Missiles, Abductions, and Sanctions: Societal Influences on
Japanese Policy Toward North Korea, 1998-2006

by

Seung Hyok Lee

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Political Science
University of Toronto

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North Korea twice conducted ballistic missile tests close to Japan in 1998 and 2006. While Japan responded with non-coercive condemnations to demonstrate its disapproval in 1998, it imposed unilateral economic sanctions in 2006, marking the first instance in post-World War II of applying a substantial coercion to punish a neighbouring state. The research asks why Japanese policy toward the North shifted for a seemingly identical type of provocation.

The dissertation seeks contextual explanations by using inductive process-tracing, a type of ‘middle approach’ between historical narratives and parsimonious theories. It is applied to highlight the underlying mechanism through which public discursive changes concerning national security and North Korea during this eight-year period influenced the subsequent policy shift in 2006.
The dissertation concludes that the unilateral sanctions were not necessarily a calculated strategic response to punish the missile launch (or North Korean nuclear programs) per se, but were a direct consequence of a deeper shift in societal discourse taking place beforehand. During the eight-year period, there had been other visible provocations and shocks originating from the North, especially the sensational revelation in 2002 of past North Korean abductions of Japanese citizens. These highly-publicized incidents facilitated the Japanese public to be increasingly conscious about Japan’s security weaknesses and re-evaluate its historical relations with its neighbour, leading to a hardened domestic environment in which the new idea of pressuring the North became a feasible option even before 2006.

These North Korean provocations and the resulting societal security discourse, along with concurrent structural changes in the Japanese government and mass media which made them both highly susceptible to discursive currents among citizens, mutually interacted to produce the policy result when the opportunity arose.

The research, however, also challenges the popular view that the sanctions are the first example of the wholesale transformation of Japan’s post-war ‘pacifist’ security principles. It argues that the confined means (economic) by which the sanctions were imposed reflects the highly nuanced discourse, which endorses Japan’s legitimate right to specifically punish the North for the harms done, but that the societal momentum is not equally supportive of the more controversial areas concerning military usage and the current constitution.
Acknowledgements

I first became interested in Japanese foreign policy toward North Korea while in Japan (2000–2005). As a graduate student at the Department of Politics and Economics, Waseda University, I wrote an English working paper on the topic (which, after re-reading it recently, led me to believe that I have made progress since then); but I certainly did not expect that this initial interest would bear fruit in the form of a doctoral dissertation.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.............................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................... iv
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................... viii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.................................................................................... 1
  1 Empirical Case for the Analysis ................................................................. 1
  2 Significance of the Research Question ................................................ 5
  3 Theoretical Contribution of the Research ............................................. 9
  4 Process-Tracing as a Methodological “Middle Ground” ..................... 11
  5 Overview of the Chapters ...................................................................... 13

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW...................................................................... 18
  1 Categorization 1: Fundamental Change or Continuity? ................ 20
     1.1 Literature emphasizing change ......................................................... 21
     1.2 Literature emphasizing continuity (despite tactical policy-level ...
     .................................................................................................................... 27
  2 Categorization 2: Theoretical Division ............................................... 32
     2.1 Realist interpretation on the nature of Japan’s transformation ... 33
     2.2 Constructivists’ claims on Japan’s maintenance of fundamental...
     .................................................................................................................... 36
  3 Relative Weaknesses of the Two Theoretical Explanations ........... 39
     3.1 Realism: Overemphasis on rationality and security politics ....... 40
     3.2 Constructivism: “Rescuing” the theory in the midst of ongoing ... 43
  4 Filling the Gap: Where This Dissertation Can Contribute for...
     Further Understanding of Japanese Security ...................................... 51
  5 Conclusion ................................................................................................. 58

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY I (CASE-STUDY APPROACH)................................. 60
  1 Introduction.............................................................................................. 60
  2 Setting the Scope and Dimension of the Case .................................. 62
  3 A Case for Case Study Research in Political Science ................... 66
  4 Case Study Research and Process-Tracing ....................................... 69
  5 Contribution of Process-Tracing for Theory Improvements .......... 77
  6 Process-Tracing as a Methodological Middle-Ground ................. 80
  7 Conclusion .............................................................................................. 84

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY II (MASS MEDIA IN JAPAN).............................. 87
  1 Japanese Mass Media and the Nature of Their Role between...
     Domestic Society and Politics .............................................................. 88

viii
1.1 Definition of public opinion and its role as a chief source of policy legitimacy ................................................................. 89
1.2 Mass media as the most influential medium for reflecting public opinion ................................................................................. 94
2 Limitations of Contemporary Literature Downplaying the Significance of Mass Media in the Japanese Domestic Political Process ................................................................................................................. 96
3 Neutrality and Pluralism in Japanese Mass Media ................................................................................................................................. 99
4 Difference in the Structure of Media-Public Relations Based on the Degree of Political Issues’ Publicity ............................................................................................................. 103
5 The Types of Media Sources Used ..................................................................................................................................................... 108
6 Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................................................................... 112

CHAPTER 5: JAPAN’S RELATIONS WITH NORTH KOREA BETWEEN 1998 AND 2000 AFTER THE FIRST TAEPODONG MISSILE LAUNCH ................................................ 114
1 Japanese Security Identity and Policies during the Postwar Period and Bilateral Relations with North Korea prior to 1998 ........... 115
1.1 Japan’s security identity and the development of the postwar consensus .................................................................................... 115
1.2 Japan’s relations with North Korea before 1998 ........................................................................................................................................ 124
2 Japan-North Korea Relations: 1998-2000 .................................................................................................................................................. 129
2.1 Bilateral issues of the period ....................................................................................................................................................... 129
2.2 Societal reactions ............................................................................................................................................................................. 131
2.3 Japanese Government policy responses ........................................................................................................................................... 136
3 Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................................................................... 145

CHAPTER 6: BILATERAL RELATIONS IN 2001-2002, PRIOR TO KOIZUMI’S VISIT TO PYONGYANG .............................................................. 148
1 Japan-North Korea Relations: Additional North Korea-related Incidents ........................................................................................................ 148
2 Societal Reaction ............................................................................................................................................................................. 151
3 The Emergence of Koizumi Junichirō and Government Responses to North Korea Issues in 2001-2002 ........................................ 158
3.1 The rise of Koizumi and new structural changes in political decision-making .................................................................................. 161
3.2 The Japanese government’s national security policy adjustments ................................................................................................. 167
3.3 Koizumi’s approach toward North Korea issues during the first year of his Prime Ministership ................................................................ 174
4 Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................................................................... 178

CHAPTER 7: JAPAN-NORTH KOREA RELATIONS FROM KOIZUMI’S PYONGYANG SUMMIT IN 2002 TO THE SECOND SUMMIT IN 2004 .............. 181
1 Koizumi-Kim Pyongyang Summit of September 17, 2002 .................. 181
2 The Unfolding of Societal Discourse toward North Korea after the Summit ......................................................................................... 190
2.1 Societal reception immediately following the summit ..................... 190
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2 The toughening of societal discourse concerning the abduction and the early signs of its pressure on the government</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Additional implications of the abduction: “Sense of victimhood” in the Japanese understanding of national history</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Heightening societal criticism toward politicians, bureaucrats, and other elite groups</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 The media reaction</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Japanese Government’s Policy Responses to Changing Societal Discourse
   3.1 Government’s abduction policy readjustment | 226 |
   3.2 Linkage of the abduction to other security policies | 232 |
   3.3 The passing of Emergency Legislation | 237 |

4 Conclusion | 240 |

**CHAPTER 8: JAPAN-NORTH KOREA RELATIONS 2004-2006 AND THE MATURATION OF UNILATERAL SANCTION DEBATES**

1 Koizumi’s Second Visit to Pyongyang and the “Return” of the Abductees’ Remaining Family Members | 246 |
2 Tracing the Origin of the Unilateral Sanction Legislations | 251 |
   2.1 The early proposals | 252 |
   2.2 Sanction legislations in 2004 | 257 |
3 The Final Dissolution of the Pyongyang Declaration Framework | 265 |
   3.1 The last straw: Yokota Megumi’s DNA incident | 266 |
   3.2 The shift of Koizumi toward unilateral sanctions | 270 |
4 Bilateral Relations in 2005: A Case for Re-evaluating the Overemphasis of North Korean Nuclear Issue as the Basis of Japanese Discourse | 272 |
5 Summary: The Nature of Japan’s Policy toward North Korea from 2004 to 2006, Immediately Prior to the Second Missile Launch | 280 |
6 Denouement: The Second Taepodong Launch in 2006 and the Imposition of Unilateral Economic Sanctions | 284 |

**CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION**

1 The Origin and the Nature of the 2006 Sanctions as Revealed by the Empirical Process-Tracing between 1998 and 2006 | 295 |
2 Going Back to the Literature Review: Theoretical Significance of the Research | 305 |
3 The Future of Japan-North Korea Relations | 311 |
4 Addendum: Constitutional Revision | 318 |

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

1 ENGLISH SOURCES | 324 |
2 JAPANESE SOURCES | 335 |
3 NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS & ARTICLES | 342 |
4 INTERVIEWS (alphabetical order) (Tokyo, Japan) | 349 |
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1 Empirical Case for the Analysis

On August 31, 1998, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK: North Korea) launched a multi-stage ballistic missile Taepodong eastward, in the direction of Japan. The missile flew over the northern Japanese main island, through its airspace, and a portion of it then fell into the Pacific Ocean. Although United States intelligence sources eventually confirmed that it was a failed satellite test launch, the fact that North Korea’s intention was not to directly strike Japanese cities did not ameliorate the shock it caused in Japan. After all, this was the first instance for post-World War II Japan to experience a ballistic missile from a neighbouring state directly flying over its airspace, without any official prior notification of its schedule or its exact intention. This incident in 1998 and its subsequent impact in Japan, therefore, rightly deserved the term “the Taepodong shock.”

The Japanese government reacted to the North Korean provocation by first launching verbal condemnations, especially in the United Nations (UN). Japan pushed for an official statement of protest made by the UN Secretariat, but it had to eventually settle for a less assertive press statement. Japan did implement a temporary hold on

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food aid to the North that had been scheduled before the launch, as well as freezing the payment of its financial contribution for the The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), an international framework which had reached an agreement with North Korea in 1995 for supplying a light water reactor while persuading the North to give up its nuclear program that had first emerged in 1994. However, the freeze on food and financial aid was not a Japanese unilateral decision, as Japan closely coordinated every move with other member states of KEDO, such as the United States and South Korea. Even the temporary hold of Japan’s portion of the KEDO contribution was lifted by October of the same year, and food aid resumed by the December of 1999.

Considering that its airspace had been violated by a potentially catastrophic missile belonging to a not-so-friendly neighbour, Japan’s reaction as a sovereign state was in fact highly limited and controlled. If we were to compare what other states – such as the United States – would have done in a similar provocation by a neighbour with history of belligerency, it is clear that Japan’s actions were modest at best.

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3 Gaimushō (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan), Bluebook 1999 online edition Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 2(2). (Japanese version) (http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/99/1st/index.html). The reaction of KEDO and Japan’s role in this international institution after the Taepodong launch in 1998 will be elaborated in more detail in Chapter 5.

In 1998, Japan did not take any directly coercive countermeasures to punish North Korea’s provocations, even when faced with a military threat to national security, and it refrained from implementing any substantive, punitive measure to prevent North Korea’s potential actions of the same nature in the future. Furthermore, the governmental actions which were actually implemented, such as the temporary withholding of food and financial aid, were not in any sense unilateral decisions led by Japanese initiative, but were coordinated closely with other states and the international community.

After an eight-year gap, North Korea once again launched a multi-stage ballistic missile *Taepodong-2*. On July 5, 2006, it conducted a series of short and medium range missile exercises, during which the modified version of *Taepodong* was launched from North Korea’s eastern seaboard toward the Sea of Japan/East Sea. This time, the debris fell into the international waters a few hundred kilometres between the western part of Hokkaido and the Maritime Province of Russia.\(^5\)

The missile in 2006 neither penetrated the Japanese airspace nor flew over Japan toward the Pacific Ocean as in 1998. Although the maritime security of other regional neighbours, such as Russia and China, were equally affected, this time the Japanese government swiftly implemented, *on the same day*, twelve-part unilateral sanctions against North Korea, which included the ban of the North Korean ferry *Mangyongbong*\(^92\) from entering Japanese harbours and North Korean nationals from entering Japan.\(^6\)


In the following months, Japan would implement additional unilateral sanctions in order to punish North Korea by stopping the bilateral flow of capital and trade, as well as banning other North Korean vessels and citizens from entering Japan as a direct extension of the measures implemented on July 5.7

Interestingly, the Japanese government in 2006 also took the leading role in drafting the UN Security Council resolution condemning North Korea and actively persuaded other member states to join the Japanese unilateral sanctions, in drastic contrast to settling for a UN Secretariat press statement eight years before.8 Although the Security Council resolution that eventually passed did not require UN member states to join the Japanese sanctions or impose their own against North Korea as Japan had hoped, the policy reaction Japan demonstrated in 2006 was, nevertheless, strikingly different from its stance in 1998. Afterall, it was the first time in post-World War II history for Japan to unilaterally impose sanctions against a regional state, as well as to take the most active part in drafting and submitting a UN resolution specifically targeted to condemn a neighbour.

The analytic question – the “puzzle” – this dissertation will be answering, therefore, is why the Japanese reactions to the two North Korean provocations of similar kind but eight years apart substantially differed, and why the unilateral sanctions in 2006


materialized in such form with particular contents – banning the bilateral flow of money, goods, and people – when the provocation was clearly military in nature.

2 Significance of the Research Question

There has been a numerous amount of literature on the recent “transformation” of Japanese foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. Almost all of these works touch on whether Japan in recent years is, as many Japan experts and regional neighbours claim, diverting away from its traditional, post-World War II national strategy and security norms symbolically based on the so-called the “Peace Constitution,” renouncing war and the use of military force (and focusing instead on economic development as a pacifist “merchant state” under the umbrella of the alliance with the United States). They have contributed to our understanding of this crucial and widely sought-after question – the current and the likely future trajectory of Japan – by analyzing a wide range of well-known topics such as the systemic-level power reconfigurations in the East Asian region in the post-Cold War era. It is, nevertheless, surprising that academia has paid far less attention to any highly-focused empirical case of Japanese foreign policy, which could be equally insightful for understanding that same question, of course including Japan’s policy shift toward North Korea between 1998 and 2006.

When we consider, especially, the fact that the policy measures the Japanese government took in 2006 were the first unilateral sanctions imposed by post-World War II Japan to apply economic coercion against a neighbouring state, the dearth of detailed studies solely devoted to this particular case is surprising, in the light of its historical significance.
It is true that Japan had participated in other multilateral sanctions and boycotts in the past as a member of the Western bloc during the Cold War, or as an ally of the United States. For example, as a member of COCOM (Coordinating Committee of Multilateral Export Controls), Japan self-regulated the exports of strategic equipments to the Soviet bloc states, boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympic to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, joined the European export sanctions against Iran the same year, and cancelled loans and aids to the People’s Republic of China after the Tiennanmen Square Incident in 1989.

They were, however, not in any sense direct coercive measures designed and exercised in order to force an alteration of those states’ policy toward Japan, nor were they punitive retaliations for actions threatening Japanese security. As the previous Japanese participation in multilateral sanctions and boycotts fundamentally differs in nature from the sanctions in 2006, the term “sanction” as it will be analyzed in this dissertation only refers to these first unilateral sanctions imposed by Japan against North Korea.

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Of course, it can be rightfully argued that Japan taking a more aggressive policy stance in 2006 is not counter-intuitive, as any country twice provoked with the same type of military threat would naturally escalate its reaction the second time. However, then why did Japan, after implementing such swift measures with overwhelming public support, not push further for even more direct means of punishment when it had the opportunity and the capability to do so? The aforementioned main puzzle of the research and this related question, the dissertation argues, can only be understood by examining the cause and the nature of this highly unique case, by systematically tracing the empirical unfoldings leading up to 2006.

For this purpose, rather than applying one of the theoretical paradigms of International Relations (IR) to seek an explanation, this dissertation will instead first trace the domestic process in Japan between 1998 and 2006. Highlighting the empirical process of mutual interactions among various Japanese domestic factors on issues related to North Korea and national security will provide us with causal mechanisms that led to the sanctions of 2006.

Throughout this research, main emphasis will be given to the public/societal sphere of Japan, and to the observable trend of its widely-supported security discourse toward North Korea. The overall “societal discursive shift” toward the North among the public, in conjunction with its influential interaction with the political system and mass media in the domestic realm, is therefore regarded as the most important key for understanding the analytic puzzle of this research.

The term “public/societal” utilized throughout the dissertation encompasses the notion of domestic, non-governmental interest groups in Japan linked to North Korean
issues or national security. The term is used to broadly embrace ordinary Japanese citizens at the mass-level of all occupational, educational, and regional backgrounds. Of course, as in any democratic state, Japanese citizens are composed of pluralistic individuals embracing and expressing diverse opinions and degree of interest to foreign policy issues. However, as the dissertation will demonstrate, there are, nevertheless, certain foreign policy issues which draw a high degree of public interest, and these “well-publicized” policy areas tend to produce – again, as in any other democratic state – a mainstream/majority opinion. Since the dissertation is more geared toward analyzing the shifts of such mass-level, mainstream emotions and ideational trends toward North Korea and national security that are observable by analyzing Japanese media sources, the term “societal” – specifically meaning “of or pertaining to society” – rather than a broader term “social” will be adopted throughout this research.

Also, the term “discourse” as in “security discourse” is used throughout the dissertation as a contextual and narrated-in-detail form of public opinion, formed by societal debates and discussions (often through the medium of domestic mass media) concerning a foreign policy issue. Public opinion as expressed in opinion polls is citizens’ responses to pre-determined and framed questionnaires. Societal discourse, on the other hand, points to the background ideational current or narratives which led those citizens to answer in such a way to the opinion polls. Discourse is, therefore, a source from which we can contextually understand the nuanced background (ideational origin) of how and why citizens in the societal sphere have come to react in a certain fashion on a particular issue. Japanese mass media are keen to reflect and express such discourse of the majority public in their coverage, especially in the major daily newspapers’
editorials. The definitions of “societal/public” and “discourse” will be elaborated further in Japanese context in Chapter 4.

3 Theoretical Contribution of the Research

That the dissertation focuses on empirical unfoldings of the case does not, however, mean that this study is an atheoretical historical narration.

As mentioned earlier, numerous political scientists especially in the field of IR have published works on Japan’s post-Cold War foreign policy. They mainly deal with the overall trajectory of the latest Japanese “grand strategy” by examining international, system-level factors concerning Japan, such as the rise of China, the first Gulf War, the present and the future of the United States-Japan alliance, and various territorial disputes Japan is facing with South Korea, China, and Russia. In addition, highly-publicized Japanese domestic issues – such as the rising public voices favouring the revision of the current Constitution, visits to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine by politicians, the publication of so-called “past-glorifying and revisionist” history textbooks, the legal status of the Self Defence Forces (SDF), and the prolonging national economic stagnation – are all comprehensively incorporated into their analyses to provide us with an overview of Japanese foreign policy and national security in the new post-Cold War environment. These works, in the light of their comprehensive coverage, then go on to answer whether there is any ongoing fundamental change in its national strategy as compared to the earlier post-World War II period.

Indeed, these scholars have enormously contributed to our understanding of the “big picture” of where Japan is currently situated and where it is likely to be headed.
(These scholars and their primary works will be covered in the literature review in order to locate this dissertation in the context of the current research tradition). However, it must be noted that most of these “mainstream” scholars who either explicitly or implicitly utilize IR theoretical tenets as their background analytic prisms have given far less attention to narrowly focused case studies concerning any one of Japan’s particular security issues, despite the fact that some of these narrow cases – particularly Japan’s bilateral interaction with North Korea – has significantly influenced the overall Japanese security trajectory more than other factors.

The broad scope of their research interests – the overall security trajectory of Japan incorporating all well-known and relevant international and domestic issues – is understandable, as the theoretical tenets they employ are better equipped to make deductive causal claims about state action in comprehensive and generalized definitions based on the employed theory’s “worldview.” However, the vast majority of contemporary works on Japanese security in the field of political science have, compared to contributions from history or area studies, overlooked the importance of focused empirical studies honing on specific cases, as those delving into too detailed empirical process could be regarded as overly contextual and narrative in a theoretical work.

Since the foremost and precise purpose of this dissertation is to pursue such detailed processes to further our empirical understanding of a particular case, the

The “mainstream” in this dissertation denotes political science research tradition which employs one of the main theoretical paradigms of IR - realism, liberalism, or constructivism - as a scholar’s “worldview” in conducting deductive, hypothesis-testing type of analyses. Mainstream research generally requires a multi-case study, but it can be a single-case (case meaning the “state”) study as well, as most Japan scholars utilizing IR theories for their analyses use. The difference between the mainstream research and this dissertation will be dealt in more detail in Chapter 3 on methodology.
theoretical relevance of this dissertation is, in the mainstream IR sense of the term, admittedly not as direct at the first glance. Indeed, the “breadth of coverage” of findings is not a main objective of this research, nor is it to test the validity of any pre-conceived hypothesis based on a particular theoretical paradigm of IR. However, as it will be argued in Chapter 3, a process-based, focused case study as employed in this dissertation, nevertheless, contributes to a further theoretical development for IR in its own way. By comparing the unearthed, empirical, causal mechanisms and complex interaction of various relevant factors to the findings of contemporary, mainstream research employing IR theories investigating the same case, the findings of the dissertation can pinpoint the limitations of those analyses based on theoretical hypotheses, and thus provide future IR research on Japan with insights on the advisable analytic direction which should be given more emphasis.

Therefore, an in-depth tracing of the process of how the Japanese public perceived North Korea, how various bilateral issues and North Korea-linked incidents between 1998 and 2006 were incorporated into the societal discourses on security, and how this societal influence guided, framed, and limited subsequent policy shifts toward North Korea, would be a meaningful “filling the gap” task for current academic practices. Such a theoretical contribution constitutes the second purpose of this dissertation.

4 Process-Tracing as a Methodological “Middle Ground”

For the two goals of this research – empirical understanding and theoretical contribution – the dissertation will utilize a “process-tracing” method. Among various
process-tracing approaches that have recently became widespread in political science research, this dissertation will specifically utilize an inductive branch of the method.

Despite the fact that the method does resemble the style of illustration popularly adopted in historical research, it is not, contrary to popular misconception among certain mainstream IR scholars, an approach purely relying on simple chronological narration. As it will be elaborated in detail in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3), process-tracing complements the strength of the detailed narrative power of historical approaches with a concurrent potential for improving IR theoretical explanations.

Process-tracing is used when a research requires an in-depth “real world” investigation of the detailed processes leading to a particular result in an empirical case under close scrutiny. The method helps the researcher to systematically trace the roles played by multiple factors (at multiple levels) that brought about the consequence, by demonstrating the causal process of how these factors mutually interacted to produce the end result of the case, within a specific historical condition. Therefore, the “causal process” sought in such research, rather than a causation between codified and abstract variables as in mainstream studies, means “the real-world phenomenon” of causation – a sequence of actual empirical events or steps.13

The process-tracing, in addition to being an ideal method for highlighting sequential developments of processes within a case, is thus also logically well-equipped to reveal the subtle interactions between multiple factors in a complex causal chain. But most of all, stemming from the difference in their research goals, the process-tracing

method does not force a researcher concern oneself with the minimum number of cases required for making valid assertions, or the number-of-variable or the level-of-analysis issues as in the mainstream IR research.

From Chapter 5, the method will be utilized in order to rearrange all accessible evidence in a detailed empirical tracing of the process which had concurrently taken place at three separate levels – international (bilateral Japan-North Korea relations), societal (public discourse on security), and governmental – between 1998 and 2006. It will, in the end, promote our contextual understanding of overlooked causal mechanisms which collectively influenced the formation of the sanction policy even prior to its eventual implementation in 2006. The dissertation will demonstrate that the sanctions of 2006 were not solely a direct policy reaction to the North Korean ballistic missile threat per se.

5 Overview of the Chapters

The dissertation is divided into nine chapters. In Chapter 2, major works on current Japanese security and foreign policies in the post-Cold War period will be reviewed. Although these works have significantly contributed to our better understanding of contemporary Japanese politics and foreign policy, most of them commonly give only a minor attention to North Korean factor in their analyses, and the role of the non-governmental sectors in the Japanese policy toward North Korea is generally underestimated. The literature review section will thus elaborate where this dissertation is situated in the research realm, framed by both the strengths and weaknesses of these contemporary literatures.
Chapter 3 will further clarify the method applied in the dissertation; what process-tracing is, and how it fits into the overall purpose of this research. Then Chapter 4 will elaborate on some of the particular empirical data sources the dissertation will heavily rely on. In addition to more conventional academic literatures, the research will engage in a close scrutiny of a significant amount of Japanese media sources, opinion polls, as well as elite interviews throughout the main portion of the research. The dissertation especially relies on Japanese mass media sources (newspaper and journal articles, and particularly newspaper editorials) for empirical insights representing local context. The chapter thus justifies adopting such resources as the main empirical data source and argues that media sources are the most important and influential indicator for tracking the societal trend ("atmosphere/current") of majority public discourse in Japan.

Chapters 5 to 8 constitute the main empirical body. In each chapter, except Chapter 8, three factors will be empirically traced, namely: (1) incidents involving North Korean breaches of Japan’s territorial, maritime, and human sovereignty in a given period; (2) societal reaction and the public’s interpretation of these incidents, and the consequential unfoldings of societal discourse on security; and finally, (3) the nature and the behaviour of the political decision-makers in the government, and their increasing susceptibility to the public discourse.

Chapter 5 will start with Japan’s overall national security principles during the post-World War II and the post-Cold War periods, as well as its traditional diplomatic stance toward North Korea prior to 1998. Then it will trace bilateral relations right after the first Taepodong missile launch in 1998 up to 2000. It will highlight the reasons for Japan taking only modest measures to protest the missile provocation (in addition to the
appearance of so-called “mystery/spy ship (fushinsen)” near Japanese coasts during this period), and the highly-nuanced and multifaceted view toward North Korea that the mainstream Japanese public still embraced in the 1990s.

Chapters 6 covers the period between 2001 to 2002, up to the point just prior to the first, historic bilateral summit meeting in Pyongyang between then-Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō14 and Kim Jong-il in September, 2002. During this brief period, another appearance of fushinsen, which resulted in Japan’s first postwar maritime live-fire engagement, and bizzare entry (and swift deportation) of Kim Jong-il’s son Kim Jong-nam, made Japanese public highly anxious of North Korea as the most proximate concern to national security. The chapter also analyzes the significance of the emergence of Koizumi, as the subsequent restructuring of the decision-making mechanism that empowered the Cabinet and public opinion would have a direct impact on subsequent North Korea policies of the Japanese government.

Chapter 7 covers the brief period from the time of the first bilateral summit meeting in Pyongyang in September 2002 to the end of 2003. The chapter will demonstrate that despite the balanced nature of the so-called “Pyongyang Declaration” signed by the two heads of governments, which laid the foundation for future bilateral diplomatic normalization and the comprehensive resolution of all recent security instabilities caused by North Korea, one “achievement” of the Japanese side during the summit – the open admission by the North that it had abducted Japanese citizens – ended

14 Throughout this research, the names of East Asians will be provided in the local last name, first name fashion in the main text. Footnotes and bibliography will, however, adhere to the standard format. (First name, last name style in the footnotes, and the opposite in the bibliography)
up causing unprecedented shock and anger in the minds of the Japanese public. Although forcing the North to the admission was originally designed to push the bilateral normalization ahead, the disclosure of the abduction issue (rachi jiken/rachi mondai) soon became the most prominent obstacle for the normalization, envisioned by Koizumi and his government, after the summit. This unintended consequence made it impossible to implement the originally-agreed framework, as skyrocketing negative societal discourse toward North Korea dominated the vast majority of public emotions, and the mass media, in turn, bandwagoned with the trend. The chapter will demonstrate how this domestic mechanism in the aftermath of the summit already started to substantially limit and frame the governmental policies toward the North from this stage.

Chapter 8 traces how the idea to pressure the North through Japanese unilateral sanctions developed and unfolded in the domestic context, originally as a consequence of the disclosure of the abduction issue. The rest of the chapter illustrates how the proposal then eventually became formal legislation by pressure from the societal sphere by the end of 2004, and how it was then finally implemented in 2006, despite the fact that the sanctions had in fact been originally planned as potential coercive measures to force North Korea to comply with Japanese demands concerning the abduction issue and not necessarily the missiles or North Korean nuclear programs.

In Chapter 9, the dissertation will conclude that based on the empirical process-tracing of the case, the imposition of unilateral sanctions in 2006 was not a part of a consistent, long-term, grand strategy of the Japanese government in the post-Cold War environment or an instant reaction by the Japanese government to punish missile launches. Instead, it was more of an unintended “joint enterprise” brought about by the
collective inputs of the three factors – accumulating, highly-provocative and publicized international (bilateral) incidents, domestic societal discursive shifts, and the governmental embrace of the public “atmosphere” – which had developed between 1998 and 2006.

Koizumi – as well as other previous Japanese Cabinets – originally preferred normalizing bilateral relations as a method for peacefully resolving North Korean threats, despite rising negative societal discourse against the North, and was personally not openly supportive of sanctions even up to 2004. Therefore, the changing trajectory of the Japanese government’s planned approach to North Korea from the one envisioned by the “Pyongyang Declaration” of the 2002 summit to the eventual imposition of the unilateral sanctions in 2006 is one of the most vivid illustrations of Japanese postwar foreign policy led into a particular direction by societal influence.

Also, in order to address the “mainstream” readers more interested in the overall Japanese security trajectory (i.e., the “grand strategy”), the last part of the conclusion, in the light of more general implications which can be derived from the focused empirical findings of the dissertation, will caution against a growing, popular belief in recent years that the 2006 sanctions are one example of Japan fundamentally discarding the “principle” security identity of the postwar period.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, contemporary literature on Japanese foreign policy will be reviewed, in order to better locate this dissertation within broader, ongoing discussions on the nature of Japan’s current and future path in security. The literature reviewed here is the most representative of the topic and also relatively recent, dealing with the current shifts of Japanese foreign policy and national security strategy. Since the literature has been selected by relevance to the particular empirical case of this research, better known but older works published prior to 2000 are not included.

Most literature on Japanese politics and foreign policy recently published in the “West” provide the authors’ answers as to whether the foreign policy trajectory Japan is currently taking will lead to a fundamental strategic transformation from its traditional post-World War II national principles based on the Yoshida Doctrine and the Peace Constitution. Since their interest is in highlighting general trajectory, works wholly

1 “West” here denotes English-speaking academia in North America and the United Kingdom, where the analyses of Japanese politics and foreign policy are mainly based on the application of the major theoretical traditions – realism or constructivism - of IR. Although most English literature on this topic is published in North America and the UK, there is a noticeable increase in the number of relevant works in recent years from other European institutions, as well as many Japanese and other Asian scholars researching within this North American academic tradition. In this dissertation, they are all categorized as “Western.” More detailed elaboration on the difference between Western and Japanese academic approaches will be provided in the next chapter.

2 The Yoshida Doctrine, formulated in the immediate post-World War II period by then-Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru, helped Japan to concentrate on the task of national rebuilding by seeking economic, political, and security guarantees from the new ally - the United States. By integrating its security with the U.S. and relying on its protection with minimum commitment in military expenditures of its own, Japan could focus its national energy on joining the capitalist Western bloc with its export-based
devoted to Japan-North Korean relations - especially the case between the first and the second Taepodong launches in 1998 and 2006 - is rare. Instead, Japan’s relationship with North Korea is taken as a piece within a broader context of Japan’s complicated and strained relations with other East Asian neighbours. Therefore, although it is desirable to position one’s work within the research domain already set by preceding literature on the exact same case and question, the lack of sufficient number of such works compels one to review works dealing with a more general research topic. Nevertheless, it is still possible to surmise each author’s stance on Japan-North Korea relations, by reviewing their overall logic used in explaining Japan’s broader trends in foreign policy change, and applying it to the specific case of this dissertation.

In this chapter, only works published in the West have been reviewed. Japanese academia has produced a significant number of empirical works on this particular topic and they will be used throughout. However, this section will focus on how the Western academia has interpreted and explained Japanese foreign policy in recent years. The reason is that despite their empirical relevancy to the dissertation, Japanese works are generally non-theoretical studies following the practices of history or area studies, and it

economy during the Cold War, with the sponsorship of the U.S. (Glenn D. Hook, Julie Gilson, Christopher W. Hughes, and Hugo Dobson, eds., Japan’s International Relations, Politics, Economics, and Security (Second Edition) (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 32,34.) Another “national principle” throughout the post-World War II period is Japan’s so-called “Peace Constitution.” The Constitution has been, and still is, the main symbol of Japanese transformation from a militaristic state of the past into a pacifist, anti-militaristic democracy. Especially well-publicized is Article 9, so-called the “Peace Clause,” which states that “the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.” Furthermore, “the right of belligerency of the state” is not recognized in the Constitution, as it bans Japan from maintaining land, sea, and air forces as well as other war potential. (Ibid., pp. 558-559) The Constitution and Yoshida Doctrine together, therefore, have offered legitimate policy guidelines for postwar Japan to rely on the alliance with the United States for its security during the Cold War, and to focus its national strength in economic development as a pacifist, liberal, trading state of the Western bloc, without giving itself a chance to pursue again the path of regional, military hegemon.
is thus difficult to compare them to theory-heavy political science approaches from the same academic wavelength. Japanese sources, however, provide us with contextually rich and detailed empirical interpretations often overlooked in theoretical research, especially concerning societal discourse and subtle process behind discursive shifts. The significance of Japanese empirical sources, and balancing the use of these two different sets of literature, will be dealt with further in the next chapter on methodology.

Contemporary literature can be divided in various ways, but this chapter will employ two main categorizations. The first category is based on the position a writer takes on the question of whether there is a fundamental change that has already taken place in the overall post-World War II Japanese security strategy. The second category is based on differing theoretical assumptions the writers either explicitly or implicitly apply in their analyses. Afterward, current debate among these scholars employing different theoretical tenets will be elaborated. The last part of the chapter argues that despite their enormous contributions to our better understanding of Japan’s security trajectory in general, contemporary works do not turn sufficient attention to the two significant inquiries this dissertation poses.

1 **Categorization 1: Fundamental Change or Continuity?**

If contemporary literature were to be categorized by each author’s interpretative stance on Japan’s fundamental shift from its traditional post-World War II security policies, they fall into two groups. The first group concurs that Japan has indeed undergone a clear shift, or that at least it is on the verge of discarding its long-held
postwar principles based on Yoshida Doctrine and the Peace Constitution. The second
group, on the other hand, places more attention to the continuity of security principles
still governing Japanese foreign policy-making in the new century, despite pressures
stemming from system-level changes in the international environment surrounding Japan.

1.1 Literature emphasizing change

The first group analyses the changes in Japan’s strategic choice-making in the
midst of ongoing international-level dynamics after the Cold War and provides grand
explanations on the nature and the significance of such transformation. The writers of
this group also emphasize how the traditional “grand strategy” of Japan, based on the
Constitution and the Yoshida Doctrine, is currently being scrutinized domestically,
especially by the political elite.

According to Kenneth B. Pyle and Richard J. Samuels, Japan is indeed on the
verge of fundamentally transforming itself from the traditional Yoshida Doctrine-based
national strategy. Japan has already taken small steps toward a major reorientation, and
although this evolution is taking place slowly, the revisions Japan is making “are not of
peripheral adjustment.”3 Japan’s future foreign policy will be very different from the
grand strategy that Yoshida Shigeru pioneered and the remaining time that Japan will
maintain its traditional postwar role as a “merchant nation” is therefore numbered.4

3 Kenneth B. Pyle, Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose (New York:
Public Affairs, 2007), pp. 16-17, 374.

Samuels likewise claims that although there are still on-going debates about the validity of the traditional doctrine that has contributed to Japanese prosperity and stability, it is nevertheless apparent that it “has been challenged, perhaps fatally.” At this point, the doctrine has not been yet been replaced, but its contours have definitively changed, as Japan is becoming more muscular and incrementally eliminating many self-constraints on the use of force.

Samuels does not ignore the fact that the central pillar of the doctrine – alliance with the United States – is still intact. He interprets it, however, as a characteristic of a transitional phase and predicts that the final goal of the transition will surely be the replacement of Japan’s over-attachment to the United States. According to Samuels, a new domestic discourse, which he calls “goldilocks consensus,” is crystallizing in Japanese politics. Although Japan prefers not to be too dependent on the United States, Japanese politicians are also well aware of the danger of rising China. Thus, they are aware of the risk of making Japan too vulnerable by unwisely and too quickly discarding an ally on whom they have relied for security for so long. Therefore, for the time being, the maintenance of the alliance is actually the ultimate form of “hedging” to secure Japan during the long process of replacing the Yoshida Doctrine, and Japanese strategists are adeptly using this hedging tactic to slowly slice away the “pacifist loaf that Yoshida

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6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., pp. 8-9, 198-209.
Shigeru baked” in the postwar period. The “goldilocks consensus” and the maintenance of the alliance are, Samuels argue, a brief moment in the process of ultimately reaching the point where the doctrine can be safely discarded and new security options for Japan can be created.

Pyle and Samuels take the same position on the probability of constitutional revision, especially that of the Article 9 – the “Peace Clause.” The possibility of the Constitution – “the holy grail of antimilitarism” – being revised is closer to realization than at any time in the past sixty years. The movement is gaining momentum as “revisionists” in Japan, who both Pyle and Samuels define as politically conscious, elite groups who have opposed Japan’s postwar strategy of relying on the United States for security and of self-limiting its own capabilities and roles in military matters, are enjoying increasing support for their critique of Article 9 as too deviant from “normal” international standards in the midst of new, system-level changes surrounding Japan. The revisionists have also attacked the Constitution for its foreign origin – they claim that it was imposed on Japan by the United States after World War II and that it thus constitutes a prime example of “victor’s justice” – and its “absence of respect for Japanese values and traditions.” Since the Constitution is not solely scrutinized for its outdated ideas, but also for being not-Japanese-enough in essence, Pyle concludes that

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8 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
9 Ibid., pp. 80-81.
11 Pyle, Japan Rising, ibid.
the current pacifist clause will be revised, and the new Constitution will be modified in ways that “correspond to Japan’s own norms and mores.” Michael J. Green similarly argues that as various “taboos” of the past era – publicly taking an openly revisionist stance on issues of security, constitution, and history – are now gradually being “streamlined,” he too expects that the Japanese Diet is likely to go ahead with the eventual revision.

Both Samuels and Pyle attribute these current shifts in how Japan perceives its traditional security principles to the political rise of revisionists; generational change in national leadership has produced new politicians and elites who are more prone to support revisionism. These new Japanese leaders embrace less constrained political views than those of the older generation and their greater assertiveness is put to work at loosening the hold of past practice and reforming institutions. Of course, those who believe Japan should be more “normal” are only one of the groups participating in contemporary security discourse. But these factions – “normal nation-alists,” to use Samuels’ categorization of Japanese elites leading the current debates on security, and other revisionists who believe in national strength as a key to international prestige –

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12 Ibid.


consolidated their power during the early 2000s\textsuperscript{15} and, in turn, marginalized both “pacifists” and “pragmatists.”\textsuperscript{16}

Although generational change has facilitated the reevaluation of the current Constitution and the Yoshida Doctrine, Samuels and Pyle agree that another, even more powerful, external factor is the most important cause of the current shift. Samuels argues that transformation of international power dynamics after the Cold War, such as the rising influence of China, the threat from North Korea, the possibility of abandonment by the United States, and Japan’s relative economic decline, have had a tremendous impact on how Japan perceives itself, the region, and new threats.\textsuperscript{17} Japan has always been noted for its adeptness in quickly altering its foreign policies and domestic institutions to respond to international, systemic change. According to Pyle, since historically “few countries have revised their domestic orders so sweepingly to meet the needs of new configurations of international order,” Japan's steady move away from the policies that guided it during the Cold War is just another example of Japan’s proven national style.\textsuperscript{18}

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\textsuperscript{15} Samuels, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 4-5.
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\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 37. Samuels also terms “pragmatists” in the Japanese political discourse as “realists.” However, it is important to note here that his definition of Japanese “realists” does not designate those who believe in the realist theory of International Relations which prioritizes material capabilities – balance of power – among nations as the key driving force of international politics, but those politicians have belonged to the mainstream political ideology of postwar Japan along the line of Yoshida Doctrine and supporting the grand strategy of remaining a prudent trading state in the given international environment. “Middle-power internationalists” is another categorization Samuels uses for the group of elites in the same political spectrum.
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\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.} pp. 4-5.
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Green concurs that significant alterations in international and regional relations and the rise of a new generation of politicians are both at the core of Japan's increasing sensitivity to the revision of its domestic institutions of national security. Compared to Pyle and Samuels, however, he places more emphasis on the economic side of analysis, namely Japan’s frail material edge in international markets vis-à-vis China in a world dominated by balance-of-power politics. As Japan is pressed to realistically assess its national economic resources in order to “get more ‘bang’ for the shrinking diplomatic ‘buck,’” it is compelled to be more serious about the notion of national interest in foreign and security policies. Green terms this new phenomenon “reluctant realism.”

Lastly, one interesting, predictive analysis of Japan’s path is that of Christopher W. Hughes. He also takes the position that Japan is likely to become a more assertive and “normal” military power as a result of international environmental changes after 9/11, its fears about North Korean threats, and long-term concerns about China’s military intentions. However, rather than forming a “goldilocks consensus” or designing new security institutions that would distance itself from the United States, Hughes, unlike Samuels or Pyle, asserts that Japan will aim to transform itself while concurrently strengthening the existing alliance with the United States. This calculation is purely

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19 Green, op.cit., pp. 6-8.
20 Ibid., pp. 3, 6-8.
21 Ibid., pp. 33-34.
strategic: since Japan cannot trust or rely on an East Asian or United Nations-centred, multilateral security framework, which could involve China or North Korea, Japan has little choice but to maintain the existing alliance, although it will clearly desire to become a more active and powerful player within it. Hughes makes a bold prediction that if so, this may result in Japan pressed to fight alongside the United States in “any future conflict and even one against China.”

1.2 Literature emphasizing continuity (despite tactical policy-level adjustments)

Some scholars in this category place more emphasis on continuities observable in Japan’s security principles. The most vocal are Peter J. Katzenstein and Thomas U. Berger, whose earlier works from the 1990s have contributed significantly to our understanding of why Japan, despite tectonic shifts in the international power relations after the Cold War, have maintained its traditional foreign policy’s guiding principles. Compared to arguments made by Pyle, Samuels, Green, or Hughes, they emphasize the consistency in the internal dimensions of Japanese foreign policy and thus highlight instead the “stickiness” of postwar Japanese domestic identities and norms. Japanese ideas about national security and their position in the world are produced by societal, ideational factors and they are, in turn, produced by Japan’s distinct historical

23 Ibid., pp. 18-19.
24 Ibid., pp. 144-147.
experiences; from Katzenstein and Berger's perspective it is understandable why Japan has not fully discarded its postwar security institutions, despite vigorous domestic debate.

Katzenstein views contemporary Japan as a peaceful, anti-militaristic, trading state that embraces a central maxim, “violence does not pay.”

This distinct, collective national identity, supported by mainstream public opinion and institutionalized in the domestic political system, has its roots in the historical experience of militaristic ultranationalism during the 1930s and the defeat in the war against the United States. The historical lesson has made Japan reluctant to use military instruments as a means of achieving national objectives. Instead, Japan’s alternative reliance on peaceful means through economic growth and technological innovation in the postwar period has become the most important hallmark of Japan’s security policies, and has contributed to its subsequent rise to the status of a major industrial power. Therefore, Katzenstein and Berger’s earlier works in the 1990s focused their attention on the anti-militaristic identity as the underpinning cause for consistency in Japanese foreign policy and the resilience of postwar security institutions.

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It would be an oversimplification to assert that Katzenstein and Berger’s analyses have deliberately omitted the significance of external influences for the sake of their central argument. Like the scholars mentioned earlier who emphasize fundamental changes, Katzenstein and Berger have also faced more recent empirical evidence of certain security policy changes and increasing domestic debate questioning the validity of postwar security principles. As a result, these scholars have been increasingly faced with the difficult task of acknowledging these changes in their more recent publications without fundamentally revising their earlier arguments.

Katzenstein’s works from the early 2000s acknowledge that the government and public are now generally more open to the idea of constitutional revision and to an expansion of military capabilities not imaginable in the past, although he emphasizes that he does not place the same significance on this change as Samuels, Pyle, or Green. Katzenstein argues that despite some observable ideational changes, the Japanese public is still largely ambivalent about changing Article 9 of the Constitution and that revision is still part of a severe, ongoing domestic debate. Katzenstein’s more recent claim about current Japanese politics is a subtle shift of his original framework, from solely prioritizing domestic norms and identities over international pressures to a new, interpretative analysis considering the relative influence of both internal and external factors on Japanese perceptions of security.

Others, such as Berger and Andrew L. Oros, also acknowledge that since the end of the Cold War, various external factors – the first Gulf War, North Korean Taepodong

missile, and the rise of China – have facilitated domestic debates on national security. They recognize that these factors have contributed to public acceptance of open discussions involving the possible revision of Article 9, of national symbols, of the Japanese Self Defence Forces' (SDF) international peacekeeping operations, and about the possibility of elevating the Japan Defence Agency into a full ministry. While Japan is undeniably responding to new threats, Berger and Oros, similar to Katzenstein, assert that these newly proposed measures do not necessarily constitute a fundamental shift in security principles. It is because ongoing policy adjustments are evolving along a “predictable path” guided by the same “central tenets” – bans on the armed forces’ involvement in domestic policymaking, on the use of force to resolve international disputes except in self defence, and on Japanese participation in foreign wars – as in the past. Oros further posits that when we look at Japan’s official positions on the export of weapons, the use of outer space for peaceful purposes, and limiting military cooperation with the United States in the realm of missile defence, it is particularly evident that none of these cases represents a fundamental break with past


32 Oros, ibid., pp. 5, 10, 45.

33 Ibid., pp. 1, 6-7.
practices.\textsuperscript{34} In short, this “constrained nature of recent ‘new’ security policies” suggests that, despite their emergence, Japan is still “far from enacting a major shift.”\textsuperscript{35}

If we are to accept these scholars’ arguments, further explanations are desirable on the origin and nature of the duality of changing policies but consistently overarching security principles. According to Berger, it comes down to Japan’s characteristics as a “liberal adaptive” state.\textsuperscript{36} Japan is still very much a “liberal” state preferring multilateral security designs and economic interdependence with its neighbours and international trading partners, rather than military might. Also Japan is “too wedded to a civilianized, nonmilitary foreign policy” to suddenly transform itself into a military power or to assume a fully active security role commensurate with its material capabilities and international status like other “normal” states. Drastic, external, system-level changes since the end of the Cold War, however, have compelled Japan to accept Northeast Asia as “a realist world where power politics are central and military confrontation is a very real possibility” at the same time. The external reality has thus demonstrated to Japan the need for embracing more “pragmatic” approaches. Berger concludes that what we are therefore witnessing is Japan ironically pushed to adapt more

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\item [\textsuperscript{34}] \textit{Ibid.}, p. 13.
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“realist tools of foreign policy” in order to realize its “wishes to move the world in a more liberal direction” (and also to maintain its traditional liberal principles).37

2 Categorization 2: Theoretical Division

Whether a particular work emphasizes crucial changes in Japanese security principles or the resilience of postwar anti-militaristic identities and norms, the literature provides us with significant insights into how empirical evidence from contemporary Japan can be diversely interpreted and understood.

It is interesting that the dichotomy already elaborated upon also largely coincides with the second categorization employed in this chapter, namely the two differing theoretical frameworks applied by the same authors. Although these scholars of Japan do not, in most cases, openly declare their preferred theoretical IR tradition, their explanations as to whether Japan is fundamentally changing are, nevertheless, based on their distinct “worldviews” prompting each author to prioritize a particular aspect(s) among multiple factors with implications on state foreign policy. It is not an overstretch to view the scholars emphasizing change in the first categorization as applying “realist” or “neo-realist” tenets of IR theories; scholars emphasizing continuity can be understood as belonging to the “constructivist” camp. As their thorough, empirical research on Japan illustrates, they are aware that the reality is an immensely complex phenomenon that cannot be fully understood by honing on a single or a few causal factors: hence their

refusal to openly define their predetermined ontologies of how international relations function. However, as we shall see, the first debate on the nature of Japan’s current changes can be equally applied to the dichotomy of theoretical differences assumed by the two groups.

