

Dialogue and Deterrence: The 1970s as Prototype

Hideya Kurata

Paper presented at the conference

North Korea Policy After The Perry Report:
A Trilateral (Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States) Workshop

March 3-4, 2000

Introduction

The Obuchi administration's policy toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea since the launch of a Taepodong missile in August 1998, officially labeled "dialogue and deterrence," may seem like a hasty improvisation. On the one hand, Japan strengthened its commitment to the security alliance with the United States by enacting new laws to implement the Defense Cooperation Guidelines and agreed to develop jointly a theater missile defense system. On the other, Tokyo explored contacts with Pyongyang, a step toward diplomatic talks on normalization of relations.

Although the words dialogue and deterrence were not paired before as a policy, in fact this duality in reverse order has characterized postwar Japanese policy toward North Korea. In the early phase of the Cold War, the emphasis was on deterrence, with dialogue an undercurrent, until the two converged in the mid-1970s. This paper examines the background of this dynamic, evolution, focusing on Japan-U.S.-Republic of Korea security arrangements.

Japan's North Korea policy today is predicated on multilateral consultation, discussions that range beyond the bilateral matters inherent in normalization of relations. Some observers suggest that the Four Party Talks, a framework to discuss regional peace arrangements, should be expanded to include Russia and Japan in a settlement of the Korea question. Actually, the idea of multilateral fora to deal with the two Koreas was aired in the 1970s. The prototype of current Japanese policy toward Pyongyang, with its bilateral and multilateral dimensions, dates from the 1970s.

Japan-U.S.-South Korea Security Arrangements

The Japan-U.S.-South Korea security system is a given, by which I mean that the 1951 Japan-U.S. security treaty and the 1954 U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty were a direct result of the Korean War. Though distinct bilateral arrangements, the treaties were, in effect, an inseparable response to North Korea's invasion of the South. In the 1951 Yoshida-Acheson memorandum, Japan agreed to provide facilities for United Nations forces; the arrangement continued after an armistice agreement ended hostilities in Korea on July 27, 1953. Still today the Rear Headquarters of the UN Unified Command at Camp Zama, the three major U.S. bases in Okinawa (Kadena, Futenma, and White Beach), the naval base in Sasebo, Kyushu, and Yokota airbase in the Kanto area retain a UN function on the strength of a 1954 U.N. forces agreement. If war breaks out in South Korea, U.S. military units can launch combat operations from these airfields and ports. Although their genesis was in the Korean War, missions from these bases, in the name of UN operations, are outside the prior consultation agreement reached when the Japan-U.S. security treaty was revised in 1960 (NSC6008/1).

The Japan-U.S. and South Korea-U.S. alliances are an inseparable arrangement to counter a North Korean attack on South Korea. The essentially tripartite nature was lessened, however, by two factors: The absence of direct defense ties between Tokyo and Seoul, and Japanese fears of entrapment. For many years, this fear inhibited policy makers in Tokyo.

Japan-North Korea Relations, 1950s-1960s

Given the inseparable security arrangements taking form, Japanese policy makers were agreed that between South Korea and North Korea, the South was the hands-down choice for diplomatic normalization. Preliminary talks were held October 1951, followed by official negotiations in February 1952, with the United States lending a helping hand.

At the time, however, the Japanese public perceived North Korea as a more authentic voice of Korean nationalism than South Korea. For example, North Korea got China to start withdrawal of its forces in 1954 (completed in 1958) a year after the armistice, while the Syngman Rhee government wanted U.S. troops to remain indefinitely.

North Korea made many peace proposals, including a call by Foreign Minister Nam Il in February 1955 for “coexistence” with Japan and establishment of “normal relations” with all countries including Japan. What Nam Il meant by normal relations was recognition of the DPRK as the only legitimate government in Korea, foreclosing diplomatic ties with Seoul. Nam Il’s peace offensive sought to isolate South Korea and drive a wedge into the tripartite alliance. The obvious goal was South Korea’s “liberation.”

The repatriation campaign in the 1950s to attract Koreans in Japan to North Korea illustrates the DPRK’s standing as the true representative of Korean nationalism. Treated as a humanitarian issue, the freedom to choose one’s place of residence, repatriation was handled through Red Cross channels. Despite the fact that most Koreans in Japan were from the southern part of the peninsula, 75,000 went to North Korea by 1961, giving the DPRK the labor force needed for its first Seven Year Plan.

