

coordinated their national interests regarding North Korea. Up to now, there have been several proposals to resolve the Korean reunification problem such as the “three-party conference”, “four-party conference” and “six-party conference.” Among these, we think that Japan would prefer the “six-party conference,” which includes Russia.

Needless to say, the future of the Korean peninsula is up to the Korean people, and subsequently, the Korean Peninsula problem should be resolved by the Korean people themselves. But it is also true that a peaceful reunification of the two Koreas requires the solid confidence and cooperation of its neighboring countries. In pursuing the reunification, therefore, it may be more realistic to consider some kind of format to consult with Japan and Russia, like a six party conference.

\* This article is the summary of the paper presented for the 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convention of the International Studies Association held in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA, March 24-27, 2002.

considers Japan to be more important, and so he chose Japan as the first country in his visit to Asian countries in 2002. Recently, Japan also shows a stronger will to actively support U.S. policy when requested.

Moreover, the Bush Administration takes more seriously the rapidly growing economic power of China. Economically, China hopes to establish a “free trade area” in Asia. This Chinese plan has the possibility of disrupting the existing geopolitical map on a worldwide scale. If we agree with the theory that economic integration leads to political integration, China could be the most powerful country in Asia after the establishment of the free trade area.

China’s future and development will not be achieved without engaging in the global economy. China will open their domestic market more, which means that foreign commodities will be imported more from other countries in Asia. But that also means that Chinese exports to other Asian countries will increase, too, and in fact, its exports to other Asian countries will be larger than its import from them. This will lead other Asian countries to be economically dependent on China. Consequently, one meaning of this Chinese proposal could be more political than economic. On the other hand, Japanese economic power cannot be as strong as Chinese power. Japan cannot satisfy fully all the needs of Asian countries. So, Japan, as a solid ally, needs American support politically, economically, and militarily.

## **6. Conclusion**

Regardless of their hopes, Japan will be influenced by its neighboring countries, like China, Russia, and North Korea. Accordingly, Japan will hope to participate directly in resolving the Korean peninsula problem. Nowadays, Japan has been invited to the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group meeting in which the U.S., South Korea, and Japan

At a press conference held in his visiting airplane to South Korea on March 20, 2002, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi emphasized that the abduction of Japanese by the North Korean government not only “constitutes an infringement on Japanese people’s lives and safety,” but also “would be detrimental to world peace and security.”

### **5. The International Political Situation and the “New Cold War”**

If we analyze Japanese policy toward the Korean peninsula from 1999 to 2002, we can see an outstanding Japanese policy change toward the Korean peninsula. From 1999 to 2000, the negotiation of diplomatic normalization between Japan and North Korea has made some progress. During that period three rounds of negotiations were convened. However, from the beginning of 2001, the negotiation process was interrupted and remains so up to this date. Why has this change of mood happened?

The reason for the change can be found in a change in relations between the U.S. and North Korea. If we carefully look at the U.S. and North-Korean relations, we can realize that relations deteriorated drastically during that period. It was worse than ever before. As already pointed out earlier, this change in U.S.-North Korean relations is correlated with the change in Japan-North Korean relations. That is, relations between Japan and North Korea had become worse because relations had gone sour between the U.S. and North Korea.

If we turn to U.S. domestic politics, the presidency had changed. Subsequently, U.S. policy toward Asia also changed. As Prichard pointed out so clearly, the Bush Administration’s policy is different from the Clinton Administration’s. For instance, the Clinton Administration considered China to be more important than Japan, and so Clinton didn’t stopped over in Japan on his visit to China. On the other hand, Bush

development as the most important agenda in its negotiating conferences with North Korea, Japan shares a common perception with the U.S. on these issues. For this reason, Japan stressed the significance of the issue in the negotiations for its normalization with North Korea, and also consulted with the U.S. and South Korea through the trilateral conference.

Another security issue that has emerged since December 2001 is the suspicious vessel problem. Although the vessel was allegedly dispatched by North Korea, it had been sunk by the Japanese Coast Guard. This accident has brought about a dispute with China, which is opposed to salvaging the sunken vessel.

#### **4. Human Rights Factor**

The Japanese government asserts that North Korea abducted Japanese men and women from Japan and Europe in the early 1980s. In connection with this issue, of course, North-Korea denied their misbehavior. But a defector, who had been involved in abducting Japanese citizens, confessed that they had kidnapped men and women in order to increase the Japanese population in a village, called "the Japanese Village" in North Korea.

Originally, this issue was not regarded as important in negotiations of the normalization conference. So in its early stage of the negotiation, the Japanese government was expecting that it could be resolved without much difficulty at the conclusion of the normalization treaty. The situation has changed, however. Resolution of the abduction issue has become a pre-condition for resuming the negotiation of normalization conference. The main reasons for this include the changing political dynamics of Northeast Asia and a rising tension between the U.S. and North Korea, especially after inauguration of the Bush Administration.

North-Korean relations will also improve. This means that we cannot explain or predict Japanese policy toward the Korean peninsula without considering U.S. policy toward, or relations with, the Korean peninsula. And we may argue that it would be the most important factor to influence Japanese policy toward the Korean peninsula.

## **2. The Geopolitical Factor**

The second important factor which influences Japanese policy toward the Korean peninsula is geopolitics. From a historical point of view, Japan has been influenced very much from the northern countries, especially, Korea, China and Russia. In relation with the Korean peninsula, Japan was almost invaded by Mongolia via Korea, and fought with China in the Sino-Japanese war between 1894 and 1895 and with Russia in the Russo-Japanese war in 1905. In 1917, Japan sent their military to Siberia during the Russian revolution, and after World War II, Japanese Northern islets were seized by Russia and still remain in their hands up to this date. Under this context, we must take into account this geopolitical factor when analyzing Japanese policy toward the Korean peninsula.

## **3. Security Factors**

Geopolitics is also interrelated with security factors, which constitute the third factor. The importance of the geographical security factor has been increasing gradually.

As is well-known, Japan is contiguous with Korea, China and Russia. Japan is always keen to threats from neighboring countries, especially nuclear bombs and missile attacks, alluded to by the North Korean development of Rodog and Tepodng missiles.

Just like the U.S. took the issues of nuclear weapons and missile

---

**NOTE**

---

## Japanese Foreign Policy Toward Korean Peninsula

Seiman Gohda

### 1. Introduction

Since 1990, Japanese foreign policy has changed in many aspects. One of the outstanding examples is the negotiation of normalization between Japan and North Korea, starting in 1991.

As is well-known, the diplomatic normalization between Japan and South Korea was concluded in 1965. But it took 26 more years from that time for negotiation between Japan and North Korea to begin. The main reason for this difference was the Cold War.

Along with the collapse of the Cold War after Bush-Gorbachev conference in Malta in 1989, negotiations to normalize relationships between Japan and North Korea began for the period from 1991 to 1992. After eight rounds of conferences, it was stopped. One of the reasons for the breaking-off was the deterioration of relations between the U.S. and North Korea due to the issue of nuclear development by North Korea.

After the resolution of the nuclear development issue in 1994, relations between the U.S. and North Korea improved much more than ever before. As relations between the U.S. and North Korea improved, so did relations between Japan and North Korea.

Judging from these situations we can generally say that, if relations between the U.S. and North Korea become worse again, Japanese and North-Korean relations will become worse, too. On the contrary, if relations between the U.S. and North Korea improve, Japanese and