2.1 Realist interpretation on the nature of Japan’s transformation

Realism, and its more recent derivative neo-realism, is one of the major theoretical traditions of IR. According to realism, all states in the international system, regardless of their national heritage or distinct culture, share one common trait: a will to survive. Since realists see the world in Hobbesian fashion, they assume that the state constantly calculates how to guarantee its survival in the international system by taking rational actions to secure its relative power. The state’s rationality not only leads it to pursue policies to maximize its capability – mainly defined in materialistic terms such as economy or military – within the limitations imposed by its contemporary status within the system, but also strategies that enable the state to retain more power relative to its potential rivals. Realism, therefore, sees the state as a strategic actor that conducts either a prudent or an ambitious security policy within a given external environment, in order to rationally maximize its power in the international system.

There are differences between realism and its “neo” variant, as the latter focuses on the state’s strategic intentions in the international system as a unitary actor, while realism is more open toward incorporating domestic factors such as national will, morale,

From this perspective, it is not difficult to notice that the scholars emphasizing current changes in Japan as fundamental transformation develop their explanations based on the assumptions of state rationality in the international system and the primacy of security considerations in state behaviour. Samuels locates himself squarely in realist tradition by asserting that “there are few truly new ideas about how nations can protect themselves. Each country is armed with its military, its diplomats, its mix of resources, its ambition, and its wits. The rest is, as ever, derivative.”\footnote{Richard J. Samuels, “Securing Japan: The Current Discourse,” 	extit{The Journal of Japanese Studies, Vol.33 No.1}, (Winter, 2007), p. 125.}

Pyle similarly prioritizes the external, system-level impact on Japanese security policy-making, claiming that this “outside-in-influence” on Japan’s foreign policy and domestic institutions has been more powerful than is acknowledged.\footnote{Pyle, “Profound Forces in the Making of Modern Japan,” 	extit{op.cit.}, p. 394.} Although a historian by trade, he regrets that historians of modern Japan have not fully appreciated IR theories, especially the dominant theoretical tradition of realism with its clear insights on how the nature and workings of the international order impose persistent, external...
influence on state security behaviour.\textsuperscript{41} Green concurs with Pyle: international balance shifts in East Asia, more than any other factor, are at the heart of Japan currently embracing its “reluctant realism.” Although Green does not explicitly rely on realist theoretical maxims, he nevertheless focuses most on the “realist” decision-making of the Japanese government and his analysis relies heavily on proving the causal effect of the comparative power balance in East Asia on Japan’s behaviour. Japan’s anxiety, which stems from its decreasing status, particularly vis-à-vis China, is at the heart of Japan’s distancing from the “sentimental, hopeful, and complacent aspects of its previous worldview” and moving toward a more “Hobbesian and self-interested perspective.”\textsuperscript{42}

Samuels also emphasizes the historical tendency of Japan's flexibility and frequent alteration of national strategies in response to changes in world orders.\textsuperscript{43} He draws the parallel between Meiji period strategists in the 19th century, who quickly grasped that new diplomatic methods were necessary in the self-help world dominated by European imperialism, and Japan’s current “hedging” strategies: Japanese strategy has always prioritized economic and technological capabilities in response to the shifting external environment. Samuels thus claims that “there has been no more pragmatic or more rational state than Japan.”\textsuperscript{44} Japan’s postwar emergence as a merchant state, like the Renaissance Venice, is another example of Japan rationally calculating the merits of

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., pp. 395-396.

\textsuperscript{42} Green, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 270.


\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., pp. 3, 5-8.
“mercantilist realism” and pursuing a technological, industrial, and financial edge in the post-World War II environment to guarantee its security.\textsuperscript{45}

One interesting point worth noticing is that while Pyle and Green’s explanations are comparatively more neo-realist in nature, Samuels can be categorized as being closer to traditional realism, as he places more emphasis on the inner workings of the domestic political arena.\textsuperscript{46} Although he does not take Japan to be a unitary actor and recognizes the existence of domestic, political diversity, Samuels' analysis is still conducted with the aim of highlighting Japan’s pragmatic, state-centred, external security behaviour as an end product of the rational, outward expression of its national interest.

\subsection*{2.2 Constructivists’ claims on Japan’s maintenance of fundamental security identities and norms}

In this dissertation, the term “constructivism” is used as a general label for IR scholars who take the position that a state's behaviour in the international system is not necessarily driven by a common desire to acquire material capabilities, but rather by cultural traits such as norms and identities. As mentioned, realists take the state’s national interest as “exogenously given,” meaning that all states, regardless of culture or history, behave identically in the system, either pursuing further power in order to gain

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comparative advantage in relation to their foes, or at to least maintain the balance of power in their external surroundings for national survival.

Constructivists, on the other hand, claim that national interest is not necessarily pre-given as the “pursuit of power.” It is a state’s distinct, cultural factors, such as social norms and identities formulated through its historical experience, that define the form of national interest the state is willing to pursue. Therefore, states do not pursue material capabilities per se; cultural factors provide distinct meaning to specific material capabilities, in addition to other forms of national interest defined by domestic actors. From a constructivist perspective, politics in general and foreign policy in particular are thus shaped by cultural characteristics. Cultural characteristics are domestically institutionalized through reiterated political interaction and projected outward in domestic actors’ collective, national security identity. The form of national interest a state defines for itself is, therefore, a consequence of the state’s distinct, domestic understanding of what it stands for in the international system.47

While there are numerous branches of constructivism within the theoretical spectrum of political science, in the field of Japanese security studies, the aforementioned Katzenstein and Berger are most representative of the constructivist approach.48


Throughout their analyses of Japan’s postwar security principles, they have maintained – especially in their earlier works in the 1990s – that cultural factors and domestic institutions that embrace Japan’s norms and identities should be given the top research priority as the context in which security policies are formulated. They argue that Japan's security principles will continue to be shaped by domestic ideas, rather than an international balance of power.

Postwar Japan illustrates how norms sustain themselves despite external changes, because once they are crystallized through institutionalization into domestic politics, they gain the status of “taken-for-granted.” Society institutionalizes norms because domestic actors attribute deeper meanings to the history that helped define their collective identities: they thus want to embed these ideals into the political system through formal and informal “institutionalizing.” Likewise, Oros agrees with the constructivist position that Japan’s institutionalized and self-perceived security identity affects security policy-making, as it is “comprised of a widely accepted set of principles on the acceptable scope of state practices.”

“institutionalism” that broadly incorporates constitutive role of domestic norms, his definition closely resembles that of other constructivists emphasizing the causality of norms and identities on security policies. Refer to Katzenstein, Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan, pp. 18-32.


51 Ibid., pp. 3, 21.

3 Relative Weaknesses of the Two Theoretical Explanations

Regardless of whether a writer emphasizes change or continuity in Japanese security principles, or whether one uses a realist or a constructivist analytical prism, recent trends in Japanese security studies place a heavier emphasis on detailed empirical narration while preferring to avoid direct theoretical debates between different research paradigms. Sidestepping from theories has, in a way, helped Japan-watchers focus their energy on accumulating real-world empirical evidence that will interest broader audiences outside the IR discipline.

Recent emphasis on empirical richness is motivated by a recognition that no single theoretical framework can fully explain the complexity in which security policies unfold. Especially in IR, scholars have started to appreciate the merit of tackling complex, interesting, empirical problems that no single theory is equipped to explain, instead of engaging in meta-theoretical battles. It is therefore likely that for the foreseeable future, Japanese security studies will revolve around comparing and synthesizing various empirical observations derived from historical materials and data.

However, even if the same empirical “pie” is shared and synthesized for knowledge accumulation, a researcher’s interpretation of the same reality is heavily dependent upon how she chooses to arrange the data and which evidence she prioritizes over others. In this regard, theoretical paradigms providing presupposed understanding

of international relations are still reflected on the researcher’s explanatory focus and preferred evidence.

In this section, the downsides of applying either realist or constructivist tenets to the case of Japanese security principles and policies will be demonstrated by illustrating how certain evidence is either given an overly significant meaning, or insufficient attention. The purpose is not to impossibly claim that researchers must look at the “whole picture” by giving equal attention to all the countless empirical accounts accessible to them. It is, rather, to demonstrate the potential weakness of basing one’s argument on any one particular theoretical presupposition. This weakness is, of course, not of the writers: it stems from the nature of the theories themselves. After all, it is the very recognition of such weakness that has recently motivated the academia to give more credit to empirically centered analyses.

3.1 Realism: Overemphasis on rationality and security politics

Prioritizing Japan’s well-proven trait of adeptly calculating its interests in the changing, external environment have compelled the writers of the realist tradition to perceive foreign policy of Japan as the product of the state’s rationality. This image of Japan as a “strategic animal” has in turn forced them to draw conclusions that other non-strategic factors, such as the emergence of democratic values and Japan’s record as the only stable East Asian democracy during the Cold War, have not been as influential in
the unfolding of Japanese security policies. Realist writers generally posit that values matter, but that they do not determine policies.\textsuperscript{54}

From their understanding, values matter not because they constitute what defines Japan’s security identity or because they directly influence policy decisions, but because they are also the embodiment of Japan’s realist pursuit of power. For example, they argue that Japan’s alliance and cooperation with the United States since the end of World War II should not be seen as a result of Japan embracing shared liberal and democratic values in economics and politics – which, according to Pyle, are seen by many Japanese as in fact destroying Japan’s “distinctive aesthetics and social values” – but simply as its “realist appraisal of the value of the alliance.”\textsuperscript{55} Since Japan has been a strategic actor willing to even undermine its own cultural heritage in order to adapt to the shifting power configuration in the international system – actually developing successful “industrial policies and a distinctive set of illiberal institutions to take advantage” of it\textsuperscript{56} – “the degree to which Japan has absorbed the universal values of democracy as guiding principles for its foreign policy is debatable.”\textsuperscript{57} Likewise, Samuels claims that “pacifist” characteristics of postwar Japanese security discourse is not necessarily evidence of a particular ideal dominating Japanese politics, because pacifists were merely “indulged” and used by conservatives; regardless of being ruled by the oligarchs of the

\begin{itemize}
\item Pyle, “Profound Forces in the Making of Modern Japan,” \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 412-413.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p. 400; Pyle, “Abe Shinzo & Japan’s Change of Course,” \textit{op.cit.}, p. 28.
\end{itemize}
pre-war or the “democrats” of the postwar, Japan will always be governed by strategists weighing their options with reference to Japan’s own autonomy and prestige in international politics. Such interpretations echo certain misunderstandings in the West, which view Japan merely as a purposeful imitator of Western institutions despite its consistency as a full-fledged democracy like the ones in the West.

Interpreting Japan’s past and current security trajectory from the viewpoint of overarching rationality is, of course, one of many ways the “empirical pie” can be carved, and it is therefore one plausible explanation of Japan’s motives. Because of the parsimony of the notion of state rationality, applying the notion to the whole length of Japanese history, however, runs the risk of over-stretching certain evidence. For example, the first decade immediately following the end of the Cold War is regarded in Japan as the “lost decade,” as Japan was unable to understand the exact implications of the systemic shift to which it could quickly adapt. Pyle, however, attributes this immobility to the uncertain nature of the international change that took place in the 1990s in contrast to past shifts in Japan’s external environment, such as the one in the late 19th century that readily made the “right choice” apparent to Meiji-era strategists. In an extension of this logic too much governed by hindsight, even Japan’s alliance with the axis powers during World War II is not seen as a deviation of “Japan always making the


right strategic choice,” since fascism seemed to be “the wave of the future” in the minds of the Japanese leaders at the time.  

3.2 Constructivism: “Rescuing” the theory in the midst of ongoing changes

Constructivism contributed substantially to our understanding of Japanese security by pointing out the significance of normative influences on foreign policy-making. Using it as an alternative approach to the dominant analyses of international balance of power that neglect domestic politics, throughout the 1990s constructivists convincingly illustrated the limitations of realism in grasping other important aspects of Japanese security policy. The limitations of constructivism argued here are not of its original accounts, but rather its more recent uses.

Since the end of the Cold War and especially since the early 2000s, Japan-watchers have witnessed domestic debates concerning the validity of its postwar security principles, as well as actual changes in certain foreign policy areas. Facing this complicated transition in which the nature of the change is open to diverse interpretations, constructivists have taken an alternative approach in their more recent works. It is apparent that the original constructivist explanations from the 1990s are no

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longer as convincing in their original form, as only emphasizing the resilience of the postwar security principles is insufficient for comprehension of the current situation.

Logically, only two choices were open to constructivists if they were to adhere to their earlier accounts: they could openly admit that the latest empirical evidence of policy changes and domestic debate was a sign of a fundamental, normative transformation of Japanese security identity and thus discard their original framework, or they could try interpreting those changes as mere adjustments that could be safely disregarded without challenging the postwar identity. Since the shifts were too multifaceted, taking either position would have been an equally risky task that would overstretch complex, empirical evidence. Therefore, the primary reason for these scholars’ current shift of neither strictly adhering to nor openly rejecting their older assertions can be understood as their attempt to find alternative means to make sense of this multifaceted reality without wholly undermining their principle, constructivist tenets. Their recent nuance-change is, in this regard, a reflection of the characteristic of constructivism, which is well-equipped to explain continuity of a certain identity but severely limited in comprehending the nature of ongoing changes.

One recent criticism of constructivism comes from Jennifer Lind: comparing the applications of the realist theory of “buck-passing” and the constructivist theory of antimilitarism to the Japanese case, she draws the conclusion that realism better explains the evolution of Japanese strategy.63 Lind does misinterpret the constructivist definition of “pacifism” and “antimilitarism” as a literal practice of non-armament and she,
therefore, takes the very existence of military potential throughout the postwar period and
the acquisition of further capability in recent years as evidence against the postwar Japan
being “pacifist.” However, as Oros postulates, Japanese antimilitarism does not mean
literal non-armed neutrality, as the idea has always embraced some role for a postwar
military within the confines of Japan’s pacifism. What the constructivists have
regarded as “pacifist” is not Japan’s material capability per se, but its distinct domestic
security institutions represented, above all, by the Constitution, which sets boundaries on
the role of the military and self-restrictions on the sovereign right to use these capabilities
as other “normal” states can. Despite her “straw man” argument against constructivism,
Lind’s claim that the theory still cannot cleanly account for the dramatic transformation
of Japan is a valid critique, since changes are indeed taking place not only in the
acquisition of new military capabilities, but in actual policies.

Needless to say, constructivists facing such criticisms have wrestled with the
discrepancy between empirical data confirming various policy shifts, and the theory’s
original assertions. In order to “salvage” the tradition of identity-based research,
Katzenstein, Berger, and Oros have come up with two distinct strategies: the first is
Katzenstein’s so-called “analytic eclecticism” in which “explanatory sketches” derived
from various theoretical explanations can still guarantee a vital role for normative and

64 Ibid., pp. 93-101.
66 Lind, op.cit., p. 93.
ideational variables; the second is Berger and Oros’ (re)definition of what “continuity” and “normalcy” *should* actually mean.

Katzenstein advocates that when tackling an empirical case beyond the explanatory boundary of any single IR theory, it is necessary for scholars to combine multiple, “explanatory sketches” derived from all theories in an “eclectic” fashion (although theories themselves cannot be mixed because of differing ontological and epistemological foundations).\(^{67}\) He further argues that eclectic analysis of any case will reveal the importance of “discursive politics” – politics of wording and naming – and that what we are observing in current Japanese security policies is, from the eclectic perspective, a social discursive process in which domestic actors are debating the “meanings of power, interest, and identity.”\(^{68}\)

If discursive politics is about meaning, wording, and naming, it is clear that the central idea of his conclusion favours the identity-based research tradition over the other explanatory sketches he supposedly incorporated into the eclectic analysis, despite his flexibility in using other theoretical approaches to make better sense of the empirical case. Therefore, eclecticism is, in a sense, an adept strategy for maintaining the primacy of ideational and normative factors as the main analytic variable in the research of Japanese security.


Berger and Oros’ strategy, on the other hand, is not a theoretical redesign: it is to create and promote definitions of “normalcy” and “continuity” that are distinctly different from those of the mainstream Japan researchers. Berger’s recent claim that Japan is an “adaptive state” is based on his belief that since the 1990s, Japanese elite and public have reached a political consensus on Japan’s future direction and purpose in the world, based on their continuously liberal view of international politics. He asserts that despite certain policy modifications, Japan is still heavily guided by a liberal belief that “progress in international affairs is both possible and necessary and that Japan can contribute to a progressive shift in international relations.”

Current policy shifts should not, therefore, be interpreted as Japan's decision to suddenly transform itself into a military giant, but rather as the struggle of this liberal state – which still embraces the principles of its postwar, pacifist identity – to continue promoting its liberal ideology of order and stability in the world by adapting to external shifts with good-intentioned flexibility.

In case of Oros, the most distinct part of his theme is defining the term “normal.” Rather than abstractly arguing whether Japan is, or is trying to be, a “normal state” from the mainstream definition of IR, he argues that the question scholars should be asking is “what is considered normal by Japan, and by Japanese.” Similar to Berger, he recognizes that Japanese security practice is evolving to respond to new threats and that the current policy reconfiguration is the result of political contestation over the same central tenets that have shaped Japan’s security in the postwar period. However, rather

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than focusing on whether this current political contestation constitutes Japan’s transformation to a normal state, Oros instead posits that this contestation, as part of a long-history of political debate on Japanese security policies throughout the past half century, in itself constitutes “normal” in Japanese society.\textsuperscript{71} The Japanese have always appreciated debates and contentious politics within the framework of the central tenets of Japanese security identity and adjustments in actual security practice as the end-process of such contention, from their perspective, have successfully kept Japan out of war and helped its reemergence as the second largest economy in the world. Oros claims that this very \textit{process} embedded in the contentious politics – socially defining the meaning of those central tenets and making practice-level evolution within that framework – is exactly what the Japanese have always defined as “normal.”\textsuperscript{72} This represents the basis of Oros’ logic: rather than debating whether Japan is trying to become a normal state by highlighting its shift in particular security policies, what Japan scholars should instead try to understand is that Japan has been in fact \textit{consistently “normal”} all along, exactly because of the continuous political contestations which realist scholars (mistakenly) take as a symbol of Japan’s fundamental transformation.

Whether demonstrating the continuation of Japan’s self-perceived liberal identity, or the consistent characteristic with which traditional security identity has been updated through “normal,” contentious, societal processes, Berger and Oros should be given credit for finding their own ways to highlight factors that can still be interpreted as

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{72} Oros, “Listening to the People: Japanese Democracy and the New Security Agenda,” \textit{op.cit.}
“continuity.” This strategy of (re)definition comes at a price, just like in the case of realism-based research. In order to make their presupposition fit with some of the existing empirical evidence that could undermine their arguments, the authors are sometimes compelled to push for a seemingly unnatural interpretation of events.

For example, concerning Japan’s recent historical “revisionism” – particularly emphasized by Pyle and Samuels – and the resulting diplomatic conflict with its neighbours, Berger claims that the current trend should be understood as Japan “seeking some ways to harmonize its views on history and security identity with those of its Asian neighbours,” in the face of increasing pressures from a more tightly integrated East Asia.73 Therefore, “if the leaders of other Asian countries were willing to reengage in dialogue with Japan on this topic and not respond neurotically to every provocation, there is reason to believe that the history problem can be at least contained and that Asia may yet be able to remember history in ways that will not condemn it to repeat the mistakes of the past.”74 In the case of Oros, if the process of making policy-level adjustments through domestic debate and contestation is taken-for-granted as normal,75 the question arises as to how we should comprehend numerous and open domestic debates of unprecedented scale and scope in recent years, in which public figures and social elites of diverse social backgrounds charge their own state as having been too “abnormal”


throughout the postwar period. Moreover, if the domestic process of contestation and the resulting changes at the policy-level constitute the characteristic of a normal state, it is questionable whether we would find any “abnormal” one in international politics.

Lind’s aforementioned criticism of Katzenstein and Berger’s constructivist claims was based on the fact that they have not explained Japan’s current changes from within their own original, theoretical framework. Instead of generating a new, eclectic methodology or re-labelling Japan as a “liberal adaptive” state, the constructivists could have approached the empirical shift of Japan from within their earlier framework by asserting that traditional postwar norms had existed but have now faded, resulting in the expansion of military power and roles.\(^{76}\) (Which, of course, would involve significant risk and courage on the part of the researchers). Regardless of whether Japan is actually going through this fundamental normative shift or not, the constructivists could have adhered to their original framework to verify its validity in the light of new empirical developments surrounding Japan, but this has not been done. In this regard, the current versions of Katzenstein, Berger, and Oros are, as we have observed, logical in the defence of their analytic positions, but only by rephrasing the questions that earlier, identity-based research asked.

\(^{76}\) Lind, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-119.
4 Filling the Gap: Where This Dissertation Can Contribute for Further Understanding of Japanese Security

Despite the weaknesses of theoretically based research, contemporary literature on Japanese security has contributed to our better understanding of the nature of ongoing policy changes, providing diverse, plausible interpretations. However, there is a research area to which they do not allocate sufficient analytic attention. This section will empirically trace the causal mechanism by which North Korea-related issues facilitated particular policy shifts in Japan and the role of societal discourse in this process.

It is not that scholars do not acknowledge the importance of the “North Korea factor” on Japanese security. In fact, most allocate a significant portion of their works to narrate the shock and the opportunities it has provided: North Korea’s test-firing of Taepodong missile in 1998 is compared to the shock the United States experienced from the Sputnik launch in 1957; North Korea has been the most effective catalyst for the reformulation of Japanese security, more useful than China in stimulating Japan’s new external threat perception; tensions with North Korea are helping the erosion of the

77 Green, op.cit., p. 22.


Yoshida Doctrine and Japan’s “cautious liberalism;” and now, for the first time in the post-World War II era, Japanese public has openly expressed hostility toward another country.

Scholars also provide thorough, historical summaries of individual incidents caused by North Korea and their impact on Japanese foreign policies. For example, the Taepodong missile launch in 1998 facilitated Diet approval of Japan’s own intelligence satellite program and research and development for the Missile Defence (MD) with the United States; the infiltration of a North Korean spy ship (fushinsen) in 2001 and the resulting naval engagement with the Japanese Coast Guards helped the beefing-up of the Coast Guards, in addition to the Diet passing National Emergency Legislation (Yūji Hōsei/Yūji Kanren Hōan) in June 2003 to respond to a direct attack on Japan; Kim Jong-il’s unexpected admission in September 2002, during the first summit meeting with then-Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō, of past North Korean abduction of Japanese citizens further stirred security consciousness and threat perception, and North Korea’s

80 Pyle, Japan Rising, op.cit., pp. 296-297.
83 Ibid., pp. 67,172; Pyle, Japan Rising, op.cit.
84 Samuels, ibid., pp. 67,148,171; Pyle, ibid.
85 Hughes, op.cit., pp. 10,42-44.

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second missile tests in July 2006 set the stage for the Japanese government, led by Abe Shinzō, to discuss the validity of pre-emption as a legitimate government option.\(^\text{87}\)

Despite these rich narrations, the North Korean factor constitutes only a part of the larger theme of this literature, namely the general trend of Japanese security strategy in the midst of a shifting international system. In these works, North Korea-related factors are incorporated into a broader framework embracing more popular topics, such as the constitutional revision, Japan’s possible nuclearization,\(^\text{88}\) its rivalry with China, the alliance with the United States, and the future, international role of the Self Defence Forces.

These narratives in contemporary works are surely informative for generally recognizing that the North Korea factor has been crucial in mobilizing threat perception in Japan and facilitating security policy shifts with broader implications beyond the scope of bilateral relations. However, they provide only limited insight for those who seek more detailed explanations on the empirical process by which a particular, policy-level change took shape directly because of North Korea – in other words, the causal mechanism existing between North Korea-related incidents and subsequent policy shifts – and this analytic gap requires an examination of its own.

Another analytic area that requires our attention is the interaction between Japanese public and the government and the actual role of the former in setting both limitations and opportunities for the decision-makers. As we shall see from Chapter 5,

\(^{87}\) Samuels, ibid., p. 173; Pyle, “Abe Shinzo & Japan’s Change of Course,” op.cit., p. 20.

the progression of various Japanese foreign policies toward North Korea, more than any other issue, has been strongly guided and observed by society throughout the process. Therefore, this study does not share Lind’s assertion that “Tokyo can bring its public along when it wants to.”

In fact, most IR scholars acknowledge that democratic elements of the Japanese political system impose heavy burdens on foreign policy making and that politicians and bureaucrats, despite their considerable power in designing foreign policy strategies, also prioritize responding to the public voice at key moments. The foremost example of this responsiveness, as the dissertation will subsequently prove, is provided by none other than Japan’s policy toward North Korea. Although these writers acknowledge the multiplicity of actors involved, subsequent empirical portions of their works are, nevertheless, still heavily tilted toward highlighting government-level decisions and vocal preferences of key political figures. Again, based on the nature of their theoretical research questions, it is understandable why the literatures focus on already-implemented policies as a logical approach for understanding Japan’s overall security strategy in the international system. But as an inevitable result, their interest in the public-government link is generally confined to reporting Japanese society’s observable reactions to government’s already-exercised security policies.

89 Lind, op.cit., p. 120.


Therefore, additional empirical tracing of the actual, causal processes by which public influences government security behaviour is required, if we are to fully appreciate and complement more general insights provided by contemporary literature. Japanese security policy toward North Korea, in this regard, is an ideal case for an independent research focus. As a number of incidents linked with North Korea have occurred in a condensed time-frame, which Japan could closely relate to its own security, they have naturally facilitated strong, societal reactions on an unprecedented scale. Compared to other security-related issues, inertia created by the reactions of the Japanese society has been strongly linked to the government’s subsequent policy design and implementation, and it is thus crucial for the discipline to delve further into the public-government policy linkage.

Finally, it must be credited that there have been a number of recent excellent publications devoted to Japan’s security policies toward North Korea or other neighbouring states in bilateral settings. These publications, similar to this dissertation, do not squarely fit into the two categorizations elaborated in this chapter as a result of their confined focus, but their contributions must be noted as examples of Japanese foreign policy studies gradually producing more case-specific findings that better illustrate empirically-valid, causal processes.

92 An example of the latter is David A. Welch’s case-study of Japan’s interaction with Russia concerning the disputed “Northern Territories” claimed by both parties. By applying “loss-aversion” analogy adopted from the prospect theory of foreign policy change, he demonstrates how government leaders’ reference-point-dependent expectations have influenced the unfolding of the territorial dispute in postwar Japan. David A. Welch, Painful Choices: A Theory of Foreign Policy Change (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 95-112.
For example, the aforementioned Christopher W. Hughes’ article on Japanese sanctions on North Korea highlights the domestic political processes through which they were designed and implemented against North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs. By tracing how organized political groups interacted he demonstrates that, contrary to a popular belief in the academia, domestic debates and negotiations among coalitions have been more influential than international pressures in the formation of Japanese sanction policies.  

Linus Hagström’s publications, specifically focusing on Japan’s multilateral, diplomatic stance concerning North Korean threats, argue that Japan, rather than being passive, has sought an active role in various multilateral negotiations by strategically using its available national means to put pressures on North Korea and also on other participants to rally their support whenever opportunities have arisen.  Finally, Hyung Gu Lynn’s article on Japan’s North Korea policy highlights how media, particularly television, generated a narrow and biased public perception of North Korea since the Koizumi-Kim summit in September 2002. Based on his extensive data analysis of contemporary Japanese sources, Lynn concludes that the distorted, societal perception in Japan imposed significant constraints on subsequent government policy toward the North, as a right-leaning, conservative political agenda and the media succeeded in


jointly framing public opinion in a particular direction in the aftermath of the 2002 summit.95

Of course, analytic frameworks employed by these scholars do not always match with that of this dissertation. For Hughes and Hagström, the main objective is to verify the validity of particular IR theories through their focused empirical case studies. In addition, Hughes takes “domestic” to be organized, political coalitions instead of the larger society and public. His interest in Japanese sanctions encompasses the term “sanction” used in this dissertation, as Hughes incorporates other multilateral sanctions against the North in which Japan took part in 1993-1994 with the unilateral one imposed in 2006.96 In Hagström’s case the main focus is Japan’s strategic style in multilateral institutional settings surrounding the North Korean nuclear issue, rather than on domestic societal influences. Finally Lynn’s work, while overlapping with this dissertation’s particular case-interest and well-elaborating the process of public’s influence on policy, is nevertheless media research and Japanese mass media’s framing of public opinion constitutes the central theme of his study.97

Despite these differences in focus, more works specifically devoted to Japanese security policy toward North Korea have indeed facilitated the accumulation of our empirical knowledge on the topic. Since this dissertation is in full accord with the


97 Lynn, op.cit., pp. 483-484.
critique that current foreign policy studies on Japan that emphasize its overall security trajectory tend to produce “too blunt” grand explanations based on the tenets of unmoderated, parsimonious theories,\textsuperscript{98} it also contributes to this new group of literature.

5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of how current literature on Japanese security has interpreted various policy changes in recent years. Whether a writer takes them as mere “peripheral adjustments” within the confines of post-World War II security principles, or as examples of fundamental transformation, contemporary works have all contributed to a deepening of our insights. By carving the same “empirical pie” in various ways along their preferred theoretical presuppositions, they have given the IR discipline diverse models for how certain empirical factors can be prioritized in our overall understanding of the current Japanese security trajectory.

Despite their merits and contributions, this chapter also demonstrated that because of the very nature of theoretical analysis, contemporary publications possess embedded weaknesses in tracing and highlighting complex processes by which domestic, societal factors interact with security policy-making in Japan. The role of the North Korea factor in changing Japanese security policies, subsequently resulting in the unilateral sanctions of 2006, is one of the most significant examples of current literature's failure to sufficiently trace this domestic mechanism. In the next chapter will elaborate the

methodology this research adopts, as an alternative approach better equipped to tackle analytic gaps in the current literature.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY I (CASE-STUDY APPROACH)

1 Introduction

This chapter provides the rationale for adapting a process-tracing method of case studies for tackling the dissertation’s two analytic purposes. First, it will provide a rich, contextual understanding of the processes behind Japan’s foreign policy shifts toward North Korea during the period under examination. It will be achieved by constructing a case-study type, causal explanation that facilitates analysis of Japanese domestic discursive changes toward North Korea and the interactions linking Japanese society and the government, which led to the unilateral sanctions in 2006. Second, the study aims to contribute to further refinement of International Relations (IR) theories in light of the study’s major empirical findings, by comparing them to the theory-embedded explanations of Japanese foreign policy toward North Korea and opening a potential for their modification.

The nature of the puzzles raised in this study make it evident from the beginning that methods utilized by “mainstream” IR theoretical research do not provide a suitable framework. Most theoretically-oriented research is used to produce parsimonious explanations by comparing multiple cases to highlight common patterns visible across the values attributed to the designated variables of interest, rather than to understand a

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1 “Mainstream research” in this dissertation will denote the paradigm-based, multi-case, deductive hypothesis-testing type of research utilized in political science.
political phenomenon of a particular case from a deep historical and local context. Applying only a methodology designed for mainstream IR theories onto the empirical puzzle of a single-state case poses problems, stemming from the divergence in the analytic goals that theoretically-based and case-study research pursue. Tracing the detailed, intervening interaction of multiple factors leading to the outcome of a particular empirical case is not a main trade of IR theories. Using mainstream, theoretical approaches, or relying on contemporary literature as the major guide for designing this dissertation’s analytic framework is, therefore, deemed problematic. This chapter is thus an extension of the arguments presented in the last chapter, while also presenting the rationale for the approach to research adopted in this dissertation.

The following topics are discussed in this chapter. First, as explained previously, the empirical realm of this research focuses on Japan’s security discourse change toward North Korea between the two missile launches in 1998 and 2006. However, it excludes any lengthy analysis of North Korea’s then-alleged nuclear programs during this time-period. The immediately following part explains why.

Second, a major portion will be allocated to elaborating on why process-tracing methods fit the research purpose of this dissertation, focusing on the fact that this case-study methodology can highlight complex reality and empirical mechanisms better than variable-based methods of theoretically-oriented research designs. It will be also argued that rather than being a simple historical narration, findings from the process-tracing have theoretical implications for pinpointing exactly where explanations provided by mainstream research on the same case require improvements for their empirical validity.
Third, similarities between process-tracing and the methods of other disciplines, namely those of history and IR in Japan, will be laid out in order to provide evidence as to why the methodology adopted in this dissertation constitutes an example of the middle-ground research design that could reconcile their epistemological differences.

2 Setting the Scope and Dimension of the Case

The case under analysis is limited to reactions in Japan, in both domestic society and the government, between the first ballistic missile test of North Korea in 1998 and a second test in 2006. During that period, other North Korean threats with direct implications for Japanese sovereignty materialized in multiple instances, and these will be incorporated into process-tracing in order to reveal their linkage to the subsequent policy shift of unilateral sanctions in 2006. However, during this same period, there were considerably publicized suspicions (“suspicions” before North Korea’s declaration of its possession of a nuclear weapon in 2005 and the first atomic test in October 2006) about a North Korean nuclear program. As in the case of any sensitive, nuclear-related issue, it was no surprise that academia regarded this general topic to be of special research significance.

This analysis, however, excludes the issue of North Korean nuclear suspicions from special analysis for two reasons. In the dissertation, it will be addressed only when the issue is relevant to already-ongoing discursive changes in Japanese society towards North Korea. This analytic boundary-setting of the case clearly runs the risk of being too narrow. However, the dissertation maintains that the risk is worth taking.
First of all, the North Korean nuclear program during the concerned time period was neither a direct, concrete, nor visible threat that had previously occurred within or near Japanese territorial or maritime sovereignty. In this sense it was unlike the two missile launches or the mystery/spy ship (fushinsen) incidents. Nor did it involve Japanese citizens, as in the case of the abduction (rachi) issue. When the suspicions turned into reality in 2006 after North Korea’s first atomic test, it is still hard to argue that Japan was “victimized” in the same manner as the other cases since the test was conducted deep within North Korea and did not violate, in any way, Japan’s sovereignty in a strict sense. For this reason, this analysis suggests that the nature of threat caused by the ballistic missile tests and other materialized provocations was different from the one posed by the nuclear issue, thus requiring two separate inquiries. Separating the research question of nuclear suspicions and actual missile launches is especially relevant when analytic inquiry centers around their direct impacts on Japanese societal sphere.

Second, in addition to the difference in the nature of the threat, there is also a difference in manner in which the nuclear issue was handled. Although the North Korean missile launches in 1998 and 2006 were perceived to be a security hazard to the region, they were mainly interpreted to be the chief concern of Japan and the United States; states in the region had diverging estimates of the degree of threat.\(^2\) The missile issue was not handled by a firmly-established and long-term multilateral institution equivalent to the International Atomic Energy Agency (of which North Korea had also

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been a member) or the Six Party Talks (SPT), devoted solely to the resolution of the nuclear issue among all related parties, including both Japan and North Korea.3

As a result, while Japan heavily relied on adjusting and coordinating its security policy with all other member states of the SPT concerning the atomic issue, its policies were comparatively less locked into international, institutional pressures in the missile cases. The United States and North Korea have been the main negotiating parties concerning the ballistic missiles. Even after 1998, the perception of Japanese policymakers was that Japan did not possess powerful means to directly deal with North Korea in the international setting.4 Therefore, the “degree of internationalization” was significantly different in the two issues. Although Japan indirectly took part in bilateral negotiations between the United States and North Korea through policy coordination with the former, and although Japanese policymakers were acutely aware of the missile’s potential danger to Japan as arguably even more serious as that of nuclear development, the missile issue never achieved the same degree of consistent international engagement as the SPT.5

In turn, as Japanese policy on the missile issue was not directly incorporated into a concrete international institution, it was more easily linked with other, already-materialized North Korean threats perceived in Japanese society. These conditions

3 Ibid., pp. 87-90.
4 Ibid., pp. 87-88.
5 Hajime Izumi, “Dealing with North Korea: Time for Japan to Reengage,” Japan Echo (February, 2008), p. 39. Izumi argues that Japan must exercise more international initiative to problematize North Korean missiles rather than the nuclear issue, since atomic weapons without a means of delivery cannot directly attack Japan while North Korean ballistic missiles have already proven their capability to reach Japan.
made it a more domestically politicized topic, allowing the issue to be a part of a “North Korea issue package” in societal discourse, unlike the North Korean nuclear issue that had been fully integrated into regional, multilateral frameworks.

Of course, this dissertation is not asserting that the nuclear and missile issues are mutually exclusive, or that the domestic debate surrounding each issue was totally unrelated to the other. However, even when there is a convergence, differences stemming from the policy environment in which the Japanese government dealt with the issues – and also the domestic discursive environment in which the public interpreted their nature – must not be overlooked, and thus should be approached as two separate inquiries.

Much publicized deadlock in the international negotiations of the SPT certainly deepened negative images of North Korea in Japan during the period under examination. Therefore, although it is undeniable that the nuclear issue provided further justification for regarding North Korea as the main threat to Japanese security, the suspicion over the nuclear program, by itself, was not the origin of the negative image of the North, at least from the societal perspective. However, it surely reinforced the ongoing direction of societal debate on Japanese security that had been generated by other, already-materialized provocations from North Korea with direct implications on Japanese sovereignty – missiles, mystery/spy ships, abductions, etc. – during the same period.

It should be remembered that in 1994, during the first nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula, Japan cooperated with the United States and South Korea to persuade North Korea to freeze their existing nuclear program. The security threat it posed to Japan at that time was as equally significant as the subsequent threat in the next decade.
However, in the absence of an actualized and visible threat near or to its home isles, Japan’s subsequent relations with North Korea did not become significantly more hostile. Even more significant, when North Korea officially declared its possession of nuclear weapons in 2005, Japan did not proceed to impose sanctions, even when legal obstacles had already been removed and there were voices in the government and the media for tougher measures.6

In the light of swift Japanese policy reactions after the second ballistic missile launch in 2006, in the form of unilateral sanctions, these examples further confirm the position of the study that the nuclear issue, by itself, cannot fully account for Japan’s societal discourse and its eventual policy shift toward North Korea. In short, the role that nuclear suspicion played prior to 2006 was much more influenced by other, actual North Korean violations of Japanese territorial, maritime, and human security, in the context of domestic security debates within Japan.

3 A Case for Case Study Research in Political Science

This dissertation is what is widely considered in political science literature as a focused, single case-study.7 By pursuing a within-case analysis of a particular empirical phenomenon, the dissertation provides a detailed and contextualized understanding of an often-overlooked embedded process. As already mentioned, applying a pre-determined theoretical framework to the case in order to prove or disprove the validity of a particular

6 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, February 15, 2005, p. 3.

7 Case-studies can employ either a single or several cases for intensive analyses. In this dissertation however, the term ‘case-study’ denotes the former.
theory’s explanatory power is not this study’s analytic priority. What is at stake, however, is more than simply descriptive detail. As will be demonstrated, the validity of the empirical study can be placed within the larger literature of focused case studies, especially with respect to contemporary research in political science that adopts a process-tracing methodology.

The nature of the knowledge that this dissertation is pursuing thus differs from that propelling most theoretically-driven research, which incorporates numerous cases into a single comparative analysis with respect to designated, commonly-shared variables. This chapter suggests that a single-case study is equally important and valuable for our knowledge-accumulation in general, especially for scholars seeking to understand a particular case in a deeper context.

Case-study method is “generally unappreciated,” despite its contribution in generating a significant proportion of empirical insight in social science disciplines, mainly due to its being poorly understood.8 A case-study is most valuable when a researcher is concerned with historical processes, case uniqueness, social complexity, and detailed interpretation.9 When the type of political phenomena under study is such that there is only a limited empirical instance that exhibits the attributes of interest to the analyst, or when one believes that the political phenomena could be best understood through examination of a small number of cases, it is natural and logical for the analyst to


decide on using a case approach. Most contemporary literature on Japanese security policy introduced in the last chapter constitutes case studies in contrast to multi-case approaches. However, as we have observed, application of theoretical tenets as their explanatory tool too often means that the results are still limited in providing systematic presentation of important empirical processes.

For case-study research focusing on one or a few empirical cases, there have been methodological innovations in recent years that enable scholars to focus in on causal processes and richly detailed narrative analyses. Besides process-tracing, there are similar methods such as systemic process analysis (SPA) and comparative historical analysis (CHA), which have been proposed by case-study scholars sharing a common motivation. Researchers working with a small number of cases agree that political events are generated by causal processes that are so complex, or context dependent, that they cannot be explicated in general terms. The analysis of political phenomena requires a focus on “social mechanisms.” Whichever case-study methodology one uses, the ability to highlight empirical richness and detailed mechanisms makes up for the small number of cases under analysis, when compared to mainstream research that


\[ \text{\textsuperscript{11}} \text{Refer to Peter A. Hall “Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Research,” James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer eds., Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 375 for elaboration on systemic process analysis. Refer to James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, “Comparative Historical Analysis: Achievements and Agendas,” James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer eds., Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 10, for elaboration on comparative historical analysis.} \]

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{12}} \text{Hall, ibid., p. 388.} \]
produces explanations applicable to a vastly larger number of cases, albeit in a
generalized and abstract form. In short, case study methodologies contribute to our
overall knowledge accumulation of international relations, but in a different sense than
other forms of theory-based research.

However, this does not mean that case studies are purely non-comparative and a-
theoretical. The processes and the mechanisms that have been unearthed in a particular
case study can be matched to verify whether theoretical explanations on the same issue
are empirically valid. Therefore, they can surely contribute to theory-improvement even
when using only a very limited number of cases. Rather than explaining – and thus
proving or disproving – whether a certain abstract variable caused a (equally abstract)
political outcome in a large number of examples, as a particular theory posits, intensive
case studies advance the theory in a different sense, by discussing exceptions and
aberrations to conventional theoretical ideas on a particular political phenomenon.13

4 Case Study Research and Process-Tracing

Typical IR methodologies for mainstream research are mainly based on the
models of standard regression14 derived from statistical analyses, and they are better

13 Bradshaw and Wallace, op.cit., p. 164.

14 Standard regression analysis refers to “an extension of correlation analysis, which makes
predictions about the value of a dependent variable using data about one or more independent variables.
A key parameter estimated in a regression analysis is the magnitude of change in the dependent variable
associated with a unit change in an independent variable.” Henry E. Brady and David Collier, eds.,
Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield
Publishers, Inc. 2004), p. 303. In other words, any causal explanation based on regression analysis
assumes that a change in the value of an independent (causal) variable $x$ will produce a corresponding
change in the value of the dependent (outcome) variable $y$ of the same magnitude across all cases (termed
“unit homogeneity”). In addition, it also assumes that there is no reciprocal causation. Therefore, the
equipped to discern conceptualized, causal links – with a common applicability to a large number of cases (so-called a “large-N” research; and “case (N)” here generally meaning the state) – between a few, powerful variables operating independently of context and with roughly similar force everywhere. However, since it is not the goal of these methodologies to look into any one case in particular detail, there is understandably less room to empirically discern the inner processes embedded at the basis of their proclaimed link between independent and dependent variables.

These methods, as the result of their distinct assumptions about causality and the decision to allocate equal importance to all states included in the study, inevitably produce explanations that are overly conceptualized and abstract in nature. Since the effectiveness of a methodology lies on its ability to make causal inferences (despite their abstractness) from a large number of cases, in which verifiable data – preferably in a quantitative form – can be derived, influential methodology texts such as Designing Social Inquiry continuously emphasize increasing the number of “observations (“N”)” as much as possible. It must be emphasized that while this strategy has its own merit – broader applicability – overemphasis on increasing the number of “N” forces a difficult

independent (causal) variables are unaffected by the dependent (outcome) variable; causal arrow is assumed to be of a single direction, and variables are exclusive without mutual interaction. Hall, op.cit., p. 382.

15 Hall, ibid., p. 398.

trade-off for scholars who are interested in a fewer number of cases and are concerned about an “untenable level of generality and a loss of contextual knowledge.”

When a researcher finds that his analytical puzzle can be accommodated by the causal assumptions of a particular theory, and when the methodology of his choosing is in harmony with his theoretical ontology and the nature of his analytic question, it is natural to embrace these methodologies as a reasonable approach. However, problems arise when the nature of the research question is not parallel with the ontology of any available theoretical tradition, or with any mainstream methodology designed to guide researchers utilizing the theory.

As is the case of this analysis, the type of research question posed could be at odds with the “Big N” theories’ ontological assumptions regarding the nature of causality and the number of cases required to make any genuine causal inferences. As Peter A. Hall argues, many works in recent years are, therefore, guided by alternative ontological views that previous theoretical understandings of causality and methodology cannot accommodate; more scholars now incorporate empirical validity of multi-causality, as they view political outcomes as the result of causal processes in which distant events, sequencing, and complex interaction effects play important roles.

From the viewpoint of these scholars who embrace an ontology accepting the primacy of complex, causal processes governing political phenomena, mainstream IR is

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too constrained both in an ontological and methodological sense. Ontologically, the current mainstream approaches do not sit comfortably with unobservable causes, such as ideas and “conditioning” social forces. Methodologically, mainstream scholars do not usually attribute an adequate role to historical, qualitative, discursive, and interpretive dimensions, although more scholars increasingly require methods that consider these factors in order to conduct analyses in harmony with their ontology. Under the current situation, we thus cannot fail to notice that a substantial gap exists between popular methodologies in the field and diversifying ontologies.

As we have observed in the last chapter, this discrepancy has been recognized and there have been proposals – the “analytic eclecticism” of Peter J. Katzenstein, for instance – for closing the gap between the current methodologies and the newly-appreciated ontology embracing complex causal forces in the real world. Katzenstein’s proposal for “constructing original causal modules that reflect the complexity and messiness of particular problems in international life” reflects his and other focused case-study researchers’ concern that many important questions are often bypassed simply because they do not fit comfortably into the analytic categories of a given (mainstream) research tradition.

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21 Hall, *op.cit.*, p. 375.

The rationale for proposing this new model is sound; this dissertation, therefore, agrees with his problematizing of the current state of IR. Analytic eclecticism as an alternative method, however, still falls short of sufficiently closing the gap between ontology and methodology, since it essentially consists of mixing (often incompatible or even opposing) theoretical explanations for the sake of producing a more contextualized conclusion, without providing a methodological guide for tracing the process during an empirical investigation. While accepting the ontology of focused case-studies allows analytic eclecticism to be closely linked to the non-mainstream approaches, mixing various “explanatory sketches” derived from mainstream theories – embedded in mainstream ontology from the beginning – to engage research questions requiring complex causality and process, still compels a scholar to uncomfortably accept differing ontology and methodology in a single research. In addition, as Katzenstein admits, analytic eclecticism as an approach is still in its infant stage, without sufficient empirical testing. His proposal was based on “the hunch that there are significant intellectual gains to be had,” and the proponents mainly “gambled on the intuition.”

It is, therefore, obvious that the discipline of focused case-studies must be provided with its own, alternative methodology in harmony with its ontology, and this dissertation argues that process-tracing method is one such approach. In his call for systemic process analysis (SPA), a method that shares striking similarities to process-tracing, Hall claims likewise that small-N research designs such as SPA offers a

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considerable potential for resolving the dilemma posed by the ontology-methodology divergence.  

Whether process-tracing or SPA, alternative methodologies for more empirically-relevant research in case studies all share the following three characteristics.

First, these methodologies accommodate complex causal relations, as the success of any research of this type lies on identifying causal mechanisms that have been previously overlooked. The very purpose of adopting process-tracing in research is to highlight subtle causal processes produced by mutually-interacting, multiple conditions. As a result, an in-depth case approach helps the analyst avoid “spurious correlation” more likely to occur in large-N research, when two correlated variables appears to be causally related but in fact are the product of an antecedent variable. Spurious correlation, of course, cannot be identified without empirically verifying the apparent causal association of the relevant variables in a particular case by back-tracing. For this reason, John Gerring claims that process-tracing is “akin to detective work.”

Second, previous knowledge of the case by the researcher is not problematized, but rather encouraged. The analyst who is knowledgeable and sensitive to the impact of

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24 Hall, op.cit., p. 375.