There was another aspect to the repatriation drive: North Korea’s attempt to enlist Japanese public opinion against diplomatic normalization with South Korea. The Japanese Foreign Ministry saw repatriation as a valid humanitarian issue, but did not allow it to discredit diplomatic ties with South Korea, an important foreign policy objective.

When Park Chung Hee seized power in a military coup in 1961, normalization talks had dragged on fitfully for years. With Park pushing for a settlement, Japan and South Korea signed a Treaty on Basic Relations in June 1965. Japan managed to accommodate South Korean demands on the sensitive question of which government in Korea was legitimate without shutting the door on future recognition of North Korea. Article III of the treaty states: “It is confirmed that the Government of the Republic of Korea is the only lawful Government in Korea as specified in the Resolution of 195 (III) of the United Nations General Assembly.”

The ambiguous wording of the UN resolution permits opposed interpretations. The Korean side referred to expressions like “there has been established a lawful government” and “based on elections which were a valid expression of the free will of the electorate” to claim sovereignty over the entire peninsula. The Japanese side emphasized the resolution’s restrictive wording: “a lawful government having effective control and jurisdiction over that part of Korea where the Temporary Commission was able to observe and consult.” In fact, the resolution limited South Korea’s legitimacy to below the 38th

parallel where elections were held. Japan contended that legitimacy above the 38th parallel was undetermined, leaving room for ties with the North. South Korea disputed the interpretation, but Japan kept the option open.

The Japan-ROK treaty dashed Nam Il's hopes for diplomatic ties with Japan. North Korea continued to demand abrogation of the treaty, condemning it incompatible with normalization of Japan-North Korea relations.

Deterrence and the Korea Clause

Ties with South Korea proved a Pandora's Box for the Eisaku Sato administration when North Korea shifted to a strategy of guerrilla warfare against the South. In January 1968, North Korean commandos on a suicide mission to kill President Park almost reached the Blue House and fears of renewed hostilities reached a post-cease-fire peak. Meanwhile, negotiations were underway with Washington on the reversion of Okinawa. Under the Sato government's formula, the United States would keep its bases in Okinawa, subject to the same restrictions of the security treaty that applied elsewhere in Japan, and banned nuclear weapons (*hondo nami, kaku nuki*). Sato had to retain the tripartite security arrangements after Okinawa's reversion

The Sato-Nixon communiqué of November 1969 warrants careful reading. In what came to be known as the "Korea clause," Japan recognized that the "security of the Republic of Korea was essential to Japan's own security." In return for relinquishing freedom of action from bases in the Ryukyus, the United States wanted Japan to accept joint responsibility for the South Korea's security. In a speech to the Washington National Press Club, Sato said that in the case of an armed attack on South Korea that required the United States to respond from bases in Japan, the Japanese government would, in prior consultation, decide its position "positively and promptly."

Often overlooked is the first clause of the "essential" sentence, which states: "The Prime Minister deeply appreciates the peacekeeping efforts of the United Nations in the area." It is fair to say that the Korea Clause suggested a linkage between the UN Command in Seoul and UN Rear Headquarters in Japan, in effect recognizing the U.S. right to use Japanese bases to meet an attack in Korea. In the joint communiqué Japan acknowledged that the security ties between Japan, the United States, and the ROK were indivisible. Nor was the triple alliance limited to wartime. South Korea's security was also the basis for peacetime coordination of North Korea policy among the allies. Until the South-North dialogue began, the general perception in Japan was that only deterrence protected South Korea, whose safety in turn contributed to Japan's security.

South-North Dialogue

In the 1970s, the tripartite security system shifted from deterrence as the only way to prevent an invasion by North Korea. Prodded by the Nixon administration's Guam Doctrine and U.S. force reductions, Park Chung Hee departed from the standard reliance on armed strength and attempted to ease tensions with the North. On August 15, 1970, Park called for "bona fide" competition between the two socio-political systems and expressed readiness to take "epoch-making and realistic measures to remove by stages artificial barriers" that divided the North and the South. The president's first proposal to Pyongyang opened the way to South-North dialogue, a topic long taboo. North Korea was at first negative, but in the climate of U.S.-China rapprochement, agreed in August 1971 on Red Cross talks.