28 Gerring, op.cit., p. 173.
cultural, economic, and historical settings is in a better position to achieve valid inference, and help us further our insight into potentially significant factors that are not among the variables being formally considered by large-N researchers.\textsuperscript{29}

Finally, the third characteristic is the conditionality and the context-embedded nature of causal explanations derived by these case-specific, process-centered analyses. Although focused case-study scholars do understand the need for producing parsimonious and generally-applicable explanations for certain types of analytic questions and for certain audiences, they appreciate more the strength of their causal-process observations for their depth of insight rather than breadth of coverage.\textsuperscript{30} Process-tracing, therefore, is interested in sequential processes within a particular historical case, and not on correlations of data across cases.\textsuperscript{31} Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett propose a metaphor of fifty numbered dominoes in line with a blind in front of them so that only number one and fifty that are already felled are visible to an observer. They assert that to verify why the two are felled in that particular instance, among numerous possible intervening causal processes that could have brought the two to fall, process-tracing would remove the blind and observe the dominoes in between.\textsuperscript{32}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{29} Brady, Collier and Seawright, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 12.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{31} George and Bennett, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., pp. 206-207.
\end{flushleft}
Other approaches such as *comparative historical analysis* (CHA)\(^{33}\) – another methodology that pursues mechanism-based explanations similar to process-tracing or SPA – also take sequential processes seriously. All these case-study approaches consider the effects of the timing of events relative to one another to be significant for verifying whether a change in one factor in fact preceded change in another; in their mutual interaction, the relative timing can be of decisive importance in bringing a particular result only applicable to that case.\(^{34}\)

Without looking into intervening processes, any comparative study using a mainstream analysis could fall into the trap of assuming the state-samples utilized in the research share identical causality, when the values attributed to the common independent and dependent variables across these multiple cases exhibit the same correlative pattern. However, even if the values display an identical pattern of change, we cannot discard the possibility that intervening mechanisms could vary in each case. Prioritizing the processes in focused case studies is, therefore, based on the belief that without looking into the sequential mechanism and the interaction of multiple factors within a specific context, any analysis of a political phenomenon is missing a significant portion of its empirical puzzle.

\(^{33}\) “Comparative” here does not mean the comparison of the values of designated variables across large-N samples as in mainstream research, but an in-depth comparison of common or diverging processes surrounding a particular type of political phenomenon in a very few selected cases.

5 Contribution of Process-Tracing for Theory Improvements

Up to this point, the differing priorities of mainstream methodologies and those of case-study research have been elaborated. The most fundamental difference lies in the role of contemporary theories within these two research types, and the number of case-samples they consider adequate to make any causal inference. Although case-study methodologies do not rely on theories as the principal framework for conducting research, it does not mean that they lack potential for any theoretical contribution. This section will explain how methods such as process-tracing still provide new insights for contemporary IR theories, even though the theoretical implication of the small case research does not lie on directly applying them to test their general validity in conceptualized terms.

Of course, a case-study can be conducted even when there is an existing theory addressing possible lines of causal explanation. In such an instance, as we have observed, case-study researchers focus on intermediary processes, rather than simply applying relevant theory to verify whether the theoretical prediction is matched by the link between the independent and dependent variables. By relying on qualitative resources such as local history, archival documents, interview transcripts, and others, the researcher utilizing process-tracing examines whether a theoretical hypothesis is in fact evident in the empirical sequence and the values of the intervening variables in that case.35 This process of discovering whether empirical findings are congruent with the

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35 George and Bennett, op.cit., p. 6.
theoretical hypothesis is called, to use Donald T. Campbell’s term, “pattern-matching.” If the real sequence unearthed by the process-tracing does not match what the theoretical hypothesis predicts, as in many cases, then that single case study has already served an important purpose of identifying circumstances that deviate from the traditional theoretical explanation, helping future studies to modify and extend the related theoretical argument. Therefore, one case study, even if theory is not used as the analytic framework but as a secondary reference to which eventual findings can be matched, nevertheless promotes our understanding of that category of political phenomenon and the better explanatory potential of the relevant theory.

Even when there is not a theory exactly applicable to a particular puzzle, process-tracing can still be conducted with the same theoretical implication, although this time, no pattern-matching is involved. This is the type of process-tracing this dissertation is adopting. When a case fails to fit any existing theory, process-tracing is conducted inductively, in order to identify original, causal processes not yet discerned or hypothesized by any theory, solely on the basis of the sequence of events observed, without any theoretical prediction involved in the analysis. Once the causal process is identified, this new finding may still contribute to the evaluation of existing theories most relevant to the analytic puzzle, as in the first type of process-tracing involving the

36 “Congruence testing” is also the term used in the same context. Ibid., pp. 186-204. Donald T. Campbell, “Degrees of Freedom” and the Case Study,” Comparative Political Studies 8 (1975), pp. 178-93. Cited in Collier, op.cit., p. 115.

37 Bradshaw and Wallace, op.cit., p. 165.

38 George and Bennett, op.cit., pp. 7,217
pattern-matching. In the end, both the pattern-matching and the inductive types of process-tracing thus contribute, in their own way, to further development of existing theories rather than to their direct testing.

When the nature of the puzzle a researcher is pursuing involves causal influence of multiple empirical factors not easily verifiable, especially in a quantitative form, inductive process-tracing is an especially crucial alternative. The analysis of this dissertation, for example, heavily depends on the role of societal discourse on security identity, and as Katzenstein correctly argued in one of his earlier works, such cultural factors “cannot be stipulated deductively; they must be investigated empirically in concrete historical settings.” At present, theoretical explanations are too contingent on complex and variable conditions, and pinpointing not-yet-well-identified conditions through a case-study method on a particular empirical context for further specification can, therefore, guide the direction of future research. This very process of accumulating knowledge on various contingencies and conditions by the collective efforts of case-study scholars, in the end, contributes to the development and the refinement of existing theories’ explanatory finesse from a uniquely different direction.

To summarize, being consistent with the methodological stances outlined in this chapter, the dissertation will utilize the method of single-case study focusing on inductive

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39 Ibid., p. 217

40 Ibid., p. 222.


42 Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, *op.cit.*, pp. 9-10.
process-tracing. Through an in-depth, within-case analysis, the findings will then be related to the conclusions of other literature introduced in the last chapter, in order to highlight exactly how the process unearthed can contribute to the refinement of our understanding of the current Japanese foreign policy trajectory toward North Korea. Since the dissertation takes the second inductive type of process-tracing as its methodological guideline, predetermined hypotheses do not play a central role. It is, nevertheless, broadly premised at the outset that the chief driving force of Japan’s foreign policy toward North Korea is the complex interaction among political and societal spheres, under specific timing and external inputs that led to society’s discursive shift. Except with this general presupposition, the study does not embrace any other detailed process-oriented hypothesis onto which deductive theory-confirmation is conducted.

6 Process-Tracing as a Methodological Middle-Ground

Finally, process-tracing constitutes a middle-ground methodology for IR scholars interested in small case studies and historians trained in historical explanations, as the result of their shared commitment to empirically laying out the complexities of political events.43 This section will argue that, in addition, process-tracing shares similar ground with the empirically-rich approach of the Japanese IR discipline as well.

Both historians and case-study researchers agree that the primary purpose of studying a case is to specify and elaborate historical processes that impact social phenomena without rushing to explain similarities with other cases, since even relatively

43 George and Bennett, op.cit., p. 223.
similar societies may have very different histories. Also, as E.H. Carr once stated,
historians characteristically assign various causes to a single empirical event, a “random
jumble of economic, political, ideological, and personal causes, of long-term and short-
term causes.” While a historian can prioritize certain factors to be more central than
others, his overarching recognition of the multiplicity of causes and his prudence in
making quick comparisons thus situate the historian close to the case-study researchers in
IR utilizing process-tracing.

The similarity between the Japanese practice of IR and case study methodologies
requires more detailed elaboration. In contrast to the Western – and especially North
American – practice of testing competing paradigms (“isms”), Japanese IR has had a
weak tradition of positivistic theoretical hypothesis-testing, but a relatively strong
tradition of describing details. Consequently, Japanese scholars have been discouraged
from producing “big theories,” and even the existing Japanese theories are generally of a
middle-range type only applicable to explaining a particular category of political
phenomena.46

Japanese academia is not necessarily a purely “theory-free” environment, but it
nevertheless has embraced a different understanding of what constitutes a proper
“theory.” Theoretical models that Japanese political studies have produced are
condition-based and context-specific, and they are generally closer to Western theories

44 Bradshaw and Wallace, op.cit., p. 164.
46 Takashi Inoguchi, “Are There Any Theories of International Relations in Japan? ” International
that heavily incorporate normative-ideational and legal elements than positivistic paradigms. Such tradition has a long history: as early as the 1920s and 30s, theoretical ideas resembling those of modern constructivism and international law already flourished,\(^{47}\) and post-war International Politics in Japan also experienced its own version of so-called “realism-idealism” debates. But most of all, in contrast to mainly academic and pragmatic debates in North America, those in post-war Japan have been highly ideological and politicized around the specific topic of “what went wrong with Japan’s IR in the past?”\(^{48}\) As a result, the Japanese theories used were often based on normatively-charged interpretations based on the producer’s empirical search for a particular historical phenomenon.

It is, then, little wonder why grand paradigms such as Kenneth Waltz’s neo-realism invited such limited reception in Japanese IR discipline; as Tanaka Akihiko bluntly states, Waltz’s system-level conceptualization was seen by many in Japanese academia as somewhat “amateurish (shirōto-teki).”\(^{49}\) Even toward constructivism, one of the few modern Western IR theoretical paradigms the Japanese can easily relate to,

\(^{47}\) *Ibid.*, p. 1. It is also plausible that one of the reasons why Japanese academia does not consider modern political science theories, especially those originated in North America, as sufficiently “fresh” stems from such historical background; in the minds of many Japanese scholars, current paradigms might be seen as a mere re-packaging of already-familiar ideas. Akihiko Tanaka of The University of Tokyo agrees; for example, as the result of long-term influence of French political studies in Japanese academia, value-neutral research without moral or ideological stance has been despised, and the introduction of constructivism and the revival of interest in norms and identities were, therefore, naturally interpreted by Japanese academia as an obvious restoration of sort. Akihiko Tanaka, “Nihon no Kokusai Seijigaku – Sumiwake wo Koete (Japanese Studies of International Politics: Overcoming the ‘habit-segregation’),” Akihiko Tanaka, Hiroshi Nakanishi, and Keisuke Iida eds., *Nihon no Kokusai Seijigaku – Gaku toshiteno Kokusai Seiji* (Japanese Studies of International Politics: Theoretical Perspectives on International Politics) (Tokyo: The Japanese Association of International Relations, Yūhikaku, 2009), p. 12.

\(^{48}\) Inoguchi, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

\(^{49}\) Tanaka, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.
some have criticized the manner in which culture and identity factors were utilized by North American constructivist scholars in understanding Japanese politics. Tamamoto Masaru, in his critique of positivist IR, in which even culture and identity are broken down into generalized variables, claims that they make sense only in a research adopting a “thick description” method, as these features, by their nature, can never be divided into components and their complex relations between them as a contextual whole are what matter.\(^{50}\)

In terms of methodology, although Japanese academia is often referred to as a mosaic embracing different methodological traditions harmlessly co-existing within the same community (often referred to as *sumiwake*\(^{51}\)), meticulous empirical – rather than theoretical – methods of investigation have always dominated Japanese mainstream tradition.\(^{52}\) The term “empirical” here denotes historical (archival) research in the traditional discipline of Diplomatic History (*gaikō-shi*). Unlike in the West, the behavioural analysis of pre-conceptualized and especially *codified* quantitative data, no matter how large the sample might be, is not regarded as empirical in the true sense of the word.

In short, many Japanese scholars feel uneasy in constructing (and applying) simplified, artificial conceptual models of historical events. As a result, Japanese

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\(^{51}\) Tanaka, *op.cit.*, p. 13. ‘*Sumiwake*’ can be literally translated as “habitat-segregation” as used in biology.

\(^{52}\) Inoguchi, *op.cit.*, pp. 9,15.
scholars who employ theories, without field expertise with a particular regional and historic focus, have been also limited in their role as mere “import-brokers of foreign theories.” In the midst of the current academic practices in Japanese IR discipline, it is then not surprising that the criticisms targeted at the mainstream IR in North America by case-study scholars and historians are largely shared by Japanese political scientists. Therefore, it is logical to postulate that methodology such as process-tracing, which avoids making conclusions based on paradigms but instead focuses on contexts and historical mechanisms, could be positively embraced by the Japanese academia as something familiar.

7 Conclusion

This chapter laid out three important methodological positions of this research project: first, it elaborated why the zone of inquiry adopted by the study leaves out the North Korean nuclear factor and instead focuses on the two missile launches and other materialized threats to Japan, and why this setting enables the researcher to better focus on domestic dynamics; second, it explained why process-tracing, one of the major methodologies in focused case-study, is the best approach suited for the type of inquiry proposed by this dissertation, as it enables the researcher to maintain contextual detail while empirically tracing the relevant social mechanisms of a single case; and finally, it also argued that this approach, unlike mainstream methods of IR, can be embraced by other disciplines such as history and political studies in Japan.

53 Tanaka, op.cit., P.15.
The basic tasks of any research are “to devise ways of leveraging existing understanding in order to extend our knowledge, and to decide sensible revisions of prior understandings in light of the knowledge just acquired.” Since the main purpose of this dissertation is to rearrange accessible evidence into detailed processes by which a particular policy of a state came about, by incorporating all relevant international, governmental, and societal evidences without limiting oneself to particular theoretical tenets or level-of-analysis concerns, it should be clear by now to the reader why the dissertation has employed process-tracing as the best means to engage in its task.

Of course, there is a clear trade-off in making such a choice. As suggested, an in-depth case-study method cannot expect to produce causal propositions that hold across all socio-cultural contexts and historical periods (i.e., “universal truth”), and thus it cannot be literally applied to other contexts. However, such modesty in goal is worthwhile, since “finding the conditions under which specific outcomes occur, and mechanisms through which they occur” is more interesting to case-study researchers than “uncovering the frequency with which those conditions and their outcomes arise” in a great number of cases across differing historical and geographical contexts. Also, while highly context-specific conclusions drawn from case-study methods make it difficult for all readers to be in a position to judge the validity of the findings, these conclusions can always be “vetted by those intimately familiar with that region, policy


56 George and Bennett, *op.cit.*, p. 31. (Italics added).
area, or historic era. The scrutiny by such experts, in fact, further secures the validity of the original insights in that particular case context.

In the next chapter, which constitutes the second part of the methodology section, Japanese mass media’s influential and complex role in domestic society will be elaborated. It will explain why the research will depend heavily on mass media sources as an important indicator for tracing societal discourse on security.

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57 Gerring, *op. cit.*, p. 185.
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY II (MASS MEDIA IN JAPAN)

This second chapter on methodology argues in favour of the validity of heavily utilizing Japanese mass media materials – public opinion polls, monthly and weekly journal articles, and especially major newspaper editorials – throughout subsequent chapters as the main sources for backing the central thesis of this dissertation.

At this point, there are not yet firmly established guidelines in the disciplines of political science or foreign policy prescribing the exact types of data (and the means of their usage) for process-tracing societal discursive shifts. This chapter claims that closely following the contextual “tone” of mass media sources – especially in the editorials of the major dailies – in addition to quantified results of opinion polls, is one of the most valid and accessible approaches for tracing representative, mainstream voices and discursive trends concerning foreign policy issues in Japanese society.

As a prerequisite for justifying the usage of this mass media data, this chapter will first highlight the significant influence mass media enjoy in setting the political tone and agenda for governmental security policies, as the chief representative of domestic society’s main discursive trend. It will conclude that media sources are indeed the most appropriate type of data for the nature of the inquiry of this research, as the analysis for this dissertation will involve close observation of complex links between Japanese mass media, society, and the government.
Here, the role that Japanese mass media play concerning domestic society and the government will be elaborated. The central argument is that when a given political or foreign policy issue is a “publicized” one – meaning it is sufficiently known to the public to the extent that a vast majority of members are aware of the issue’s existence and are emotionally involved in its unfolding – any analysis of Japanese governmental policy on the given issue that does not incorporate the role of public opinion, and contextualizing discourse, is incomplete. Of course, when a political phenomenon is not a publicized one – as in everyday politics of less significance to the state and to public interest – the direct, influential role of the media on policy is comparatively lessened. However, policy-makers and other government agents are heavily influenced by the tone of public opinion on publicized issues, and the Japanese mass media play the role of the mirror of public sentiment whenever such occasions arise. Therefore, looking into the content of mass media is a direct means of tapping into the nature of public opinion and the background societal discourse on any widely discussed and engaged political matter. It is especially the case when an issue is shocking enough to affect citizens’ nationalism and to stir their emotional involvement. International incidents with direct implications on Japanese identity, national pride, and security, understandably rank among the top as such examples.

This dissertation does not deny the governmental influence on mass media. Indeed, media in Japan, as it has been often argued, do rely on government-released information, and controlling the accessibility to official information thus constitutes
leverage for the government when an issue is not well publicized. While this particular aspect of media-government interaction has been widely discussed in the past, the nature of the relationship between public and mass media, on the other hand, has not been systematically analyzed to an equivalent degree. What is especially relevant for the analysis of this dissertation is that, depending on the issue at hand (whether publicized or not), the society-media relationship often reverses the nature of power relations between the government and media. Therefore, not sufficiently delving into this equally important, second aspect of Japanese media constitutes a serious limitation of previous studies.

The influence-structure between the public and the media, and the linkage between governmental policies and public opinion mirrored by the media, are thus complex and issue-dependent; these comparatively overlooked, multifaceted dimensions are the focus of this chapter. Since North Korea related issues are one of the most vivid empirical illustrations of “publicized” foreign policy cases in the late 1990s and the early 2000s in Japan, this chapter, therefore, establishes the methodological foundation for relying on public perception and its impact on media as the most crucial key for understanding Japanese foreign policy change toward the North in subsequent chapters.

1.1 Definition of public opinion and its role as a chief source of policy legitimacy

Before moving on to the topic of mass media, it is helpful to first define “public opinion (yoron or seron in Japanese)” as understood in the Japanese context. Compared
to the more detailed and operational definition in North American academia,¹ the term is used much more broadly in Japan. It is everyday vocabulary in colloquial Japanese, of all social strata, and is embedded into the language to an extent that it does not even normally require a definition.

When defined, Japanese society and politics broadly understand public opinion as a “viewpoint of society that is perceived and recognized by its members to be strong and influential in a particular issue area.” In order for the viewpoint to be recognized as such, it is essential that the idea exudes an impression of being – or has clear potential to be – conceded to by the public majority in a visible manner.² Japanese newspapers also provide us with equally-general definitions of their own. The largest circulation daily, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and the close second, *Asahi Shimbun*,³ adopt the following definitions: *Yomiuri Shimbun* takes public opinion as “an inclination of ordinary citizens on a certain issue,”⁴ while *Asahi Shimbun* argues that it is “an opinion or an attitude

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¹ The most widely used definitions of public opinion in North America are the following: (1) An aggregation of individual opinions which can be obtained by polls of randomly selected samples; (2) A reflection of majority beliefs and values of citizens and equivalent of “social norms”; (3) Individual opinions that are cultivated, crystallized, and eventually communicated by interest groups such as political parties, trade organizations, corporations, activist groups, etc.; (4) A simple projection of what journalists, politicians, pollsters, and other “elites” believe; and (5) A mere fiction, “phantom,” and rhetorical construction only used by newspapers and television. The first definition is the most commonly used in contemporary American public opinion studies. Carroll J. Glynn, Garrett J. O’Keefe, Robert Y. Shapiro, Mark Lindeman, and Susan Herbst, *Public Opinion, 2nd Edition* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), pp. 19-32.


(bearing/demeanor) of everyone (i.e., every citizen) toward a problem that concerns everyone.”5 Two additional terms widely interchangeable with public opinion in the Japanese context are “iken no kazamuki” and “kūki,”6 and they have connotations of societal inclination toward a particular viewpoint and a strong – albeit indirect, unofficial, and subtle – pressure on individuals to voluntarily conform to mainstream ideational current.

Therefore, the Japanese understanding of public opinion, when compared to the North American ones mentioned in the earlier footnote, is closest to the second definition signifying a reflection of majority beliefs and values of citizens. In addition, this general definition of public opinion as the majority of citizens’ expressed value inclinations on certain issues in many ways overlaps with how the term “discourse” is used in political studies. Indeed, there is no clear demarcation between “public opinion” and “public discourse” in Japan, as there is no equivalent vocabulary for the latter in Japanese.7

The Japanese definition is not helpful if we were to codify public opinion as a quantitative type of research data sample. As the inquiry of this dissertation is to


6 Iken no kazamuki can be literally translated as “the wind-direction of opinion,” and kūki as “air” or “atmosphere.” Kabashima, Takeshita and Serikawa, op.cit., pp. 134-135. One of the most widely read work on the topic of kūki in Japanese society is the contribution by Shichihei Yamamoto, Kūki no Kenkyu (Study of Kūki) (Tokyo: Bungeishunjū, 1983).

7 In Japanese academia, the term “disukōsu” is often used, in case a distinction between the two is required.
observe the general contextual undertow of societal attitude on a particular foreign policy issue, the definition of public opinion as broadly understood in Japan is sufficient for the analytic purpose. In fact, adopting the Japanese meaning of the term helps our detailed understanding by adding contextual validity to the research. For this reason, this dissertation does not venture further into producing more specific and operational definitions for the two most important sets of empirical data – those providing us with the actual contents of Japanese public opinion and discourse – used throughout the main analyses.

Despite the definitional overlap between “public opinion” and “discourse” and their usage in the Japanese context, the dissertation nevertheless acknowledges that there is a difference between their focus, and the data for each of them will, in subsequent chapters, be analyzed in a slightly different way despite that they both constitute important societal data.

Discourse embeds the meaning of the social-communicative process through which public, mainstream preferences and values are formed concerning a political issue, while the expressed result of the discourse constitutes public opinion. Discourse thus provides us with more contextually-rich background information as to why the majority of citizens react in a particular fashion on a specified issue area, as expressed by public opinion. This “expressed” portion, therefore, does not always “tell the whole story” by itself, as it is rather a simplified and partial indicator of the societal discussions through which it was derived. Japanese definitions not cleanly distinguishing between the process and the expressed result is another indication that public opinion is not merely seen as numbers but as the very representation of social communication in the Japanese
context. In subsequent chapters, therefore, both public opinion and societal discourse concerning North Korea will be examined, although the latter will be analyzed more in detail as a key to understanding the ideational undercurrent among the majority of societal members.

In any case, public opinion – and its background societal discourse – has a tremendous influence on Japanese politics because it constitutes one of the most powerful sources of legitimacy in policy-making. Even when the actual policy-making process involves coordinative negotiations among the Cabinet, the ruling party, and the bureaucracy, the agents in power in a democracy are, nevertheless, constantly pressured to monitor the reactions of citizens and the degree of their support. Whenever the government launches a new initiative, it is thus obliged to consider whether it will be seen as legitimate in the eyes of the public, and for this reason, “the policy orientations of the political leadership will never stray far from the basic values of the citizenry.”

Public opinion can be an especially powerful background force in Japan’s international relations, since governmental decision on foreign policy is linked to the state and its people’s perceived interests projected internationally. The international

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relations and foreign policy of one’s country, especially when linked to the physical
security of the state, indeed constitutes “a problem that concerns everyone,” to use Asahi
Shimbun’s definition.

1.2 Mass media as the most influential medium for reflecting public opinion

Even if public opinion is a powerful influence on governmental decisions, it still
requires the means to be transmitted. In this regard, Japanese mass media are accepted
by both the public and the government as its most prominent reflective medium. Major
newspapers are well-established societal organizations that enjoy an especially high level
of respect as credible sources of such information in Japan.¹²

Ellis S. Krauss argues that compared to other democratic systems, a parliamentary
form of government where citizens lack opportunities to directly elect the chief
executive, and an electoral system of multi-member (rather than proportional)
representative constituencies at the national level, have always made it difficult for Japan
to determine the mandate of the people. As a consequence of the Japanese government
system, mass media have been perceived as the representative of society to a greater
extent than in other democracies.¹³ Since electoral votes have not regularly directly

Relations,” Gerald Curtis, ed., New Perspectives on US-Japan Relations (Tokyo: Japan Center for

Pharr and Ellis S. Krauss, eds., Media and Politics in Japan (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1996),
p. 359.
turned the governing party out of office, it is understandable the media have instead been seen as the chief “institutional transmission belts” of public opinion: they have been even regarded as a supplement of civil society in Japan.\(^\text{14}\)

Mass media being seen as the most reliable mirror of the will of the people has significant political implications. Government officials and policy-makers consequently consider mass media – especially the major dailies – as the primary source for gaining access to public opinion and consistently monitor the expressions and interpretations of the people’s mandate written in newspapers. “Voices from all strata of the public, comments and editorials of journalists, letters from the ordinary readers and the viewers, columns with coverage on how ordinary citizens are reacting to a certain issue, and opinion polls” all introduced and transmitted through newspapers, magazines, and television, are always closely watched and viewed by policy-makers.\(^\text{15}\) They constantly inform themselves of some desire or antipathy among the public especially through newspapers, as “everyone around the Japanese government seems to read three papers a day and to take from them his or her own notions of what problems facing the nation deserve attention and what might be done about them.”\(^\text{16}\) The viewpoint they recognize as the mainstream current in society on a given topic constitutes unignorable public opinion in their minds.\(^\text{17}\)


\(^{15}\) Kabashima, Takeshita, and Serikawa, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 119.


\(^{17}\) Kabashima, Takeshita, and Serikawa, \textit{op.cit.}. 

95
This structure makes sense if we consider that once the Japanese public is focused on a particular issue (i.e., publicized), the behaviour of a politician in dealing with the situation also automatically becomes a major criterion for assessing the personal quality and political capacity of the individual.\(^{18}\) For this reason, all sectors of political actors and societal elites rank the media to be the most powerful and influential actor in Japanese politics.\(^{19}\)

2 Limitations of Contemporary Literature Downplaying the Significance of Mass Media in the Japanese Domestic Political Process

Based on the evidence of a society-media-government linkage elaborated so far, it must be noted that contemporary political science literature has significantly underestimated the influence of mass media in the Japanese political process.

Political science literature employing conventional methodologies mention the media “only in passing,” and do not consider them an important, direct cause of policy change.\(^{20}\) Their downplaying of the media stems from the long-held tradition among Western political scientists in upholding analyses of the political efficacy of individuals

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 123.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., pp. 35-37. One of the studies includes a survey conducted by Ikuo Kabashima in 1990. The questionnaires were answered by the leaders of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), opposition parties, major corporations, agricultural interest groups, labour unions, and civil movement. Bureaucrats and other social intellectuals also took part in the survey. Also, Susan J. Pharr, “Media as Trickster in Japan: A Comparative Perspective,” Susan J. Pharr and Ellis S. Krauss, eds., Media and Politics in Japan (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1996), p. 19.

\(^{20}\) Campbell, op.cit., p. 188.
and their active personal involvement.\textsuperscript{21} In his study of the media’s role in United States-Japan relations, Tadokoro Masayuki similarly argues that International Relations’ (IR) emphasis – especially among realists – on state-centric power relations and strategic considerations have misled the discipline to seriously underestimate the role of media images or public opinion in shaping the relations between nations.\textsuperscript{22}

In addition, previous works, even when they do incorporate the role of mass media in Japanese politics, have shown a single-sided tendency to assume strong governmental control over the media sector through policy-makers’ monopoly of insider information. While some academics in journalism have asserted that Japanese government is less inclined to control its press than in most other countries and that Japanese media are rarely restricted,\textsuperscript{23} many political scientists observing Japan have clearly taken the opposite view. An example that has always served as the prominent evidence of this accepted understanding is the existence of the “press club (kisha-kurabu)” system in Japan. Many foreign observers take it for granted that the Japanese

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\textsuperscript{21} Pharr, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 38. It is worth noting, however, that even among individual-centred researchers, there have been arguments to shift their focus more toward policy entrepreneurs’ ability to convince the society especially in the context of Japanese politics, as no policy can succeed in the long-run without constituencies sharing their goal. For example, David A. Welch, “Embracing Normality: Toward a Japanese “National Strategy,”” Yoshihide Soeya, Masayuki Tadokoro, and David A. Welch eds., \textit{Japan as a “Normal Country”? A Nation in Search of Its Place in the World} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).


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97
government must have a considerable influence in setting the agenda for major daily press because of the system.²⁴

Although it is undeniable that the government enjoys the power to distribute official information at its own discretion to the members of the press club, it must be noted that there is also a flip side to this institutional design. A logical consequence of the press club system is that the information obtained by all major dailies and televisions from the government must not much differ. In other words, it is hardly possible for any one major media agency to monopolize exclusive material for a “scoop” by solely taking part in the press club. Therefore, while the press club is clearly a convenient and a reliable system both for the media and the government to access and transmit the official governmental stance, it still constitutes only one source from which mass media would seek quality news materials, especially when the issue of concern is much publicized and is already at the center of wide societal attention.

If we assume that the content of official materials obtained by all major media from the press club are essentially the same, then it is also logical to conclude that it is not the information per se but the political interpretation of it by each media agency that would distinguish one newspaper or television from the other and make one more or less popular among the public. Consequently, all major Japanese media agencies place tremendous importance on being reflective of public sentiment, and they constantly monitor both themselves and society to make sure that their political stances and interpretations do not fundamentally deviate from the mainstream societal attitude on

²⁴ For example, Open Source Center Media Aid, op.cit., p. 7.
publicized issues. In short, the Japanese mass media do not necessarily fawn over the government within a clearly one-sided power structure; producing stories based on insightful and original interpretations that resonate with majority public sentiment matters more to them than the access to government-released information.

This dissertation does not argue that the government has no influence over the media in Japan. Rather, what it emphasizes is another obvious aspect of mass media in any democratic country. The media’s role is to mediate between sources (the government being one of them) and audiences (the public), and the process is always a two-way flow. As evidence above has shown, society exerts tremendous influence over the conduct of Japanese media; what this study thus problematizes is that while the government-media relations have been abundantly documented by previous literatures (in heavily one-sided presentations), the public-media power structure, which directly frames the tone of the media on issues of high interest to the public and which, in turn, also influences the government policy reaction, has been alarmingly overlooked in our previous understanding of Japanese political processes.

3 Neutrality and Pluralism in Japanese Mass Media

As mentioned, the Japanese government heavily relies on mass media content to gauge public opinion. The public, in turn, regards major media press as the “spokesmen” of various opinions in society, and also as informants of important political

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and societal agenda that citizens might not yet be well aware of. Japanese media have won their position by maintaining plurality and neutrality in the way they transmit their information (when, it should be emphasized, the issue at hand does not involve foreign actors or states). What is meant here by “pluralistic” and “neutral” is that their management structures are not organized to systematically support any particular political, economic, societal group or individual. Although it could be argued that the media’s everyday functions can never be purely neutral – as each newspaper or television surely has its preferred political inclination – at least they have an “obsession” for neutrality in their news coverage and one example of it is the wide practice – compared to Western media – of writing news articles in anonymity.26

Rather than merely being obsessive, studies have shown that the claim has an empirical validity. The nature of Japanese mass media’s neutrality and pluralism stems from their management of societal relations. They have always been exceedingly accessible to all societal groups and individual voices (hence not only organized interest groups), and they have purposely maintained intimate and comprehensive relations with all conceivable societal strata in order to constantly take in fresh news information from every available public source (again, not only from the press club).27 Since the media consist of actors in journalism who deliberately keep close relationships with wide-ranging societal institutions and individuals – and of course, the readers of diverse age,  


income, occupation, education, and political background, and whose numbers exceed millions for each major media agency – it is natural that the media’s principle concern is to cover news stories in ways that they would be broadly approved of and conceded to by their pluralistic audiences.\textsuperscript{28} The location of mass media within the societal structure in Japan, therefore, compels these news agencies to strive to be impartial and receptive in their tones to diverse voices, to ensure that they are not out of touch with the overall attitudes of the public. The “neutrality” and “pluralism” of the media – or rather, their receptiveness to (or their flexibility to accommodate – whether voluntarily or reluctantly) the current mainstream voices – have been the core assets of the major Japanese media agencies in sustaining their respective positions within society.

Japanese media’s wide-ranging connections with various groups and individuals and their susceptibility to ongoing domestic discourse – hence their deep embeddedness in society – consequently lead them to play another important social function. It is, as Susan J. Pharr puts it, creating “a sense of bondedness within the community.”\textsuperscript{29} As Pharr argues in her metaphor of the Japanese media as “trickster,” their journalist activities induce citizens’ social evaluation and reflection of common public concerns, and “the high degree of media saturation is a reflection of the importance of this bonding effect in a homogeneous society (\textit{communitas}).”\textsuperscript{30} However, “the bonding effect” here does not mean, in any way, the media’s deliberate program to “indoctrinate” the Japanese

\textsuperscript{28} Abe, Shindō, and Kawato, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 163; Pharr, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 24.

\textsuperscript{29} Pharr, \textit{ibid.}, p. 38.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 24-27, 38.
to share a particular idea – something they cannot do, even if they so desired – but rather a type of socializing process providing the public a structural medium for shared awareness.

The media present focused news on various political and social issues that are already at the center of public attention so that citizens can reconfirm the importance of the agenda and be informed of “trendy” (mainstream) interpretations derived by societal discourse. Or, in case societal awareness concerning a certain agenda is not yet sufficiently proliferated, the media can facilitate such awareness and provide the public stage where diverse voices can engage in domestic discussions on their viewpoints as part of a new societal discourse, which will, in turn, help the media eventually focus on the mainstream societal interpretation once the overall “atmosphere” is pinpointed later on. Again in both cases, what media create is a sense of social unity by facilitating the public to share common agenda of interest and contemplation.

The mass media’s social bonding function and their self-conscious need to accommodate the public’s appetite for interesting topics cause some journalism specialists to lament the Japanese media’s sometimes overly nation-centric selection and presentation that only appeals to the Japanese. But the media’s bonding effect has certainly contributed to wide political participation by promoting psychological

\[\text{Footnote: For example, Kaori Hayashi, \textit{Masumedia Jānarizumu wo Shihai suru “Saidai Tasū no Saidai Kōfuku” no Saidai Fukō (The Absolute Tragedy of the ‘Absolute Happiness to Absolute Majority’ Principle Governing Mass Media Journalism),} Ronza (July, 2008), pp. 26-31.}\]
involvement and political knowledge for everyone, including “opinion leaders” as well as those of lower socio-economic status.\textsuperscript{32}

4 Difference in the Structure of Media-Public Relations Based on the Degree of Political Issues’ Publicity

As mentioned above, the nature of the relationship between the media and public slightly differs based on the degree of publicity of a given news topic. It is, therefore, crucial to understand this differing nuance before moving on to the subsequent chapters, to prevent any misunderstanding as to the media-public influence on foreign policy. Previous studies on Japanese mass media, in addition to their aforementioned too-heavy emphasis on governmental influence over journalism, have also overlooked the implications of how media behaviour differs based on the types and the degree of publicity on a given issue.

Japan, like any advanced democracy, consists of citizens who have interests in various political and social issues, and anyone and any group can vocally present one’s opinion publicly. It is, however, also natural that not everyone is concerned with the same issue to the same magnitude; not all political issues are perceived by the public as equally dramatic or significant. Especially when a case concerns foreign policy, the scope of societal interest and the degree of its publicity could vastly differ depending on

\textsuperscript{32} Krauss, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 369.
the country to which the policy is directed, and the policy’s domestic implications. Therefore, when a particular issue does not elevate itself to be a popular agendum for a wide-ranging societal discourse, or when the nature of the issue makes it difficult for the ordinary citizens to “personalize” it – meaning they relate it to their own lives, interests, and their national identity and pride – the societal discursive current surrounding the issue could be nebulous, in the sense that it would be difficult to locate the majority opinion (as a result of limited participation). This degree of public involvement directly affects the differing behaviour of Japanese mass media.

Political issues generally do not enjoy wide societal attention when they fall into the type of everyday politics with little consequence to the economic and security well-being of ordinary citizens, or those international topics involving routine inter-governmental contacts and negotiations. When the degree of societal engagement is relatively soft and thus without any clear, dominant public attitude, Japanese mass media can be highly versatile in their style of presentation. In this case, mass media have relative freedom to reflect diverse voices from the interested public and provide their own interpretations of the issue’s societal implications with a strong sense of “neutrality” and “pluralism.”

On the other hand, certain political topics invite much wider societal engagement from the start. They are the ones involving strong emotional or moral dimensions; topics such as international issues that provoke citizens’ nationalism (by an act of an external force) or touch upon traditional societal taboos are bound to be at the center of

public attention.\textsuperscript{34} When the nature of the topic is such that there is a strong societal emotional participation from the beginning and the voluntary formation of a clear, mainstream, public discursive undercurrent, the media, in turn, often end up merely reflecting the ongoing trend. Media in such a scenario are generally compelled (by correctly “reading” the societal atmosphere) to report on the majority opinions of the public, and thus further provide a more concrete, discursive “focal point” by their own act of news coverage.

Ötake Hideo argues that the Japanese media have a strong tendency to fawn over readers and viewers (again, not the government); they are especially prone to be swayed by direct criticism – through telephone and fax – from the public.\textsuperscript{35} Therefore, if a particular opinion or an individual is enjoying a nationwide popularity and support, it is unlikely that any media agency would publish articles or send images with an openly critical tone and risk criticism from the whole of the society. According to Ötake, one of the most visible characteristics of the Japanese media under such circumstances is their strong predispositions for “following the crowd/not standing out (yokonarabi taishitsu).”\textsuperscript{36} Consequently, when all media more or less adopt a similar tone of interpretation concerning a particular topic, it is not as a result of deliberate collusion, but rather bandwagoning. As we shall see later, on certain instances in which the majority

\textsuperscript{34} Kabashima, Takeshita, and Serikawa, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 131-133.


\textsuperscript{36} Ibid. “Yokonarabi taishitsu” literally means a “tendency to stand in a single horizontal line.”
public atmosphere is overly dominant, the phenomenon resembling Noelle-Neumann’s “the spiral of silence” could become noticeable.37

The tendency to bandwagon – again, depending on the publicized nature of a political issue – is especially prominent in television broadcasting. In the mid-1990s, Japanese public started to demand new types of news programs better informing them of international and domestic political economies. Media agencies answered the demand by incorporating coverage of international and domestic politics in a so-called “variety show” or “wide show” format. News wide shows have been popular and have enjoyed high viewer ratings, as their coverage is provided in an easy-to-grasp and even entertaining (consequently also overly-simplified) fashion for understanding political and international phenomena. As a result, they have supplemented (or substituted, in the eyes of the general public) more respectable, traditional format prime-time news as the main source of insight on interesting political topics for ordinary citizens.38

Even in the Japanese media industry as a whole, television broadcasting corporations are especially susceptible to what the public want to watch and listen to. As the popularity of wide show news was demonstrated by high viewer ratings, from the 1990s television corporations applied further lessons learned from other news and political debate programs, carefully designing their presentations of political and economic topics (especially well publicized ones) to reflect what the majority of

37 Kabashima, Takeshita, and Serikawa, op.cit., pp. 131-133. “Spiral of Silence” metaphor will be dealt in more detail in Chapter 7.

38 Ōtake, op.cit., pp. 202-208. However it must be also noted that, despite the differing degree of “seriousness” in their coverage, prime-time news of traditional format is not independent of such societal demand either.
interested citizens would like to hear. Program scenarios are usually prewritten based on a already-known, mainstream preference on a particular topic (if there is one), and commentators in political debates on television are “encouraged” to speak in a certain direction; comments that are directly contradictory to the scenario (with a potential to invite controversy or public outcry) are often deleted during editing. Some Japanese experts lament that journalism has become like “the fast-food industry,” as media must keep on supplying shows the consumers want, even when the providers themselves are aware that those products are not necessarily good for the people.

Under these circumstances governing television and other media behaviour in Japan, it is not difficult to fathom why the government’s policies seriously consider the domestic discursive atmosphere, as expressed through media coverage and opinion polls. Increasing political coverage in both newspapers and television, especially concerning international relations and Japanese foreign policy, have facilitated societal awareness and interest, forcing the Japanese government to constantly monitor likely public reaction to its planned actions.

As mentioned, the degree of publicity and societal involvement in each of these political and foreign policy issues produces certain nuance-divergence for media’s domestic operations. When the concerned topic is of genuine interest to the citizens and


when there is a visible majority discursive current (with media bandwagoning further reinforcing the trend), then it is much more likely that public opinion would both lead and constrain government policies. Therefore, what this chapter – and the dissertation as a whole – is claiming is not a simple function of public opinion on Japanese foreign policy. There are numerous foreign policies in which societal influence do not play crucial roles. What it has rather argued is that there are certain types of foreign policy issues that result in a wide range of discursive engagement by the citizenry, and that these cases are the ones in which public opinion must be regarded as a highly influential factor for gauging likely government policy reactions.

5 The Types of Media Sources Used

Based on the analysis of the Japanese media’s influential role on government policymaking, as the chief representation of citizens’ interest and preferences, the rationale for using media sources to determine trends in public opinion and societal discourse is clear. The focus will now be shifted to the exact types of media sources the dissertation will utilize in subsequent chapters, in order to achieve that goal.

This study adopts sources from both academia and media for close scrutiny. Except for interviews, all other data are accessible to the public in either English or Japanese. Again, the primary purpose for adopting particular types of sources is not to unearth any novel data, but to rearrange them to highlight overlooked mechanisms.

Scholars in journalism have long relied on media data as a means to measure public opinion and its background discourse. They are well aware of the fact that systematic assessment of media content reveals rich and textured insights about public
opinion, as popular media texts in a capitalistic economy are popular exactly “because they somehow resonate with cultural norms, values, or sentiments.” In the case of Japanese foreign policy studies, there has not yet been a firmly-established approach for systematically conducting analysis of societal discourse, although there have been countless works that simply use opinion survey data. However, a number of recent works on the topic have emphasized the importance of Japanese newspaper editorials, analyses and columns, and this dissertation concurs with them, especially concerning the editorials.

For example, in his study on the origin of Japanese Cabinet (Kantei)-led diplomacy facilitated by Koizumi Junichirō, Shinoda Tomohito covers “the most traceable opinions expressed in the editorials of Japan’s five major newspapers: Asahi, Mainichi, Nihon Keizai, Sankei, and Yomiuri” as the most expressive of public opinion. He argues that since the Japanese press is considered the most reliable source of information and also enjoys a significant influence on policy as a result (especially on security), jointly utilizing major newspaper editorials and public polls can be a highly effective approach to accessing empirical unfolding of the interaction between these domestic actors.

Another contribution by Linus Hagström and Jon Williamsson, which assesses Japanese foreign security policy changes, also treats editorials and analyses (kaisetsu) of

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42 Glynn, O’Keefe, Shapiro, Lindeman, and Herbst, op.cit., p. 107.


Yomiuri Shimbun and Asahi Shimbun as a “shortcut to gauging normative change” in Japanese society. Although the definition of what constitutes Japanese society somewhat differs between their work and this dissertation – as the former takes elite perception expressed in editorials as the representation of the society’s norm, rather than the discursive undertone of wider societal components – this study is nevertheless in agreement that newspaper editorials are still the best empirical data for contextually tapping into opinions outside of the government. This study thus also incorporates the editorials of those two major dailies in subsequent chapters. In addition, Yomiuri and Asahi are the two largest circulating newspapers, with the former taking a moderately conservative stance (without leaning as far right in the domestic political spectrum as compared to Sankei Shimbun) and the latter being more liberal and progressive; this enables the researcher to examine the general discursive tone of Japanese society in a more balanced fashion.

When we look into how editorials are written each day by major Japanese dailies, the rationale for adopting them as the chief representation of public sentiment becomes even clearer. Everyday, boards of editorialists decide on the theme and the argument for the day, and the decision must be always made, in principle, by unanimous consensus. An editorial is always considered as the official product of ‘integrating everyone’s voices in the company,’ and never regarded as the personal opinion of an individual writer.47


46 Ibid.

Also, when the theme of an editorial relates to a publicized topic in which citizens’ emotions are highly charged, the tone is carefully framed in order to present the newspaper’s stance in a controlled and balanced manner, as not to sound too distant from the dominant, public interpretation and discursive atmosphere. It is because an editorial board is aware that taking a different stance could provoke a strong, adverse reaction from the public and would be counter productive for the position that an individual editor or the newspaper actually stands for in the long-run.  

Therefore, dailies invest much effort in their choice of themes and tones in order to correctly reflect ongoing societal discursive trends, and for also that reason, politicians, bureaucrats, and opinion leaders in various societal strata pay close attention to editorials as one of the most definite grounds for gauging their policies’ legitimacy.

Another media source more popularly regarded as the direct reflection of societal inclination, and also frequently used in this dissertation, are public opinion polls and surveys (yoron chōsa). Japan as a whole, not just the government, heavily depends on opinion polls as the lens through which to observe society in “real-time.” Polls have been respected as one of the symbols of Japanese democracy throughout the postwar period, and they have served as a “mock-referendum” substituting actual direct voting by the citizens on socio-political themes of public interest. But the downside of opinion polls is that, while informative, they only reveal a momentary “snapshot” of public

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48 Yoshibumi Wakamiya, interview with the author, December 17, 2009.

49 Kabashima, Takeshita, and Serikawa, *op.cit.*

50 Matsumoto, *op.cit.*, pp. 13-14, 130.
discourse on an issue; respondents are, after all, asked to instantly react to carefully-framed and worded questions prepared by poll-takers. As mentioned, it is impossible to fully understand the discursive context in which the majority of respondents answer the questions only by relying on the resulting figures. It is, therefore, crucial that a researcher supplement data from polls with editorials, in order to provide more detailed insights on societal discursive trends and the linked public opinions as a more vivid, “moving picture.”

Lastly, the dissertation will also incorporate articles from Japanese monthly journals. While not as scholastic in scope as the typical academic literature of political science, they are nevertheless highly reflective of ongoing societal trends and offer much more nuanced and stepped-in analyses of background societal discourses concerning the topics raised by newspaper articles and editorials of the day. For balance and comprehensiveness, the dissertation will utilize pieces from the following five major monthly journals (in the order reflecting their overall political inclination from conservative to progressive/liberal): Seiron; Bungeishunji; Chukoron; Ronza; and Sekai.

6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a methodological rationale for adopting Japanese media sources – especially the editorials but also including opinion polls – together with more traditional academic literature and monthly journal articles in the subsequent main part of

\[51 \text{Comment by Professor Cheol Hee Park of Seoul National University, at the European Institute of Japanese Studies (EIJS)-Swedish Institute of International Affairs (SIIA) Workshop “Japan-South Korean Relationship,” Stockholm, Sweden (August 21, 2009).}\]
this dissertation. It has argued that the Japanese media are highly perceptive to public opinion, and that they are not necessarily controlled by the government as many previous studies have assumed.

Especially concerning political topics that are highly publicized and well-known among the general public, Japanese media have long assumed the role of reflecting and bandwagoning with dominant societal inclinations and interpretations. For this reason, mass media have been regarded by both the government and the citizens as the chief medium through which to gauge public opinion and background societal discourse. This central aspect of Japanese media is especially important for the case of this dissertation, as it has demonstrated its direct implications on the unfolding of Japan’s North Korea policies.

The main part of the dissertation which follows consists of four chapters. They are divided chronologically into the following periods: 1998-2000, 2000-2002, 2002-2003, and 2004 to the second North Korean missile launch in 2006. Each chapter will analyze how security-related issues involving North Korea during the concerned period were received and interpreted by domestic society, gradually forming a dominant security discourse concerning this neighbouring state. This societal portion will constitute the most important focus for each chapter, as it deals with the nature and the content of societal discourse in each time period, by heavily utilizing related media sources. Then, each chapter will proceed to discuss how public perception, in turn, influenced policymakers’ available options toward North Korea.
CHAPTER 5: JAPAN’S RELATIONS WITH NORTH KOREA BETWEEN 1998 AND 2000 AFTER THE FIRST TAEPODONG MISSILE LAUNCH

In the next four chapters, Japan’s relations with North Korea are empirically traced. Each chapter consists of three parts: first, incidents initiated by North Korea during the particular period are introduced in order to highlight the nature of bilateral relations; second, Japanese societal reactions to the incidents are elaborated upon, with the intensive use of materials that reflect contemporary domestic discourse concerning North Korea and Japanese security more generally; and third, the link between currents in societal discourse and governmental policies toward North Korea and national security will be examined.

Empirical analyses of the period 1998-2006 will clarify that the Japanese government’s policies toward North Korea were largely influenced by shifts in societal discourse, especially from the early 2000s. The chapters will elaborate how the government-society linkage in policy-making toward North Korea strengthened with the accumulation of North Korean-initiated incidents, leading to an increase of threat perception among the public. Logically, the chapters will finally demonstrate the sequential unfolding through which this domestic, societal process facilitated the formation of legitimacy necessary for imposing unilateral sanctions, even prior to North Korea’s second ballistic missile launch in 2006.
Before moving on to the main empirical study in the latter half, this chapter will first cover Japanese security principles and identity during the post-World War II period and their connection to Japan’s policy toward North Korea prior to 1998, in order to provide a contextual background for the main analysis.

1 Japanese Security Identity and Policies during the Postwar Period and Bilateral Relations with North Korea prior to 1998

1.1 Japan’s security identity and the development of the postwar consensus

Numerous works have already dealt with the origin and nature of Japanese security identity after World War II. Scholarly interpretations differ on what that identity has meant for domestic politics and society, but it is generally agreed that, in the aftermath of the war, the majority of Japanese public strongly supported a new Japan that distanced itself from past, great power ambitions and the use of military force, especially toward its neighbours. Scepticism about the use of armed forces was a fundamental attitude of many Japanese and influenced Japan’s subsequent decisions on defence policies; this scepticism also expressed what was known as the “postwar consensus,” built on remorse over the nation’s wartime aggression in Asia.1

1 Akio Watanabe, “Japanese Public Opinion and Foreign Affairs: 1964-1973,” Robert A. Scalapino ed., The Foreign Policy of Modern Japan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 143; Yoshihide Soeya, “The Misconstrued Shift in Japan’s Foreign Policy,” Japan Echo (June, 2006), p. 17. For example, one of the former chief editors of the liberal-progressive monthly Sekai comments that the magazine, launched after the war based on principles of “peace and social justice” and “harmony and solidarity with the peoples of East Asia,” enjoyed a huge popularity at the time since they “struck a chord
During the postwar period, the Japanese rated military power to be non-effective in ensuring Japan’s security: they instead promoted economic development by aligning themselves with the United States, based on the Yoshida Doctrine, which balanced against the realization of extensive military power, despite subsequent changes in both internal and external conditions during the Cold War. In the same vein, Iokibe Makoto – contrary to a widely held interpretation of the Japanese Constitution (and Article 9) as having been imposed on Japan by the United States – argues that during the same period of the so-called American “MacArthur draft,” Japanese architects in the government, such as Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru, were directly involved in a constitutional draft of their own that reflected the same antimilitaristic principles prevalent in public attitude: their ideas were subsequently incorporated into the final version. 

Mainichi Shimbun conducted one of the first postwar opinion surveys on the constitutional issue on May 27, 1946, asking the public whether they saw the need for a clause repudiating Japan’s sovereign right to conduct war: 70% responded yes, illustrating that the current Constitution was generally supported by the majority of citizens as the ideological backbone on which Japan should reconstruct a new state.

Of course, contrary to claims highlighting the “Japanese origin” of the new Constitution, we may still argue whether, or to what extent, the Japanese rejection of

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4 Cited from *Asahi Shimbun* editorial, May 3, 2000, p. 2.
militarism and hegemonic power ambitions was purely derived from remorse over past actions toward their neighbours and the international community. Some scholars have pointed out that rather than stemming from a moral conviction, the Japanese readily embraced pacifism because the defeat brought “a sense of relief and liberation” from a war they never considered themselves fully devoted to in terms of ideas or causes: a memory many Japanese simply tried to make sense of as “a misfortune that befell them” due to powers beyond their control.⁵ Therefore, it is a plausible interpretation that the notion of peace becoming a defining value of the postwar era originated more from “a determination never to be horribly victimized by war” themselves, than from the remorse toward outsiders.⁶

Others likewise doubt the sincerity of the Japanese government’s postwar, antimilitaristic policies and conciliatory gestures toward its neighbours. These scholars point out that rather than an automatic embodiment of pacifist ideals, the underlying principles and the direction of Japanese foreign and security policies were always internally debated by right-leaning conservatives and left-wing socialists and communists. From this perspective, the meaning of the Japanese government’s numerous apologies to its neighbours is interpreted as the product of political, cost-benefit calculations and mere compromises among politicians and bureaucrats for the

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⁵ Watanabe, op.cit., pp. 111-112.

sake of domestic politics. 7 Miyashita Akitoshi also argues that the postwar norms of antimilitarism and pacifism were not necessarily products of internal, normative convictions: although Japanese public and politics did indeed wholeheartedly embrace them, it was not because of remorse but rather a realization that it would best serve Japan’s material interest in a new, postwar world structure. 8

Doubts as to the genuineness of postwar, pacifist sentiment correctly convey one aspect of societal and political trends that surely must have existed during the postwar period. However, it would equally be an overstatement to argue that the subsequent security policies rejecting great power ambition and the institutionalization of antimilitarism were mere functional decision by calculating politicians, or that Japanese society did not exert influence over the general direction of Japan’s future. Focusing on fierce intra-governmental debates between key political actors runs the risk of overshadowing the existence of a more fundamental consensus shared by both the government and mainstream society.

Again, it is true that politicians and politically-active citizens belonging to either the extreme right or the left of the political spectrum had always engaged in heated debates, and they certainly would not have agreed on anything at policy-level. However, the very existence of debate between these groups should not lead us to a simple conclusion that they were the only ones leading actual security policy formulation,


or that there was no broader consensus over antimilitarism and the rejection of great power ambitions. What should be equally emphasized is the historical fact that “despite intra-governmental debate and animosity, socialists and mainstream conservatives, especially in the newly formed Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), could still agree that Japan must discard its traditional ‘Rich Nation, Strong Army (Fukoku Kyōhei)’ doctrine and instead find a realistic means to pursue the ‘Rich Nation (Fukoku)’ portion in line with widespread societal demand for a peaceful development strategy.”

Governmental and societal debates on national security and Japan’s relations with its neighbours were neither narrowly confined to the legal status or the legitimate role of the military, nor to the validity of its so-called “diplomacy of apology.” It is important to note that while there were open disagreements at the level of individual policy implementations, any debate on national security concurrently involved the fundamental issue of preventing the resurgence of pre-war militarism/fascism: this is one area where the Japanese did reach a consensus. The absolute majority of the public agreed that the principle of democratic control of Japan’s security policies must be central and the political elites agreed to the institutionalization of democratic principles in security and foreign policy areas.

Therefore, it matters less whether the origin of Japan’s postwar security stance stemmed from the country’s genuine remorse, considering the fact that the public and elites alike felt the absolute necessity of reversing the country’s pre-war course.

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9 Makoto Iokibe, interview with the author, December 18, 2009.
Renouncing the conduct of pre-war Japan – because it resulted in tragedy for the Japanese themselves or for their neighbours, depending on one’s interpretive priority – constituted the most significant element in the departure from the past. The renunciation was embedded in new security principles that would orient the country towards limiting its military power projection and conducting non-coercive and pacifist diplomacy through the institutionalization of democratic control. Of course, as numerous past works have noted, there have been individual policies which have not always seemed to be in line with this mainstream public perception. However, the divergence between certain, issue-specific policies and broad, public sentiment during the postwar have been the government’s “tactical” decisions, not “strategic,” since Japanese political elites share the orientation of society, being part of mass as well as elitist culture.\(^{11}\)

In light of the new postwar security identity, it is not wholly unconceivable that an “ideal” international environment might have allowed Japan to move closer in the direction of unarmed neutrality. Indeed, as a logical extension of the security identity, one perception that had a significant resonance among Japanese during the early postwar period was that as long as Japan did not start another war and rejected the very notion of military deterrence, the country would avoid entangling itself and enjoy “perpetual peace.”\(^{12}\) However, the reality of the Cold War compelled Japan to recognize that


unarmed neutrality had become an unrealistic option and that literal fulfillment of the constitutional renunciation of military potential had also lost its international relevance. The government was certainly adaptive in accepting the shifting international environment, as the alliance with the United States and the establishment of the Self Defence Forces (SDF) illustrate, and some political elites surely would have considered this reality a blessing.

Some interpret this move as evidence of the government forming national strategies contrary to the broader societal identity, or of the demise of short-lived, postwar antimilitarism (an interpretation linked to the claim that the identity of pacifism was an academic myth from the beginning). Closer to reality is that the mainstream Japanese public, like the government, also understood the simple fact that hard compromise and delicate balance between realities and ideals would have to be made, in order to maintain national security while upholding the principle of renouncing their militaristic past. In fact, the societal majority was willing to accept certain “necessary evils” of compromise, if they would actually further higher priorities: prevent the resurgence of pre-war militarism and guarantee smooth national reconstruction, democracy, and security. The public still felt strong, emotional attachments to the socialists and other left-leaning political organizations that opposed the alliance with the United States and even limited rearmament – not necessarily because the majority supported the ideology of the Eastern bloc, but because those parties still stood for a more

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literate form of the postwar identity— but they drew a pragmatic line between idealism and reality, which should guide actual policies. Therefore, the compromise between identity and policy represented by the alliance and the SDF is not necessarily evidence of waning antimilitaristic principles, but rather an unavoidable process of finding realistic means of maintaining it in the context of the Cold War.

By the 1960s, maintaining the alignment with the United States (and therefore supporting neither unarmed neutrality nor the Eastern bloc) and defensive military capability within the context of that alliance constituted a firm consensus in mainstream politics and society. The success of this strategic design further reinforced the people’s opposition to Japan’s participation in hegemonic power politics and unnecessary amendment of security institutions to permit more full-scale rearmament: two dangerous ideas which still reminded the Japanese people of the “dark era of the pre-war period.”

The alliance with the United States especially illustrates that the postwar identity was still dominant in Japanese society, despite policy-level compromises. Even once the alliance was accepted as unavoidable, the public made sure its voice was heard, in order to maintain a balance between dogmatic, postwar, pacifist identities and international security realities. For example, during the late 1950s and 1960s, mass demonstrations took place criticizing the government policy of further strengthening military ties with the United States (anpo-tōsō). Rather than pushing for simple, anti-American agenda or more literal application of idealistic pacifism in security policy-

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making (although left-wing political organizations bandwagoning with the crowd certainly would have liked to proceed in that direction), the majority of the participants were rather concerned that aligning too closely with the United States would lead Japan to unwilling entanglement in hegemonic war between the great powers. Also, while the following aspect of the anpo-tōsō is not well noticed in the West, a more fundamental reason for the public outcry had less to do with the alliance itself than the fact that Japanese people were determined to resist the “shadow of the pre-war” they saw in the images of the governmental elites in charge of national security (such as then-Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke).  

Throughout the Cold War, the consensus enabled Japan to prioritize its economy and maintain its national security without burdening itself with the dangers of international entanglement or excessive military buildup. The success of this security strategy through the postwar period led to an increasing confidence the Japanese felt in having made the right choice and they could live without fear of a plausible, direct external threat. Excepting the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, neither the public nor the political elite thought it credible to expect an attack from abroad, and opinion surveys during the 1960s and the early 1970s strongly confirm this majority perception.  

The prevalence of the postwar, antimilitarist identity and the institutionalization of consensus in mainstream society of balancing idealism and reality in security policies

15 Ibid., p. 118.

16 Thomas Berger, “From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan’s Culture of Anti-militarism,” Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller eds., East Asian Security (An International Security Readers) (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996), p. 318; The result of opinion surveys is from Watanabe, op.cit., p. 116. Based on Mainichi Shimbun polls, only 3% of the respondents in June 1968 thought there was a likelihood of an attack. The figures were 5% in October 1969, and 4% in April, 1972.
was surely not welcomed by everyone. Some right-leaning politicians and academics certainly considered the identity and security design to be too naïve. Even moderate conservative elites with a more realpolitik understanding of the international system argued that the public, through education, should be enlightened as to the more assertive military capability necessary for Japan to achieve a truly-functioning deterrence. Throughout the Cold War period, however, these types of proposals never won a wide following either in society or in politics as a part of the mainstream discourse.

1.2 Japan’s relations with North Korea before 1998

As a natural extension of the postwar identity, it is not surprising that Japan’s relations with its neighbours were sensitive to possible charges of resurgent neo-colonialism and that Japan strove to avoid direct political and economic confrontations, as well as military conflicts. Japanese foreign policy in Asia was, therefore, geared more toward confidence-building and reconciliation, mainly using the formula of diplomatic normalization and economic cooperation through the provision of official development assistance (ODA) as a means of paying for war reparations.

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17 Matake Kamiya, “Gunjiiryoku e-no Kyohi Hannō wo Kokufuku surunoga Senketsu-da (The first priority must be to overcome the adverse reaction to military power),” Chūōkōron (July, 2003), pp. 54-55.


focus our attention to Japan’s basic stance toward the Korean Peninsula in general and toward North Korea in particular, we find that its principle foreign policy goal was thus largely confined to the careful support of regional stability and the status quo.\(^{21}\)

In postwar, diplomatic interactions with the two Koreas, the Japanese were reluctant to openly express their concern over security issues of the peninsula, since any Japanese initiative beyond supporting inter-Korean dialogue could be perceived by Koreans as a sign of interference.\(^{22}\) Such caution was not confined to government foreign policy. The public was equally passive concerning Japan’s role in any potential contingency on the peninsula, even if it would have a direct consequence on Japanese security. For example, as late as 1997, a year prior to the Taepodong missile launch, 39% of the Americans who were asked about contingencies in Korea responded that they expect a military response from Japan, as an ally, should the United States got involved, while only 2% of the Japanese favoured their country’s participation.\(^{23}\)

In line with societal perceptions, Japan’s foreign policy doctrine towards South Korea was to maintain cordial, bilateral relations while sidestepping any direct military cooperation in the United States-South Korea-Japan triangular alliance; likewise, its


\(^{23}\) Murata, *ibid.*, p. 146. Notice that the survey was taken after the first North Korean nuclear crisis of 1994.
doctrine towards North Korea was to keep non-political contacts on a case-by-case capacity, to circumvent unnecessary disputes.\textsuperscript{24} Japan’s non-political contacts with North Korea were well-maintained throughout the Cold War. Especially after signing private-sector agreements on trade in 1972 and fishing in 1977, other moderate steps were also taken in economic and cultural spheres\textsuperscript{25} and bilateral trade was stable around $500 million per year, even into the 1990s.\textsuperscript{26} Again reflecting the general societal trend, Japanese media throughout the 1960s to 1980s emphasized the need for maintaining “peace and friendship (heiwa to yūkō)” between Japan and the North, despite a number of North Korean terrorist activities against South Korea which occasionally destabilized regional security.\textsuperscript{27}

With the end of the Cold War, the Japanese government also reached out to better official, bilateral relations, in a way updating its previously cautious stance. This is an interesting development, since the years immediately following the end of the Cold War are generally interpreted by many Japan experts to be the starting point of the so-called, “rightist” foreign policy orientations, especially after its diplomatic embarrassment in the first Gulf War.


\textsuperscript{26} Michael J. Green, Japan’s Reluctant Realism: Foreign Policy Challenges in an Era of Uncertain Power (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 117.

Japanese initiatives started with Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru’s Diet statement on March 30, 1989, in which he expressed “deep remorse (ikan)” to the people of the peninsula and his willingness to improve official relations with North Korea.\(^{28}\) That same day, the first Dietary delegation made up of LDP and Japan Socialist Party (JSP) politicians headed for Pyongyang.\(^{29}\) In September, 1990 another LDP-JSP delegation – this time led by Kanemaru Shin, the “godfather of the LDP” – visited North Korea. Kanemaru agreed with Premier Kim Il-Sung that negotiations for diplomatic normalization must start and that Japan would acknowledge its responsibility for damages incurred by North Koreans during both pre- and post-World War II periods. Although the latter agreement with North Korea caused an obvious uproar in the Japanese government, negotiations nevertheless started, continuing until February, 1992.\(^{30}\) This “Kanemaru mission” was then followed by two more delegations: a 1995 mission, led by influential Katō Kōichi of the LDP and made up of LDP, JSP, and Sakigake Party Diet members, presented the North with 500,000 tons of rice to “move a step closer to diplomatic normalization,” followed by a 1997 mission led by the even-more-influential Mori Yoshirō of the LDP.\(^{31}\) The 1997 delegation is especially significant for the purpose of this dissertation, as it illustrates the extent that Japanese

\(^{28}\) Togo, *op.cit.*


\(^{30}\) Togo, *op.cit.*, p. 185.

government was willing to compromise with the North in order to better bilateral relations after the Cold War.\textsuperscript{32}

During this period immediately following the end of the Cold War, diplomatic normalization with North Korea was perceived by ambitious LDP leaders as a political winner that could help their names be engraved in Japanese history.\textsuperscript{33} Contrary to the risk-averse stance of Japan toward North Korean affairs during the Cold War, leaders of the LDP, and even those of the opposition parties (socialists and communists who had been emotionally pro-North all along), started to see a better political relationship with the North as a risk worth taking, even if it could involve problematic and appeasing agreements. It would be a highly symbolic and politically beneficial achievement for both politicians and Japan to secure amicable relations with the last, neighbouring state with which Japan did not have official, diplomatic ties. This goal would remain unchanged until Koizumi Junichirō’s visit to Pyongyang in 2002.

The Japanese public was still generally passive, neither openly supporting nor opposing the changing bilateral dynamics, although the societal atmosphere was largely in favour of “peace and friendship,” in principle. It is, therefore, important to note that contrary to the heightened public attention and threat perception toward North Korea as seen in the early 2000s, there was not yet open opposition to the normalization of relations. Society was generally neutral to governmental interaction with the North and somewhat lenient on domestic issues involving pro-North Korean communities in Japan.

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\textsuperscript{32} Refer to footnote 76.

\textsuperscript{33} Ōtake, Koizumi Junichirō Popyurizumu no Kenkyū – Sono Senryaku to Shuhō, op.cit., p. 202; Green, op.cit.
Huge amounts of political funds had been flowing into the LDP and JSP from the *pachinko* industry, and *Chōsen-Sōren* was able to send a wide range of financial support to Pyongyang. In this trend of public apathy, politicians and various organizations could freely interact with North Korea without facing public scrutiny and friendly links with the North were not necessarily career-killers for politicians, as would become the case a decade later.

2 Japan-North Korea Relations: 1998-2000

2.1 Bilateral issues of the period

There were two North Korean-initiated incidents between 1998 and 2000. The first was the North Korea’s launching of *Taepodong* intercontinental ballistic missile across Japan in August, 1998; the second was the appearance of so-called “mystery/spy ships (*fushinsen*)” off the coast near Noto Peninsula in March, 1999.

Around noon on August 31, 1998, North Korea’s new, two-stage ballistic missile, later confirmed as *Taepodong*, was launched eastbound, in the direction of Japanese airspace. A portion of its warhead landed on the Pacific Ocean, marking the first

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34 Green, *ibid. Pachinko* industry is largely owned by ethnic Koreans in Japan, many of whom have attachments to North Korea.

35 *Jochongryun* in Korean; pro-North Korea organization made up of Korean ethnic communities residing in Japan. It has been considered the *de facto* representative of the North Korean regime in Japan.

instance in which a missile flew over the Japanese isles. At the time of the incident, it could not be confirmed whether the missile’s trajectory was in or above the atmosphere – in the case of the former, it would be a violation of international law on sovereign airspace – and it was also presumed that the purpose of the launch was an exercise, not an attack on Japan. A multi-stage ballistic missile from a neighbouring country flying over the homeland without prior warning, for the first time in postwar history, spread an unprecedented shock throughout Japan. The next day, the Chief Cabinet Secretary Nonaka Hiromu issued an official statement of protest, saying that the missile gravely undermined the peace and security of Japan and Northeast Asia.

The second incident of the period occurred on March 25, 1999. Two unidentified vessels, so-called mystery/spy ships (fushinsen), appeared off Noto Peninsula on the northwest coast of Japan, heading north. While they disguised themselves as Japanese fishing boats, they were equipped with numerous antennas and were extremely fast. They were presumed to be from North Korea, but no proof could be obtained by the Japanese government at the time of their appearance. However, then-Prime Minister Obuchi Keizō ordered the Maritime Self Defence Forces (MSDF) and the Japanese Coast Guards (JCG) to the area, marking the first, post-World War II

39 Two weeks later, the United States government concluded that it was a failed satellite launch. Asahi Shimbun editorial, September 18, 1998, p. 5.
instance of Japanese naval vessels firing warning shots. During the chase that followed, MSDF and the JCG in fact considered shooting the rudders of the mysterious boats. But they eventually decided against that option and limited themselves to warning shots, as the officers were reluctant to take responsibility for the consequences of their “excessive misadventure,” in case accidental death or injuries (kashitsu-chishi) occurred to the personnel aboard fushinsen. After the Japanese government confirmed that the two boats entered a North Korean harbour after their successful escape, it again issued a statement of protest, but without a demand that the boats or crews be handed over.

2.2 Societal reactions

Understandably, after the 1998 Taepodong launch, North Korea became a serious security concern in the minds of the Japanese. Although it had been known to policymakers, the provocative missile launch confirmed the fact that Japan was indeed vulnerable to potential attack of the same kind and this clearly agitated the Japanese public’s threat perception of North Korea. The fushinsen incident, barely a year later, provided an additional source of anxiety in the minds of the Japanese that their country was lacking even the basic means of enforcing its maritime sovereignty. Overly self-

41 Asahi Shimbun editorial, March 25, 1999, p. 5.
42 Asahi Shimbun editorial, March 25, 2000, p. 5.
43 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, April 1, 1999, p. 3.
44 Funabashi, op.cit., p. 7; Christopher W. Hughes, Japan’s Re-emergence as a ‘Normal’ Military Power (New York: Adelphi Papers, Routledge, 2006), p. 44.
controlled reactions by the MSDF and the JCG – though Japan’s sovereignty was clearly breached, the Japanese government’s official reaction was confined to verbal protest – not only worsened Japanese perception of North Korea, but also their own country’s handling of the situation.\textsuperscript{45} From this period on, it is important to note, we are able to observe more frequent criticisms from certain major media toward an “almost theological adherence” to the so-called “peace naivety (heiwa-boke)” of the postwar period, which had prevented realistic and effective countermeasures against a clear and present violation of Japanese sovereignty.\textsuperscript{46}

The repercussions of the two incidents in the post-Cold War context, therefore, went further than a simple agitation toward North Korea. Security-conscious sectors of the media reflected on the structural failure of Japan’s postwar, regional diplomacies, conducted without an adequate backing of “power” to secure its rights, as demonstrated by North Korea’s taking advantage of these Japanese practices.\textsuperscript{47} The exposed limitations of national contingency plans provided ample opportunities for the Japanese public to pay more attention to the regional environment from a more realistic viewpoint; it thus led to a better societal setting for questioning the persuasiveness of “pacifism as the only means to prevent entanglement in international conflict,” a postwar dogma long


\textsuperscript{46} Yomiuri Shimbun editorials, January 1 and May 3, 1999, p. 3. This is the time when the term “sovereignty (shuken)” makes increasing appearances when North Korean issues are covered.

\textsuperscript{47} Yomiuri Shimbun Editorial Committee, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 147-148.
espoused by progressive factions in society.\textsuperscript{48} Confirming this subtle reconfiguration of security perception in the late 1990s, former Prime Minister Asō Tarō, in an interview in 2006, commented that: \textit{“the prevailing winds of Japanese public opinion apparently changed direction with North Korea’s test launch of its Taepodong missile.”}\textsuperscript{49}

The two incidents undoubtedly stirred a new threat perception and North Korea came to the forefront of public attention. Anxiety was clearly heightened as a result of the North Korean actions and the inability of the Japanese government to respond: this societal concern was widely reflected in security debates. Before moving on, it must be noted that this new development did not necessarily mark the beginning of “the new strategic thinking” as a prelude for discarding Japan’s postwar security principles, contrary to some interpretations that it was the turning point for Japan’s “shift to the right” in the security realm. Despite the genuine shock and the impact on Japanese perception of North Korea, the security discourse which unfolded between 1998-2000 was still well within the framework of the postwar security identity, and the general population did not consciously intend to use this opportunity to reject the nation’s overarching security principles of the past.\textsuperscript{50}

Compared to security discourse prior to the missile launch, the period between 1998 and 1999 can indeed be interpreted as a transition of sorts. However, to reiterate, this transition in security perception was mainly visible in the way that society more

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun} editorial, May 22, 2000, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{49} Tarō Asō and Shōichi Watanabe, “A Talk with the Foreign Minister,” \textit{Japan Echo} (October, 2006), pp. 9-12. (Italics added.)

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Asahi Shimbun} editorial, August 28, 1999, p. 5.
openly expressed its concern and anxiety over the demonstrated limitations of Japan’s response. But contrary to the expectations of many observers, the transition certainly did not involve a wholesale transformation of the societal view of North Korea as an enemy, or the rejection of its traditional security principles all together. In fact, it is interesting to note that the trend did not maintain momentum after the incidents and that during domestic elections that followed in 2000, security was not a critical issue for all the constituents.51 In this regard, the true significance of this period is that societal anxiety over North Korea provided a preliminary stage on which future security discourse would be debated, following additional provocations from the North in later years.

The eye-opening experience of the North Korean shocks caused the general public to be more conscious about national security, but this consciousness was still largely abstract, once the actual incidents had passed. As a result, the heightening of concern did not necessarily lead to sufficient, societal mobilization for forming a mainstream consensus on alternative, security policy preferences. Besides registering its anxiety to the government, the role of the Japanese society during this period was not sufficiently focused to be able to influence government policies toward a particular direction. Contrary to the strengthening societal influence on North Korean issues in the next decade, what we instead observe in the societal and media discourse during the late 1990s is that despite the new security consciousness, concern was mainly confined to debates on the adequateness of measures already sought out by the government.

51 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, June 18, 2000, p. 3.
Concerning countermeasures for possible, future missile threats, the debate centered on the feasibility of two government proposals: joining the Theater Missile Defence (TMD) with the United States, and starting Japan’s own spy-satellite program. While the heightened threat perception clearly helped the two programs obtain a green light, the moderate left and right mainstream media debated the merits and demerits of the programs in the light of the postwar security identity. For example, Yomiuri supported the TMD and independent satellite programs, claiming that any sovereign nation would seriously consider an air defence system against a possible attack from abroad. However as an example of the postwar security identity still largely setting the boundaries of acceptable discourse, it is interesting to observe that Yomiuri made multiple emphases that it supported the programs, as they were not in any conflict with Japan’s exclusively defence-oriented security principles of the postwar period (senshu-bōei). On the other hand Asahi, while not taking an opposing stance in the midst of societal anxiety, shifted focus to the potential, negative consequences of the programs – such as cost-benefit efficiency of allocating a huge budget to untested projects, or Japan initiating a new arms race in East Asia – and proposed that Japan must put heavier emphasis on alleviating the general threat-level in the region.

Concerning the fushinsen, a similar pattern of debate is visible. While both streams of the security debate recognized the seriousness of the situation, Asahi took a

52 For example, Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, September 1, 1998, p. 3.
53 For example, Yomiuri Shimbun editorials, September 3, 12, 1998 and February 5, 1999, p. 3.
54 For example, Asahi Shimbun editorials, September 1, 5, 22, 1998, p. 5.
more cautious stance on the MSDF’s involvement and the firing of warning shots, as this could, if not regulated properly, undermine the doctrine of senshu-bōei.\textsuperscript{55} Yomiuri, on the other hand, focused on the failure to seize the vessels, arguing that overly stringent standard operating procedures for the use of MSDF weapons were at fault.\textsuperscript{56}

2.3 Japanese Government policy responses

As mentioned, heightened threat perception and anxiety among the public did not necessarily directly influence policy during this period. In this regard, compared to the government’s North Korea policy-making process in the next decade, decision-makers could formulate policies relatively independent of societal pressure.

However, the reaction of the government was similarly characterised by a heightened sense of external threat from North Korea and self-consciousness of Japan’s inability to prevent it. During Dietary debates in the autumn of 1998 and the spring of 1999, all parliamentarians shared common concerns that Japanese sovereignty had been infringed upon and that its security might be seriously threatened; they felt deep frustration over Japan’s inability to prevent North Korean provocations.\textsuperscript{57}

However, similar to the societal level, North Korean incidents during this period did not lead to the government’s wholesale restructuring of its North Korea policies in the direction of confrontation. The government, despite implementing certain defensive

\textsuperscript{55} For example, Asahi Shimbun editorials, March 25, 1999, and March 25, 2000, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{56} Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, March 25, 1999, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{57} Togo, op.cit., p. 188.
policy measures to better manage similar threats in the future, still maintained the strategy of diplomatic normalization through dialogue. Concerning the ballistic missile threat, even after 1998 the Japanese government limited itself in coordinating its policies with those of the United States and South Korea, without being a direct negotiating party with the North, as they considered themselves to lack any diplomatic leverage to conduct bilateral talks on this particular issue.58

In addition to weak societal influence on security policies during the late 1990s, the composition of the ruling party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and security decision-makers also contributed to the limited tones of Japanese policy responses. Compared to the strong leadership and populist tendency of the Koizumi administration in the next decade, which was more prone to societal input and political risk-taking in foreign policy, the LDP in 1998-1999, led by Prime Minister Obuchi, was still in a relatively weak position within the ruling coalition with the Liberal Party (Jiyūtō) and in a difficult process of political recovery after the resignation of LDP Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō.59 As maintenance of the coalition and political stability took priority, policymaking was characterized by an overall aversion to unnecessarily drastic risk-taking, as any reshuffling of traditional security policy practices might also invite


unintended political consequences. Some media point out that this precise nature of the ruling party – overly focused on maintaining harmony with the coalition and the Diet – is at the heart of failing to foresee and boldly prepare for possible security contingencies.\(^{60}\)

Of course, in response to the *Taepodong* and the *fushinsen*, the Japanese government during this period put into practice certain security measures that have been well-noted by Japan observers, such as the decision to join the Theater Missile Defence (TMD) with the United States and the launching an independent spy-satellite program. However, it should also be noted that the policies adopted were defensive countermeasures that did not directly impose consequences on North Korea.

There were four policy responses to the North Korean ballistic missile incident. The first was the utilization of the United Nations (UN) in order to take part in multilateral condemnation. After expressing “a strong sense of regret/dissatisfaction (*kiwamete tsuyoi ikan no i*)” to the North Korean ambassador to the UN,\(^{61}\) Japan demanded the Security Council pass a resolution condemning the launch. But it did not materialize; the UN instead issued a Security Council President’s press statement, a mere symbolic gesture.\(^{62}\) Confining itself to limited vocal criticism, Japan did not press for further measures in the UN.\(^{63}\)

The second response was also multilateral in nature. Just before the *Taepodong* launch, the member states of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization

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60 For example, *Yomiuri Shimbun* editorial, September 1, 1999, p. 3.


62 Green, *op.cit.*, p. 126.

KEDO\(^{64}\) were coincidentally in the process of allocating the financial contributions of each member for the construction of the planned light-water reactor. After the launch, on September 3, 1998, the executive board members of KEDO (the United States, South Korea, Japan, and the EU) agreed to postpone this decision, for the time being.\(^{65}\) Although this could be interpreted as a type of sanction in which Japan took part, this measure is fundamentally different from the subsequent Japanese-imposed sanctions in 2006 in three aspects. First, contrary to the sanctions in 2006 in which Japan acted unilaterally, the decision in 1998 was fully multilateral. Second, contrary to the 2006 sanctions, which are still in effect as of March, 2011, the temporary suspension of financial contributions in 1998 was lifted within two months (October 21, 1998) by KEDO and Japan agreed to provide its share through multilateral agreement with the other member states.\(^{66}\) Finally, it was not intended to directly inflict damage upon the North – in the case of the 2006 sanctions, the flow of money, people, and goods from Japan were summarily prohibited – as the member states of KEDO, especially South Korea and the United States, did not want to break up the difficultly-negotiated framework of the organization.\(^{67}\) Therefore, although the postponement of financial contributions by KEDO members for two months did constitute a symbolic pressure on North Korea, the effect of this demonstration was limited at best and its meaning in the

\(^{64}\) This multilateral framework was established after the first North Korean nuclear crisis in 1994 in order to pressure the North to freeze and eventually dismantle its nuclear program while the member states provided a light-water reactor.

\(^{65}\) Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, September 3, 1998, p. 3.


\(^{67}\) Michishita, op.cit., pp. 78-79.
Japanese domestic political context is not of the equal significance as the later unilateral sanctions in 2006.

The third and the fourth security policy responses involved the earlier-mentioned Japanese participation in the United States-led Missile Defence (MD) initiative and the launching of its own spy satellite program. As with societal and media consideration of the issue, domestic politics went through extensive internal debates on Japanese participation, but the government eventually confirmed its intention to take part in joint US-Japan research of TMD in December, 1998. Because it was purely defensive and did not infringe on the past Diet resolution concerning the “peaceful use of space,” the system was interpreted to be compatible with the basic principles of postwar, Japanese national security. Legislation authorizing four new indigenous spy satellites to be launched by 2002 soon followed. Finally, besides TMD, Japan also agreed to further cooperation with the United States for developing Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD), another pillar of the MD system. The relatively swift implementation of these proposals and the lack of strong opposition from both public and other political parties testify to the boosting affect of the North Korean shock.

Concerning the *fushinsen*, no direct demand was made of North Korea to investigate the incident or to prevent such events from happening in the future; the changes that followed as a result of the incident were all internal. The Japan Defence

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70 Michishita, *op.cit.*., p. 86.
Agency (JDA) requested the budget to establish three platoon-sized special teams in the MSDF to enable the boarding of such vessels.\textsuperscript{71} And in March of 2000, JCG and JDA jointly published a new manual for responding to maritime incursion, stating that although the JCG would be responsible for interception, MSDF could be dispatched for supporting roles with the consent of the Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{72}

In short, the Japanese government responded to the shock with moderate policy shifts in its defensive capabilities, but did not undergo a significant reformulation of its postwar security principles. While this aspect of the Japanese reaction has already been well analyzed by others, another side of the North Korea policy during the same period, which actually better characterizes the Japanese government’s basic stance toward North Korea, has been comparatively overlooked.

After the previous Kanemaru mission to Pyongyang in 1990, the LDP had fostered a channel of dialogue with the North throughout the 1990s and this “default engagement position” was maintained even after 1998.\textsuperscript{73} As a result, while both the government and the public were struggling to make sense of an increased awareness of North Korean threats in a confusing atmosphere, the government, surprisingly, initiated a concurrent diplomatic move. Another multi-party delegation, this time led by former

\begin{footnotes}
\item[71] Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, September 1, 1999, p. 3.
\item[72] Asahi Shimbun editorial, March 25, 2000, p. 5.
\end{footnotes}
Socialist Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi, was sent to Pyongyang to mitigate tensions, even at the cost of being seen as too yielding and conciliatory.

This often overlooked dimension of Japanese policy during 1998-2000 symbolizes the complicated and the multifaceted nature of the government and societal view of North Korea. It almost gives an observer the impression that the Japanese were much more eager to normalize diplomatic relations with the North. In short, although the Japanese opened their eyes to the actual threat from the North and partially updated their defensive capabilities, the shock was not yet fundamentally earthshaking or long-lasting enough to force the government and the public to discard their traditional, postwar approaches toward the North.

The Murayama delegation arrived in Pyongyang on December 4, 1999, about eight months after the fushinsen incident. As usual, it was made up of multi-party Diet members, including those from the LDP, and the prime objective of the visit was still to pave the road for diplomatic normalization. Both sides promptly agreed to restart negotiations. 74 Aside from reopening the official channel of dialogue, however, what deserves special attention, as a reflection of the Japanese stance toward the North during this period, is the mutually agreed upon official agenda for the talk. Although the Japanese initially commented on the ballistic missile issue, the North Koreans declined to discuss, arguing that any state had the right to possess one. The fushinsen was not even mentioned by either side from the beginning. 75 As a result, the Japanese let go of the


75 Ibid.
opportunity to directly address the two most serious security concerns to the Japanese in
the subsequent normalization talks, as they were concerned that annoying the North
Koreans by raising those issues could break up the negotiation all together.

Also, when the Japanese delegate cautiously asked for North Korean cooperation
in investigating the not-yet-confirmed suspicion of Japanese citizens being abducted by
the North,

North Koreans flatly denied any connection, asserting that the very use of
the term “abduction (rachi - napchi in Korean)” was an expression of Japanese
aggression toward North Korea.

While the North Koreans “offered” to conduct internal investigation of the “missing persons” through the International Red Cross from

\[\text{RAW TEXT END}\]
a humanitarian standpoint,\textsuperscript{78} this issue likewise failed to become an official inter-
governmental agenda for diplomatic normalization talks afterwards.

Following the Murayama delegation’s recommendations to both governments, diplomatic normalization meetings restarted on April 8 and on August 25, 2000, these being, respectively, the ninth and the tenth time such governmental negotiations had taken place since the Kanemaru mission of 1990. Prior to the meeting, probably as an initial trust-building measure, the Japanese government responded in March to the World Food Program (WFP)’s request to send 100,000 tons of rice to North Korea.\textsuperscript{79} During the negotiations in April, the Japanese representatives assured North Korean counterparts that Japan would sincerely respect the contents of the so-called “Murayama statement of wartime remorse and apology to Asia” made in August 15, 1995 (not to be confused with the same person’s statement in Pyongyang as the head of the delegation in 1999) and apply it to its dealings with North Korea, even though the ballistic missile, \textit{fushinsen}, and the abduction suspicion had not been included in the mutually-agreed upon, official agenda for normalization.\textsuperscript{80} Especially concerning the ballistic missile issue, North Koreans demanded that the Japanese delegation address it as a “satellite,” rather than a missile.\textsuperscript{81} When Japan nevertheless requested that North Korea abandon the future development, production, deployment, and test-launching of such missiles, even if not as an official condition of the negotiation, the North simply responded that the topic was

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun} editorials, December 4, 15, 1999, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Asahi Shimbun} editorial, March 8, 2000 p. 5.

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun} editorial, April 8, 2000, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
only to be discussed bilaterally with the United States. The negotiations in April and August, 2000, therefore, in effect “did nothing but register Japan’s concerns.”82 Despite the Japanese government agreeing to provide an additional 500,000 tons of rice – an unprecedented scale for Japanese grain aid – in October, 2000 in response to another request from WFP,83 the eleventh negotiation which took place on November 13, 2000 also failed to make much headway.84

3 Conclusion

North Korea’s Taepodong missile launch on August 31, 1998 and the incursion of fushinsen on March 25, 1999 clearly marked the first instances in which the post-Cold War Japanese could visualize direct security threats to their homeland. After these North Korea-initiated incidents, even ordinary Japanese were forced to contemplate potential contingencies and the inadequacy of the post-World War II security principles in a new context. North Korea started to be embedded in the Japanese psyche as a destabilizing factor, and as one survey from this period demonstrates, the security-related topic the public was most interested in was the situation on the Korean Peninsula. The same survey found that many Japanese felt the post-Cold War regional dynamic to be

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82 Funabashi, op.cit., p. 34.

83 Yomiuri Shimbun editorials, September 19 and October 7, 2000, p. 3.

84 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, November 13, 2000, p. 3.
even more dangerous than during the Cold War, and 31% were worried that there was now an actual possibility of entanglement in a war, an all time high since 1969.\textsuperscript{85}

But while the public acutely experienced a new sense of North Korean threat and became more susceptible to the idea of a need for more “realistic” security policies, the period between 1998 and 2000 did not mark a fundamental shift from the traditional Japanese perception toward the North, as exemplified by the contents of media debates following the two incidents. Media, following the societal atmosphere, approached North Korean threats from various perspectives and still presented diverse opinions on the desirable Japanese response. Lacking a publicly-preferred, widely-shared or organized policy orientation toward North Korea, it is natural that we do not witness a strongly visible policy proposal from either the public or the media during this period. In this regard, while this period can be understood as transitional in certain aspects – the public trying to make sense of the situation caused by the North Korean shock and embracing more realistic security awareness – the extent of this transition should not be overly interpreted.

The societal atmosphere of the period was also largely shared by policymakers in the government. Similar to the reaction among the public to the North Korean shock, the government also planned several defensive security measures – TMD, spy satellites, and new guidelines for the MSDF to handle maritime incursions – considered to be still within the scope of the traditional postwar security principles. But as we have observed, an equally, if not more, important emphasis of the government was on maintaining the

\textsuperscript{85} Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, May 22, 2000, p. 3.
engagement policy with North Korea. The behaviour of the government and the LDP during this period clearly gives us an impression that they still largely preferred negotiations for diplomatic normalization as the most desirable path for enhancing its security from North Korean threats. In short, the overall default policy of engagement was maintained even in the aftermath of the Taepodong launch.

In retrospect, the most significant characteristic of the period between 1998 and 2000 is that while the last years of the 1990s did not yet experience any transformation in Japanese security policy toward North Korea, the shock brought by the North would be soon accumulated in the Japanese societal psyche, along with other additional issues in the next decade. Eventually, these would collectively provide a public discursive stage on which postwar security discourse in general, and Japanese default policy toward North Korea in particular, would be debated in the early 2000s.
2001 to early 2002 saw further worsening of the North Korean image in Japan as a result of two new incidents. However, as in the 1990s, this period did not produce any concrete Japanese foreign policy directly targeted against North Korea, although the impact of accumulating provocations on the minds of the Japanese public led to some domestic policy changes concerning national “emergency.”

The most important factor during this period, which would have lasting consequences for subsequent Japanese North Korea policies, is the rise of Koizumi Junichirō and the strengthening of the society-policy linkage as a result of his “populism.” Although the populist tendency is not always clean-cut and visible in his early policies toward North Korea, the domestic changes he facilitated in the midst of ever-accumulating North Korean threats are, nevertheless, significant. As we shall see in the next chapter, the domestic realignment of influence-structure would eventually play a crucial role in the process that would enable public anxiety to directly pressure the government to harden government policies toward the North.

1 Japan-North Korea Relations: Additional North Korea-related Incidents

As if to maintain the momentum of the shocks brought by North Korea earlier, two new incidents during this period would keep the Japanese public’s attention on the
North. They would further reinforce the legitimacy of regarding this neighbour with added suspicion.

The first incident is the truly bizarre, to say the least, arrest and swift deportation of Kim Jong-il’s eldest son Kim Jong-nam and his family from Japan on May 4, 2001. On May 2, less than a week after Koizumi Junichirō became the Prime Minister following the short-lived and unpopular term of Mori Yoshirō, four foreigners were detained by Japanese immigration authorities for entering Japan with forged Dominican Republic passports. The officials identified the male head of the group to be Kim Jong-nam, the eldest son of Kim Jong-il, an identity that the man neither confirmed nor denied.¹

The man admitted to using counterfeit passports, and officials presumed that the group entered Japan to visit Tokyo Disneyland and the Akihabara electronics district in central Tokyo.² The police advised the new Prime Minister to detain and prosecute them for violating Japanese passport laws, but the government quickly decided to deport the group in the early morning of May 4. Although government officials had been certain, from the early phase of the investigation, that the man was indeed Kim Jong-nam, they announced on the day of the deportation – which was broadcasted nationally on live television – that they could confirm neither his true identity nor his link with North Korea.³


On December 23 of the same year, one more North Korea-initiated shock occurred, this time in the form of another mystery/spy ship (fushinsen) incursion. Barely two years after the fushinsen incident in 1999 during which Japan Coast Guards (JCG) fired live warning shots for the first time in postwar history, this second incursion likewise marked the first instance for Japan to use actual deadly force, as the JCG vessels fired on the ship in the first naval engagement for Japan since the end of World War II.\(^4\) The two fushinsen incursions thus coincidentally provided postwar Japan with the experience of using actual military means within Japan’s maritime sovereignty.

The fushinsen appeared on the night of December 21 off the high seas near Amami Ōshima island chain of Kagoshima Prefecture in southern Japan. A JCG patrol ordered the boat to stop and fired warning shots as in 1999, but it continued its escape, only stopping on the night of the 22nd near the Chinese Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).\(^5\) On the 23rd, JCG vessels and the boat then started exchanging fire, at the end of which the fushinsen sank and one Japanese Coast Guard personnel was wounded.\(^6\) Eventually, JCG recovered two bodies from the scene as well as lifejackets with Korean alphabet Hangul written on them. Since the shape of the boat was similar to that of the ones in 1999, the government concluded the vessel to be of North Korean origin.\(^7\)


\(^5\) Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, December 23, 2001, p. 3.

\(^6\) It was presumed that the fushinsen sank as a result of its crews activating a self-destruction mechanism before being captured with the boat intact. Asahi Shimbun, December 24, 2001, p. 1.

\(^7\) Ibid.
2 Societal Reaction

Prior to the second fushinsen incident in 2001, Japanese societal attitude toward North Korea was still more or less an extension of its perception from the 1990s. In other words, as more news related to North Korea was broadcast to ordinary Japanese and its hard-to-comprehend activities were publicly divulged, Japanese threat perception toward the North gradually increased. However, there was also a concurrent societal trend that still maintained that it would not be wise to unnecessarily provoke North Korea.

In this context, it is understandable why the public reaction to the Kim Jong-nam incident was not overly critical of the government decision, despite the public’s bewilderment and annoyance at his strange entry into Japan and the equally strange manner in which he was deported. Of course, this bizarre episode certainly joined the list of North Korea-linked incidents in the minds of the public. But immediately after the deportation, the tone of the media representing the societal mainstream was generally sympathetic to the new government, which had to consider broader implications of Japan-North Korea relations, though there were some disagreements as to whether the release of Kim Jong-il’s son would win North Korean gratitude. Typical media evaluation of the new government’s move – deporting the group as ordinary “illegal aliens” in order to draw an early end – was that it was indeed a difficult political decision, as publicizing the man’s true identity through a full investigation would have caused
further negative implications for the already-stranded diplomatic normalization process. However, they also did not fail to point out that some would question their government's expectation of reciprocal, North Korean goodwill.

In retrospect, the Kim Jong-nam incident did not have a long-lasting impact on Japanese perception of North Korea or national security as other incidents did. It was indeed a minor happening somewhat difficult to categorize as a national security concern. But it certainly became a part of the list of ever-accumulating North Korea-related incidents and would eventually resurface, when societal discourse on North Korean threats gained further momentum later on.

The fushinsen incident in 2001, on the other hand, had a significant impact and wide-ranging consequences on Japanese security discourse during this period. The very nature of the incident – another direct violation of Japan’s maritime sovereignty and the first instance of Japanese use of deadly force – made it a visual indication of a North Korean threat, along the same degree as the earlier fushinsen incident and the Taepodong launching, even more so because actual footage of the naval engagement was repeatedly broadcast on television. Among all North Korea-initiated incidents that had accumulated since the late 1990s, the Taepodong and this second fushinsen incident especially encouraged public belief that East Asia was a dangerous place and that Japan

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8 For example, Asahi Shimbun editorial, May 5, 2001, p. 2; Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, May 5, 2001, p. 3.

9 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, May 5, 2001, p. 3.
must be more sensitive to external military threats from North Korea. While 19.6% of respondents to a Yomiuri survey in August 1998 – just before the Taepodong incident – felt threatened by North Korea, the figure jumped to 50.4% in October, 2001. (For comparison, the same survey in 2001 found that 13.8% identified China as a threat)

In addition to the Taepodong and fushinsen incidents in 1998-1999, further escalation of North Korean threats within this three-year span, in the form of another armed incursion by fushinsen, motivated the Japanese public to further embrace a hardened understanding of national security. Both public and policy communities interpreted the second fushinsen as an example of an imminent and direct, irregular military attack on Japan with more serious implication than maritime incursions; it was widely believed that North Korean agents on the boats were conducting drug trafficking and other criminal activities, and that they possessed a real potential to launch terrorist attacks on infrastructure such as nuclear power plants, water supplies, or public transportation.

As a result of the incident, considerable public discussion concerning maritime security and the JCG took place. Wider audiences seemed to accept that an occasional use of force could be understood, as long as it was done within its borders, for defence,


and in inevitable circumstances, and that it would be necessary to integrate the role of the JCG into Japan’s more general national defence strategy.\textsuperscript{13} Despite the fact that the JCG directly engaged the \textit{fushinsen} this time, there was still criticism for prolonging the sea chase for more than a day and incurring casualties, since an overly careful response in the early phase of the operation was widely believed to be at fault.\textsuperscript{14} In addition, in one of the rarest occasions in postwar Japan, we witness the establishment of several loose organizations made up of security-conscious members of the public volunteering for “homeland defence.” For example, the \textit{Nippon Zaidan} – a network of conservative Sasakawa group foundations and think-tanks – established the so-called “Coastal Guard” during this period, a “volunteer auxiliary organization whose 100,000 members pledged to report suspicious activity along the coast to the JCG.”\textsuperscript{15}

It is also characteristic of this period that additional coverage of the North Korean violations of various aspects of Japanese security – sovereignty of the sea and airspace, and now even immigration laws – led to wider public reflection on national security principles, with more concrete attention toward North Korea, than during the 1990s. North Korean actions provided the most opportune medium for the public to be conscious about the limitations of Japan’s capability to effectively protect itself.


\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun} editorial, December 23, 2001, p. 3.