South-North dialogue added a new element to the deterrence-oriented triple alliance, yet in Japan fear of entrapment reemerged. Foreign Minister Takeo Fukuda, for instance, at the Japan-U.S. ministerial conference in September 1971 advocated revision of the Korea clause. The Korea clause was dropped from the Sato-Nixon communiqué in January 1972. At a press conference after his meeting with the U.S. president, Sato said “This particular expression is not necessarily valid in describing the new situation today.” In May 1972, Fukuda, in reply to a Diet interpellation, pronounced the Korea clause no longer valid. These statements reflected the Japanese government’s judgment that the probability of another war in Korea was minimal and its wish to disengage from the obligations the Korea clause entailed. Exaggerating the efficacy of dialogue, Japan downgraded inseparability in the three-way security arrangements.

South-North dialogue also thawed the Tokyo-Pyongyang relationship. Japanese politicians from several parties in November 1971 formed a Parliamentary Association for the Promotion of Japan-North Korea Friendship, headed by Liberal Democratic Party representative Chuji Kuno, which signed a trade memorandum with the DPRK Committee for the Promotion of International Trade. Another joint statement in January 1972 by the parliamentary association and a delegation from the DPRK Association on External Cultural Relations emphasized the importance of mutual visits and economic and cultural exchange, declaring that “good neighborly relations and diplomatic relations could be established between the two countries.” With prospects for trade looking up, Korean business leaders in Japan founded the North Korea-Japan Export-Import Co. in February 1972.

North Korea showed greater flexibility on normalization of relations with Japan. In January 1972, Kim Il-Sung, speaking to a Yomiuri Shimbun delegation, criticized Japan’s hostility to the North, and called for “normal” relations. To Kim Il Sung, of course, the Japan-South Korea Basic Treaty was anathema, and he demanded it be scrapped. “Normal” relations implied recognition of the North Korean government as the sole legitimate state in Korea, though Kim Il Sung did not make abrogation a precondition: “If diplomatic relations are established, the erroneous policy the Japanese government has followed toward our country will be nullified.” He envisioned abrogation as the outcome of normalization.

Japan never at any stage considered abrogation of the treaty with Seoul. The joint statement cited above mentioned neighborly and diplomatic relations, but the Japanese emphasis was definitely on the former. Certain conditions had to be fulfilled before ties could be normalized with the DPRK.

One condition was that South Korea drop its claim to be the only legitimate government in Korea, i.e., accept Japan’s interpretation of UN Resolution 195 (III). Another condition was that North Korea drop its opposition to the Basic Treaty, both as a precondition for and an anticipated result of normalization. Unless both Koreas met these criteria, the Foreign Ministry was convinced, Seoul would always be suspicious of Japanese contacts with the North and Pyongyang would misinterpret the implications of rapprochement.

Japan welcomed the South-North dialogue, expecting that the two foes, as West and East Germany had, would reach a provisional agreement on managing the political division. Such an agreement would not only help prevent another war but also allow other countries to establish diplomatic ties with both Koreas. Japanese policy makers probably hoped this would achieve their desiderata, leading to relations with the North without prejudice to the Basic Treaty.

In September 1997, the new Kakuei Tanaka administration broke diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan) and moved dramatically toward ties with the People’s Republic of China,

raising immense expectations in Pyongyang. The joint statement signed in Beijing said Japan's "abnormal relationship" with the Republic of China was over. Applied to the Korean Peninsula, the scenario would be abrogation of the Basic Treaty followed by normalization. Japan certainly set a precedent for diplomacy with a divided country: cut ties with one part and mend them with the other.

North Korean Vice-Foreign Minister Park Sung Chul told visiting Japanese journalists on September 7, 1972, that Japan should follow an equidistant diplomacy toward North and South Korea, which he saw as leading to ties with the DPRK. Kim Il Sung was effusive about the Tanaka administration in an interview with Ryosuke Yasue, editor of Sekai Magazine, in Pyongyang in October 1972.: Kim Il Sung said: "The Tanaka government maintains relations with socialist countries on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence, so it should not be so negative toward our country." Pointing out that the Tanaka government had allowed business exchanges to continue, Kim said Japan was now less hostile to North Korea.

But North Korea's fond hopes of the Tanaka administration were not met, largely because of developments between Pyongyang and Seoul that disrupted dialogue and eventually affected Japan-North Korea relations. Although the abduction of Kim Dae Jung (August 8, 1973) triggered the breakup, it was foreshadowed in June when Park Chung Hee unveiled his Diplomacy for Peaceful Unification and Kim Il Sung reciprocated with his Five Principles for the Unification of the Fatherland. The two Koreas had staked out fundamentally different positions on unification, particularly on UN membership, that doomed dialogue to failure.