The most widely raised topic in security discourse was the discrepancy between changing public threat perception and the current, legalistic hindrances that prevented the updating of domestic measures for national defence. In an editorial on Constitution Day in 2002, *Yomiuri* asserted that the people and the government alike, as a result of the changing external security environment, finally started to realize that “national security cannot be obtained for free like air and water.” While positively assessing this trend-shift, in which more Japanese felt compelled to find solutions to security threats that were more “commensurate with international standard and common sense,” the editorial then points out that the Constitution and other legal institutions are not yet equipped to reflect the new discursive trend.  

In another widely-circulated magazine, the Governor of Tokyo Metropolitan Government Ishihara Shintarō and the future Prime Minister Abe Shinzō also positively interpreted their countrymen’s greater willingness to embrace the long-overdue perception of a new, hard reality. Claiming that television coverage of the JCG and the *fushinsen* in naval engagement forced Japanese people to face the reality that national security was indeed in danger, they reflected on the societal attitude toward North Korea during this period in the following: “The visual imagery made it clear to the public that North Koreans are not one of those “peace-loving people around the world” assumed by our Constitution.”

Considering the well-known political inclination of these two politicians, we should not, of course, take their comments at face-value as literally representing the

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16 *Yomiuri Shimbun* editorial, May 3, 2002, p. 3.

17 Shintarō Ishihara and Shinzō Abe, “Kangan-Kokka tono Ketsubetsu no Toki (It is time to say farewell to the country run by eunuch bureaucrats),” *Bungeishunjū* (August, 2003), p. 114.
majoritarian attitude toward North Korea and Japanese security institutions. Nevertheless, their statements do convey a contemporary portrayal of the subtle – but increasing – societal anxiety on national security. Although the degree of reception would have surely differed depending on individuals, it is still reasonable to interpret this period as the time when the overall trend was of a constantly growing negative perception toward North Korea, when Japan’s own security posture was also increasingly being linked to the North in the minds of the people.

Before we move on to an analysis of the Japanese government, it is worth noting other explanations as to why Japanese security discourse experienced shifts during this period. Although the incidents involving North Korea were surely the most direct cause, some scholars also argue that two additional factors at play since the 1990s – economy and generation change – further reinforced the speed and degree of societal anxiety.

The so-called “lost decade” of the 1990s saw the Japanese economy in serious stagnation, and most government-led reforms to cope with external and internal transformations in the post-Cold War environment had limited success at best. Although Japanese economic performance improved somewhat from the 2000s, a pervasive anxiety about the future prospects of their country had led the Japanese into

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18 Gerald Curtis, *The Logic of Japanese Politics: Leaders, Institutions, and the Limits of Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 237-242. Curtis, however, asserts that despite numerous difficulties Japan is facing, it will not “sink” in the end, as Japan has a strong and resilient “social capital.”
frustrating muddlings in “the politics of uncertainty.”\textsuperscript{19} Such prolonged economic difficulties had “gradually taken a toll on Japan’s national psyche,” and a loss of confidence led the public to become, in turn, more supportive of a “tough, hawkish, assertive, and occasionally confrontational posture in the conduct of foreign policy” and frequently critical of their government’s “subservient” and soft stance toward other countries, including North Korea.\textsuperscript{20} Compared to the period before the “lost decade,” when Japanese could generally “afford” to accept reconciliatory diplomatic measures simply to avoid international friction or diplomatic hassle, years of national stagnation led to social frustration that facilitated the emergence of previously-repressed, conservative minority opinions arguing for Japan’s stronger self-assertion in the international arena.\textsuperscript{21}

In addition, generational change in society produced, for the first time, a tier of Japanese youths who reached maturity in the post-Cold War period. The younger generations are more willing to respond angrily to Japan being “made fools of” by foreign countries, as they are comparatively less burdened by feelings of guilt about their country’s past than older generations, when dealing with neighbouring countries.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} Michael W. Donnelly, “The Politics of Uncertainty in Japan,” \textit{Behind the Headlines 61.3}. (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 2004).


Before moving on to the analysis of the linkage between the Japanese public and the government’s North Korea and national security policies during this period, it is important to first explain a significant change that took place in Japanese domestic politics in 2001.

Koizumi Junichirō became the new Prime Minister in the spring of 2001. Koizumi won his position not necessarily on his foreign policy stance, but through his successful, public portrayal as a reformer of domestic politics and his charismatic personal character. In making friends with ordinary Japanese and the media, he distanced himself from traditional, factional turf wars within the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and countered opposition both in and out of his party by directly appealing to the people. As a direct result of his charisma and strong public support, Koizumi was able to exercise strong leadership in the decision-making processes of foreign and domestic policies, at the cost of undermining the traditional influence of the bureaucracy and the LDP.

However, as his administration was fundamentally dependent on popular support for its survival, one result of his “populist” Prime Ministership was the increased influence of public opinion on the Cabinet’s decision-making. The emergence of Koizumi in Japanese politics during the early 2000s, therefore, marked a start of Cabinet-led politics highly susceptible to societal voices; this change in the domestic political structure would eventually have significant consequences for subsequent Japanese
foreign policy toward North Korea, as Koizumi's Prime Ministership passed its “honeymoon.”

Of course, this is not to say that Koizumi and his Cabinet were always directly swayed by public opinion in all domestic and foreign policy matters. Koizumi did, on a number of occasions, embark on unpopular policy decisions especially in the domestic realm, as his plans for privatizing the postal service and curtailing budgets for regional highway projects illustrate. However, as he was keenly aware that his popularity did not necessarily depend on public support for particular policies but rather on his abstract, “reformist” label, there were cases in which he used his superb communication skills to try to persuade the public to understand and (hopefully) accept his policy blueprints. Nevertheless, as we shall see, Koizumi’s populist political background as the essence of his power gradually – and paradoxically – forced his policies to eventually conform more to societal discursive shifts and accept that the balance of power tilted in favour of society as his time as Prime Minister matured.

Similar patterns are observable in his policy toward North Korea; there are differences between his earlier and later stances toward the North, and this discrepancy will be described in this chapter and the next for close comparison. As we shall see below, during this period the Koizumi Cabinet put into practice certain security-updating measures and also took part in the preliminary “Emergency Legislations” debate in the Diet, as the accumulation of North Korean threats and the hardening of societal discourse against North Korea was increasingly felt by politicians. However, since the primary focus of the public during this period was still largely on internal reform, Koizumi initially had relative leeway to pursue his North Korean policy based on his personal
ambitions (his secret negotiation with the North for a summit meeting which would eventually materialize in September, 2002) and the more traditional LDP default policy of engagement (for realizing bilateral diplomatic normalization), all the while answering to the increasing public demand to re-evaluate Japan’s security policies. In short, in the first year of his Cabinet the “populist” tendency of Koizumi was visible domestically but not equally reflected in his North Korean policies. On the other hand, his subsequent stance increasingly followed the societal trend, as he was forced to reorient his original policies in favour of drastically increasing threat perceptions and the anger of Japanese people toward the North, especially after his visit to Pyongyang (as covered in the next chapter).

In the broader context of the Japanese government’s policy shift toward North Korea, the emergence of Koizumi is highly significant, since it laid the foundation for a clearer linkage between societal security discourse and foreign policy in subsequent years. It is one of the most important keys to understanding how and why North Korean provocations and the resulting rise in societal threat perception became a direct influence on the government’s foreign policy decision-making toward the North.

In this part, the rise of Koizumi and his Cabinet’s characteristics in policy-making are elaborated upon, before we move on to analyses of the Japanese government’s actual measures toward North Korea and other security-related policies during this period.
3.1 The rise of Koizumi and new structural changes in political decision-making

Koizumi Junichirō became Prime Minister in the spring of 2001 by winning the LDP presidential election. His catchphrase, that he would “destroy LDP,” won the hearts and minds of ordinary Japanese, as his straightforward and almost amateurish way of speech helped him to be popularly portrayed as “one of the people” at a time when the public was fed up with “professional” politicians and bureaucrats. Although Koizumi himself has been surprised to be categorized as a “populist,” his means of achieving power by positioning himself not with other politicians but with popular sentiment clearly indicates that he knew how to use society’s negative reaction against traditional politics to his advantage.

Contrary to typical LDP Prime Ministers, he had never been a leader of an intra-party faction and was, at least initially, without any organized support from Diet members. Despite the handicap, he succeeded in gaining a clear upper hand in pre-election debates by deliberately “making others look bad” with his strong personality (hence his nickname “henjin” – a “weirdo”) and a stand-offish way to traditional, factional party politics, eventually making him an “idol” among the public. And of course, an idol in Japanese politics is not an everyday phenomenon. In a time when

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24 Ibid.

ordinary Japanese strongly felt the need for general political reform, Koizumi’s image as an idol boldly embarking on a venture to destroy old and inept politics was extremely advantageous for his bid for the Prime Ministership.26

What we can easily surmise from this is that, from the very beginning, the most important base of his political power was the public and therefore Koizumi was comparatively more sensitive toward public opinion than previous Prime Ministers. He put considerable emphasis on keeping that support by maintaining the image of “good guy” – in which he generally succeeded – even when some of his actual policies could not have made him a good guy if the people were to look back and closely examine them.

For the maintenance of his popular support, it is therefore not surprising that Koizumi put into practice a new public affairs strategy not previously seen in Japanese politics. As he acutely knew the power of the media on society and vice versa, his strategy revolved around making friends out of both, by making himself constantly accessible to ordinary citizens via everyday television and newspaper appearances. In order to effectively reach out to ordinary constituents outside Nagata-chō (Japanese equivalent of Downing Street), Koizumi emphasized drawing media attention to himself on television debates and gossip shows, and in the sports and entertainment magazines of minor media corporations previously not allowed in the press club system (kisha-kurabu). The diversification of Koizumi-coverage thus led to increasing competition among all

26 Ibid., p. 245.
media groups to obtain fresh and entertaining news material, and this change also influenced the way mainstream media corporations dealt with political news.27

Koizumi gladly responded to the media’s so-called “burasagari (journalists clinging on – sometimes almost literally – to a popular politician full-time for a news scoop),” unlike other old-styled and lordly LDP politicians, and since he rarely betrayed their expectation for an entertaining and refreshing comment or two, the practice of conducting extremely short, daily interviews has become a media norm in Japan ever since. Other politicians had to eventually succumb to this new media tradition, as they learned from Koizumi the merit of doing well in this so-called “one-phrase politics.” But Koizumi, more than anyone else, benefited from his proven skill in daily one-phrase politics on television by directly briefing people about his intentions in easy words.28

The emergence of Koizumi and the changes he facilitated in political communications between the Prime Minister and public resulted in higher citizen interest in and understanding of politics. However, while heightening popular interest resulted in a more intimate link between politicians and the public, it also led to increasing pressure on politicians to be constantly sensitive to societal trends, even more so than in the past. Although the introduction of one-phrase politics diversified the ways that politicians could publicize one’s position, it also had a rather powerful effect on politicians’ behaviour and statements, as they were constantly “tested” by the media and society. Koizumi, more than anyone else, constantly passed these “tests” by

27 Ibid., pp. 219,241.

successfully portraying himself as the politician correctly understanding and representing people’s wants, thus helping them to release frustrations over Japanese politics and receive vicarious satisfaction.

So successful was Koizumi’s populist strategy that some media journalists and observers actually started to worry about the people’s support turning into an absolute, nation-wide trend. Admitting the result of an opinion survey – which reported an 80% support rate for the Koizumi Cabinet – as a correct reflection of public emotion favouring “the reformist” and hopes for political change, one Asahi Shimbun editorial raised concerns that “people support almost anything, without careful and logical reflection, as long as it is initiated by Koizumi…. The trend is already turning into a general mood, and this unswerving support based on collective emotional atmosphere (kūki) could, if not handled correctly, even turn into a type of indirect censoring mechanism denying alternative opinions.”

Similar trends appeared in the political arena as well. As the rank-and-file party members of the LDP realized the tremendous importance of having a popular party leader in their own electoral polls, they could not dare antagonize popular Koizumi in public. In fact, as Koizumi successfully gained grassroots popularity as a result of “audience-drawing,” more Diet members turned to openly express their support for him rather than turning for cues from their factional leaders as they had done in the


past. Even the biggest opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ: Minshutō), had to admit the merit of having a single charismatic and popular leader, and promptly copied the Koizumi model in subsequent election campaigns.

It is not surprising that the nature of Koizumi’s political power affected the way he conducted domestic and foreign policies. Especially concerning the latter, under the Koizumi Cabinet, traditional consensus-building among the Cabinet, the bureaucracy (especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - MOFA), and the ruling party (especially the LDP’s policy subcommittees) prior to deciding on foreign policy was weakened, and the Cabinet (Kantei) instead gained centralized power in the decision-process, based on its political needs. This procedural change, which centralizes the Prime Minister's power to delegate authority to his own Cabinet under his supervision and to make final decisions, resembles the British Westminster system of parliamentary democracy; it is, to borrow Estévez-Abe’s words, “the Britannicization of Japan.”

The drastic shift of authority being concentrated in the Kantei without the necessary “general staff headquarters” – like the White House National Security Council


32 Estévez-Abe, op.cit., p. 651.

33 The Kantei includes the Prime Minister and the body of Cabinet Secretariat, which is led by Chief Cabinet Secretary (Kanbō Chōkan) and three Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretaries (Naikaku Kanbō Fuku-chōkan). Tomohito Shinoda, Koizumi Diplomacy: Japan’s Kantei Approach to Foreign and Defense Affairs (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), pp. 10,13.


– to professionally support the Prime Minister with solid and long-term strategic feedback on important foreign policy decisions rather concerned some experts. Nevertheless, so long as he was backed by the public majority, Koizumi was able to push for his domestic and foreign policy decisions and smooth out tedious Diet operations, even when professional experts did not necessarily support him.

As mentioned earlier, the concentration of foreign policy decision-making power in the Cabinet, as in domestic politics, would eventually produce a paradoxical environment: Koizumi gained much leeway to put into practice his own personal vision for Japan’s external conduct, so long as the public supported him as an individual, but it also meant that his decision-making would face pressures if he realized that the societal majority clearly preferred other options. Rather than being contradictory, it was an inevitable consequence of conducting populist policy-making with close interaction with the public.

To reiterate, the basis of Koizumi’s political power did not lie on unswerving public support for his individual policies, but on his image as a reformer who would not be intimidated by breaking traditional, political “taboos.” Therefore, Koizumi’s conduct was heavily geared toward breaking and creating new precedents of their unmaking, in order to facilitate the people’s release of stress and frustration. In foreign policy, for

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37 Shinoda, op. cit., pp. 144,147.

38 Hiroshi Nakanishi, “Reisen Shūengo no Nihon no Henyō – Naisei to Chiiki Gaikō (Transformation of Post-Cold War Japan – Domestic Politics and Regional Diplomacy),” Yoshihide Soeya
example, openly expressing “Japanese rationale” for the Prime Minister’s visit to controversial Yasukuni Shrine (plus the actual visits) and not succumbing to South Korean and Chinese criticisms on other historical issues, even at the risk of undermining smooth regional diplomacy, reflected Koizumi’s political position, which had to represent increasing societal frustration over neighbours’ “interference with domestic issues.”

Koizumi was also adept in directly reaching out to citizens and taking initiative to persuade the public to support his policies when they were controversial. However, as time passed, Koizumi’s power increasingly reflected signs of being under pressure to place heavier emphasis on unfolding societal trends and to adjust his policies accordingly.39

3.2 The Japanese government’s national security policy adjustments

What is the relationship between the provocations from North Korea and their reception in Japan on the one hand, and the emergence of Koizumi and the resulting political shifts on the other, in shaping the Japanese government’s North Korea and national security policies during this period? As mentioned earlier, Koizumi’s Cabinet’s North Korea and security policy-making, and the role of societal discourse, became much more apparent from late 2002 onward. Therefore, the empirical picture we get on their

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interactions is not so cleanly-cut and straightforward, at least during this one-year period before 2002.

Certainly, North Korean security threats continuing from the 1990s helped maintain constant societal engagement on national security, and domestic debates increasingly reflected public acceptance of a more realistic interpretation of their external environment and the need for re-evaluating traditional security policies. For this reason, while actual foreign policy directly targeted against North Korea did not materialize, the accumulating and strengthening public security perception was nevertheless reflected in the domestic political context and resulted in the further upgrading of the role of JCG and the stepped-up preparation for so-called “Emergency Legislations” during this period.

In this regard, Koizumi, as in other domestic policy areas, matched his stance with security policies that were linked to the increasing threat perception of the public, and he consequently went along with political developments in the Diet. However, these measures by Koizumi were also matched by his initial adherence to the traditional LDP foreign policy stance of maintaining political negotiations for normalization with North Korea, and his ambitious plan (although secret at this time) to meet Kim Jong-il in Pyongyang to personally resolve all North Korea-related threats by forming normal diplomatic relations with the regime. These two, seemingly contradictory characteristics of Koizumi’s policies are not, in fact, contradictory under careful examination. The security-conscious public, feeling increasingly threatened by the North at this point, would have also supported diplomatic normalization if it were to actually resolve the threats by peaceful means, and Koizumi knew it would be a great political victory as well as a sure way of winning further popularity at home.
If we were to examine the Japanese government’s counter-measures after the second *fushinsen* incident in 2001, the government, and especially the Diet, actively sought more concrete ways to update the proper roles and standard operating procedures for the JCG against continuing maritime incursions. It is not surprising – considering that the incident touched on core notions of military security by forcing naval combat upon Japan – that immediately after the incident the LDP proposed to further mitigate the legal limitations on weapons-use imposed on the JCG, discussions that had already started after the first incursion in 1999.\(^{40}\) For politicians who had wanted to know the extent to which the Japanese public would accept more defence spending and the use of force, the increase of societal threat perception by the *fushinsen* incident became a useful case study that helped them to conclude that Japanese voters would be now more prepared to support such measures.\(^{41}\)

But far more significant than the empowerment of the JCG, 2001 and early 2002 saw the LDP and the Diet undergo preparations for passing “Emergency Legislations (＊ギ－シー/＊ギ－ケ－ンシー).” Legislation clarifying the role of the state and prefectural governments in case of national emergency (from both foreign attacks and natural disasters) had been proposed in the past, but had never gotten under way; in 1978, Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo (father of Fukuda Yasuo, the Prime Minister from 2007 to

\(^{40}\) *Asahi Shimbun*, December 24, 2001, p. 2.

\(^{41}\) Samuels, “New Fighting Power! Japan’s Growing Maritime Capabilities and East Asian Security,” *op.cit.*., p. 111. The empowerment of JCG as a result of the *fushinsen* incident is interpreted by Samuels as “the most significant and least heralded Japanese military development since the end of the Cold War,” since it constituted “the transformation of the Japanese Coast Guards into a de facto fourth branch of the Japanese military.” *Ibid.*, p. 95.
2008) argued for them in the Diet, but he was met with vicious protest and he had to eventually back down under criticism that he had “embarked on a return to authoritarianism.”  

Also, immediately after the Taepodong launch and the first fushinsen incident, media reported that some Diet members felt the time had matured to start official discussions on how to relieve legal burdens on the SDF, in order to facilitate an effective military response in case of external attack.  

But even during the last years of the 1990s, discussions never materialized in Diet sub-committees. North Korean threats resolved this reluctance to even contemplate emergency situations among both public and the Diet in one stroke.  

It is, therefore, highly suggestive that legislation for national emergencies became the political agenda during the late 2001 and early 2002. Even opposition parties took full part in the discussions this time, acknowledging that Japan was indeed under serious threat by North Korean missiles and fushinsen. Preliminary, inter-party debates in the Diet in January 2002 laid the foundation for drafting the bills which would simplify the required governmental procedures in case the Self Defence Forces (SDF) was to be dispatched for national contingencies.  

In the end, with more Diet members accepting the idea that at least the government’s standard legal procedures in times of emergency must be re-evaluated, the Japanese government was able to announce in April the final

43 Refer to, for example, Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, June 17, 1999, p. 3.
45 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, January 26, 2002, p. 3.
draft for three legislative bills\textsuperscript{46} dealing with national emergencies in case of an – or known to be an imminent – attack from abroad.\textsuperscript{47}

Even if the Emergency Legislation was not actually put to vote in Diet sessions during this period, it was nevertheless significant progress from the 1990s, as we are starting to observe more visible linkage between North Korean threats and actual political initiatives to re-evaluate formal legal procedures with broader security implications. Circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that accumulating North Korea issues thus facilitated this linkage in a timely manner, and in the same vein, discussions to give a freer hand to the JCG after the second \textit{fushinsen} incident were also closely tied to the unfolding of this legislative procedure.

As in the case of Japanese society, a similar generational change in the political sphere also played a role. From the early 2000s, especially in the LDP, traditional “mainstream pragmatists”\textsuperscript{48} who had devoted political energy to economic development and a limited (or rather, prudent) foreign policy role for Japan by strictly adhering to the ideals of the Yoshida Doctrine were shunted aside, replaced by young Turks embracing a more active stance in pursuing Japan’s national interest and security in policy debates.\textsuperscript{49} These younger politicians emerged in all parties and came from diverse professional,

\textsuperscript{46} It is important to clarify that it was the preparation of the final government draft, \textit{not} that the emergency legislations themselves passed the Diet as laws. What is instructive, however, is that political discussions went as far as allowing the government to actually prepare the bills during this period.

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun} editorial, April 17, 2002, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{48} For example, pre-war generation of leading politicians such as Nonaka Hiromu, Kōno Yōhei, Miyazawa Kiichi, and Katō Kōichirō of the LDP.

academic, regional, and family backgrounds. However, they shared one common trait in that they all belonged to a post-World War II generation more open and sensitive to national security affairs and to Japan’s demonstrated vulnerability. Moreover, as their political rise coincides with the emergence of Koizumi and the domestic changes he brought to the society-media-politics relations, it is not surprising that their success (in elections, especially among “Koizumi’s children”) testifies to their greater susceptibility to public attitude and discursive shifts than the older generations of politicians. These young politicians, whose parents in most cases also belong to the postwar generation, genuinely share the societal anxiety over “current and proximate threats (ima soko ni aru kiki)” from North Korean missiles and fushinsen: one questionnaire of forty-eight Diet members in their twenties and thirties revealed that 82% consider it plausible that North Korea will either wage war directly against Japan or force Japan’s participation in one that involving the North in some point in the future.

The preparation of Emergency Legislations, despite the historical significance in the context of increasing linkage of heightening societal threat perception and political responsiveness, should not be overly interpreted as a sign of Japan discarding its traditional, postwar principle on security. As in the case of the Japanese government’s international and domestic responses after the Taepodong and the first fushinsen incident,

50 Murata, op. cit., p. 143.

51 Out of the forty-eight, sixteen were from the LDP, twenty-two from the DPJ, three from the New Komeito Party (Kōmeitō), three from the Liberal Party (Jiyūtō), two from the Social Democratic Party (Shaminō), one from the Conservative Party (Hoshutō), and one independent. “20,30-Dai Kokkaigiin Chōsa ni Miru – Nihon ga “Neo-con”-ka Suru (Observations from a questionnaire to the Diet members in the twenties and thirties – Japan turning “Neo-con”),” Weekly AERA (June 16, 2003), pp. 11-12.
the accumulation of North Korean provocations indeed heightened societal and political senses of external danger and facilitated the updating and re-evaluation of domestic contingency measures to a modest degree. However, these domestic security upgrades were carried out without consciously touching on more fundamental values of the postwar era: exclusively defence-oriented security principles (senshu-bōei), democratic control of the government and the military, and the avoidance of direct international confrontation.

It should be also noted that even when the legislations were drafted and presented to the Diet, they were not automatically put to vote. Diet subcommittees and other politicians realized that there could still be questions concerning the bills’ possible implications on “constitutionality and potential endangerment of civil liberties,” as the central government and the SDF would be given more freedom to sidestep prefectural governments’ and ordinary citizens’ rights.52 Diet subcommittees, made up by both ruling and oppositional party members, widely discussed individual rights of citizens, basic human rights, and a clearer definition of what would exactly constitute “emergency.” As a result, the government, despite the legislations already at hand, was compelled to postpone actual deliberation of the bill indefinitely.53


3.3 Koizumi’s approach toward North Korea issues during the first year of his Prime Ministership

As mentioned earlier, Koizumi’s “populist tendency,” shown in his domestic politics, was not clearly visible in his foreign policy designs in the early period of his administration, as he was focused on domestic reforms with public backing. His Cabinet’s early stance toward North Korea, therefore, more or less inherited the earlier government’s stance of careful engagement with the North without directly provoking the regime during the process.

Embracing this default policy is most apparent in the Koizumi Cabinet’s immediate response to the Kim Jong-nam incident, which occurred barely a week after he came to power. When Kim’s group was first detained by the immigration officials, inter-ministerial debates ensued: the police wanted the group to be officially arrested and interrogated; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), especially its then-Minister Tanaka Makiko, preferred to let them be “secretly deported by bypassing standard procedures” before the media was fully alerted, since the MOFA knew that arrest would only make the problem drag on indefinitely, as North Korea would never admit to the group’s identity, under any circumstances.54 With this conflicting advice, Koizumi made a decision to publicly deport them only three days after the arrest to prevent any further, negative implications for bilateral relations, although he claimed that the measure

54 Funabashi, op.cit., p. 62; Yomiuri Shimbun, May 5, 2001, p. 3.
was in “full accordance with standard legal procedures of democratic Japan.”

To the very end, the government continued to obscure the true identity of the male, addressing him in media briefings as “the man who resembles Kim Jong-nam,” and Koizumi is reported to have said that Japan had no choice but to deport him since “Japan won’t be able to withstand the various complications that will result if we take any other action.”

By hurriedly “getting rid of this nuisance (yakkai-barai)” before fully-engaged media exposure could potentially run this issue out of control, the government could give itself credit for preventing a source of serious bilateral tension by letting North Korea save face; in fact, there was a wide-spread prediction that Koizumi’s measure might have positive consequences on bilateral relations.

With the advantage of hindsight that we now have on Koizumi’s secretive negotiations with North Korea to realize a summit meeting with Kim Jong-il the same year he came to power, the policy response to the Kim Jong-nam incident is not only

55 Yomiuri Shimbun, May 5, 2001, p. 3; Asahi Shimbun, May 5, 2001, p. 1. Thus, Koizumi partially accepted the claims of both the MOFA and the National Policy Agency, as he, in accordance with the former’s advice, released the group without official investigation, while also making the deportation fully public in order to appease the latter.

56 Funabashi, op. cit.

57 Yomiuri Shimbun, May 5, 2001, p. 3.

58 The first secret negotiation is reported to have started in October, 2001. Chief negotiator for the Japanese side was Tanaka Hitoshi, newly-appointed Director General of Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau of the MOFA. The North Korean counterpart was an unidentified high-ranking official with a direct link to Kim Jong-il, simply known as “Mr.X” by the Japanese media. During the whole length of the negotiation process, Tanaka, under strict order from Koizumi, reported to only four others in the entire Japanese Government (Koizumi, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda Yasuo, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Furukawa Sadajirō, and Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the MOFA Nogami Yoshiji), as an early media leak would invite various complications and the stalling of the negotiation all together. Abe Shinzō, another then-Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary, was not included in this “insider” group. As even the Minister of the MOFA and other officials in the Ministry were left in the dark, Tanaka was severely criticized by the media after the summit meeting in September, 2002. Refer to Yomiuri Shimbun Political
coherent with the traditional LDP default stance toward North Korea, but also possibly one of the earliest indications of his personal intention to resolve all North Korea related issues with his personal initiatives. Although the incident occurred before the first secret negotiation, it is likely that Koizumi had already possessed his own blueprint for the future of bilateral relations and did not want a nuisance to unnecessarily complicate its implementation. Again, the rise of threat perception did not equal to a wholesale societal opposition during this period to diplomatic normalization, in principle, if it were to result in the mitigation of those threats. By correctly understanding the nuanced societal perception toward the North, it is likely that he preferred that minor incidents like Kim Jong-nam not hinder the realization of the ultimate political solution that would also be welcomed domestically. In short, making a diplomatic breakthrough with North Korea as a secretive foreign policy target in order to normalize bilateral relations would be a win-win strategy in which he could successfully secure both his popularity and his political legacy in postwar history.\(^59\)

Koizumi’s early hope to realize a historical breakthrough with North Korea was also evident in his handling of the second \textit{fushinsen} incident. As mentioned, the government went ahead and updated Japanese security postures concerning maritime incursions – within the confines of the postwar security principles and without actually


\(^{59}\) Funabashi, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 7.
punishing the North – by strengthening the readiness of the JCG. The Koizumi Cabinet also went along with it, as the *fushinsen* incident, unlike Kim Jong-nam, was a provocative and publicized external threat.

However, one less-known fact related to his handling of this incident is that his Cabinet took ample time (some would argue, deliberately) to salvage the hull of the sunk *fushinsen*, as its recovery would inevitably divulge the nationality and the purpose of the vessel. Only one day after the incident, the government had planned to bring the ship to the surface, since it was technologically feasible. For one reason or the other (one being that the area falls under the Chinese EEZ), the government took a full six months to finally decide on it (on June 19, 2002). Even then, it took another three months to finally recover and identify the nationality of the vessel on September 12, which happened to be only five days before Koizumi’s planned summit in Pyongyang.

Although we lack concrete proof, the timing of the recovery gives an unavoidable impression that Koizumi, and a few insider politicians and bureaucrats involved in the secret negotiations for a summit meeting, had to delay other governmental agencies from recovering the vessel, without informing them of the true reason. Circumstantial evidence suggested from the unfolding of the recovery process enforces the speculation that the recovery was put on hold by deliberate efforts of insiders to the secret negotiation: at least up to the point where they could be sure that the North Koreans


61 Refer to the following editorials sequentially in order to trace the debate behind the recovery process: *Yomiuri Shimbun* editorials, January 22, February 26, May 9, June 19, September 4, September 7, 2002, p. 3., and *Asahi Shimbun* editorial, September 12, 2002, p. 2.
would not oppose them, or that talks had progressed sufficiently enough for both sides to not consider turning back. One media source supports this speculation by reporting that “Mr. X”\textsuperscript{62} – the chief North Korean delegate – indeed expressed during the latter phase of the secret negotiation that North Korea would not oppose the recovery, and that it would exercise connivance (mokunin).\textsuperscript{63} Considering that North Korea not only “exercised connivance” but that Kim Jong-il actually admitted and apologized for the fushinsen, along with the past abduction of Japanese citizens in Pyongyang during the Kim-Koizumi summit only five days after the recovery, it would not be a far-fetched supposition that Koizumi timed the salvage to be after he had already received sufficient guarantee on the scheduled summit and the promise of North Korean apologies.

4 Conclusion

The period between 2001 to the first half of 2002 saw persisting societal threat perception as a result of additional incidents linked to North Korea. This period, however, as in the 1990s, did not see any concrete Japanese foreign policy directly targeted against North Korea or other punitive measures to put pressure on Kim’s regime. Nevertheless, the momentum reinforced by constantly accumulating North Korean provocations, and their impact in the minds of both the Japanese public and politicians, resulted in certain domestic policy changes, first concerning the JCG and also the traditional Japanese stance on national “emergency.” In this context, despite the fact

\textsuperscript{62} Refer to footnote 58.

\textsuperscript{63} Yomiuri Shimbun Political Section, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 22-23.
that the “Emergency Legislations” did not actually become laws, the preparation of the bills and active debates concerning national contingencies in the Diet still highlights a noteworthy change, as the presentation of the draft to the Diet was indeed facilitated by the overall trend of linking North Korea to national security in general.

The most significant political change during this period, that would eventually play an important role in the unfolding of Japanese policy toward North Korea, is the emergence of Koizumi as Prime Minister and the realignment of society-politics dynamics he brought with his “populism.” The significance of the so-called “Koizumi factor,” does not point to the all-importance of research that prioritizes elites above other factors. Although his individual traits and adept “showmanship” that won him wide public support certainly deserves attention, Koizumi is important because of the long-lasting structural and procedural consequences he brought to Japanese domestic politics: structurally, his success in winning the Prime Ministership by directly reaching out to the public strengthened societal and media influence in policymaking and made politicians increasingly susceptible to public atmosphere; procedurally, the structural shift in the society-media-government power balance in turn resulted in more Cabinet-led political decisions in foreign policy reflecting societal discourse, at the cost of weakened party and bureaucratic engagement in decision-making procedures. These two changes brought by Koizumi, more than his individual popularity, had a lasting impact on subsequent North Korea policies, as the nature of his political power gradually led him to directly reflect the shifting societal discursive trend toward North Korea in subsequent years, after the Pyongyang visit in September 2002.
From the perspective of this dissertation’s overarching thesis that societal discourse was the most important influence on Japanese foreign policy change toward North Korea in 2006, the significance of these changes introduced during 2001-2002 on subsequent bilateral dynamics cannot be overstated. Since societal discourse does not simply and automatically become foreign policy, there must be an inevitable connecting link. This chapter has demonstrated that the rise of Koizumi in 2001 – whether he was consciously aware of it or not – provided that crucial piece of the puzzle that enabled abstract security anxiety of the public to be directly incorporated into subsequently-hardened policy against North Korea. In addition, the concurrent emergence of young, postwar generations of politicians, keenly sensitive to the changing security environment and public opinion as they adeptly recognized the shifting domestic “rule of the game” induced by Koizumi, also reinforced this chain. Therefore, the significance of this brief one-year period is that it provided Japan with a key for changing its conventional North Korea-approach inherited from the 1990s.
CHAPTER 7: JAPAN-NORTH KOREA RELATIONS FROM KOIZUMI’S PYONGYANG SUMMIT IN 2002 TO THE SECOND SUMMIT IN 2004

1 Koizumi-Kim Pyongyang Summit of September 17, 2002

Koizumi Junichirō’s year-long secret negotiation with North Korea to realize a summit finally bore fruit on September 17, 2002. As the first acting Prime Minister of Japan in postwar history, Koizumi visited Pyongyang and met Kim Jong-il, concluding a historical bilateral agreement, the “Pyongyang Declaration.” Koizumi’s visit was initially regarded as a “shining example of success of Japan’s recent foreign policy” by the international community, as it opened official channels for diplomatic normalization that had long been a high priority for Japan. Koizumi’s initiative was perceived to be both an important stepping stone for Japan, resolving one of the last remaining agenda of the World War II legacy and achieving greater diplomatic leverage in the region.

After two meetings that day, Koizumi and Kim signed a mutual agreement that comprehensively dealt with all previous historical and security related issues that had hindered the normalization process in the past. The “Pyongyang Declaration” accordingly stated that the two governments would restart negotiations for diplomatic normalization in October. Japan would initiate economic aid to North Korea once

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2 Ibid.
bilateral relations were normalized, and both parties would mutually cede their right of claim for properties and other assets from the pre-World War II period; North Korea promised that it would take appropriate measures to prevent further occurrence of “unfortunate incidents that endanger Japanese citizens’ lives and security,” and that it would adhere to international agreements for resolving its nuclear issue; furthermore, North Korea would extend its moratorium on ballistic missile launches to 2003, as well as cooperating with Japan on general regional security talks.³

The most significant breakthrough the declaration achieved for Koizumi and Japan was Kim Jong-il’s open admission of North Korea’s involvement in previous fushinsen incidents and abductions of Japanese citizens. At last, these long-held suspicions of North Korea’s involvement were publicly confirmed. Although the words “fushinsen” and “abduction (rachi)” were not incorporated into the declaration, during the summit Kim verbally confessed to Koizumi that the fushinsen of December 2001 was in fact a North Korean spy vessel. Concerning the abduction, Kim informed the Japanese that among thirteen Japanese victims that the North Korean government confirmed, eight had already died and five were still living in North Korea.⁴ After offering both his personal and official apology to Koizumi, Kim added that both of these incidents were “voluntarily” conducted by special units, without his prior knowledge: some operatives had unfortunately decided to act on “(overly) patriotic and heroic

⁴ Ibid.
intentions” to win the heart of Kim and the fatherland. Kim’s “frank” apologies as the head of the state for the unfortunate incidents – unprecedented in North Korea’s history – was then balanced by a clause in the Pyongyang Declaration that Japan, for its part, would apologize for “the pains and the sufferings inflicted on the people of the Korean Peninsula” by past Japanese colonialism.

The contents of the declaration were a delicate compromise between both parties to “save face” while also genuinely seeking a workable solution to various “abnormalities” that had marred bilateral relations throughout the postwar period. One-quarter of the declaration, for the interest of the North Korean government, was allocated to an official Japanese apology for its past colonialism and the means by which the Japanese side would conduct economic aid, in the forms of low-interest loans by the Japanese government and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). Another one-quarter, reflecting an unnegotiable Japanese position, constituted North Korea’s open admission of its past conduct that seriously undermined the security and lives of Japanese

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6 Asahi Shimbun, September 18, 2002, p. 1. The latter part dealing with Japan’s apology, for unknown reasons, was dropped from Yomiuri Shimbun coverage of the same day.

7 Yomiuri Shimbun Political Section, op.cit., p. 32.
citizens, and its promise to take all necessary measures to prevent future occurrence.\(^8\) It is true that a sentence stating that such incidents happened “within the context of unfortunate and abnormal bilateral relations of the past” was added in order to take some personal blame off Kim Jong-il, and the terms “fushinsen” and “rachi” were never used. However, official North Korean admission was then supplemented by Kim’s additional verbal apology to Koizumi during the summit, and it was also broadcasted by North Korean state television.\(^9\) Although Koizumi understandably reacted to the reported death of eight victims with strong protest and – at the insistence of Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe Shinzō – returned to Tokyo without going to (pre-scheduled) discussions for the signing of a bilateral peace treaty,\(^10\) the Pyongyang Declaration, in itself, was a balanced and well thought-out blueprint for a diplomatic breakthrough for both parties.

Koizumi’s Pyongyang summit was an illustration of what an ambitious Japanese Prime Minister’s foreign policy initiative could achieve for Japan. There were, in fact, potential obstacles in the international environment, especially since Japan’s most influential ally regarded the North as a member of the “axis of evil” and had continued to refuse bilateral talks with Pyongyang.\(^11\) The United States government, when at the last minute informed by Koizumi of his planned Pyongyang visit, briefed the Japanese

\(^8\) Ibid.

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 33.


government about the North’s possible nuclear weapon’s program and expressed its “disquiet” about the idea of a summit in the light of such regional security threats. Koizumi nevertheless made a political decision to exercise more diplomatic freedom for Japan.\textsuperscript{12}

Tanaka Hitoshi, then-Director General of Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and the representative of Koizumi throughout the secret negotiations with the North, countered the accusation that the United States was deliberately kept in the dark by asserting that Koizumi personally informed President George W. Bush by phone and that he additionally briefed the Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly in late August, as soon as the plan for the summit was finalized.\textsuperscript{13} However, he also admits that Koizumi’s decision was Japan’s choice made independently of international constraints: since the Japanese government was faced with its own, distinctively bilateral agenda with the North (such as the abductions and the legacy of colonialism), it would be far-fetched for any outsider to assume that Japan must always coordinate its every move toward North Korea with the United States.\textsuperscript{14}

Besides the “independent” process through which the preliminary negotiations had been conducted, Koizumi’s summit with Kim Jong-il was also highly unique, as the


\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 118-119, 212.
Japanese side finally succeeded in persuading the North Koreans to recognize the merit in better bilateral relations. Unlike its former stance, as preliminary negotiations progressed, North Korea gradually showed yielding signs concerning the issues of Japanese colonialism and the abduction. The change of North Korean stance was facilitated by Japanese insistence on “drawing a big picture” for realizing long-term, mutual benefit.\textsuperscript{15} The North Koreans were successfully persuaded that normalization would especially benefit them economically, although Japan would equally gain by the opening of North Korean market and long-due financial return from heavy Japanese investment made in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula before World War II.\textsuperscript{16} In addition, the opening of “aid and development” programs after the normalization was expected to provide business opportunities for associates of core factional members of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the recession-hit construction industry, as they would take part in infrastructure-building in North Korea.\textsuperscript{17}

However, one single factor that most convinced the North to agree to the summit and the declaration was Koizumi’s political willingness to act as a mediator between the United States and North Korea. Although Japan’s offering of a “carrot” – economic incentives – must had surely enticed Kim Jong-il to reconsider North Korea’s traditionally stubborn stance in dealing with the Japanese government, it must be also

\textsuperscript{15} Sōichirō Tahara and Hitoshi Tanaka, \textit{Kokka to Gaikō} (The State and Diplomacy) (Tokyo:Kodansha, 2005), pp. 36-37.

\textsuperscript{16} “North Korea’s Last Chance for a Diplomatic Solution: An Interview with Tanaka Hitoshi,” \textit{Japan Echo} (June, 2007), p. 27.

emphasized that the prospect of economic benefit was nothing new. When we consider that the economic factor had not necessarily helped the normalization process in the 1990s as other issues were deemed more important in the eyes of the North Koreans – historical legacies and always-shifting regional security arrangements – Koizumi’s proposal to help Kim’s communication with Washington, the most significant military threat to the North, must have been a much more attractive incentive for Kim. In a time when regional tension was mounting as a result of the American President publically calling North Korea a member of the “axis of evil,” and North Korea verbally responding to the condemnation in an equally direct fashion, Koizumi’s political gamble to become a broker was an unprecedented example of a Japanese Prime Minister skilfully utilizing potentially unfavourable, external circumstances to his timely diplomatic leverage. As Okonogi Masao, a distinguished Japanese scholar on North Korean affairs, also concurs, it was Koizumi’s “self-driven approach to East Asian diplomacy based on skilful use of the post-9/11 global situation.”

Koizumi’s strategic insight and personal drive to achieve both regional stability and the resolution of bilateral historical legacies – colonialism, the abductions, and North

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18 This diplomatic leverage was maintained even after the 2002 summit. As we shall see later, one of the reasons Kim Jong-il agreed for a second summit with Koizumi in May 23, 2004 despite subsequent breakdown of the bilateral relations as a result of Japanese society’s anger on the abduction issue after the 2002 summit, was North Korea’s expectation that Koizumi would still be willing to accept the mediary role. During the second summit on May, 2004, Koizumi allegedly mentioned the example of Libya to persuade Kim of the benefits of dismantling its nuclear program. Kim replied that as long as the United States maintained its “threatening postures” against North Korea, it would be impossible. However, Kim also added that although the case of North Korea was different than that of Libya, he desired coordination with the United States and asked for Japan’s assistance, to which Koizumi promised his cooperation. Refer to Yomiuri Shimbun Political Section, op.cit., pp. 66-67.

Korean military threats – through the promise of mutual benefit was also apparent in his public statements right after his visit. On September 18, 2002, Koizumi declared in a press conference in Tokyo that both sides adhering to the “principles and spirits” of the Pyongyang Declaration would result in bilateral relations turning from animosity to cooperation and would directly promote the national interest of Japan by the mitigation of threats. Concerning the abduction, Koizumi stated that improving bilateral relations was especially important in order to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future, and asked for Japanese citizens’ cooperation and support.20

Immediate reception of Koizumi’s summit among experts was generally positive.21 The Pyongyang Declaration was not only beneficial for Japan’s national interest, but was a historical success of postwar Japanese diplomacy that opened a new chapter for a more stable East Asian security.22 In a drastic departure from typical bilateral negotiations in the past, Japan, by signing officially written agreements with the North for cooperation in regional security and trust-building measures, succeeded in institutionalizing Japan’s legitimate right to directly participate in the security matters of


21 For example, Makoto Iokibe, the President of the National Defence Academy of Japan, expressed high regard for Koizumi’s political initiative. In February 2002, some half a year prior to the Pyongyang visit, Koizumi invited Iokibe to share his personal insights on how Japan should approach North Korea. Iokibe, without any knowledge of the secret negotiation taking place at the time, advised Koizumi that “the Prime Minister’s Office, unlike in the past, must take the initiative in negotiating with the North by mobilizing all possible policy tools to secure stability of Japan and East Asia, with a clear goal: persuading North Korea to be a respectable member of international society.” Iokibe now understands the reason for Koizumi’s invitation that day; Koizumi wanted to make sure whether his Cabinet-led secret negotiation was on the right track or not by feeling out expert opinions before the official announcement of his planned summit. Makoto Iokibe, interview with the author, December 18, 2009.

the Korean Peninsula and East Asia with North Korean consent.\(^{23}\) Moreover, Koizumi succeeded in finally persuading the North to accept Japan’s preferred formula for the normalization process – Japan’s apologies for its past colonialism and economic cooperation, as a new partner, to repay the legacy – rather than paying unconditional financial compensation, as North Korea had demanded in the past.\(^{24}\)

Experts who had long witnessed North Korean external behaviour were especially impressed by the fact that North Korea actually acknowledged and apologized for the abductions at the cost of openly self-contradicting their own, past denials.\(^{25}\) Few observers expected Kim to personally express his remorse, and although some Japanese media were dissatisfied by the term used in Kim’s statement and the Pyongyang Declaration – only “remorse (ikan; yugam in Korean)” without the actual use of the term “apology (shazai)” – it clearly contained the nuance of the latter in standard diplomatic practices.\(^{26}\) Considering the nature of the issue – which might have even constituted a casus belli under traditional international law – and the frustratingly limited, realistic options that had been available for Japan,\(^{27}\) Koizumi’s head-on approach, accepting personal political risk, to resolve this long-neglected issue by linking it to the official

\(^{23}\) Jong-won Lee, “Datsu-Reisen wo Mezashi, Nessen no Shusenjō wo Fusen Kyōdōtai ni (By overcoming the Cold War, we must pursue a peaceful cooperative body in the main battlefield of the “hot war”),” Sang Joong Kang, Jong-won Lee, and Naoki Mizuno eds., Nicchō Kōshō (Japan-North Korea Negotiations) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003), p. 43.

\(^{24}\) Ibid.; Kitaoka, op.cit., pp. 49,51.

\(^{25}\) Iokibe, Kokubun, Lee, Okonogi, and Yamauchi, op.cit., p. 16.

\(^{26}\) Kitaoka, op.cit., p. 50.

conditions for diplomatic normalization and future economic cooperation was highly regarded by most experts.\textsuperscript{28}

All in all, the bilateral agreements signed by both parties were considered by the academic community in Japan to be a reasonable approach for a diplomatic breakthrough, and such voices were, at least in the immediately following months of the summit, reflected in mainstream media. Now that the North Korean side accepted most of Japanese formula for normalization and for the resolution of the abduction issue, expert voices reflecting positive evaluation advised that Japan adhere to what had already been achieved by Koizumi without recklessly pushing things too far. Since it could not be denied that Japan also “committed atrocities in Korea during the colonial period,” it would be “morally problematic” to press further, as it could even result in the loss of international society’s already-won support for the Japanese cause.\textsuperscript{29}

2 The Unfolding of Societal Discourse toward North Korea after the Summit

2.1 Societal reception immediately following the summit

During the period immediately before and after Koizumi’s Pyongyang visit, societal reception of the news was relatively balanced. Despite increasing threats from North Korea, normalizing diplomatic relations with the North had been considered a long-due assignment for Japan. Therefore, the general expectation of the public,


\textsuperscript{29} Kitaoka, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 51.
concerning Koizumi’s meeting with Kim Jong-il, was that it should, for the present and future sake of both countries, result in a full resolution of historical issues from the pre-war period (senso shori/kako no mondai no seisan) by somehow agreeing on mutually acceptable terms to proceed with the normalization. Reflecting the turbulent past record of bilateral negotiations and North Korean threats posed to Japan in the more recent period, the Japanese public was not necessarily drawing a naively optimistic picture of future prospects of bilateral relations. However, opinion polls conducted prior to the summit reflected that now that an opportunity had presented itself, the public cautiously supported Koizumi’s initiative. Asahi Shimbun’s opinion polls conducted in late August and September 3, 2002 showed that 53% of the respondents expected positive results in bilateral relations from the summit, and 58% supported Japan formally normalizing diplomatic relations with North Korea. Likewise, a poll taken after the summit by the Cabinet Office (Naikaku) in October 2002 confirmed that 66% of respondents were still in favour of diplomatic normalization, while only 26% were against it.

After Koizumi’s return from Pyongyang on September 17, 2002, the immediate public response did not deviate from the pre-summit expectations. Almost all major newspapers and television media conducted special telephone opinion surveys on the day

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31 Asahi Shimbun, September 3, 2002, p. 1; Asahi-conducted database presented to the author by Yoshibumi Wakamiya (http://xs-tyr01.asahi-np.co.jp/oronopen/servlet/MainServlet: accessed by Wakamiya on December 10, 2009). Among 53% who responded positively, 11% were “highly optimistic” and 42% were “somewhat optimistic.”

of the summit; their results showed that the public objectively evaluated the benefit of Koizumi’s visit and considered that it would have positive consequences for both bilateral and regional stability.\textsuperscript{33} Likewise, opinion polls conducted on September 20 revealed that, even with the shock over the abduction issue, the majority of Japanese still considered diplomatic normalization to be necessary and that the agreement of Koizumi to reopen official negotiating channels was a correct one.\textsuperscript{34} Major newspapers found that more than 80% of the public had a good image of Koizumi as a politician and that Cabinet was supported by 64%.\textsuperscript{35} According to \textit{Yomiuri}, the Cabinet support rate was significantly higher than the average figure in Japanese politics, especially considering that 57.1% of the respondents were “political neutrals” without any formal or emotional attachment to a particular political party.\textsuperscript{36} Besides the obvious breakthrough brought by Koizumi’s “courage,” Japanese people also found it simply “refreshing” to see him visiting Pyongyang without consulting the United States. As one journalist reflected,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{34} An opinion poll of \textit{Asahi Shimbun} on September 20 showed that 59% supported the principle of normalization and 58% agreed with the government decision to reopen negotiating channels. A \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun} poll of the same date resulted in 20.5% of the respondents preferring normalization at the earliest possible opportunity and 68.4% agreeing with the eventual normalization but “not in haste.” Also, 51.4% of the \textit{Yomiuri} respondents – close to the result from \textit{Asahi} – similarly evaluated the government decision for the negotiation positively. Such trends at least stably continued up to October, 2002 as an \textit{Asahi Shimbun} poll conducted in early October found the same percentage of respondents (58%) still favouring diplomatic normalization. Asahi-conducted database presented to the author by Yoshibumi Wakamiya.
  \item \textsuperscript{35} Hiroshi Nakanishi, “Reisen Shūen go no Nihon no Henyō – Naisei to Chiiki Gaikō (Transformation of Post-Cold War Japan – Domestic Politics and Regional Diplomacy)” Yoshihide Soeya and Masayuki Tadokoro eds., \textit{Nihon no Hīgashi Ajia Kōshō} (Japan’s “East Asia” Concept) (Tokyo: Keio University Press, 2004), p. 294; \textit{Asahi Hīgashi Ajia Kōshō}, September 20, 2002, p. 4; \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun}, September 20, 2002, p. 2. 37% of \textit{Asahi} respondents evaluated the summit positively while 44% said it was “positive to a certain degree” (total of 81%). 43.6% of \textit{Yomiuri} respondents gave a high score to Koizumi for the summit and 37.6% answered “somewhat positive” (total of 81.2%).
  \item \textsuperscript{36} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun}, September 20, 2002, p. 2.
\end{itemize}
“one reason why most Japanese people consistently supported the normalization of Japan-North Korea relations despite being angry about the abduction was Koizumi’s forthright manner of advancing Japan’s foreign policy independent of the U.S.,” unlike past LDP-led Cabinets.

However, the most noticeable aspect of media opinion polls during this period immediately following the summit concerned the abduction. Despite the fact that the public majority supported Koizumi’s initiative and the move toward normalization in principle, an even higher percentage of Japanese felt that North Korea’s handling of the abduction issue by verbal apology and a promise for the eventual return of the five survivors (and their children born in North Korea) as a quite unacceptable resolution. An Asahi poll found that 76% of respondents were severely critical of North Korea, and 90.6% of the people in a Yomiuri poll felt that the Japanese government must push for a Japanese-led investigation of the issue using diplomatic normalization as leverage.

When we consider that the public had given high scores to Koizumi and the principles behind Pyongyang Declaration, and that the majority of the same poll respondents said their image of North Korea did not change much after the summit, it is highly indicative that only the shock of the abduction issue clearly stood out in public minds, even during this early phase of the post-summit environment. The contradictory


39 Ibid. (69% of Asahi respondents and 66.4% of Yomiuri.) However, it must be emphasized that Japanese people’s original “reference point” to this question had already been surely negative, as a result of Taepodong and fushinsen incidents from the previous period.
reception toward the summit in general and the abduction issue indicated that among all bilateral sub-agreements in the declaration, the Japanese public’s utter dissatisfaction at how the two governments compromised to resolve the abductions would have a potentially devastating effect on the smooth implementation of other bilateral agreements. That would be exactly how bilateral relations would unfold, as September passed and the shock concerning the abduction snowballed and shadowed other aspects of the original agreements.

Based on the results of opinion polls conducted within a few days of the summit, the most reasonable interpretation of contemporary societal discourse toward North Korea would be as follows. In principle, the public highly appreciated Koizumi’s courageous initiative to overcome the deadlock in bilateral relations by leading Japanese foreign policy in a direction independent of the United States and persuading Kim Jong-il to sit at the negotiating table. Not only that, Koizumi succeeded in reaching a mutually-acceptable formula for resolving pre-war legacies of Japanese colonialism, in the form of economic cooperation and diplomatic normalization, in contrast to the previous, dogged North Korean demand of unconditional Japanese apology and compensation. In light of Japanese public suspicion toward North Korea in recent years, most Japanese found Koizumi’s achievements to be surprising. Therefore, although the public had already long regarded North Korea as a national threat, they were willing to support Koizumi for ending turbulent relations and turning the unstable neighbour into a more responsible actor sharing a formal, diplomatic link – and economic stakes – with Japan, now that an opportunity had presented itself.
At the same time, however, Japanese citizens were utterly shaken by the realization that the long-overlooked “suspicion” of abductions had turned out to be undeniable: the emotional impact on the public was, understandably, significantly different than in times when the incident still remained a suspicion. Persuading Kim to openly admit to them constituted the most significant achievement of Koizumi, at least in the eyes of outside observers and academia in Japan. However, now facing the truth of an act of state terrorism in which their fellow citizens had been actually abducted, ordinary Japanese felt perplexed (tomadoi) as to how they must make sense of this situation in the context of the broader Japan-North Korea relations. The perplexity soon enough turned to open anger as emotions mounted. In this complex state of affairs immediately following the summit, the Japanese public were, therefore, forced to embrace a dual stance toward North Korea in which they accepted the Pyongyang Declaration and the idea of diplomatic normalization to be valid in abstract principle, but with the main emotional focus directly fixed on an already-negative image of the North, with suspicion and anger skyrocketing each day.

Paradoxically, Koizumi’s achievement beyond anyone’s expectation on this particular issue would eventually force his broader blueprint for bilateral normalization and his other, equally-significant achievements to be overshadowed. As the Japanese

40 Shinzō Abe and Kenzō Yoneda, “Nihon Kakusei no tameni Wareware wa Nani wo Nasubekika (What we must accomplish in order to awaken Japan),” Seiron (September, 2003), p. 74.

41 The tone of Asahi Shimbun - generally critical of government policies - that interpreted the plausible nature of societal discursive stance toward North Korea right after the summit also concurs with the dual logic presented here. Refer to Asahi Shimbun editorials, September 18 and 22, 2002, p. 2.
public’s initial perplexity turned to anger, this shift in societal atmosphere to solely focus on the abduction issue would take over as the central theme in all North Korea discourse.

2.2 The toughening of societal discourse concerning the abduction and the early signs of its pressure on the government

At the most abstract level, societal reaction over the abduction issue resembled American emotions following 9/11; ordinary people were simply shocked to recognize that their nation, and innocent and ordinary citizens just like them, had become a target for an “outside force.” As the initial objectivity shown by the public in evaluating the summit started to give way to more of a focus on the abduction issue, perplexity over how to explain the nature of this North Korean crime gained momentum, resulting in drastically heightened anger toward the North. This, in turn, would initiate a societal process by which the public’s anger over the abductions would pressure subsequent governmental decisions to deviate from the bilateral frameworks originally agreed by Koizumi and Kim.

As early as the first week following the summit, signs of societal anger mounting stronger and faster than anyone’s expectation were already felt by both the government and the media. After North Korean officials briefed the MOFA counterparts about the tentative results of their own abduction-investigation as a part of the arrangement for the surviving victims’ eventual return to Japan, it became clear that a significant majority (82%) of the Japanese public would not in any way trust the result of the North Korean

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\[42\text{ Lee, } op.cit., p. 34.\]
agreed investigation, and that they considered North Korean handling of their crime to be still completely inadequate (72%). Under such circumstances, the negative public opinion against North Korea was already, as early as the last week of September 2002, starting to become a “wall of deterrence” hindering the government from simply following the agreed steps of the Pyongyang Declaration. The government – as well as the LDP – were forced to be cautious in their North Korea-related statements in order to avoid potential societal criticism, in case they were viewed as too conciliatory. What would become increasingly clear in this process was that, although societal concern and anxiety about the abduction was understandably genuine at first, the public and the media’s reaction would gradually transform the initial emotion into a form of “national obsession” that would even “swamp debates about other crucially important aspects of the Japan-North Korea relationship.”

The Japanese government negotiating with the North was aware of the subtle, ongoing change in the societal sphere after the summit. The change – an angry Japanese public gradually preferring a more assertive diplomatic stance against North Korea concerning the abduction issue – had an inevitable influence on the government’s negotiating stance. As a result, some central figures in the Koizumi Cabinet, such as

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43 Asahi-conducted opinion poll database (October, 2002) presented to the author by Yoshibumi Wakamiya.


Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe Shinzō and Vice Minister of the Cabinet Office Yoneda Kenzō – who had not been in the insider group prior to the summit – started to advocate a “diplomatic fight” for the sake of national security and the security of Japanese citizens, even at the cost of discarding the already-agreed upon frameworks.46

As months passed in 2002, the government and Koizumi thus found themselves in a dilemma. Having achieved a historical breakthrough with the summit, they would have preferred to resolve the remaining hurdles of the abduction issue – the return of the surviving victims, their families, and the remains of the already-deceased, as well as additionally conducting a joint investigation – from within the framework of the Pyongyang Declaration while concurrently proceeding with other important negotiations related to the diplomatic normalization, economic cooperation, and regional security dialogues. However, it was becoming apparent that it would not be the government but the public that would maintain leadership (shudō-ken) and decision-making power (kettei-ken) on how the abduction issue would be handled.47 The pressured government was already shifting its negotiating stance concerning the abduction, but it was also aware of the consequences, as North Korea, protesting that the Japanese side was breaking the agreed procedures, was gradually assuming a non-cooperative stance in return.48 Then-Special Advisor to the Cabinet (Naikaku Kanbō Sanyo) Okamoto Yukio, in an interview with Asahi Shimbun, admitted that in the face of the Japanese public taking the abduction

46 Abe and Yoneda, op.cit., pp. 73-74.
47 Asahi Shimbun, November 8, 2002, p. 3.
48 Ibid.
of their fellow citizens more “personally” than other past North Korean security provocations, it would be simply impossible to reach governmental decision without fully incorporating public opinion.\(^{49}\) As the Governor of Tokyo Metropolitan Government Ishihara Shintarō also argued that the abduction issue facilitated the resurgence of long-forgotten national “oneness (rentaikan),”\(^{50}\) it would be an underestimation to discard this “personalization factor” as irrelevant. The abduction issue, for the public, was no longer an incident which happened to someone else, somewhere else, in a distant past.

The MOFA bureaucrats facing North Korean counterparts in additional post-summit negotiations, according to what some of them told Okamoto, found the situation somewhat comforting, since they could now simply assume a forceful manner to reflect domestic anger in Japan, without having to take responsibility for broader diplomatic consequences. During those difficult post-summit negotiations, Koizumi and most of the members in his Cabinet, however, had to continually face the dilemma between prioritizing the ever-worsening “people’s preference (min-i)” concerning the abduction, and prioritizing the bilateral “agreements (gōi).”\(^{51}\)

Concerning the drastic shift of public opinion concerning the abduction and its effect on the government’s negotiation stance after the summit, many observers noticed the rise of several abduction issue-specific interest groups at the forefront of societal and


\(^{50}\) Shintarō Ishihara and Shinzō Abe, “Kangan Kokka to Ketsubetsu no Toki (It is time to say farewell to the country run by eunuch bureaucrats),” *Bungeishunjū* (August, 2003), p. 114.

media attention. As a result, some analysts claimed that these organizations’ lobbying and “intentional manipulation” of public opinion were the primary catalyst of societal anger. However, although three primary groups – The National Association of Families of Japanese Abducted by North Korea (“Families Association” or Kazoku-kai made up of immediate families of the abduction victims), The National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Abducted by North Korea (“Rescue Association” or Sukuu-kai), and The Association of Diet Members for the Japanese Abductees (Rachi-Giren) – undoubtably became the most widely covered, supported, and vocal interest organizations after the summit,\(^{52}\) it would be an over-simplification to argue that societal anger generated by the shock of the abduction was solely fueled by deliberate manipulation from agents of particular interest groups. As it will be further elaborated later on, it is true that particularly the latter two associations – Sukuu-kai and Rachi-Giren – were politically motivated groups that were already known more for advocating a hardline stance toward North Korea, to weaken (or even topple) the Communist regime by Japanese initiative, than their immediate concerns over the abductions. Especially the Sukuu-kai, made up

\(^{52}\) McCormack and Wada, op.cit., p. 86. Both Kazoku-kai and Sukuu-kai (and to a lesser degree, Rachi-Giren) had been influenced by researchers and public commentators of the Modern Korea Institute (Gendai Koria Kenkyūjo: Formerly known as Korea Research Institute) established in 1961 in Japan. (Kazoku-kai was established in March, 1997, and Sukuu-kai in April, 1998) Researchers of the Modern Korea Institute consisted either of Japanese scholars formerly belonging to left-wing groups disillusioned by Communism and North Korea during the Cold War, or of hawkish nationalists aiming to topple North Korean regime and establish non-apologetic historical interpretations domestically. Although these organizations had always been active, the government and the general public had not been interested in, or were not aware of, their activities prior to the summit. For further historical background of these abduction-related organizations in Japan, refer to Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “Refugees, Abductees, “Returnees”: Human Rights in Japan-North Korea Relations,” Sonia Ryang, ed., North Korea: Toward a Better Understanding (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), pp. 129-155; James L. Schoff, Political Fences & Bad Neighbors – North Korea Policy Making in Japan and Implications for the United States, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: A Project Report by Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 2006. http://ifpa.org/).
of various academics and social activists generally belonging to the right-wing, had espoused various political agendas spanning all the way from Japan’s military nuclearization to historical revisionism denying Japan’s wartime atrocities.\textsuperscript{53} For some members of the organization, therefore, Japan’s heightened anger toward North Korea, despite the fact that it was focused on the abductions, was nevertheless a rare and timely opportunity to push their broader and more nationalistic agenda into domestic politics and diplomacy.

The North Korean admission of abductions provided them with an unprecedented degree of justification for their existence and agenda after the summits about the abductions gave the views of these organizations and their associates an extraordinary influence on media debates; their influence was further inflated as growing number of politicians, sensitive to societal atmosphere converging with these groups, started to position the abductions as their central political concern, above any other North Korea-linked issues.\textsuperscript{54}

Despite the political activities of abduction-related interest groups that reinforced prevalent societal anger and hindered the government’s original intention to adhere to the agreement with the North, their emergence in Japanese society cannot be fully explained without our understanding of both the sympathy that ordinary citizens expressed toward

\textsuperscript{53} Tōru Hasuike, \textit{Rachi: Sayū no Kakine wo Koeta Tatakai e} (The Abduction: Toward a fight beyond the left-right hedge) (Kyoto: Kamogawa Shuppan, 2009), p. 96. For tracing Sukuu-kai’s linkage to other like-minded groups to publish revisionist history textbooks for public schools, refer to Nobuyoshi Takashima, “The North Korean Abductions,” an online article translated by John Junkerman from “Sukuu kai to Tsukuru kai wo musubu ito (Thread that links Sukuu-kai to Tsukuru-kai) (Social organization for publishing textbooks that reinterprets Japan’s mainstream postwar historical perspective)), http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/10915 (February 23, 2003)

\textsuperscript{54} Morris-Suzuki, “Refugees, abductees, “returnees”,” \textit{op.cit.}, p. 140.
the fellow-citizen victims and their families and the resulting fury against North Korea. In this regard, the public’s anger had a pure humanitarian origin and therefore should not be taken as Japan suddenly adopting a xenophobic nationalism, despite the fact that certain groups indeed saw opportunities to influence the public in that direction.\textsuperscript{55} As Tessa Morris-Suzuki summarized, the most fundamental reason for the abduction issue having an unprecedented influence on public opinion was exactly that “many ordinary people who had never been involved in politics or NGO activism before rallied to the cause because they were genuinely moved at the terrible plight of the abductees and their families,”\textsuperscript{56} not because of certain organizations’ political drumbeat.

In the end, however, it must also be admitted that Japanese people’s genuine anxiety about the violation of key human rights of their fellow citizens, and their altruistic sympathy toward the victims, led to a societal current that almost voluntarily resulted in the people’s support for and the empowerment of the Kazoku-kai and its supporting political organizations of Sukuu-kai and Rachi-Giren. Abstract anger and sympathy initially felt by ordinary citizens were indeed given more concrete logic by the arguments of these organizations, especially those of the most-politically motivated anti-North Korea Sukuu-kai. In this fashion, North Korea discourse, which increasingly came to the fore in public as early as October, 2002, started to convey a certain “storyline” encompassing initial public emotions. Something more than simple sympathy and anger became apparent, as comparatively more concrete explanations on

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{55} Ōtake, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 238.\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{56} Morris-Suzuki, “Refugees, abductees, “returnees”,” \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 140-141.}}
the true nature and the origin of the abductions were widely presented through the media, with frequent mentioning of certain political terminologies, such as “sovereignty,” “human rights,” or “dictatorship.” Although there is no quantitative way to gauge the extent of the abduction-linked organizations’ influence in this process, we can nevertheless surmise that the public’s drastic exposure to media debates and discussions about North Korea that included such organizations and other elites would have played a part in leading the direction of the discourse.

The main “storyline” concerning North Korea and the abductions that took shape from October 2002 and became widely accepted throughout 2003, was of a peaceful and democratic state’s human rights – and therefore an integral part of national sovereignty (kokka-shuken) – being utterly violated by an individual-worshipping and criminal dictatorship located dangerously close to Japan. As Yomiuri’s special editorial marking the fifty-first anniversary of the ending of the allied occupation of Japan and the signing of the San Francisco Treaty (April 28, 1952) stated, for many Japanese, the disclosure of the abduction was closely linked to how they had understood the importance of national sovereignty. The day that Japanese recovered their lost rights as an independent state, the editorial suggested, should also be a meaningful time to discuss the proper role of the state in protecting the lives and properties of its citizens, as the abduction now provided Japan with a clear example of a violation of its state sovereignty.57

The forming societal discourse was significant not only because the notion of “sovereignty” was incorporated in the process. After all, other previous North Korean

57 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, April 27, 2003, p. 3.
provocations – missile launches and especially the *fushinsen* incidents – had also been discussed and understood by the public as examples of Japanese sovereignty being “toyed around” with by the North in the past. What distinguished the newest version of the “sovereignty” issue, as compared to other previous incidents, was that it was the first instance in which the Japanese came to view the danger to their vital *shuken* in the form of “human rights.”

Incorporation of the “human rights” factor in societal discourse here did not necessarily symbolize a more heightened concern for the principles of human rights ideology in general, since the public’s understanding of “rights” was highly selective to the fate of their fellow citizens. However, what is significant is that for the first time in Japanese postwar history, widespread emotions caused by the humanitarian tragedy of its citizens were linked to the concern for national security and sovereignty, especially as the people came to focus on “a particular external force which is seen both as radically threatening to national security and as violating key human rights.” And to many Japanese citizens, this “external force” was not just any state, but one of the most bizarre and eccentric ultra-dictatorships in the world, practicing individual-worshipping and a closed system of governance. Along with heightened consciousness about national

58 Morris-Suzuki, “Refugees, Abductees, “Returnees,”” *op. cit.*, p. 135. For this reason, Morris-Suzuki distinguishes the ideology of human rights proper from the discussion of “human rights” in Japanese societal discourse related to the abduction, calling the latter “human rights nationalism.” Human rights nationalism differs from our typical understanding of human rights since it focuses selectively on “particular humanitarian concerns than happen to overlap with national security concerns” despite its “extensive use of the rhetoric of human rights.” If North Korea discourse in Japan had concerned human rights – not human rights nationalism – then other humanitarian concerns, such as the fate of North Koreans under Kim’s regime or of Koreans during the colonial period, would have taken equally central position in these discussions.

sovereignty and human rights, the nature of the state that caused such security violations further fueled the growing animosity. From October 2002 on, major newspaper editorials agreed that the strange nature of the “criminal state practicing abduction (rachihan kokka)” was additionally fueling an already-heightened distrust of the North among the public. They had to further recognize the reality that openly supporting diplomatic normalization was increasingly becoming an act of going in the face of large portions of the public, which expressed unprecedented distrust and hatred and the belief that Japan should instead exert further pressure on the North, as it had now finally “confessed its crime.”

While inter-governmental negotiations concerning the return of the victims’ families from North Korea and mutually-acceptable means of conducting investigations prolonged throughout 2003, the societal trend turned to be an ever stronger obstacle to the normalization process. An opinion poll conducted in July 2003 illustrated that people disapproving of normalization (46%), now for the first time after the summit started to outnumber those approving it (44%). In September 2003, 49% voted against normalization as opposed to 38% still favoring. A substantial proportion of the respondents still approving of normalization in the mid-2003 meant that public’s initial acceptance of Koizumi’s initiative was not yet wholly lost. Nevertheless, more

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61 Asahi Shimbun, July 1, 2003, p. 2.

62 Asahi-conducted opinion poll database (September, 2003) presented to the author by Yoshibumi Wakamiya.
objectively-minded experts and scholars observed a clear societal trajectory, in which the claim that society’s over-fixation on the abduction issue could limit Japan’s broader opportunity to play a leading role for regional peace was increasingly becoming a statement too “audacious against near-uniformity in emotional criticism of the North.”^63

Indeed, openly suggesting any concession to North Korea on any issue was becoming “political suicide” in Japan.^64

As we have observed, the primary cause of the initial anger felt by the public, turning into a more focused discourse, was the incorporation of three political themes – the ideas of sovereignty, human rights, and the nature of the regime in North Korea – into one coherent narration after the summit. Only by the incorporation of these three factors into one “storyline” concerning the abduction did the initial anger become a more politically-focused, societal discourse with the potential to become a substantial pressure on the government. Among the three, only concerns about “sovereignty” pre-existed, while “human rights” and “the North Korean regime” crept into discourse after the summit. When we consider that the North Korean regime had always been a dictatorship and that the Japanese government and public alike, in full realization of its nature, had nevertheless preferred better relations in the past, it is interesting that the “dictatorship” metaphor started to serve as one new reason for putting pressure on North Korea after the summit.


It is thus reasonable to conclude that *any one* of the three discursive strands that led the main “storyline” concerning the abduction would not have independently created the dominant North Korea discourse, as empirically observed after the summit. It was the timely combination of the three as unprecedented in Japan’s postwar history that made the negative discourse against North Korea persuasive and justifiable in public minds.

### 2.3 Additional implications of the abduction: “Sense of victimhood” in the Japanese understanding of national history

The discourse concerning the abduction issue had another societal implication: closely linked to the ongoing trend after the summit, there was a subtle shift in which mainstream, postwar narratives about the historical relationship between Japan and North Korea were being re-interpreted.

As the initial euphoria over Koizumi’s political success subsided and the public majority started to solely focus on the abduction, a number of prominent Japanese scholars with “rightist” inclinations started to present their own interpretations of its cause. One of them, Professor Nakanishi Terumasa of Kyoto University, found its clue in the way Japanese had incorrectly understood the nature of Japan-North Korea relations in the past, including those of the pre-war era. He asserted that the true villain of the abduction was none other than Japan’s leniency and sense of guilt toward its neighbours, because embracing a wrong historical notion of being the oppressor in the past had allowed alleged, historical “victims” to consistently violate the rights of the Japanese without being punished, North Korea being the worst among them. Therefore, North
Korea, through the abduction of innocent Japanese citizens, had taught the Japanese a valuable lesson that such a misconstrued historical perspective (rekishikan) must be corrected.65 Nakanishi concluded that the shock ordinary Japanese felt at the disclosure of the abduction – “the amount of shock equivalent to what Americans must have felt in 9/11” – had demonstrated to the public that a erroneous sense of guilt and atonement (shokuzai-ishiki/tsumi-ishiki) was not simply an act of crime against one’s own history, but a danger to state sovereignty and to the security of one’s citizens.66

More than being a political statement of a very limited number of vocal, right-wing elites of high education, the argument for linking mainstream interpretations of Japan’s historical relations with its neighbours to the abduction had, in fact, wider resonance among the public. It might not be readily clear to some outside observers how the abduction and historical interpretation of pre-war East Asia could be causally linked in Japanese minds, and thus some doubts that such arguments even existed in post-summit Japan is a legitimate question. Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that empirical observations of scholars, journalists, bureaucrats, and other figures who had been closely monitoring the unfolding of North Korea discourse in Japan, reported on the historical reinterpretation factor subtly influencing the way the public, and even the direct family members of the abduction victims, perceived the nature of the abduction. For example, according to Hasuike Tōru – former chief spokesman for the Kazoku-kai and the elder

65 Terumasa Nakanishi, “Kitachōsen no Kaku kara Kokka to Kokumin wo Mamorerunoka (Can we protect our nation and our citizens from North Korean nuclear?),” Seiron (December, 2002), p. 53.

brother of the abduction victim Hasuike Kaoru who returned to Japan on October 15, 2002 – the Secretary General (Jimu Kyokuchō) of Kazoku-kai, Masumoto Teruaki – another family member whose sister Masumoto Rumiko allegedly died in North Korea in 1981 – had made an uncommonly political statement after the summit that, “as a result of Kim Jong-il’s admittance and apology of the abductions, Japan, at last, has been freed from the spell (jubaku) of always having to atone for past colonial rules (kako no shokuminchi shihai no shokuzai).”

The argument that mainstream, historical narratives that had prioritized atonement to its neighbours was to blame for the abduction had a certain persuasive logic, since it resulted in Japanese suffering by a deliberate act of a neighbouring state for the first time in the postwar period. In the background of the free public criticism of North Korea’s immorality and Japan’s past naivety, was the overpowering societal realization that the abduction had, in a day, turned Japan from a historic “aggressor (kagaisha)” into a “victim (higaisha).” In short, the abduction effectively helped push the long-embraced “conscience of guilt” toward North Korea out of the Japanese minds.

67 The statement was “uncommon” because compared to Sukuu-kai and Rachi-Giren, the foremost concern for the Kazoku-kai, understandably, had always been the rescue of the members’ families in North Korea. This relative political neutrality of the association in addition to the obvious individual tragedies of its members was at the heart of Japanese public’s unanimous support and sympathy for Kazoku-kai after the summit.


70 Masao Okonogi, interview with the author, December 11, 2009.
In the post-Cold War decade, when Japan had been struggling in a difficult quest to find a “new national identity” to restore social unity and a sense of purpose for the nation, the “victim mentality” stimulated by the abduction even had a “somewhat cathartic” effect of freeing Japan from continuous, historical accusations by its neighbours.71 Especially considering that around the same time Japan was being criticized for its “lack of earnestness” in taking responsibility for the issue of “sex slaves” in the Japanese military during World War II, interpretations that North Koreans had also committed similar humanitarian crimes against the Japanese helped “even the score” in the minds of many.72 Moreover, at a time when many Japanese were becoming defensively nationalistic against both Koreas’ and China’s criticism of Koizumi’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, the abduction provided indirect, but nevertheless perfect, material on which to release their frustration, at least against North Korea.73 In any case, the “collective victim mentality (shūdanteki higaisha kanjyō)” was a new phenomenon, since mixing historical reinterpretation and North Korea issues in such a form had not previously existed in the mainstream public discourse prior to 2002.74

Despite the fact that this new surge of “victim mentality” crept into Japanese discourse after the disclosure of the abduction, it should not be interpreted as a sign that

71 Funabashi, *op.cit.*, p. 73.


all Japanese public fully and consciously accepted the literal claims of the aforementioned scholars and activists. The government’s official stance on pre-war regional history did not shift during this period, and there was no major public outcry to adopt revisionist versions of history in Japan’s diplomatic dealings with its neighbours. Rather, what the new victim mentality and the related reinterpretation of regional history illustrated, was that an environmental opportunity was provided for the essence of some right-wing elements’ claims to be more easily accepted by broader societal audiences as a plausible version of historical narration, more so than in the past. It is similar to the process in which the public ended up supporting various abduction-specific organizations foremost out of humanitarian sympathy, despite the fact that most people did not fully share those groups’ more extreme long-term political goals. Even though the majority of ordinary Japanese did not consciously side with some intellectuals’ aggressive claims, that had long been regarded as too extreme even in Japan, societal agitation did enable the essence of their stories to be transmitted more freely, exactly because the public anger resulted in their willingness to listen to readily-available and sensational re-interpretations of why the abductions had happened.

2.4 Heightening societal criticism toward politicians, bureaucrats, and other elite groups

Public anger also resulted in severe criticism of certain groups of Japanese politicians and bureaucrats, for their past conduct concerning the abduction issue. Although North Korea was clearly the villain that carried out the kidnappings, the public increasingly came to view politicians of both ruling and opposition parties and
bureaucrats, who had not been assertive enough in the past toward the North, as equally at fault.\textsuperscript{75} Right from the day Koizumi returned from Pyongyang, the MOFA and the headquarters of major political parties – including the LDP – were bombarded with e-mails and telephone calls from ordinary citizenry attacking their previously-lenient stances.\textsuperscript{76}

In the political realm, the most hard-hit parties were the Social Democratic Party (\textit{Shamintō}) and the Communist Party (\textit{Kyōsantō}), two major representatives of the leftist elements of the Japanese society that had also been traditionally sympathetic to North Korea. It could be substantively argued that the two parties “dug their own graves,” since they had, prior to Kim’s admission of the abductions, accepted the North’s denial at face value and even criticized Japanese politicians who were pointing at possible North Korean involvement for making accusations without concrete evidence. After the summit public anger swiftly shifted to previous actions of the two parties resembling “spokesmen” of the North, and the credibility of their official statements related to anything North Korean came to a swift downfall.

The two parties tried to control the damage by either publicly apologizing for blindly believing the North Korean denial, or by explaining the rationale for their past behaviour. For example, Doi Takako, the head of the Social Democratic Party, took the former step of making an apologetic media statement in October 2002, while Shii Kazuo, Chairman of the Communist Party, made media appearances to argue that the people’s

\textsuperscript{75} Nakanishi (Hiroshi), \textit{op.cit.}, p. 294.

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun} editorial, September 19, 2002, p. 3.
criticism of his party as a mere messenger of the North was unfounded, and that his party had never officially stated that the abduction could not have taken place. Despite their best efforts, criticism toward the parties maintained its course, continuing to the present day although the original fever has somewhat softened. ⁷⁷

In addition, regardless of party affiliations, any politician who either in the past or after the summit made public statements that lacked “sufficient emotional involvement” toward the abduction was equally criticized by the public and fellow Diet members for being a person who was consequently “weakening Japanese diplomatic leverage” against North Korea by assuming a distant “third-person” perspective at this crucial moment for the Japanese nation. ⁷⁸ Abe claimed that anyone who criticized public reaction to the abduction as “too extreme” was, in all practicality, “siding with North Korea.” ⁷⁹

Under the circumstances, in which even mild statements could be branded as “not sympathetic enough,” any involvement in North Korea affairs after the summit could suddenly turn into a political liability. As more politicians preferred to either safely bandwagon with public anger or refrain from taking part in any North Korea-related activities all together, in order to stay out of public and media attention, political organizations such as the Federation of Japanese-North Korean Diet/Parliamentary

⁷⁷ For Doi’s apology and the cold social reception, refer to Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, October 11, 2002, p. 3. For Shii’s defense of himself and his party, refer to his interview with Yomiuri Shimbun, November 13, 2002, p. 4. For a more recent media criticism on Japanese parties’ previous stances toward North Korea, refer to Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, March 24, 2006, p. 3.

⁷⁸ Shinzō Abe and Yoshiko Sakurai, “Futatabi Tatsu! Dare ga Kono Kuni wo Mamorunoka (Rising Again! Who will protect this country?),” Seiron (September, 2008), p. 52.

⁷⁹ Abe and Yoneda, op.cit., p. 74.
Members for Mutual Friendship (Nicchō Yūkō Giin Remmei) stopped functioning after the summit. 80

As more findings were revealed about the actual unfolding of the abductions, an emotionally charged public targeted the MOFA more severely than political parties. After the summit, many Japanese perceived the MOFA to be made of bureaucrats who had never been serious about protecting the security and welfare interests of their fellow citizens. 81 In this regard, the abduction issue furthered the already-prevalent societal discontent toward secretive, “elitist bureaucracy” to a new level. 82 Media reported that many Japanese especially expressed tremendous anger at the MOFA for consistently prioritizing issues belonging to “big politics” of diplomatic normalization, by advising the government to provide incentives – various food aids, for example – to North Korea, while “assuming that the suspicion around Japanese abductions to be an annoying obstacle for the realization of their grand foreign policy goal.” 83 To the public, the past “half-heartedness” of the MOFA to engage in the abduction issue was the primary reason for the prolonging of the suffering of the victims and their families. Abe Shinzō, emerging at the forefront of Japanese politics during this period by aggressively

80 Haruki Wada, “Ushinatta Kanōsei no Kaifuku wo (Lost opportunity must be restored),” Sekai (March, 2003), p. 139.


83 Yomiuri Shimbun, September 18, 2002, p. 3; Yomiuri Shimbun editorials, September 18, 2002, and April 24, 2003, p. 3.
participating in abduction-related domestic debates, wholly supported this reasoning. Abe also viewed the past abduction-related conduct of the MOFA to be too passive, since “many Japanese diplomats had typically cared more about making North Koreans happy on diplomatic stages pre-arranged by their counterparts. And whenever North Koreans offered them a token reward for their cooperation, some MOFA bureaucrats indulged themselves in a false belief that it was a hard-won diplomatic achievement.”84 To Abe, the MOFA’s past dealings with North Korea in general and its stance toward the abductions in particular constituted an example of a fundamental pathology in postwar Japanese diplomacy.

As criticism mounted, societal anger toward the MOFA spilled over into personal attacks on its officials who had been directly involved with North Korea diplomacy. Makita Kunihiko, former Director General of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau from 1998 until September 2001, and Tanaka Hitoshi, who succeeded Makita and had taken charge of the secret negotiations for the summit as stated earlier, became the main targets.85 Especially Tanaka: the widely-circulated weekly magazine Shūkan Bunshun’s October 2002 edition labelled him a “Class-A war criminal,” and Kazoku-kai and Sukuu-kai the same year jointly sent him an open questionnaire to highlight his responsibility for “prolonging the resolution of the abduction issue in the past” and framing the issue to be of “secondary importance” to Japan.86

85 Hughes, op.cit., p. 467.
86 Wada, op.cit., p. 138.
Considering that the abduction issue probably would not have moved forward at all but remained a “suspicion” without the summit, in which Tanaka had taken the most crucial role for its realization, much of the public’s accusation was unfair and unfounded. However, after learning of the victims’ fate, public emotion was too involved with the issue and Tanaka’s somewhat methodical pursuit of diplomatic normalization, in order to solve all North Korea-related issues comprehensively, was interpreted by the public as a sign of his emotional detachment from the abduction. In the midst of public opinion already well formed against him, with even a time bomb being delivered to his house in September, 2003, Tanaka found it difficult to defend his position that “diplomacy must be conducted in order to secure long-term security of one’s own state in a comprehensive fashion and the abduction issue can also be resolved within this broader framework.”

Since he knew that societal atmosphere would further interpret such statement as an evidence of him “not taking the issue seriously,” he was compelled into silence throughout this period.

2.5 The media reaction

While some politicians and bureaucrats were facing acerbic criticism, the media were also not safe from scrutiny. The public went on to bash certain media outlets, especially Asahi Shimbun, monthly journals such as Sekai, and other magazines belonging to the “progressive camp,” for their not-sufficiently-engaging, past abduction

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88 Tahara and Tanaka, *ibid.*
coverage. *Asahi Shimbun* and other progressive media (understood in Japanese society as modestly leftist/pacifist) had traditionally put weight on political values: better relations with Japan’s neighbours through Japan’s sincere apology and full acceptance of its historical responsibilities, citizen-centred democracy, and antimilitaristic pacifism (adherence to the Constitution, limitations on the SDF, and resistance against further strengthening the United States-Japan military alliance). Therefore, they had been somewhat sympathetic to the people of the North, and their past coverage on North Korea had indeed shown signs of downplaying the plausibility of the abduction when the issue was still an open suspicion.\(^{89}\)

In the post-summit environment, these media corporations were increasingly facing similar public criticism resembling those against politicians and bureaucrats. *Asahi Shimbun* and *Sekai*, at least up to the early 2003, tried to parry the attacks by mixing downright apology to the Japanese people and concurrently explaining the rationale behind their past coverage in defensive tones, without much success. For example, on December 27, 2002, *Asahi Shimbun*, in its full two-page article titled “Reviewing North Korea’s abduction-related coverages: *Asahi Shimbun*’s reports until now (*Kenshō Kitachōsen Rachi Hōdō- Asahi Shimbun wa dō Tsutaetaka*),” provided an extensive overview of how the newspaper had reported all North Korea-linked news

\(^{89}\) After the 2002 summit, there were also criticisms that they had downplayed the abduction issue in the past by drawing a parallel between North Korean abductions with Japanese “abduction” of Koreans during the colonial period in far greater numbers. Since historical contexts and circumstances in which those two separate incidents occurred vary, the simple parallelism employed by these media – probably with an original intention to highlight to the Japanese public the multi-faceted nature of regional history and politics and that North Korea was not the only party to be blamed for such types of crime – actually backfired in the post-summit environment.
Concerning the abduction, the newspaper defended its past “passivity” by asserting that, “since the incident, at that time, was neither official nor confirmed, we felt that reporting based on mere speculations could even result in the endangerment of the abduction victims possibly held in North Korea, and we therefore prioritized confirming the rumor first.” In the end, nevertheless, Asahi Shimbun had to admit that its stance had inevitably produced a public impression that the newspaper had not been sufficiently engaged, and it officially apologized for causing such “misunderstanding.”

Sekai, a monthly journal read by more politically-conscious readers, was also pressured to set the record straight. Similar to Asahi, Sekai had been publicly attacked after the summit for being too sympathetic to North Korea. In a defensive article in which the journal tried to convince the readers that it had never intended to downplay the gravity of the abduction, it also cautiously expressed its concern that the ongoing “North Korea bashing” and the public’s enthusiastic alignment with the trend might be an instance in which a much more fundamental factor – the unchanging and persistent “distorted image of Koreans as troublesome, incomprehensible, complicated, and dangerous” embraced by the Japanese since the colonial period – might be at work in the background. Sekai claimed that the recent societal atmosphere, in which the journal’s problematizing of such “distorted images” being regarded as a typical “pro-North rambling,” – and also the very fact that it had to publish a defensive article to explain its view of North Korea – illustrated the abnormal state of Japan in the post-summit

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91 Ibid.
environment.⁹² One prominent journalist, Tahara Sōichirō, who was facing criticisms during this period for linking the abduction to Korean forced labourers during the colonial period,⁹³ similarly viewed North Korea bashing as not merely a product of people’s anger, but a part of a larger process that might be at work in the background, in which the subtle intentions (omowaku) of some were utilizing the opportunity to change fundamental ideas about the Korean Peninsula and regional history.⁹⁴

Despite apologies and defensive articles, the public’s already-established impression never fully subsided. Asahi, Sekai, and other progressive media’s somewhat changed, official stance after the summit – that they also regarded the North Korean abduction of Japanese to be an unforgivable crime and that Kim’s regime must take full responsibility – was still regarded by many Japanese as a pitiful “alibi making” in order to make up for past passivity.⁹⁵ To a large degree, such public scepticism was not without grounds. However, at the same time it was also evident that these media sources, witnessing firsthand how the people’s emotion toward North Korea had drastically shifted in a short time-span, genuinely decided to place more weight on the abduction and reflect societal sentiment. Editors and managers were indeed feeling guilt, as well as a clear disappointment in North Korea for “betraying” their sympathy;

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⁹² Sekai Editorial Office, “Chōsen Mondai ni kansuru Honshi no Hōdō ni tsuite (Concerning our position on Korea-related issues),” Sekai (February, 2003), pp. 260-266.

⁹³ For example, Kazuya Fukuda, “Tahara Sōichirō-shi no Rekishikan wo Tou (Questioning Mr. Tahara’s understanding of history),” Bungeishunjū (February, 2003), pp. 134-141.


⁹⁵ Abe, op.cit., p. 52; Ōtake, op.cit., p. 223.
their guilt might even have forced them to obsessively counter their own mistakes by voluntarily adopting tones relatively close to conservative media and mainstream public emotions toward the North.\textsuperscript{96}

As in the case of public criticism toward politicians and bureaucrats, media bashing was originally initiated by organizations such as Sukuu-kai and, to a lesser degree, Kazoku-kai. However, their criticism, of some media groups not cooperating with their cause in the past, was able to maintain consistent momentum after the summit precisely because the public fully backed and shared their irritation. Media corporations such as Asahi and Sekai had to reply to these accusations defensively, not simply because the criticisms were initiated by famous figures, but because they were aware that the public’s anger was supporting those views.

Asahi Shimbun, for one last time, argued in its New Year editorial in 2003 that despite legitimate public sympathy to the abduction victims and their families, the paper was nevertheless concerned about societal trends, in which diplomats were being labelled as “enemies of the state” and extreme statements even favouring war or nuclear armament against North Korea were being made by politicians in the aftermath of the summit. Such an atmosphere, the editorial concluded, was in a way making Japan even resemble its authoritarian enemy.\textsuperscript{97} It was a bold statement which illustrated that

\textsuperscript{96} Masao Okonogi, Hajime Izumi, Sang Joong Kang, Naoki Mizuno, and Jong-Won Lee, “Sōgō Tōron: Nichehō Pyōngyang Sengen no Rekishiteki/Kokusaiteki Igi (Historical and international significance of the Pyōngyang Declaration),” Sang Joong Kang, Jong-Won Lee, and Naoki Mizuno eds., 

\textsuperscript{97} Asahi Shimbun editorial, January 1, 2003, p. 2.
traditional “progressive” camp, although much weakened, could still raise its voice (with sufficient “courage”) in non-monolithic Japanese society, even in the post-summit domestic environment.

However, as expected, it was critically received as a typical, leftist claim undermining public unison concerning the abductions. For example, in a public lecture on January 25, Abe Shinzō made an official statement that, “such editorial was hindering Japan’s assertive negotiating position against North Koreans” and that Asahi was in effect telling the Japanese people to forget about the abduction victims. It was a very rare occasion for a high-ranking Cabinet official to criticize by name a particular newspaper’s editorial, but his view was largely shared among the agitated public.98 Not limited to Asahi, any media report or individual press statement even remotely deviating from Sukuu-kai and Kazoku-kai’s stance would be answered by thousands of critical and threatening e-mails everyday, sent from ordinary citizens.99 It is easy to surmise that in the process, organizations related to the abduction victims became a “sanctuary” not to be touched upon, as media quickly learned that annoying them also meant making an enemy out of the Japanese public.100

Media elites monitoring Japanese media after the summit observed that journalists were self-censoring and bandwagoning with main trends, and that there was also an atmosphere strongly pressuring the media into a situation resembling a “spiral of

98 Asahi Shimbun, January 26, 2003, p. 2; Wakamiya, op.cit., p. 49.


100 Hasuike, op.cit., pp. 88-89.
silence,” for those who chose not to bandwagon with the mainstream. Self-censoring of minority interpretations became widespread, as few writers were willing to challenge the prevailing tone of the “hawks dominating the public discourse” on North Korea.101 Liberal journalist writing in general – and Asahi editorials in particular – “always fold(ed) back on itself two or three times,”102 clear evidence of their loss of self-confidence and of their painstaking measures to intentionally dilute any potential source of public criticism. As Wakamiya Yoshibumi, the chair of the editorial board of Asahi Shimbun during this period admits, any newspaper in a democratic country has to make sure that its arguments do not deviate too much from majority readers’ opinion, as “too openly going against the trend for the sake of maintaining consistency in its political views could even be counterproductive for the newspaper’s agenda in the long run.” Newspapers, including Asahi, had no choice but to prioritize making an “alibi” that they were sympathetic to the majority opinion while waiting for public fever to subside, since any statement not sharing the majority public opinion would be, no matter how objective and rational, far from persuasive.103

On the contrary to Asahi and other “liberal” media pressured to adjust their tones, more conservative journals read by the general public, such as the weekly SAPIO and monthly Seiron (affiliated with the right-leaning Sankei Shimbun) known for their strongly negative views on North Korea, experienced increased sales, especially among

102 Ibid.
103 Yoshibumi Wakamiya, interview with the author, December 17, 2009.
the younger generations in their twenties and thirties. Other weekly and monthly magazine stories about North Korea were published at a phenomenal rate, and everyday television news offered “almost saturation coverage” of every imaginable, negative aspect of the North. In addition, manga – a highly approachable means of casual information transfer for ordinary Japanese citizens – was also successfully used as a popular medium to educate the public about Kim Jong-il’s despotic image, as one such title sold half a million copies in its first three months of the publication, “more than all books ever published in English about Korea put together.”

Most media experts in Japan recognized the prevalent societal atmosphere (kūki) discouraging diverse interpretations in covering North Korea after the 2002 summit as a clear case of the so-called “ninety-percent phenomenon (kyū-wari genshō),” a not-so-common trend in which the absolute public majority strongly supports a particular idea and ends up further reinforcing the already-set discursive direction. As we have observed, after the initial shock of the disclosure of the abduction had sunk in by the end of 2002, all media coverage on North Korea came to be of more or less “one voice,” as they were planned and broadcast based on a premise that expressing anything other than hatred toward North Korea and the anger of the Japanese public would be rejected by the people. While the pressure Japanese media was facing was inevitable, it led scholars

105 McCormack and Wada, op.cit., p. 87.
106 Maruyama, op.cit., p. 127.
107 Ibid., pp. 128-129.
of Japan-North Korea relations and of mass media to worry that media had generally failed to function as objective journalism, correctly grasping the complex political environment surrounding the bilateral interactions and advising the best feasible options to both the government and the public.\footnote{Kazuyoshi Hishiki, “Nicchō Kanren Hōdō – Media ga Baiyō suru Fushin to Zōo no Seron (Media coverage concerning Japan-North Korea relations – Public opinion of distrust and hatred nurtured by the media),” Sang Joon Kang, Jong-Won Lee, and Naoki Mizuno eds., Nicchō Kōshō (Japan-North Korea Negotiations) (Tokyo:Iwanami Shoten, 2003), p. 162.}

A number of experts were especially fascinated by the developments in media-society relations after the disclosure of the abduction. Among those who approached it theoretically, Tessa Morris-Suzuki’s comparison of 9/11 and the shock brought by the abduction issue in Japan is one work highly relevant to our understanding of Japanese media’s conformity to societal pressure in the aftermath of the summit.

Adopting the analytic framework used by Murray Levin in his 1971 work \textit{Political Hysteria in America: The Democratic Capacity for Repression}, Morris-Suzuki argued in her 2003 article “The Politics of Hysteria: America’s Iraq, Japan’s North Korea” that public anger from the abduction and Japanese media’s voluntary bandwagoning to conform and actively reflect the trend was an example of “pluralistic repression.” It is “pluralistic” because press is free in a democracy; any press obviously retains its right to criticize and question any socially-dominant narrative of key events. There is, however, also a strong element of “repression” because when there is a “single enormously powerful dominant narrative (\textit{shihaiteki monogatari}) about the key events of
the day,” critics who question it are liable to be “marginalized, ridiculed, decried as unpatriotic and labelled an extremist” if they exercised that right too freely. 109

In the case of the “dominant narrative” concerning North Korea after the summit, Japanese media indeed refrained from such questioning. In the midst of the mainstream narrative becoming ever more prevalent among the public, it is natural that other, critical elements in journalism would also face pressure to self-censor or to bandwagon with the trend. Other Japanese scholars also pinpointed the applicability of similar analytic models – such as Noelle-Neumann’s “spiral of silence (chimmoku no rasen).” 110 The structure of the spiral of silence was perfected in Japan by the end of 2002 and early 2003, as media corporations’ self-monitoring of the contents of abduction reports became, although unofficial, a norm. 111

Explanatory powers of both “the spiral of silence” and “the pluralistic repression” are empirically valid, when they are applied specifically to Japanese media practices toward North Korea issues. Morris-Suzuki argued that when “the key event of the day” is particularly related to national security or external actors, strengthening of “the dominant narrative” could sometimes even turn into a type of “hysteria.” To her, Japanese societal discourse concerning North Korea generally and particularly


110 “The spiral of silence” model asserts that, “individuals who notice that their personal opinions are spreading will voice these opinions self-confidently in public; those who notice their opinions are ‘losing ground’ will be inclined to adopt a more served attitude and remain silent.” Carroll J. Glynn, Garrett J. O’Keefe, Robert Y. Shapiro, Mark Lindeman and Susan Herbst, Public Opinion (Second Edition) (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), pp. 244-247.

concerning the abduction was a primary example. In addition, similar to the 9/11, the “dominant narrative” of North Korea easily transformed into a powerful “national hysteria” in Japan because the people’s fear and anger were built around a real act of violence or source of danger – a “core of truth,” but also consisting of “usable facts (tsukai-mawashi no kiku jijitsu)” prone for contextual manipulation within the confines of that “truth” – and not just a product of fantasy. As in many security threats involving an external actor, when the truth of outsiders’ violence strikes “a receptive chord with the public (taishū no kokoro no kinsen),” a dominant narrative built around usable facts and the resulting hysteria also creates a sense of national unity in the face of a commonly perceived threat.