Article 5 of Park's blueprint proposed that the two Koreas simultaneously join the United Nations, whereas Kim Il Sung insisted that the North and South enter as a single entity, the Federal Republic of Koryo. Item 6 of Park's plan, contacts with communist countries, was later developed by Roh Tae Woo into his Northern diplomacy.

Although to what extent Japanese diplomats understood the ramifications for intra-Korea dialogue of the two plans is questionable, Japan endorsed Park's approach. Vice Foreign Minister Mizuno described Park's declaration as exactly what Japan had been urging South Korea to adopt. Park's willingness to accept North Korea's entry into the United Nations meant that Seoul no longer insisted it was the only government authorized by the world body. If both Korean states were represented in the United Nations, they would, in effect, grant each other legitimacy in their respective territories. The battle over legitimacy might go in intra-Korea politics, however, the fact they had their own seats in the most universal international organization was equivalent to cross-recognition. To Japan, South Korea's policy opened the possibility of establishing diplomatic relations with North Korea. The joint statement issued after a Japan-US summit in August 1973 welcomed the new developments in Korea and expressed approval of Park's initiative.

The Prototype: The "new" Korea Clause and Multilateral Consultation

After South-North dialogue broke down, some time passed before Japan reconfirmed the inseparability of tripartite security arrangements. Foreign Minister Toshio Kimura's somewhat flamboyant statement in 1974 reflected government thinking on Korean unification. Shortly after taking office in July, Kimura said the security of the entire Korean peninsula, not just that of the ROK, was essential to Japan's security. The Japanese government still wanted to distance itself from the 1969 Korea clause. In September, Kimura and the director of the Foreign Ministry's Treaty Bureau went further, saying that the ROK was not the only legitimate state on the peninsula, comments that provoked large-scale protests in South Korea. Japan had misjudged President Park's unification policy.

Japan realigned with Seoul after North Korea proposed a peace treaty with the United States and the collapse of South Vietnam sparked tension in Korea. The Miki administration, in office since late 1974, developed a new policy in collaboration with the Ford administration. In a joint declaration in August 1975, Japan went on record: “The security of the Republic of Korea is essential to the maintenance of peace on the Korean peninsula, which in turn is necessary for peace and security in East Asia, including Japan.”

This passage, known as the “new” Korea clause, is not just a return to the 1969 version. Granted the first part revived emphasis on deterrence by the tripartite security system, but the second part implicitly recognized the value of the South-North dialogue in the early 1970s. Shortly afterwards Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, in an address to the 30th UN General Assembly, endorsed simultaneous entry of both Koreas to the United Nations and suggested the possibility of cross-recognition of North and South Korea. Japan applauded the proposal, indicating a willingness to participate in multilateral consultations on Korea. Multilateral discussion, Japanese policy makers reasoned, would be a chance to capitalize on the climate of coexistence to start normalization negotiations with Pyongyang. Japan’s involvement with South-North relations in the 1970s was the prototype for today’s policy of dialogue and deterrence. The multilateral talks implicit in the prototype, it may be argued, have resurfaced as the proposal for Six Party Talks.

References

Cha, Victor D. *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The US-Korea-Japan Security Triangle*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

Lee Chong Shik. *Japan and Korea. Sengo Nikkan kankeishi* [Postwar Japan-Korea relations]. Okonogi Masao and Furuta Hiroshi, translators. Chuo Koron-sha, 1989

Okonogi, Masao, “*Nanboku Chosen kankei no suii to Nihon no taio : Tokyo, Seoul, Pyongyang kankei no kihon kozo*” (Japan’s Response to Changing relations between South Korea and North Korea), *Kokusai Seiji* 92 (October, 1989).

Kurata, Hideya, “*Kankoku ‘hoppo-gaiko’ no hoga: Park Chung Hee heiwa toitsu gaiko sengen no shoso*” [South Korea’s Nordpolitik diplomacy: Park Chung Hee’s and Peaceful Unification], *ibid.*

Kurata, Hideya. “*Kita Chosen no dando missile kyoji to Nichibeikan kankei: aratana chiiki anpo no bunmyaku*” [North Korea’s Missile Threat and Japan-U.S.-South Korea Relations: The New Regional Security Context], *Kokusai Mondai*, 468 (March, 1999).