3 Japanese Government’s Policy Responses to Changing Societal Discourse

3.1 Government’s abduction policy readjustment

Considering the hardening of public opinion against North Korea, it is natural that the Japanese government quickly responded to this societal atmosphere. Within a week of the summit (September 28, 2002), Koizumi met with the family members of the abductees to publicly apologize for the LDP’s “insufficient dedication and handling of the issue” in the past. He comforted them with a promise that the abduction issue would be the government’s highest priority and that without further explanation and sincere


113 Ibid. The quoted part is from pp. 234-235 of the Japanese version.
cooperation by North Korea, his government would not proceed with diplomatic normalization.\textsuperscript{114} His promise was announced again in early October as the government’s basic policy.\textsuperscript{115} Kōmura Masahiko, Minister of the MOFA in 1998-1999 and 2007-2008 and who was leading the foreign relations advisory group of the LDP that had recommended that Koizumi designate the abduction the government’s top concern, recalled that intense public anger was the most significant background for his recommendation.\textsuperscript{116}

The first actual test for Koizumi government to take societal anger toward North Korea seriously came in October, 2002. Adhering to the bilateral agreements reached during the summit, North Korea announced on October 10 that the surviving five victims of the abduction would “temporarily return (ichiji kikoku)” to Japan.\textsuperscript{117} On October 15, they arrived at Narita Airport by a special charter flight prepared by the Japanese government; the government also announced at this point that the five would temporarily stay for about ten days, meeting with long-parted families, and go back to North Korea on the 26, where the victims’ children still resided.\textsuperscript{118}

The reason the Japanese government originally agreed to the victims’ “temporary return” to Japan was that their children – who were all born in the North, believed they


\textsuperscript{115} Funabashi, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 39.


\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Asahi Shimbun}, October 10, 2002, p. 3.

were North Koreans, and knew nothing of their parents’ Japanese origin – would be utterly shocked if they were simply told to permanently “return (kikoku)” to their parents’ country to which they had never been before. Therefore, the government assumed it would be reasonable for the five to first return to comfort their waiting families and relatives in Japan and demonstrate to the public that they were well. Then they would return to the North to break the news to their children themselves, before everyone made one last trip back to Japan in the near future. A Cabinet official confirmed this to the Kazoku-kai when the victims arrived in Japan, telling the families and relatives, “this is a temporary return, and children are not accompanying this time. Whole families will come back next time though, and this is the agreement (with the North).”\(^\text{119}\) The government even prepared allowances for the five to buy souvenirs to take with them when they returned to North Korea.\(^\text{120}\)

Whether the Japanese government’s agreement with the North was a reasonable one or not, what became clear was that it utterly failed to predict public reaction. Once the five abduction victims returned, understandably starting with the families and relatives belonging to the Kazoku-kai, there started a public outcry urging Koizumi to make the five permanently remain in Japan. The government, already sensitive to the heated public opinion strongly sympathetic to the victims’ families, was cornered into a difficult situation, in which it had to prioritize the families’ demands at the cost of discarding the bilateral agreement if it were to pre-emptively remove a potential source of

\(^{119}\) Hasuike, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 27.

\(^{120}\) Funabashi, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 40.
public bashing. As the media also sided with the public in their sympathy for the abductees and their families, it became apparent to government officials that returning the five to North Korea at this point was already politically impossible.

Inside the Koizumi Cabinet, there were nevertheless debates leading to the government’s final decision. Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda Yasuo, along with Tanaka Hitoshi of the MOFA, insisted that the five be sent back to North Korea for the time being, because the MOFA had obtained the North’s agreement on the basis of a “temporary return.” Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe Shinnō countered that returning them “would be an abdication of a sovereign nation’s responsibility” and that the abductees themselves should decide whether they wanted to go back or stay permanently. It was not clear whether the five victims themselves all preferred to remain in Japan; they never expressed their intention publicly throughout their stay, as it would surely complicate the reunion with their children. However, Kazoku-kai and the sympathetic public surely did. This societal atmosphere, demanding of the government a particular policy direction, was the background for the Cabinet’s subsequent adoption of Abe’s position. As another Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Furukawa Teijiro observed, it was apparent to the wary government officials that if they returned the five and no progress with the North was made afterward, the Koizumi government would

122 Pempel, op.cit., p. 129.
123 Funabashi, op.cit.
surely topple and be forced to resign, as the abductees’ families and the public would never forgive them.  

Inevitably, two days before the abduction victims’ scheduled return to North Korea (October 24), the Koizumi Cabinet announced that it would allow them to remain in Japan. Furthermore, it demanded of the North that their children and other family members be allowed to be reunited with the five abductees in Japan. Even from governmental officials’ viewpoint, the policy shift to keep the victims and officially pressure North Korea with a new demand appeared as the Koizumi Cabinet being inevitably moved by public pressure – “the direction of the wind (kazamuki).”

As predicted, Pyongyang denounced the Japanese government for “betraying its trust,” and warned that it would postpone other scheduled Japan-North Korea talks agreed during the summit. Eventually, North Korea conceded to the five’s permanent stay, saying that indeed it would be up to those individuals to decide where they wanted to settle, and that the North Korean government would not intervene in their decision-making. However, North Korea’s criticism toward the Japanese government for breaking the agreement persisted: it emphasized that Japan must understand the

125 Funabashi, *op.cit.*., p. 41.

126 One abductee, Soga Hitomi, had an American husband, Charles Jenkins, a former military personnel of the United States Army who had defected to North Korea while stationed in South Korea. The two had met and married in the North, and had two children.


129 Shinoda, *op.cit.*., p. 108.
abduction from the context of past, bilateral animosity, and that if Japanese cared so much for human rights, they should then show equal concern for Japanese historical atrocities toward Koreans.\textsuperscript{130}

The policy shift to keep the five victims in Japan at the expense of undermining scheduled diplomatic normalization marked the Koizumi Cabinet’s passing of the first “test” imposed by the public. Although North Korea eventually yielded to the five victims’ settlement, Pyongyang nevertheless rejected new Japanese demands to send the remaining family members still in North Korea, insisting that the victims themselves must persuade their children, as the North had no intention of getting involved in this matter once the Japanese government broke the original agreement. From this point on, Japan-North Korea relations bogged down to a general stalemate, and the diplomatic momentum originally sought by Koizumi was lost.

In the domestic realm, however, Japanese citizens positively received the Cabinet’s decision to accommodate their sympathy to the abduction victims’ families in Japan, and it was shown in public opinion.\textsuperscript{131} When asked to evaluate the government’s stern stance toward North Korea in an \textit{Asahi} opinion poll conducted in January 2003, 62\% replied that they thought of it positively.\textsuperscript{132} Although some media, even after the government’s decision, kept pressing the question of whether the government had in fact agreed with the North Koreans to the temporary visit in the first place (which it

\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Asahi Shimbun}, October 24, 2002, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{131} Togo, Japan’s Foreign Policy 1945-2003, op.cit., p. 191.

\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Asahi}-conducted poll database (January, 2003) presented to the author by Yoshibumi Wakamiya.
unquestionably did), the Koizumi Cabinet skilfully diverted media scrutiny by only claiming that it had “coordinated (chōsei wa shita)” for the victims’ return, without once mentioning the terms “temporary (ichiji-teki)” or “agreement (gōi).”  

Considering the extent of potential political blowback, in case the media scrutiny got out of control and the interested public demanded more detailed answers, the government for some time had to carefully walk through the political minefield and wait for the media questioning to subside, even after the decision to keep the five victims had been announced.

3.2  Linkage of the abduction to other security policies

Shock and anger caused by the disclosure of the abduction did not only push the Koizumi government to adjust the original policies directly concerning the issue itself. It had a broader impact on the way the public understood the domestic and international security policies of Japan. In Japan, the abduction was taken not simply as a bizarre, state crime committed by a few foreign infiltrators in a remote past, but as the most symbolic embodiment of all security threats linked to North Korea. The abduction was, therefore, soon and easily linked to all other North Korean security threats of the past.

For example, an opinion poll conducted by the Cabinet Office in October 2002, right after the Pyongyang Summit, found that among all North Korea-related issues, ordinary Japanese showed the highest interest in the abduction (83.4%), followed by fushinsen (59.5%), North Korean nuclear programs (49.2%), and Taepodong missiles (43.7%). The same opinion poll a year later (October, 2003) revealed that while public

\[133\] Asahi Shimbun, November 2, 2002, p. 3.
interest in the abduction and *fushinsen* was more or less constant (the former again topping the rank with 90.1% and the latter in the fourth place with 58.7%), societal concern for North Korean nuclear programs (66.3%) and the ballistic missiles (61.1%) increased noticeably, despite the fact that during this one-year period, there had been no visible and drastic developments concerning Japan on these two issues. Representing such feeling, then-Minister of Defence Ishiba Shigeru commented in early October, 2002 that the abduction issue must be understood in the context of overall Japanese national security itself, and that it would be naïve to expect a country kidnapping foreign citizens to be sincere in resolving other regional security issues such as ballistic missiles, nuclear programs, or the *fushinsen*.

In the same vein, the Metropolitan Police Department (*Keishichō*), for the first time in its history, allocated a whole chapter to North Korean threats in its 2002 Public Safety/Security White Paper (*Chian Hakusho*). Defining all past North Korea-related security threats such as the abduction and the *fushinsen* as ongoing, the paper argued that the nature of the “terrorist state” would never change. Predicting that *fushinsen* would try to infiltrate Japanese coasts in the future, it concluded by advising the government that new legislation would be required to realistically deter North Korean spy activities. It is now known that in late September, 2002, Japanese police also transferred a bulk of personnel who had been assigned to intelligence-gathering missions

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concerning China and Chinese nationals to a new branch specializing in possible North Korean spy activities in Japan.\textsuperscript{137}

Prefectural governments joined the police in advising the government to be more assertive in protecting national security. Prefectural assemblies of Fukuoka, Kumamoto and Kanagawa submitted letters to Koizumi urging the central government to be firm in negotiating with the North, and the governor of Niigata Prefecture, from which most of the abductees came from, petitioned the government in June, 2003 to halt the North Korean regular passenger ferry \textit{Mangyongbong 92} – which had long been the only regular means of human movement between the two countries – from entering its harbour.\textsuperscript{138}

Clearly, societal and political discourse toward North Korea after the disclosure of the abductions had much broader implications about national security in Japanese minds, and domestic resistance that in the past had been viciously against updating of national security policies or institutions faced increasing difficulty in justifying the cause after 2002.\textsuperscript{139} As societal threat perception toward North Korea widened in scope, more government officials and LDP politicians raised concerns about Japan’s exclusively defensive-oriented security principle (\textit{senshu-bōei}), and especially after Ishiba’s comment on October 2002, even the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Diet

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\item \textsuperscript{137} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun}, February 8, 2003, p. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Hughes, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 476.
\item \textsuperscript{139} Kitaoka, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 52.
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members in security subcommittees followed suit.\textsuperscript{140} After Defence Minister Ishiba once again commented in April 2003 that Japan must re-evaluate the senshu-bōei posture and its over-reliance on the United States for offensive capability, one hundred young Diet members belonging to both the ruling and opposition parties made an emergency public statement (kinkyū seimei) in support, urging Japan to obtain minimal military capability to attack potential enemy targets abroad.\textsuperscript{141} Kakiya Isao, formerly a Professor at the National Defence Academy of Japan, went on to present his own reinterpretation of what a “exclusively defensive-oriented security principle” should now mean in the post-summit environment: if Japan ever conducted offensive military operations – for example, an infiltration of Japanese special commando units into North Korea – in order to rescue other (alleged) remaining abductees and their families, it should be rightfully interpreted as legitimate defensive conduct on the part of Japan.\textsuperscript{142}

Professor Kitaoka Shinichi of the University of Tokyo – also the former Japanese Ambassador to the United Nations (UN) and a close academic advisor to Abe Shinzō – confirms that the abduction had much a wider societal implication for the Japanese public’s “perspective/viewpoint (mesen)” of pacifism in general. Although Japan as a whole still strongly upholds peace and nonaggression as the most sacred national principle, the abduction provided the Japanese people with a timely opportunity to contemplate on other, real North Korean threats. It easily convinced them during the

\textsuperscript{140} Yomiuri Shim bun editorial, May 26, 2003, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{141} Yomiuri Shim bun editorial, April 3, 2003, p. 3; Asahi Shimbun editorial, June 25, 2003, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{142} Isao Kakiya, “Ishihara Tochiji Sensō Hatsugen ni Kinkijyakuyaku Shita Asahi Shimbun (Asahi Shimbun’s over-reaction to Governor Ishihara’s statement on war),” Seiron (January, 2003), pp. 108-110.
process that the principle of senshu-bōei by itself would not be able to deter future North Korean threats such as nuclear, missile, or fushinsen incursions. While most policymakers had been surely aware of this since the early 1990s, Kitaoka points out that North Korea factor in the early 2000s widely triggered this realization among the public; North Korea, in this regard, contributed tremendously to lessen the Japanese public’s long-held resistance to “realism” in national security.143

Professor Iokibe Makoto, the President of the National Defence Academy of Japan, also agrees that North Korea was the most influential factor in facilitating among the public the questioning of the so-called postwar “pure/fundamentalistic pacifism (junketsu heiwa-shugi).” Although there were already past instances in which the Japanese had engaged in public discussions on national security – especially during the first Gulf War – arguments that Japan must shift its dogmatic pacifism “in order to contribute to peace and security of the world” were still too abstract, and were not as convincing as the impact of actual, next door threats presented by North Korea. Therefore, like Kitaoka, Iokibe also claims that the North Korean factors contributed to the rising of a more “common sense approach (futsū no kankaku)” to national security debates in Japan.144 Several high-ranking officers of the SDF told Iokibe that they cannot sleep with their feet toward North Korea because of their “gratitude.”145

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143 Shinichi Kitaoka, interview with the author, December 16, 2009.
144 Makoto Iokibe, interview with the author, December 18, 2009.
145 Ibid. In East Asian culture, one never sleeps with one’s feet facing an object or a person one is thankful to or reveres.
3.3 The passing of Emergency Legislation

The heightening of overall threat consciousness among the public not only resulted in politicians making loud public statements about security preparedness. In the midst of the linking of North Korean abductions to broader national security issues, the Japanese Diet finally voted on the “Emergency Legislations (Yūji-hōsei/Yūji-kanren-hōan),” on June 7, 2003, and they were passed by close to 90% approval, even from the opposition DPJ. The legislations, in three parts, provided a legal framework for clearing roads for military vehicles and supervising evacuations, to help the SDF to respond to foreign attacks effectively. It also centralized authority previously kept by local governments, and imposed control on the release of government information.

If we were to recall from the last chapter that the deliberation of the same legislations – which had already been prepared in the aftermath of the second fushinsen incident in 2001 – were indefinitely postponed in May 2002 because of its potential danger to individual rights and civil liberties, this unusually-high percentage of Diet support barely a year later is clearly indicative of the changes Japan had gone through. Considering that no major security threat in the form of North Korean nuclear threats, missiles, or fushinsen, or threats from other neighbours, materialized during this period, it is reasonable to surmise that the security discourse shift after the summit must have played a crucial role in the public’s and politicians’ new willingness to accept the

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legislations’ deliberation. DPJ politician Ubukata Yukio confessed: “Originally, one-quarter of the party members were against, and another quarter in strong favour. The rest were willing to take where the ‘wind’ of the public attitude would lead them. But once the media reported that 70% of the ordinary citizens were in support, everyone quickly decided to follow the trend.”

In a special editorial for the one-year anniversary of Koizumi’s Pyongyang visit, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, concerning the passing of the Emergency Legislations, analyzed that the 90% Diet support for the bills resulted from Japanese citizens’ realization that the dictatorship in North Korea was indeed a serious threat to Japan’s peace and security. North Korea helped the public to embrace a new “national consciousness (*kokka-ishiki*),” that it was common sense to build a nation well prepared, against terrorism targeting its citizens and other contingencies, and such societal discourse from the late 2002 directly facilitated the deliberation of once-postponed bills. Maehara Seiji, a rising star politician of the opposition DPJ (the future Minister of the MOFA from September, 2010 to March, 2011) who took the leading role in his party’s support for the legislations, similarly asserted that the impact of North Korean factors required more realistic security policy initiatives from both the ruling party and the opposition.


149 *Yomiuri Shimbun* editorial, September 17, 2003, p. 3.

150 *Ibid.; Yomiuri Shimbun* editorial, April, 24, 2004, p. 3.

151 Shinoda, *op.cit.*, p. 112.
As mentioned earlier, the abduction issue had also fundamentally undermined the political influence of the Social Democratic Party (Shamintō) and other left-leaning political organizations. As these political parties, which had traditionally blocked any emergency bill for civil liberty reasons, were effectively doomed, the post-summit environment provided an additional boost for the legislations to be passed without hindrance. For the Socialists who were being severely criticized by the public for their traditional pro-North Korea position and naïve acceptance of Pyongyang’s past denial of its involvement in the abductions, not being able to block the legislations was the least of their worries. Although the party – surely still a legitimate political organization in a non-monolithic democratic state – somehow maintained the loyalty of its (fast-diminishing) social support base, it won only six seats in the 2003 general election, and even the head of the party, Doi Takako, humiliatingly lost hers.152

Not just the Socialists, but all politicians facing the 2003 election were forced to realize that public perception toward the North had gone through a quantum shift in a year, and that a pro-North stance would have no future prospect in Japanese politics. It is, therefore, not an understatement to argue that North Korea even shaped Japanese electoral politics since 2002.153 All major parties raised the abduction issue as their official election agendum and competed to appeal to voters with their hardline stance and


support for a more realistic security framework against North Korean threats.\textsuperscript{154} Individual candidates, aware that they were closely watched by the voters, were pushed into a situation in which they had to make assertive statements concerning North Korea, even if it had very little to do with actual, everyday politics of their constituency.\textsuperscript{155}

## 4 Conclusion

Koizumi’s visit to North Korea and the signing of the Pyongyang Declaration, at least in its original intention, was a ground-breaking diplomatic victory in the history of postwar Japan. By taking personal initiative and accepting political risks shunned by previous Prime Ministers, Koizumi decided to engage head-on all North Korea-related issues hindering Japanese-North Korea diplomatic normalization, and succeeded in winning previously inconceivable concessions from Kim Jong-il.

The way Koizumi conducted his North Korean diplomacy up to his visit to Pyongyang could also be understood as an example of his “taboo breaking” of the traditional, Japanese governmental approach to North Korea. The Japanese public, at least before the anger of the abductions widely spread, thus supported his ambition to resolve all North Korean-linked problems obstructing better bilateral relations in one masterstroke. The media generally also praised his decision to conduct more “independent” foreign policy prioritizing the needs of Japan, by Japanese initiative.

\textsuperscript{154} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun}, October 15, 2003, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{155} Masao Okonogi, interview with the author, December 11, 2009.
However, societal anger resulting from the disclosure of the abductions – much more severe than the government’s initial prediction – diluted the meaning of the original achievements afterward, and the Koizumi Cabinet was eventually pressured to adjust its post-summit negotiating stance, as illustrated by the government’s decision to keep the five abduction victims in Japan as opposed to its previous agreement with the North. Although empirical evidence suggests that Koizumi intended to pursue both the resolution of the abductions and diplomatic normalization concurrently within the original context of Pyongyang Declaration, even in the post-summit environment, he increasingly faced diminishing viable choices and had to subsequently accommodate the drastically anti-North Korea societal atmosphere.

One important consequence of the anger toward North Korea stemming from the abductions was a subtle emergence of a historical victim mentality among many Japanese. Although this “victimhood discourse” after the summit progressed somewhat elusively and gradually underneath more visible diplomatic interactions between the two countries, many observers, especially the ones in Japan, did not fail to catch the shift in nuance by which the postwar Japan had acknowledged the traditional aggressor-victim narrative in the history of the two states.

Another indirect, but equally important, implication of the rising anti-North sentiment was the heightened, overall national security consciousness that led to freer discussions of other hardline policy options and the eventual passing of the Emergency Legislations. However, from some security experts’ perspective, “certain shifts in Japanese defensive postures – not only the emergency bills but also measures to cope with foreign special operations vessels as well as missile defence capabilities – still do
not constitute a full departure from the traditional exclusively-defensive *senshu-bōei* policy. Even with these shifts, Japan’s defence policy remains very much “restrained” by “international standards.” Foreign observers tend to place too drastic meaning to them, since for anyone too used to Japan’s *senshu-bōei* principle, any change, or even an argument for change, can look “aggressive.” \(^{156}\)

Therefore, although some elites did adeptly and successfully utilize public anger toward North Korea as a means to push their security agenda in the midst of societal momentum, it would still be an overstatement to claim that the majority of Japanese – with the new “victim mentality” as a justification – consciously and deliberately supported “rightist” claims for assertive security and military reforms as a long-overdue national purpose. \(^{157}\) What makes it complicated to grasp is that it would also be incorrect to interpret the trend as the public simply being convinced and mobilized by a small number of elites.

Instead, what the empirical tracing of public discourse concerning North Korea in the aftermath of the summit suggests is this: the public anger, originally stemming from humanitarian concerns over the fate of their fellow citizens, created – as a byproduct – a domestic environment in which some elites could bandwagon and more easily persuade

\(^{156}\) Narushige Michishita, interview with the author, December 16, 2009.

\(^{157}\) For example, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, on December 28, 2003, asked its readers to rank the top ten news of the year. Concerning national security, the Japanese unanimously chose North Korea as the most interesting topic, followed by the passing of the Emergency Legislations. However, the overall top news of the year for most Japanese was in sports; *Hanshin Tigers* winning the national league for the first time in eighteen years! *Yomiuri Shimbun* editorial, December 28, 2003, p. 3. What this report signifies is that although the North Korean factor, especially the abductions, shook Japanese society to the core and made the public conscious of Japan’s own security on an unprecedented scale, with clear policy consequences, as in any country, Japanese society and politics do not solely revolve around foreign policy and national security issues.
the societal sphere of their other security and historical agenda concerning North Korea, with the Japanese media – also very much conscious of the clear domestic trend – as the “tamed” intermediary. As we shall see in the next chapter, this domestic environment was the context in which the proposals for unilateral sanctions against North Korea would gradually take form, even without, of course, the foreknowledge that the North would conduct another ballistic missile test in 2006.
CHAPTER 8: JAPAN-NORTH KOREA RELATIONS 2004-2006 AND THE MATURATION OF UNILATERAL SANCTION DEBATES

This chapter is not divided into three sub-sections separately analyzing bilateral issues, societal sphere, and governmental policies, as in previous chapters. The purpose here is to provide a one coherent, causal narration of how domestic arguments favouring unilateral sanctions against North Korea emerged within the context of the post-2002 environment in Japan, and how it was eventually accepted by Koizumi as inevitable by the end of 2004, much earlier than the actual North Korean second ballistic missile test in 2006.

Proposals to sanction North Korea had its earliest origin in the immediate aftermath of the 2002 Pyongyang summit, but it gradually came to the fore of national discourse as negotiations with the North concerning the abduction dragged on throughout 2003. Although Koizumi tried to break the stalemate by revisiting Pyongyang in May 2004, the ever-worsening domestic frustration had reached a point where sanction proposals were already being legislated in the National Diet.

Despite Koizumi’s apparent, personal desire to maintain the frame of the Pyongyang Declaration even up to the end of 2004, by then the prospect of diplomatic normalization had faltered for good, as Japanese investigation of DNA from one of the deceased abductees’ cremated remains, provided by North Korean authorities, found them to be of someone else. The latter part of the chapter elaborates the process by
which this crucial turning point in the abduction issue provided further legitimacy for implementing already-prepared sanction bills, and how Koizumi – in a drastic deviation from his original plan – eventually succumbed to admitting that sanctions would be a justified option for Japan in light of bilateral developments and the domestic environment.

This chapter demonstrates that the detailed plans for unilateral sanctions against North Korea that would eventually be implemented in 2006, had been formulated earlier through strong societal and political interaction. The chapter also emphasizes that although the sanctions were finally implemented in 2006 after the second North Korean missile threat – in a virtually identical form as they had been envisioned in 2004 – the process by which plans for the sanctions crystallized in 2004 was almost solely guided by the worsening public opinion concerning the abductions, and by the ever-strengthening “popularization” of the foreign policy decision-making process in Japan, not directly by the prospect of future military threat. Further developing on the above point, one subsection of the chapter provides evidence that the sanction discourse in Japan proceeded separately from the unfolding of the multilateral Six Party Talks (SPT) concerning the North Korean nuclear program, which took place at the same period.

The final part of the chapter then ties together the empirical evidence in order to demonstrate exactly how the previous sanction legislations, which had already passed the Diet, were directly reflected in the government’s North Korean policies after the missile launch in July, 2006.
Koizumi’s Second Visit to Pyongyang and the “Return” of the Abductees’ Remaining Family Members

This part illustrates that Japanese public anger toward North Korea, which started in 2002, maintained its full momentum even in 2004. Koizumi’s second visit to Pyongyang in May 2004 was aimed at bringing the abductees’ remaining family members (the children and one American husband1) from North Korea, to convince the public that the abduction issue was at least moving somewhere and to provide the government with justification to proceed with the long-delayed diplomatic normalization. However, despite Koizumi’s gamble, the effect of his trip would not be sufficient to overcome the stalemate over the abductions or to mollify the Japanese societal image of North Korea.

To Koizumi, the domestic anger resulting from the abduction issue after 2002 – which barred the government from proceeding with the normalization process – was much more severe than he would have initially anticipated. All throughout 2003, he was under substantial pressure to somehow make new headway on the abduction issue, to again convince the public for the need of resuming bilateral talks and to put the Pyongyang Declaration back on track for Japan’s long-term interests.2 Therefore, when North Koreans secretly contacted Hirazawa Katsuei, a key, well-known member of the Rachi-Giren and also a close aid to Koizumi, for an unofficial talk in Beijing in December of 2003, Koizumi grasped the opportunity and agreed with Pyongyang that a

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1 Refer to footnote 126 of Chapter 7.

high-ranking Japanese government official would visit North Korea at the nearest possible opportunity, to retrieve the remaining family members as the first step to re-invigorating the stalled negotiations. In yet another example of bypassing normal diplomatic channels through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) for coordinating foreign policy matters, Koizumi again relied on his close supporters to gauge both North Korean intentions and the most likely reaction of the Japanese public, prior to making his political decision.

Whatever his conclusion about the prospects of public reception, after several months of unofficial contacts with the North, Koizumi decided that the spring of 2004 would be a good time to use his new card. The initial coordination with the North did not require Koizumi, but someone at the ministerial level. He, nevertheless, decided on May 14, 2004 that he would visit Pyongyang once more and take personal political risk, despite open opposition by the Chief Cabinet Secretary, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary, and the Secretary-General of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

On May 23, Koizumi was again at Haneda Airport for a day trip. As expected, he returned to Tokyo the same day with five children of the abductees, after meeting with Kim Jong-il in his second summit talk. The Japanese media first focused on the children’s return and North Korea’s new promise to launch another, follow-up investigation to reveal the truth behind the (allegedly) deceased abduction victims. However, it also came to their immediate attention that in return, Koizumi had agreed

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4 Asahi Shimbun, May 15, 2004, p. 3.
with Kim Jong-il upon the delivery of additional aid – 250,000 tons of food and ten-million U.S. dollars worth of medical goods – within a month or two, by coordinating with international aid organizations. Moreover, he promised that his government would do its best to prevent discrimination against ethnic Koreans (with official or informal ties with the North), as societal anger toward North Korea had caused a domestic spill-over effect of wide prejudice toward those people.5 What is apparent from the second summit is that Koizumi, in effect, was painfully positioning himself to re-open the normalization process and salvage the stalled implementation of the Pyongyang Declaration by concurrently providing North Korea with additional incentives and also (hopefully) containing public antipathy toward the North, by providing them with new images of the abduction victims and their children happily reunited.

Although the government consoled itself after Koizumi’s return that it had somehow cleared the “minimum line” required to persuade the public, from that very day it would be forced to face ominous indications that neither the public nor politics shared that view; Kazoku-kai and other abduction-related organizations voiced a strong protest against the government’s “concessions,” and domestic politics, even the LDP, kept silent, with one eye on public opinion seemingly indifferent to Koizumi’s limited achievement.6 From the day Koizumi returned, it was apparent that the public would not “appreciate” the agreements he had reached with Pyongyang, although the majority of people were not


6 Ibid, p. 4.
openly protesting against them either, as the news of the children’s’ reunion with their parents and adaptation to their new homes in Japan filled the news.

In this regard, although Koizumi did not lose much political ground from a pre-second summit “reference point,” neither did he achieve the breakthrough he had hoped. In the midst of such cool societal reception, at least Koizumi must have felt fortunate that the public and the media did not criticize him as harshly as the government had feared. This is because in another demonstration of his populist tendency, Koizumi had deliberately broadcast, through all major Japanese media, his personal briefing to Kazoku-kai of the result of the summit, only hours after his return from Pyongyang. As expected, the family members of the abduction victims vehemently criticized him in front of national television, without thanking him for retrieving the children. Although the public sympathy toward the families was unwavering, to everyone watching television, Koizumi being verbally abused without a chance to make his defence was still a bit too much; it immediately spurred further societal sympathy, this time towards Koizumi, that Kazoku-kai’s treatment of him was understandable, but “unfair.” Thus, by portraying himself as a loyal and sincere, but helpless, servant of the families and public who had tried his utmost to resolve the abduction issue but had unfortunately failed to achieve the end satisfactory to them, Koizumi at least succeeded in damage-control during this potentially-devastating political crisis.

There have been alternative observations – primarily from within Japan – that assert that the true purpose of his second visit was not necessarily to put bilateral

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7 Ōtake, op.cit., p. 229.
relations on track, but to benefit Koizumi and the LDP in the coming Upper House (The House of Councillors; Sangiin) elections in July, by strengthening his image of dedication to the resolution of the abductions. But it is doubtful whether he actually would have considered the returning of the children as a definite means of winning the election, since his move was a double-edged sword that could either end positively, or – as it almost turned out – prove to be an unnecessary gamble that might worsen his position right before the election. Therefore, rather than a calculation for the election, it is more plausible that Koizumi actually prioritized reaching a diplomatic breakthrough, by engaging the issue holding the key for that very goal. He must have felt tremendous pressure to pull bilateral relations out of stalemate, and the only means by which he could achieve that was by producing a visible result on the abduction issue, regardless of the election, since the clear majority of the public (86%) was, as one opinion poll in June 2004 indicated, still holding the abduction to be the most important topic in Japanese foreign policy.8 In another poll conducted in July, which asked whether Koizumi’s second summit and the “return” of the children had any impact on the respondents’ voting during the election, 58% answered that it had no effect.9

Whatever true motives, Koizumi did not win much by the second summit, although he did not lose much either. Bringing back the victims’ children in full, live television coverage certainly did not result in a wider public acceptance for diplomatic re-

8 Asahi-conducted database presented to the author by Yoshibumi Wakamiya (http://xs- tyr01.asahi-np.co.jp/yoronopen/servlet/MainServlet: accessed by Wakamiya on December 10, 2009). Only 10% of the respondents answered that they did not regard the abduction to be a significant topic.

9 Ibid.
engagement with the North. Although there were brief hopes immediately following the summit that the children’s return would mark the start of the true resolution of the abduction issue, no further positive developments allowed the public to maintain their fixation on the injustice done to Japanese citizens by the North.10

2 Tracing the Origin of the Unilateral Sanction Legislations

This part elaborates how proposals to impose unilateral sanctions against North Korea first emerged. By going back once again to September 2002 and proceeding to 2004, it retraces, with focus, how domestic debates concerning unilateral sanctions gained momentum during 2003 and were finally legislated in 2004.

What is significant is that the demand for sanctions against North Korea gradually accumulated during 2003 and 2004, and came to take an increasingly concrete form as public agitation toward the North continued. Koizumi’s limited success in his second Pyongyang visit, which materialized in the midst of this process, must be, therefore, understood in this context.

The sanction option was first proposed and supported by political parties and members of the wider public, not by the bureaucracy or the Cabinet. As the public was increasingly convinced that a full resolution of the abduction issue would not materialize unless certain pressure was applied to North Korea, societal support for sanctions as envisioned by the original proposers came to dominate mainstream debate by 2003.

During the process, North Korea-discourse that had developed after 2002 as outlined in the last chapter – that Japan’s traditional, postwar national security stance vis-à-vis its neighbours had been problematic, and that Japan was a political entity democratically and economically superior than North Korea in every sense – also gave weight to the idea of unilateral sanctions a distinct Japanese character and content as it progressed.

In this domestic context, voices favouring unilateral sanctions against North Korea among the public and political parties would develop into official Diet proposals, and ideas for how they should be imposed would pass as formal legislation in 2004, although they were not imposed immediately afterwards. This part thus lays the ground for the subsequent argument of this dissertation, that Japan’s imposition of unilateral sanctions in 2006 after North Korea’s second ballistic missile launches was, in terms of origin, not something out of a vacuum.

### 2.1 The early proposals

The earliest proposal by a Japanese official that Japan must consider applying sanctions on North Korea in order to punish the abductions was made by then-Minister of Defence Ishiba Shigeru the same day of the Koizumi’s first summit.11 Although the term “sanction” was certainly not a part of the mainstream public discourse at this early stage, some politicians, along with Ishiba, were already playing with the idea that somehow Japan would be able to bring North Korea to its knees by the application of materialistic pressure on Kim’s regime.

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Considering that Koizumi was still cautiously hopeful that the Pyongyang Declaration could be salvaged, the idea of applying unilateral pressure to undermine Kim’s political base did not originate from his government. Although some members of his Cabinet – such as Ishiba and Abe Shinzō – indeed took part, they made clear distinction in which capacity they were supporting the idea of sanctions. In most cases, Koizumi’s Cabinet members participating in these early proposals presented their views as the members of the Rachi-Giren and as individual LDP politicians. Of course, even ministers appointed by Koizumi could surely enjoy their differences in opinion.

Two months after the Japanese government under public pressure decided to keep the returned abductees in Japan, more Diet members were starting to align themselves with Ishiba and Abe’s idea. Politicians knew that supporting the idea of sanctions would enhance their tough image in the eyes of the Japanese people. As the initially-vague, but potentially-beneficial, idea was taken seriously by more Diet members, the National Security Committee of the Lower House (Shūgiin Anzen Hoshō Inkai), on December 10, 2002, held a meeting to discuss this “pressure on North Korea” option. What is interesting is that rather than confining the debate among the committee members, it invited various “consultants/witnesses (sankōnin)” from domestic think-tanks and North Korea-related organizations to provide their own ideas and their expertise. One of them, the head of the Sukuu-kai and right-leaning Modern Korea Institute, Satō Katumi, was invited by the LDP as a presenter. Concerning the abduction, Satō – an ordinary citizen heading a public organization that had recently

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12 Refer to footnote 52 of Chapter 7 for the origin and political inclination of Sukuu-kai and the institute.
became popular – asserted that putting solid pressure on North Korea in order to topple the regime would be necessary if Japan were to expect a resolution of the issue, and that Kim Jong-il must not be regarded as a counterpart for diplomatic negotiation.\(^{13}\) When the committee, intrigued by his blunt argument, questioned how he proposed to best achieve that end, Satō claimed that stopping all movement of money, goods, and people between the two countries, by banning North Korean freighters and passenger liners from entering Japan, would result in “the demise of Kim’s regime within three months.”\(^{14}\) Satō’s urging to ban North Korean ships from Japanese harbours was the earliest example of concrete proposals from the non-governmental sector on how Japan should develop the “pressure option.”

Interestingly, just three days after the committee hearing, on December 13, 2002, rising young LDP politicians of both Lower and Upper Houses – such as Yamamoto Ichita and Kōno Tarō – launched a Diet policy study-group called “The Association for Considering Foreign Policy Cards against North Korea (Tai-Kitachōsen Gaikō Kādo wo Kangaeru-kai).”\(^{15}\) Although it is hard to prove with certainty how much the association’s aim was influenced by Satō, it went on to formulate its own “foreign policy cards” of unilaterally stopping both trade and money transfer between the two countries. In addition to the ban on North Korean ships, the association also discussed the

\(^{13}\) Haruki Wada, “Ushinatta Kanōsei no Kaifuku wo (Lost opportunity must be restored),” Sekai (March, 2003), p. 143.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

possibility of revising Japan’s lax foreign exchange laws, since some Korean residents supporting the North were using them to their advantage when sending hard currencies to support Kim’s regime.\textsuperscript{16}

Although the first argument for pressuring North Korea to resolve the abductions originated from societal think-tanks and LDP politicians, a domestic atmosphere hostile toward the North allowed the idea to easily permeate into public discourse and develop into an even stronger version after 2003. The options of banning North Korean ships and revising foreign exchange laws appeared in the media with increasing frequency, and the term “economic sanction” replaced “foreign policy cards,” as both politics and public widely adopted the terminology. Again, it is difficult to quantitatively trace exactly how much the ideas originally proposed by the head of the Sukuu-kai and the LDP “Kangaeru-kai” had influenced the subsequent trajectory of sanction discourse. However, it is certain that by the beginning of 2003, all sanction discussions in the media, political parties, prefectural governments, and general public adopted the banning of key North Korean vessels and updating foreign exchange laws as the most realistic and readily-imposable means at Japan’s disposal. From this early stage, “unilateral economic sanction” in public discourse would thus denote these two options in one set-piece.

The banning of North Korean vessels from entering Japanese harbours won wider publicity first, since some of these ships – especially the passenger liner Mangyonbong-92 – had already been well-known. Once Metropolitan Police Department (Keishichō)

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
announced in January 2003 that the liner could have functioned in the past as a command center for North Korean spies in Japan, media support for the ban became even more widespread.17 Prefectural governments also ardently supported the argument – especially the assembly of Niigata, since the Mangyongbong regularly docked at Niigata harbour – and declared that fushinsen, after all, were not the only North Korean “mystery/spy ships” Japan should be worried about. They urged the central government that, at the very least, inspections of the vessel once it had entered Japan must be tightened, before the ban had been officially legislated.18 Although the idea of banning North Korean vessels was first confined to the most well-known Mangyongbong, by the mid-2003, it was eventually expanded to cover all North Korean ships – mostly small freighters numbering about 400 a year – coming with marine products and mushrooms to Maizuru in Kyoto and Sakai in Tottori Prefecture, and leaving with used automobiles.19

In May and June of 2003, societal support for another pillar of the “pressure option” – the revision of foreign exchange laws – also gained momentum. The public was more convinced than ever that blocking Japanese goods from flowing into North Korea could not be complete unless the capital transfer of so-called “pachinko money” to Pyongyang by pro-North, ethnic Korean residents in Japan was strictly controlled. Throughout 2003 societal discourse of supporting the two options became the mainstream, with wider public understanding.

17 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, January 30, 2003, p. 3.

18 Yomiuri Shimbun editorials, February 2, May 28, and August 26, 2003, p. 3.

19 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, June 10, 2003, p. 3.
By the end of 2003, Japanese media realized that there was already a “national consensus in principle (kokuron)” among politics and public concerning the validity of pressuring North Korea.\textsuperscript{20} It is not surprising, then, that we observe during this time the first instance in which the LDP decided to officially consider the two original foreign policy pressure cards as potential Diet legislations for the near future, with public, prefectural, and media backing.\textsuperscript{21}

### 2.2 Sanction legislations in 2004

The development of sanction options generally proceeded independently of either Koizumi or the bureaucracy. Although some of his ministers took part in pushing the options into formal legislation, like members of the Rachi-Giren as mentioned earlier, the Cabinet initially refrained from direct participation. The official explanation of the Japanese government for its restraint was that it was a skilful approach for deliberately sending dual messages to North Korea: while Koizumi personally offered his hand to talk with Kim Jong-il, domestic support for sanctions, on the other hand, would also remind the North of the consequences of not being sincere to Japanese demands.

In retrospect, the claim is logical and it would have entered the government’s calculation at some level. However, it certainly does not sit comfortably with the empirical fact that the Prime Minister made two trips to the North with substantial political risk, and even promised additional incentives in exchange for the victims’

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun} editorial, December 14, 2003, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun} editorials, May 23, and June 19, 2003, p. 3.
children. It would be a more logical interpretation that although Koizumi still preferred the Pyongyang Declaration as the framework through which to negotiate without the “sanction card” – his design would be even more difficult to achieve with possible North Korean retaliation – he, nevertheless, also had to succumb to the rising domestic support for sanctions, and thus overlooked the activities of his fellow LDP politicians.

Ever since the disclosure of the abduction in 2002, Abe Shinzō – among those fellow LDP politicians – had established himself as the head of the hawkish voice against North Korea, despite being the Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary. He never openly disagreed with Koizumi’s North Korea policies and Koizumi, in turn, retained Abe in his Cabinet. However, Abe succeeded in winning enormous popularity among the public by consistently insisting on direct pressure on Kim’s regime, even though some of his claims would consequentially deviate from his boss’s true intention. Since animosity toward North Korea was growing, his strong statements simply rang true in the minds of the public, and this led to unanimous support of Abe by Kazoku-kai and Sukuu-kai as well.22 Therefore, once the sanction debate got under way, he also came to the forefront of the politicians favouring the legislations, confidently assuring the public that “time will work to our advantage,” since North Korea’s economic difficulties would inevitably force it to surrender to the Japanese resolution.23

22 Asahi Shimbun editorial, November 3, 2005, p. 3.

Though an adept populist politician, Koizumi, in retrospect, failed to correctly appreciate the extent of popularity Abe would enjoy, as he also had failed to anticipate the likely societal reaction to the disclosure of the abduction in 2002. Therefore, Koizumi in 2003, regardless of what he had in mind for the resolution of the diplomatic stalemate, was showing signs of leaving popular Abe alone to pursue the North Korea agenda: it is likely that by preventing a public disagreement over North Korea policies, Koizumi was aiming to maintain his popularity and keep the public on his side by retaining Abe in the Cabinet.\footnote{Yoshibumi Wakamiya, interview with the author, December 17, 2009.} Koizumi’s difficult position was especially apparent during the sanction debates. Although Koizumi, as the head of the Cabinet, at least restrained Abe from initiating any definite move to actually impose sanctions during 2003-2005, the hierarchical control was not always clear, and Abe was increasingly allowed a free hand to pursue the abduction issue and the sanction legislations in his own style.\footnote{Christopher Hughes, “The Political Economy of Japanese Sanctions Towards North Korea: Domestic Coalitions and International Systemic Pressures,” \textit{Pacific Affairs} 79:3 (Fall, 2006), p. 469.} Koizumi’s “yielding” to Abe demonstrates that although he had originally won his popularity and Prime Ministership by skilfully using the media and public perception to his advantage, his foreign policy strategy from 2003, on the contrary, was more tilted toward first observing the mainstream, domestic mood before taking the political path that reflected majority domestic discourse in the end.\footnote{Hitoshi Tanaka, \textit{Gaikō no Chikara} (The Power of Diplomacy) (Tokyo:Nihon Keizai Shimbun Shuppansha), pp. 216-217.}
The rise of Abe in domestic politics was not overlooked by the LDP. Anticipating that huge popular support for Abe would benefit the party during the Lower House General Election scheduled for November 2003, the LDP “promoted” him to Secretary-General (Kanjichō) of the party. Abe, in turn, launched a “manifesto” promising sanctions on North Korea. Other parties – the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ: Minshutō) and the New Komeito Party (better known as simply Kōmeitō) – quickly copied him, incorporating in their manifestoes their own plans for sanctions in order to benefit from the source of Abe’s popularity.27

The election ended with the LDP winning a solid majority in the Lower House. A satisfactory result further guaranteed Abe’s position in the party, and it was clear to the LDP members during this time that he would be the most likely candidate for the next Prime Ministership; Koizumi, for his part, went along with the atmosphere (kūki) within the party by showing signs of further tacit tolerance to Abe’s aggressive policy initiatives.28 The new Secretary-General then declared that he would take full personal responsibility in passing the legislations concerning the revision of foreign exchange laws, and the executive council of the LDP (Jimintō Sōmukai), by December 2003, was already regarding his statement as a fait accompli.29


27 Ōtake, op. cit., p. 226; Yomiuri Shimbun Political Section, op. cit., pp. 49-50.
28 Yoshibumi Wakamiya, interview with the author, December 17, 2009.
29 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, December 14, 2003, p. 3.
Japan to unilaterally stop the transfer of capital and goods to North Korea passed the plenary session voting in the Lower House. On February 1, LDP, DPJ and Kōmeitō agreed to cooperate in passing the bill in the Upper House as well. (Eight days later, it was duly realized). Although the ban of North Korean vessels originally constituted the first pillar of the “pressure card” and had been in domestic debates for a slightly longer period, the foreign exchange pillar was given the first “go,” evidently because amending already-existing laws was simpler than drafting a whole new bill from scratch. However, reflecting the sanction supporters’ thorough preparation, drafting the new bill did not take much time. On February 17, the LDP officially adopted the party’s final draft of the bill restricting the entrance of North Korean ships; on March 4, LDP, DPJ, and Kōmeitō once again agreed to jointly support the second sanction bill – “Law Prohibiting Particular Vessels from Entering Japanese Harbours (Tokutei Senpaku Nyūkō Kinshi-hō).”

By this point, Diet discussions were snowballing to further expand the scope of the sanction bills beyond the two options originally envisioned in December 2002. In order to complete the ban on human movement between the two countries, the Diet, more than targeting North Korean vessels, started to consider the possibility of rejecting the issuance of re-entry permits to particular “foreigners with permanent-resident status (eijyū gaikokuujin)” – the majority of them being ethnic Koreans – by revising the

31 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, February 1, 2004, p. 3.
32 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, February 18, 2004, p. 3.
33 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, March 4, 2004, p. 3.
immigration control laws (*Shutsunyūkoku Kanri-hō Kaisei-an*). Rare for the largest opposition party, the DPJ was more than willing to support the movement; in fact, it went even further than the LDP, announcing in March, 2004 that it was independently analyzing the prospect of banning all North Korean airliners on top of ships, thus virtually closing the border both at sea and in the air. Since there were almost no direct flights between the two countries in the first place, the effectiveness of this measure, even if it were to be implemented, would have been dubious at best. However, the DPJ’s ready cooperation with the LDP when it concerned North Korea well illustrates how all political parties were influenced by discursive trend favouring the sanctions, and how they were under constant pressure to demonstrate their willing participation to the public. As we shall see later in the chapter, these latter two proposals would be incorporated into the actual unilateral sanctions implemented in 2006.

An opinion poll conducted in February, 2004 by *Yomiuri Shimbun* showed that 78% of the public welcomed the revised foreign exchange laws, and also supported passing the “Law Prohibiting Particular Vessels from Entering Japanese Harbours” (80%). In fact, the poll found that the majority of Japanese felt even stronger sanction measures were desirable. Media of both left and right political inclinations also accepted this public voice as a legitimate reaction by the people whose national sovereignty and human rights had been violated; they admitted that by this point, it would

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34 *Yomiuri Shimbun* editorial, February 1, 2004, p. 3.
36 *Yomiuri Shimbun* editorial, February 26, 2004, p. 3.
be simply natural for Japan to show its resolution by demonstrating to the North Koreans that it was ready to impose pressures of Japan’s choosing at any time.37

One article published by monthly Seiron in January 2004 is highly representative of the time when the momentum of sanction legislations was at its peak. Seiron, jointly with Sukuu-kai, sent open questionnaires to all Lower House Diet members (480 of them) to ask for their opinions on the two proposed sanction bills as “the resolute means to fully resolve the abduction issue,” and for their public recognition of whether the abduction was indeed “unforgivable state-terrorism” or not. The members’ answers to each question were published verbatim with their names, affiliated parties, and regional constituencies fully disclosed, as a useful reference for the voters. Again, proving that the origin of the sanction debate in the domestic context was the abductions, the questions specifically asked for politicians’ opinion on the sanction bills as the way to pressure North Korea concerning this particular issue only. The way in which the opinions were collected and published, needless to say, led most respondents to support the bills and publicly declare the abduction to be a state-crime. What is especially intriguing, however, is that while Abe obviously answered “strongly support” to all questions, Koizumi – possibly reflecting his “dilemma” just prior to the second Pyongyang visit – did not send his replies for the questions related to sanctions.38


On June 14, 2004, the second pillar of the proposed sanction bills that would, once imposed, prohibit North Korean vessels from entering Japan also passed the Diet as the “Special Legal Measures Prohibiting Particular Vessels from Entering Japanese Harbours (Tokutei Senpaku Nyūkō Kinshi Tokubetsu Sochi-hō).” Now that both pillars of the original sanction proposals were officially legislated, regardless of Koizumi’s second Pyongyang visit barely a month before, it was clear that his gamble had not paid off in reinvigorating the Pyongyang Declaration. On the contrary, from September – the second anniversary of Koizumi’s first Pyongyang visit – pressures on Koizumi to actually use the legal means now at Japan’s disposal intensified by constant statements by the LDP, DPJ, and Kōmeitō politicians. Rachi-Giren, for its part, also supported the parties’ demands by proposing that the two-year anniversary would be the perfect time to impose unilateral sanctions in order to “rescue all abduction victims still held in North Korea.” Opinion polls taken during October-November 2004 illustrated the same trend; although about 10% lower than the ones taken before Koizumi’s second Pyongyang visit and the retrieval of the children, a substantial majority (68%) still agreed

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40 Yomiuri Shimbun, September 17, 2004, p. 3. Since both Japanese public and politics never recognized the North Korean claim that the victims and their family members already repatriated to Japan were the only living survivors, the official stance of Japanese government also had to assume that the other eight abductees who allegedly died in the North were still alive. Even mentioning the possibility that they might have been already deceased in national media was a taboo, and it is still true at this time (March, 2011). Since North Korea has consistently claimed that the eight abductees had died whether Japan believed it or not, and since there is no means to find out the truth, the Japanese assertion that “all remaining victims must be rescued” has been at the core of the stalemate concerning what really constitutes the “full resolution” of the issue. This aspect of the abduction issue will be dealt in further detail in the latter part of the next chapter, Chapter 9.
with the need to impose sanctions.\textsuperscript{41} Asahi polls in November also showed 65\% of respondents with the same positive reply.\textsuperscript{42}

3 The Final Dissolution of the Pyongyang Declaration Framework

For the obvious reason that one cannot expect to normalize diplomatic relations and impose sanctions at the same time, Koizumi, even after his second visit to Pyongyang, maintained his distance from the domestic legislations against North Korea. Some have argued that his caution stemmed more from his experiences with the North; he expected that sanctions, if applied, would still have only limited effects and could even force Japan to deal with the possible consequences of North Korea declaring war.\textsuperscript{43} Indeed, there were doubts in Japan echoing Koizumi’s pessimism; that sanctions unilaterally imposed by Japan would have little effect in any case without neighbouring states’ support and participation.\textsuperscript{44} In addition, even politicians who had pushed the two legislations in the Diet could not explain, when asked, how exactly (and through what process) the sanctions would result in the return of the abduction victims still held in the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun} editorial, October 11, 2004, p. 3; \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun}, November 5, 2004, p. 3.
\item Asahi-conducted database presented to the author by Yoshibumi Wakamiya.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
North (allegedly dead according to the North Korean investigation, but presumed alive by the Japanese public and official government stance).\textsuperscript{45}

However, as elaborated above, Koizumi’s reservations also reflected his higher hope that the framework he had agreed to with Kim Jong-il in 2002 could still be put back on track if some improvement – even a minor one – could be made on the abduction issue. In fact, as late as July, 2004, Koizumi was still openly expressing his personal desire to normalize bilateral relations, before his term as the President of the LDP (Jimintō Sōsai) ended in September, 2006.\textsuperscript{46}

By December of 2004, however, Koizumi’s hope would be effectively shattered by another single incident related to the abductions. This next section traces the process by which one deceased abduction victim’s cremated remains forced Koizumi to shift his stance.

3.1 The last straw: Yokota Megumi’s DNA incident

It is likely that Koizumi believed that the retrieval of the abduction victims’ children and the North Korean promise to conduct follow-up investigations (although not a joint Japan-North Korea investigation) during his second Pyongyang visit would constitute “some improvement,” clearing the minimum hurdle for the renewal of bilateral

\textsuperscript{45} Tōru Hasuike and Masakuni Ōta, \textit{Rachi Tairon} (Abduction Debates) (Tokyo: Ohta Shuppan, 2009), p. 103. When Hasuike of Kazoku-kai asked young LDP politician Ichita Yamamoto to make sure whether the party had a specific roadmap predicting the mechanism through which the abduction victims would be retrieved by the imposition of pressure, all Yamamoto could say was that it would be done “strategically (senryaku-teki ni).”

\textsuperscript{46} Asahi Shimbun editorial, July 2, 2004, p. 3; Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, July 19, 2004, p. 3.
negotiations. As a part of the agreement, North Korea handed over what it claimed to be the cremated remains (*ikotsu*) of Yokota Megumi, the youngest victim, abducted in 1977 at age thirteen on her way back from school and, based on Pyongyang’s claim, who had committed suicide in the North in 1994.

In the best of scenarios, the ashes of Megumi, even as a painful reminder of tragedy, *should have* become a symbol of North Korea’s new willingness to cooperate with Japanese demands. They might even have helped the reinvigoration of the normalization process by at least providing valid results of the past North Korean investigations. “Proving” that Megumi and other victims had indeed died would not have ameliorated public anger, of course. However, for those on both sides desperately looking for a breakthrough in the abduction-deadlock, undeniable proof of Megumi’s death could have helped silence wide speculations about her alleged current whereabouts. Once the public, however grudgingly, accepted the fact as *fait accompli*, a more “realistic” resolution of the abduction issue would have been possible.

The events that unfolded once the cremated remains arrived in Japan could not have been more different from those expectations. On December 8, 2004, Japanese authorities reported that a careful DNA examination had revealed the remains to be not of Megumi’s but of someone else.47 Although there were – and still are – debates concerning the credibility of the examination results, especially from outside Japan,48


48 The most prominent critique of the result was international weekly journal of science *Nature*. Although it did not claim the DNA to be of Megumi, the journal pointed out that, from a purely scientific perspective, the Japanese investigation was inconclusive and that it was insufficient to prove that the remains did not belong to Megumi either. When criticism from Japan mounted toward the journal,
what is significant is not the scientific process through which the conclusion was derived – which is beyond the scope and purpose of this dissertation – but its empirical consequences in Japan.

Japan was stunned by the official report, probably to the same magnitude in 2002 when the abduction was first disclosed. Public anger immediately reached a new height, and domestic pressure to use the sanction measures already prepared won immediate and widespread support both in the Diet and the societal sphere. Only a day later (December 9, 2004), the LDP announced its detailed scenario for imposing unilateral economic sanctions, fully utilizing both legislations which had passed the Diet earlier. The LDP plan was divided into five “levels”: level 1 would begin with Japan freezing humanitarian aid (food and medical supplies); level 2 would impose strict restrictions on sending money to North Korea; level 3 would wholly ban money transfers, as well as the trade of certain pre-designated goods; level 4 would ban particular North Korean ships from entering Japanese harbours; and finally, level 5 would expand level 4 to all vessels. Level 1 was more of an expression of Japanese determination – since there had been almost no large-scale humanitarian aid since 2002 – as well as a declaration to the North

Nature, in a highly atypical editorial for a science magazine, on March 16, 2005 titled “Politics versus Reality,” countered that “Japan’s politicians have to face scientific uncertainty, no matter how uncomfortable it may be,” and that “dealing with North Korea is no fun, but it doesn’t justify breaking the rules of separation between science and politics.” “Politics versus Reality,” Nature (online editorial, March 16, 2005, accessed September 15, 2010). (http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v434/n7031/full/434257a.html). The young chief examiner at Teikyo University who led the DNA test was then promoted to the head of Forensics Department at the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department (Keishichō Kagaku Sōsa Kenkyūjo); but he has remained silent to any question concerning the examination since then. Toru Hasuike, Rachi: Sayū no Kakine wo Koeta Tatakai e (The Abduction: Toward a fight beyond the left-right hedge) (Kyoto: Kamogawa Shuppan, 2009), pp. 42-44.

(and probably to Koizumi also) that, under current circumstances, Japan had no intention of implementing the aid that Koizumi had promised during the second summit. On the other hand, other levels clearly illustrated how all the sanction legislations were put to use; levels 2 and 3 were the direct reflections of “The Amendment of Foreign Exchange and Trade Laws,” and levels 4 and 5 were obviously derived from the “Special Legal Measures Prohibiting Particular Vessels from Entering Japanese Harbours.”

North Korean fabrication of Megumi’s cremated remains and the LDP’s timely five-stage proposal, in return, further facilitated domestic uproar in favour of unilateral economic sanctions. Major newspapers expressed their full support for the justification behind the LDP plan. Public opinion and domestic politics alike were also clearly dominated by the tide, especially after Kazoku-kai urged Koizumi to immediately impose sanctions and criticized the government for procrastinating. A Yomiuri opinion poll on December 14 showed that 74% of the respondents supported Japan’s immediate imposition of unilateral sanctions.

50 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, December 9, 2004, p. 3.
51 Asahi Shimbun editorial, December 9, 2004, p. 3.
52 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, December 14, 2004, p. 3.
3.2 The shift of Koizumi toward unilateral sanctions

The DNA result shocked the Koizumi government to the core and it would come to symbolize the turning point where Koizumi admitted that normalizing relations with North Korea under the framework of Pyongyang Declaration would be impossible.\(^{53}\)

Although it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when after the official DNA report Koizumi made up his mind, it is clear that tremendous public uproar in the aftermath proved to him beyond doubt that it would be prudent for him to embrace a new direction. It is plausible that his personal humiliation of being betrayed by the North also played a significant part. Whether from his personal conviction or from his ability as a populist politician sensing the discursive atmosphere, Koizumi, in the latter half of December 2004, started making statements that were more clearly in line with public emotions: pressuring the North was not just understandable, but necessary.\(^{54}\) As mentioned earlier, Koizumi had let Abe take personal initiative on the abduction issue, even as his Cabinet as a whole kept its distance from Abe’s measures, to maintain the impression that he and Abe were not necessarily pursuing contradicting strategies and to keep public support. In this regard, Koizumi’s shift after the DNA incident is an equally vivid example of his consciousness to majority preference as a politician whose power largely depended on public support.

On December 17, 2004, only nine days after the announcement of Megumi’s DNA test result, Koizumi made a noteworthy statement in an international setting,\(^{55}\)

\(^{53}\) Asahi Shimbun, December 9, 2004, p. 2.

\(^{54}\) Ōtake, op.cit., pp. 233, 237.
possibly the first indication of his policy shift toward North Korea. During a summit meeting with the South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun, Koizumi said “pressure (on North Korea) is necessary,” and it was widely publicized in Japan as Koizumi’s “change of heart” from his previously cautious stance.\textsuperscript{55} The stage on which Koizumi made his point is significant, since it was to the head of the South Korean government that had inherited Kim Dae-jung’s “Sunshine Policy” of reconciliation and mutual coexistence with North Korea, and was thus not very fond of Japanese pressuring other Koreans. Moreover, many Koreans in government and society alike were suspicious that the sanctions were a deliberate “precedence-making” for Japan’s bigger hidden agenda – more aggressive regional, foreign policies in the future.

Koizumi’s new expression of open understanding for sanctions was not confined to this statement. On January 30, 2005, he again announced that, “it is simply natural (tōzen) that voices urging the government to impose economic sanctions are overwhelming, considering the extent North Korea has ridiculed the state and the citizens of Japan.”\textsuperscript{56} As a follow-up measure, the Diet’s special committee on the abduction issue demanded of the government that the plan for unilateral sanctions be put into effect at the nearest possible opportunity, adding that the request was a “representation of the Japanese people’s determination.”\textsuperscript{57} “Representation” it truly was; in February, 2005,

\textsuperscript{55}Yomiuri Shimbun, December 18, 2004, p. 3; Kang, \textit{op.cit.}

\textsuperscript{56}Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, January 30, 2005, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{57}Funabashi, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 60; Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, December 25, 2004, p. 3.
Koizumi then received a petition, signed by five million people, also demanding economic sanctions against North Korea.58

4 Bilateral Relations in 2005: A Case for Re-evaluating the Overemphasis of North Korean Nuclear Issue as the Basis of Japanese Discourse

Throughout 2005, there was a broad domestic consensus in the government, the Diet, the public, and the media that there was a need to exert pressures on North Korea, and that normalizing diplomatic relations with the North within the original framework of Pyongyang Declaration was a lost cause.

Then, North Korea made an official announcement in February 2005 that it now possessed nuclear weapons.59 However, Japan did not immediately impose prepared sanctions when North Korea again reinforced the long-held concern that it constituted the most direct threat to national security. Instead, Japanese sanctions would commence a year later after the second Taepodong launch in 2006, when North Korean missiles once again landed near the Japanese ocean. An obvious question arises as to why they were not imposed in 2005.


59 The announcement is also a strong indication that even North Korea concluded by the end of 2004 that diplomatic normalization, that would better enable Koizumi to mediate between the North and the United States, could not be expected. Therefore, from Pyongyang’s perspective, making already-hopeless North Korea-Japan relations worse by its nuclear declaration (and facing the possibility of Japanese sanctions) was not as important as shifting its tactics to directly force the United States to sit at the negotiating table for a bilateral “big deal” (which it had always preferred over multilateral talks), by using the “atomic card” that the Americans were most sensitive to.
The origin of the sanctions was, beyond doubt, the abduction issue. Since the abductions constituted the very symbol of the evil nature and threats associated with North Korea, the issue had a broader implication on the public perception of other North Korea-related problems as well. Therefore, although the sanction-option was first proposed and supported by the public as the result of the abductions, the argument that it could be applied to other existing North Korean issues was a natural extension.\(^60\) Japan was thus logically – and legally – already prepared to impose sanctions, once North Korea made the nuclear announcement.

The fact that Japan did not use them provides us with clues as to how the nuclear issue had been understood by the Japanese public, compared to other more up-close-and-personal threats such as the abductions and the missiles. North Korean threats that, by their nature, visibly affected territorial and maritime sovereignty or (especially) the security of one’s citizens, had always been prioritized in the emotions of the Japanese.\(^61\) An ongoing nuclear program in a foreign country – even if it were North Korea – was, on the other hand, comparatively more “distant, abstract, and arid,” at least to the ordinary

\(^60\) For the Japanese government’s official version of the linkage between the abduction and all other North Korean issues and the progress of sanction proposals in that context, refer to the MOFA’s policy pamphlets concerning the abduction both in Japanese and English. “Abductions of Japanese Citizens by North Korea – Awaiting the Day When We Will be Reunited,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (April, 2008). The same pamphlet in Japanese (with more detailed contents) is “Kitachōsen ni yoru Nihonjin Rachi Mondai.” Also, “Heisei 18 Nendo Rachi Mondai no Kaiketsu Sono-hoka Kitachōsen Tōkyōku ni yoru Jinken Shingai Mondai e no Taisho ni Kansuru Seifu no Torikumi ni tsuite no Hōoku (2006 Report on the government’s pursuit of the resolution of the abduction issue and its engagement with other humanitarian violations by the North Korean regime),” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (June, 2007). The pamphlets are downloadable at http://www.mofa.go.jp/mafaj/ or http://www.rachi.go.jp

\(^61\) Watanabe, op.cit., p. 7.
people, and there was no “human-ness” to the story. As an article in Yomiuri explained, “amid the uproar over the fate of Japanese abductees, the Japanese public (was) in no mood to concentrate on the arcane details of North Korea's nuclear program.”

And here lies the limitations of many contemporary, academic analyses – especially those in North America – that mainly focus on the nuclear issue as the main driving force behind Japanese policy-making toward North Korea: *the nuclear threat that progressed concurrently with the abduction issue surely reinforced the already-prevalent societal anger, but it was neither the origin nor the main cause of hardened policies.*

Of course, governmental and bureaucratic policy circles would have given all issues equal consideration. But their aim to comprehensively tackle both the abduction and the nuclear at the same level, within the Pyongyang Declaration framework, had always been countered by both the emotional current among the public and bandwagoning Diet politicians. The government, as a result, yielded to domestic opinion and ended up giving the abductions a clear precedence over other issues.

As Korea-Japan relations expert Izumi Hajime pointed out, there was a clear discrepancy of

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Terumasa Nakanishi also concurs, arguing that compared to the abduction, nuclear issue has been regarded by Japanese as “prosaic and dull (*sanbun-teki*).” Terumasa Nakanishi, *Nihon no Kakugo* (Resolution of Japan) (Tokyo: Bungeishunjū, 2005), pp. 19-20.


preferred focus between the government and the public from the beginning, since “typical societal understanding (ippan-teki shakai ishiki)” on the nature of North Korean problems lacked international-level strategic considerations. As Abe – representing such “typical understanding” – once asserted, it was natural that Japan prioritize the abductions above any other agenda “since Japan cannot expect or rely on help from others, as for outsiders who have not experienced such tragedy, the kidnapping of one’s own citizens by a foreign country is nothing more than “somebody else’s problem (taningoto).”

Tracing the results of annual public opinion surveys conducted by the Cabinet Office (Naikakufu) further illustrates the prevalence of the “societal understanding;” they show the extent to which the abduction had overshadowed other North Korea issues, including the nuclear threat. When the Cabinet Office, in October of each year, asked the general public to rank all North Korea-related issues they were most concerned about, the 2003 result showed 90.1% placing the abductions at the top of their list, followed by the nuclear weapons (66.3%) and the ballistic missiles (61.1%). In 2004 and 2005, the order remained the same: 88.3% for the abduction, 56.6% for the nuclear weapons, and 56.2% for the missiles in 2004; and 87.6% for the abduction, 63.9 for the nuclear


66 Shinzō Abe and Yoshiko Sakurai, “Futatabi Tatsu! Dare ga Kono Kuni wo Mamorunoka (Rising Again! Who will protect this country?),” Seiron (September, 2008), p. 52.
weapon, and 52.2% for the missiles in 2005. Although the percentage of interest in the nuclear and missile threats experienced slight ups and downs, the abductions always remained constant at the top, even after the North Korean nuclear announcement in 2005. What is even more surprising is that when the same poll was taken in October 2006 after the first North Korean nuclear test, it still did not replace the abduction as the top priority in the minds of the Japanese public (86.7%, followed by the nuclear threat at 79.5%).

Of course, it would be an over-simplification to argue that the nuclear threat had no connection to the unfolding of Japanese security policies. Indeed, one plausible reason why Japan refrained from imposing unilateral economic sanctions after the nuclear announcement was that the Japanese government and public alike saw a new opportunity to exert additional pressure toward North Korea in a multilateral setting (i.e., the Six Party Talks – SPT) for the resolution of both the nuclear and the abduction. Therefore, although it is quite reasonable to interpret that the establishment of the SPT may have indeed played a role in delaying the imposition of sanctions in 2005, this delay still does not substantiate the claim that Japanese policies toward North Korea were governed by the nuclear factor. For although all participating states considered the resolution of the atomic threat as the central agenda of the SPT, the Japanese public overwhelmingly regarded even this international institution as a stage for pressuring North Korea concerning the abduction issue.

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68 Ibid.
The Japanese government was constantly pressured by the public and domestic media to raise the abduction issue in the SPT, to win support for the Japanese cause among other participating members. Subsequent Japanese behaviour in the SPT, rather than proving the influence of the nuclear issue on Japanese policies, in fact further illustrates the extent that the abduction issue guided – and limited – the government’s position, even in multilateral settings. While negotiations in the SPT progressed, Japanese media reports overwhelmingly focused on whether the Japanese representatives were sufficiently raising the abduction issue, and the unfolding of negotiations concerning the nuclear issue itself was overshadowed, only taking a secondary part in most domestic SPT coverage. A number of scholars have argued that Japan’s urging of other parties to incorporate the abduction issue into the main agenda of the SPT – often in contravention of United States’ requests to refrain – made already-delicate negotiations even less likely to reach a multilateral agreement concerning the nuclear problem, and gave the North Koreans a pretext to deliberately impede progress when they were at a disadvantage. As a result, South Korea and China also expressed displeasure at Japan’s consistent holding up of the main discussion.

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69 Asahi Shimbun editorial, July 12, 2005, p. 3.


There is, of course, an alternative explanation to this Japanese behaviour – one preferred by government officials – from the perspective of normal diplomatic practices in international negotiations, not domestic pressure: since the SPT was originally established in order to “comprehensively (hōkatsu-teki ni)” resolve regional instability created by North Korea (the nuclear issue being the primary cause), a multilateral agreement in which all participating states provided incentives to the North in return for its dismantling of nuclear programs and arsenals would naturally require an acceptable pre-environment in which each state within the SPT had first resolved all its bilateral concerns with the North. In other words, although the main agreement in the SPT would be made at a multilateral level, acceptable preconditions for providing the “carrot” to the North for each member state must still be met bilaterally, based on their differing relations with the North. According to this logic, it is thus natural that Japan raised the abduction issue, regardless of domestic pressure or not, as it undoubtedly constituted the most important bilateral hurdle for Japan if it were to provide its share under the SPT.72

Although this logic – Japan persisting on the abduction issue as the “bilateral precondition” to reaching multilateral agreements – could be rational according to international diplomatic norms, it would not fully convince many Japan observers that it was indeed the reason for the Japanese delegation’s particular agenda-setting. After all, Japan raised the issue not only in the bilateral setting, but consistently during general negotiations involving other member states; Japanese delegates included statements about the abduction in their opening statements at every round of the SPT, as they obviously

72 Hitoshi Tanaka, interview with the author, December 17, 2009.
could not “afford to remain silent.” For this reason, it has been more widely interpreted that the real cause of Japan’s insistence on winning international support for the abduction issue was domestic pressure, rather than from strategic calculations regarding the direction of the nuclear crisis.

Viewed from this context, it is not surprising that the nuclear announcement in 2005 did not have a sufficient domestic impact for automatic imposition of the prepared sanctions. If the sanctions were to be imposed, an official justification (seitōseigai) readily understandable by the public must be derived from new (negative) developments in the abductions or other issues that were of equally direct concern to them, since the nuclear issue per se was comparatively a secondary interest to the domestic audiences.

Without question, the SPT was a significant regional development from an international-level perspective. However, Japan’s engagement with the framework for resolving North Korean nuclear threats does not necessarily symbolize the centrality of the issue in Japanese policy-making toward the North. The public, as an extension of its domestic discourse on sanctions, also saw the institution as a useful opportunity to exert pressure and isolate North Korea, by winning moral support concerning the abduction from other members. Therefore, the Japanese delegate’s behaviour in the SPT reinforces the notion that the abduction issue was indeed more important even during these multilateral negotiations. An example illustrating the consistency of the

73 Lynn, op.cit.
74 For example, Akaha, op.cit., p. 34.
75 Masao Okonogi, interview with the author, December 11, 2009.
abductions as the primary concern for Japan, independent of the SPT, is Abe Shinzō’s official statement as the newly appointed Chief Cabinet Secretary (*Naikaku Kanbō Chōkan*), on November 2, 2005. Made soon after the signing of the difficultly negotiated first joint statement of the SPT (September 19), he again warned North Korea that Japan was still ready to impose sanctions unilaterally at any time despite the development in the SPT, if it failed to sincerely react to Japanese demands concerning the abduction.  

5 **Summary: The Nature of Japan’s Policy toward North Korea from 2004 to 2006, Immediately Prior to the Second Missile Launch**

Koizumi’s second Pyongyang visit to push the diplomatic normalization back on track by retrieving the abduction victims’ remaining family members was a bold political gamble which failed to produce the desired result.

Despite the minor achievement in 2004, public anxiety over the lack of “real progress” concerning the abduction – meaning a full re-investigation involving Japanese officials as well as the “return of all surviving victims” claimed by North Korea as deceased – continued and grew. The steady escalation of public animosity toward North Korea from 2003 on gave birth to a new discourse about the implementation of concrete pressure utilizing Japanese economic might as leverage. Evidence suggests that Koizumi, even though he initially distanced himself from the proposal and subsequent sanction legislations, eventually succumbed to the domestic atmosphere supporting

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76 Yomiuri Shimbun Political Section, *op.cit.*., p. 108.
sanctions, especially after the Yokota Megumi DNA incident in December, 2004. Steady domestic support for unilateral economic sanctions was maintained largely independent of the progress in the multilateral negotiations of the SPT.

As Shinoda Tomohito argued in his model of Koizumi’s decision-making, even public opinion led by well-informed and educated citizens does not guarantee good judgment in foreign policy. However, since a democratic government cannot neglect the public, it is therefore desirable that the Prime Minister and his Cabinet (Kantei) take strong political leadership in foreign policies, while investing equal energy on public persuasion process in conjunction. 77 Koizumi’s original approach to North Korea well reflects his understanding of this duality in policy-making. He had pursued a comprehensive resolution of all North Korea-related problems by trying to normalize bilateral relations and enhance the Japanese position in the regional security order through the framework of Pyongyang Declaration. At the same time, he devoted energy to the difficult task of persuading Japanese citizens and politics, hostile to the North as a result of the abductions, of the need for rational strategic thinking, while also expressing his sympathy and political dedication to domestic emotions.

However, the persuasion did not bear fruit in the end, and Japanese foreign policy making toward North Korea from 2002 would become one of the most prominent examples of governmental design stalling in the face of overwhelming domestic pressure. North Korea, in this regard, significantly facilitated the “popularization” and “democratization” of foreign policy making in Japanese politics. As Fujiwara Kiichi of

the University of Tokyo asserts, the abduction issue is “perhaps the first example in postwar Japan” in which public opinion significantly altered the course of diplomacy, as it surely crippled Koizumi’s “major pet project” – diplomatic normalization as “his hallmark achievement.” 78 The base of his political power deeply embedded in domestic popularity, the emotional nature of the North Korean problem as understood by the public, and the North Korean insincerity as demonstrated by Megumi’s DNA, all contributed to limiting Koizumi’s policy options by the end of 2004. In addition, the same domestic mechanism would gradually shift the de facto leadership in policy-making toward the North from Koizumi to his subordinate Abe during the sanction legislation process.

The legislation of two sanction bills in 2004, even without their actual imposition, was a significant event. The idea that unilateral, economic sanctions toward a neighbouring state could be legitimately imposed for failing to respond to Japanese demands was unprecedented in postwar Japan. The legislations, regardless of the actual effect they would have on the North Korean regime, demonstrated that Japan would stand firm on its “principles” as a sovereign state, when faced with clear injustice. 79 But most of all, the construction of the sanction legislations was unique for the level of overwhelming public engagement, in contrast to the image of typical Japanese foreign policies formulated by elite bureaucrats insulated from the public.


At the same time, however, the legislations must not be overly simplified as an example of Japan embracing a new, assertive foreign policy doctrine based on brute force. Considering the extent of overwhelming public anger that consistently supported the move toward legislating sanctions as the abduction issue dragged on, it is interesting that the bills crystallized in that particular form without going even further. The legislations were, despite their significance, designed to ban the movement of capital, goods, and people between the two countries by closing North Korean access to Japan, not actively blocking North Korea from outside. Theoretically, in the light of the sheer momentum at the time, Japan would have been certainly capable of legislating even more severe forms of pressure almost bordering on military sanctions – such as naval blockades or demonstrative naval exercises in the vicinity of North Korea – as a matter of “principle,” and as long as it was ready to accept the consequences.

The very fact that the legislations were confined to the economic and societal spheres of the domestic realm without stepping into more “controversial area” of power projection illustrates the multifaceted nature of the sanction discourse. While the idea of unilateral sanctions itself is unprecedented, the extent of the means the legislations propose implies that the idea is still short of a fundamental deviation from the postwar principles that self-restrain the full use of force as a legitimate form of conducting foreign policy. In short, the sanction legislations of 2004 symbolize a significant change, but it is change within the continuation of overall postwar principles and foreign policy norms.

As we have observed in the last two chapters, a number of elites in both domestic politics and academia had certainly won wider support in changing societal perspectives concerning Japan’s regional history and Japan’s security vulnerability, by bandwagoning
with the sentimental inertia created by the abduction issue. Some of them surely would have preferred to use the North Korea factor as leverage to push the legislations even further, in order to make precedents for their long-term agenda of fundamentally revising Japan’s postwar national principles. However, even if Japanese citizens widely supported the sanctions as a means of resolving the abduction, it is doubtful, in the light of the multifaceted nature of the discourse behind the 2004 legislations, that they would also have been readily willing to “go all the way” with those elites, despite their tremendous animosity toward North Korea. Had the elites openly pursued their designs, it is more likely that they would have been checked when the public eventually realized the implications to be dangerously far-reaching beyond the original goal of the legislations.

Throughout 2005, Japan consistently pressured North Korea with the threat of economic sanctions; many Japanese in the Diet, media, and the public expected that North Korea would tremble and eventually yield only at the threat, without Japan having to actually implement the legislations. However, contrary to those expectations, North Korea did not yield. Then, in 2006, another shock from North Korea presented itself.

6 Denouement: The Second Taepodong Launch in 2006 and the Imposition of Unilateral Economic Sanctions

On July 5, 2006, North Korea conducted another multi-stage intercontinental ballistic missile exercise, the first in eight years since the 1998 launch. From the early morning and throughout the day, North Korea launched seven missiles from Musudan-ri toward its eastern seaboard and into the midst of the Sea of Japan/East Sea, the third of
which was the ballistic missile Taepodong-2 launched at 4:59 AM (the other six were identified as more conventional, shorter-range anti-ship missiles).\textsuperscript{80} This Taepodong-2, however, plunged into the sea between the Maritime Province of Russia and a few hundred kilometers from the western seaboard of Hokkaido, without flying over Japan as it did in 1998.\textsuperscript{81}

Although the actual threat posed by the missile was comparatively not as provocative and direct as in 1998, the Japanese government swiftly responded by announcing on the same day that it was finally imposing unilateral sanctions on North Korea. The unprecedented speed with which the government reacted later amazed experts, who had been used to endless inter-ministerial coordination and buck-passing in typical, Japanese foreign policy making; it is now known that all the key figures of the Koizumi Cabinet had met – after receiving the latest intelligence report on the North Korean movement – an hour before the first missile was launched, and had already reached a decision on the detailed components of the sanctions by 7:30 AM.\textsuperscript{82}

The announcement was divided into twelve parts, the first nine stating how Japan would conduct the sanctions by domestic means, with the latter three urging other states and international organizations – the United States, the United Nations (UN) Security Council, the member states of the SPT and the G8 – to cooperate with Japan and


\textsuperscript{81} Asahi Shimbun, July 6, 2006, p. 1; Yomiuri Shimbun, July 6, 2006, p. 1.

participate in pressuring the North.\textsuperscript{83} The first nine clauses, besides the obvious verbal condemnations for the launch and North Korean development and export of missile technologies, also included the following: (1) the immediately-effective banning of the North Korean passenger liner \textit{Mangyongbong-92} from entering any Japanese harbour for six months; (2) a ban on North Korean government officials entering Japan, along with heightened security and immigration checks for anyone who had traveled to the North; (3) the cessation of issuance of re-entry permits to ethnic Korean residents in Japan with affiliations with the North (mostly the officials of \textit{Chōsen-Sōren}), once they had left Japan; (4) the cancellation of Japanese government visits to the North and also a call for citizens to refrain from traveling to the destination for personal and business reasons; and (5) the ban on North Korean air flights from making a stop at any Japanese airport. In addition, one clause expressly made public that the above measures were only the beginning, and that the government was already considering the imposition of stronger measures – the ban of foreign exchange, capital transfer, and trade – depending on North Korean reactions.\textsuperscript{84}

The domestic reception of the first imposition of unilateral sanctions was supportive, as even the Communist (\textit{Kyōsantō}) and Socialist (\textit{Shamintō}) parties quickly expressed their consent. In fact, while the Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe told journalists questioning him about the actual effectiveness of the measures by saying that “expressing Japan’s firm resolution is what counts the most,” the head of the \textit{Rachi-Giren} Hiranuma

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Ibid.}
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Takeo was still criticizing Koizumi’s “past lukewarm (namanurui) policies favouring diplomatic normalization” for delaying what should have been realized much earlier.\textsuperscript{85}

Also in a drastic departure from Japan’s posture in 1998, during which it had to be content with a UN press-release statement raising concerns about North Korea’s first \textit{Taepodong} launch, the Japanese government in 2006 took initiative as promised in the three latter portions of the July 5 announcement. Japan demanded that the Security Council pass a formal resolution condemning the launch as a serious threat to international peace and security and urging the members to join the Japanese sanctions, by quickly submitting its own resolution draft on July 7 – the first instance in its postwar history to propose an UN resolution calling for sanctions against a neighbouring state.\textsuperscript{86}

Although the Security Council resolution that eventually passed on July 15 did not include a clause requiring the member states to take part in sanctions as Japan hoped – most likely as a result of Chinese and Russian restraints – it nevertheless clearly condemned the North Korean action and encouraged all UN members to refrain from exchanging and transferring military technologies with the North related to weapons of mass destruction (WMD).\textsuperscript{87} Even if the resolution was not as assertive as Japan demanded, once it was passed, and when the North Korean ambassador to the UN left the Security Council meeting in the middle in an act of protest, the Japanese government interpreted that its sanction policies had achieved further international justification, as the

\textsuperscript{85} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun}, July 6, 2006, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun}, July 7, 2006, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Asahi Shimbun}, July 17, 2006, p. 1; \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun}, July 18, 2006, p. 3.
North had openly rejected the “will of the international community.” At least the resolution was more direct and severe compared to the press statement in 1998, and this time Japan had undeniably taken the most active role throughout the process in persuading the permanent members of the Security Council.

On July 17, the Japanese government once again requested all UN member states to participate in sanctions with Japan, as well as announcing that it would soon assert additional measures that would ban money transfers to North Korea. On September 19, the government announced that Japan was imposing the second part of the sanctions in order to step up its pressure. The additional measures were legally based on “The Amendment of Foreign Exchange and Trade Laws (Gaikoku Kawase/Gaikoku Bōeki-hō Kaisei-an)” passed in 2004, and they included bans on sending cash to the North as well as freezing all North Korean assets in Japan. The first part, effective immediately, started with the freezing of the financial accounts of fifteen North Korean companies and one individual trading with Japan. Coincidentally, the presidential election of the LDP took place a day later (September 20, 2006). Abe, who had led the imposition of sanctions from the beginning, won an easy victory as expected and finally replaced Koizumi as the head of the LDP; the timing of the election made it hard to deny that the

88 Yomiuri Shimbun, July 17, 2006, p. 3.
North Korean missile and his subsequent demonstration of leadership in sanction impositions were the key to his victory.91

The lists of the sanctions imposed on July 5 closely reflected the legislations and other legal proposals prepared during 2004 when the abduction issue was experiencing a stalemate. The ban of Mangyongbong-92 was clearly based on the “Special Legal Measures Prohibiting Particular Vessels from Entering Japanese Harbours (Tokutei Senpaku Nyūkō Kinshi Tokubetsu Sochi-hō)” which passed the Diet on June 14, 2004. The cessation of re-entry permits for ethnic Korean residents with affiliation with the North was an adaptation of the 2004 Diet proposal to revise the immigration control laws (Shutsunyūkoku Kanri-hō Kaisei-an). In addition, the ban on North Korean charter air flights from stopping at Japanese airports was, if we remind ourselves, originally an independent plan formulated by the DPJ also in 2004. Finally, as mentioned above, the additional measures imposed on September 19 to prohibit cash flows between the two countries and freeze North Korean assets was based on the “Amendment of Foreign Exchange and Trade Laws (Gaikoku Kawase/Gaikoku Bōeki-hō Kaisei-an)” which had passed the plenary session voting of the Lower House on January 29, 2004.

When we consider the swiftness with which Japan imposed the detailed, twelve-point sanctions on the very day of the missile launch and other follow-up measures in subsequent months, it is obvious that it was applying thoroughly-prepared policy options already at the government’s disposal. The MOFA indeed admitted to the media that

91 Asahi Shimbun, September 20, 2006, p. 2; Asahi Shimbun editorial, September 20, 2006, p. 3.
they were a part of already-existing policy “menu” which could be immediately put to practice once the need arose.\textsuperscript{92}

As the dissertation has elaborated, the sanctions in 2006 were, therefore, not a spontaneous Japanese reaction to the missile launch itself. The contents of the sanctions illustrate that they were rather an application of already-prepared punitive measures originally thought out for a different issue – the abductions – but the same target state. As Abe himself admitted, all plausible scenarios for sanctions had already been considered much earlier by a Diet task-force (established by his initiative) when the primary national concern was bringing back the abduction victims’ children from North Korea (in 2004), and the \textit{Taepodong} launch in 2006 made the implementation of the scenarios timely suitable.\textsuperscript{93} Concerning Japan’s unprecedented initiatives in the UN Security Council, Abe also pointed out on numerous occasions that it was natural as “we are the most threatened party by the North Korean actions and Japan alone is suffering from the big issue called the abduction.”\textsuperscript{94}

North Korean provocation did not end with the \textit{Taepodong} in 2006. On October 9, a day before the anniversary of Korean Worker’s Party (\textit{Chosun Nodong-dang}), it conducted its first underground nuclear test deep in the mountainous region of central North Korea. Although it was assumed – correctly – that the international reaction in

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun}, July 6, 2006, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{93} Abe and Sakurai, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 54; Shinzō Abe, \textit{Utsukushii Kuni e} (Beautiful Country Japan), (Tokyo: Bungeishunjū, 2006), p. 54.

the UN would be much more severe than in July, Japan nevertheless unilaterally raised the level of its already-effective sanctions on October 13, without waiting for a new Security Council resolution. Now the closure of Japanese harbours was extended to all North Korean ships, and trade – especially imports from the North such as mushrooms and marine products like clams – was further restricted in addition to the freeze on cash flow and assets by the expanded application of the foreign exchange and trade laws. Moreover, immigration control laws were also further applied to prohibit not only the government and Chōsen-Sōren officials but to all North Korean passport holders from entering Japan. The restriction on trade would eventually become a full ban by November, and Japan, interestingly, took special care to prohibit the export of twenty-four luxury items including jewelry, cosmetics, and perfumes to Pyongyang.

On October 14, as expected, the UN Security Council passed a new resolution (R-1718) which strongly condemned the North Korean atomic test, and this time requested (but again did not “enforce”) member states to inspect North Korean cargoes in order to prevent the movement of technologies and parts related to WMD. As in July, Japan took the lead in pressuring the North by unilaterally strengthening its already-imposed sanctions and deliberately trying to influence the direction of debates in the UN through the example of its own policy initiatives. In this regard, what was clear was that the imposition of additional, unilateral sanctions in October was not another, separate

95 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, October 13, 2006, p. 3.
96 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, November 15, 2006, p. 3.
punishment by Japan toward North Korea for the nuclear test *per se*. It was a direct extension of the policy momentum already initiated in July that had simply gained another timely extra push.
CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

This dissertation has analyzed Japan-North Korea bilateral relations between 1998 and 2006 to explain the particular cause of Japan’s unilateral economic sanctions toward North Korea in 2006. For this purpose, the empirical process of discursive changes among the Japanese public toward the North was traced, as well as the interaction between the societal sphere and the government of Japan.

Process-tracing has been employed because it is well equipped to highlight the complex causality produced by the interaction of multiple factors and levels in reality. Rearranging the accessible evidence in a detailed, empirical tracing of the process, which had taken place at three separate levels – international, societal, and governmental - promoted a contextual understanding of overlooked societal mechanisms that collectively influenced the formation of the sanction policy prior to its eventual implementation in 2006. In addition, the method illustrated the importance of the relative timing of factors that had decisive roles in the particular policy result.

The dissertation’s research question has been primarily concerned with the understanding of the unique case itself. Therefore, causal explanations provided here are not readily transferable to all cases of Japanese foreign policy – as surely there have been many cases in Japan in which the public-government interaction and the discursive influence have not played the crucial roles as illustrated in this research – or to general foreign policy studies encompassing national-cultural contexts.
However, “breadth of coverage” has not been the main objective, since the purpose of this research has neither been to test the validity of any pre-conceived hypothesis based on a particular theoretical paradigm of International Relations (IR), nor to build one’s own theory of foreign policy by comparing visible patterns among pre-designated variables across a number of similar cases. Although the analytic arrangements adopted in the main chapters indeed largely resembled those of historical narrations, the findings of the dissertation through the process-tracing, nevertheless, can contribute to theoretical development in their own way.

This concluding chapter first pieces together all the empirical findings concerning Japan-North Korea relations between 1998 and 2006 in order to provide an empirically-valid, causal explanation of the origin and the nature of the 2006 unilateral sanctions. In the light of these findings, the latter portion of the chapter will pinpoint where and how contemporary IR theories, when applied to the case of Japan, have underestimated the influence of domestic discourse outside of the government level in the current literature. The last two parts of the chapter will then present additional insights on the future of Japan-North Korea relations, as well as the implication of the findings of this dissertation on another crucial security-related discourse currently ongoing in Japan: the constitutional revision.
1 The Origin and the Nature of the 2006 Sanctions as Revealed by the Empirical Process-Tracing between 1998 and 2006

This dissertation has traced the origin of the 2006 unilateral economic sanctions by jointly analyzing: (1) international (bilateral)-level incidents in Japan-North Korea relations between the first Taepodong missile launch in 1998 to the second launch in 2006, in the forms of constant North Korean provocations that deteriorated formal bilateral relations; (2) domestic reaction within Japan toward these North Korean issues, which facilitated broader societal discourse among both the general public and bandwagoning mass media about re-evaluating Japan’s traditional security policies and its “apologetic” and “reconciliatory” stance toward its neighbours; and (3) government-level structural changes, especially with the coming of Koizumi, that resulted in the greater susceptibility of political decision-making and foreign policy to changing societal moods.

By following the process through which these levels concurrently progressed since 1998, the dissertation has illustrated that the timing and the content of the sanctions in 2006 were a natural consequence of this three-level interaction. But how exactly did the linkage of these levels produce this particular policy result?

(1) At the international-level, there had been constant North Korean provocations between the two more militarily-direct missile threats in 1998 and 2006 that stirred Japanese security consciousness in the forms of multiple fushinsen incidents, the bizarre entry of Kim Jong-nam, and most of all, the official disclosure during the 2002 summit of past abductions of Japanese citizens.
(2) These provocations were unlike other international-level incidents in the post-Cold War period. Other distant incidents – such as the first Gulf War – had already given Japanese policymakers a wake-up call to re-evaluate Japan’s security principles, but had largely failed to invite the public’s committed and consistent participation. North Korean threats, on the other hand, facilitated the societal sphere to increasingly problematize Japan’s traditionally restrained security policies, especially toward its neighbours, at an unprecedented scale. This attention is understandable, as North Korea’s constant and highly visible provocations during the eight-year period directly affected Japanese maritime and territorial sovereignty, unlike any distant war or terrorism, and, more than anything else, the safety and security of Japanese citizens as demonstrated by the abduction issue.

During this eight-year period, North Korea had demonstrated to the public that the traditional, postwar self-limitations on the use of the “sovereign right of the nation” against its neighbours – a direct extension of Japan’s Constitution and “pacifist” and “antimilitaristic” tendency to resolve international (and especially regional) disputes diplomatically, without relying on any forceful, punitive measures – were anachronistic in their original, dogmatic form. Although such an argument was nothing new – politicians belonging to the nationalists and other “rightist” camps had especially long advocated it – the highly illustrative and proximate nature of the “North Korea factor” gave this line of thought a significant, domestic legitimacy from 1998. As the public was increasingly convinced that Japan’s “timid” diplomatic stance was at the core of the inability to prevent such a North Korean “abuse” of Japanese postwar security institutions, actual examples of North Korean breaches of Japanese sovereignty and the
The public discourse also facilitated a subtle shift in the way many ordinary Japanese embraced the mainstream, historical narration of Japan’s relations with its neighbours in the pre-war era, which, in turn, had also influenced Japan’s postwar regional diplomacy. Contrary to the equally-subtle-but-prevalent understanding ingrained in the post-World War II societal disposition, where there was always a grain of “victim mentality” concerning pre-war history and the United States and other “Western powers,” Japan as a whole had largely accepted and officially admitted its role as the “aggressor” in regional history.\(^1\) In conjunction with the increasing might of China and consistent criticisms from Japan’s neighbours concerning other historical issues, North Korean provocations facilitated a surge of a new victim mentality among ordinary Japanese citizens gave strength to public discourse concerning the use of “national power” to prevent and punish such actions.

\(^1\) Japanese “victim mentality” or “Japanese sense of victimhood” toward the “West,” and especially toward the United States for its use of atomic bombs during the war, has been indeed noticed by many scholars. Steven T. Benfell, for example, argues that such mentality resonates powerfully in all Japanese and especially among older generation, and that the “victimhood” is “a powerful constraint on any political leader seeking to issue more powerfully worded apology or offer of compensation” to Japan’s former enemies and subjugated people. Steven T Benfell, “Why Can’t Japan Apologize? Institutions and War Memory since 1945,” *Harvard Asia Quarterly Volume VI, Number 2* (Spring, 2002).

Although the prevalence of victim mentality toward the “West” throughout the postwar period cannot be denied, this dissertation rather asserts that the sense of victimhood toward the West and toward Japan’s neighbours must be separated. Although there must surely be a difference in the extent of acceptance among individual Japanese, Japan as a nation has accepted its historic role as the aggressor in its official discourse for most of the postwar period. In this regard, the new surge of “victim mentality” as a result of the North Korea factor in recent periods is a new strand of societal discourse which needs to be distinguished from our typical understanding of “Japanese sense of victimhood.”

Moreover, the main reason why Japan has been reluctant to offer powerfully worded apologies or compensation to individuals or states in the West and in Asia also diverges. In the case of the former, it is indeed true that such mentality played a major role, in addition to the fact that Western countries in general – as victors – have not prioritized the demand of such official compensation on behalf of their citizens. In the case of the latter, however, the chief reason has rather been *economic* and not the victim mentality. In other words, the problem of “where to draw the line” – meaning what constitutes the aggressions and atrocities which must be compensated for, and above all, how much – has prevented the Japanese government from actively stepping into the compensation issue, and rather made it prefer bilateral negotiations for political settlements that would ensure that whatever an agreed compensation with a particular state might be, it would be the “final settlement.”
substantial portions of the public, now applying it to Japan’s relations with its neighbours, and especially with North Korea. Therefore, as a byproduct, the domestic environment from 1998 (and especially from 2002 when the abduction issue was disclosed) made it easier to scrutinize Japan’s official, historical version of being the past aggressor.

In addition, the role of Japanese mass media at the societal level was crucial. Contrary to some understandings of Japanese media as always portraying things the way the government wishes, the mass media in Japan have been largely pluralistic and have informed citizens of all aspects of domestic and international phenomena from diverse perspectives throughout the postwar period. However, although the media have enjoyed significant societal prestige and influence as reliable informer of political and diplomatic issues, it must not be overlooked that at the same time, they have also been highly susceptible to domestic discursive currents as an indicator as to how to frame and present coverage on issues of high interest to the viewers and readers. This tendency became especially prevalent from the mid-1990s, as Japanese media discovered that the public was now more interested than ever in foreign policy matters in the post-Cold War environment. Both print and televised media, as a result, facilitated a “popularization” of foreign policy through their adaptation of easy-to-approach-and-understand formats of political coverage to appeal to the domestic audiences. Although this popular format of reporting political phenomena has its own setbacks – over-simplifying reality and often relying on not-confirmed materials and gossip, instead of more objective discussion of the issues – the popularization of politics and especially foreign policy, in the end, enabled ordinary citizens to easily engage in foreign policy discourse from the late 1990s.
Naturally, such a media environment reinforced ongoing societal discourse concerning North Korea from 1998, by providing a public stage on which societal anger toward the North could gain focus and momentum. In turn, Japanese journalism further realized how the mainstream public viewed North Korea and they promptly bandwagoned – either voluntarily or reluctantly, depending on a media corporation’s traditional stance within the left-right domestic political cleavage and toward North Korea – with the domestic “current.” The bandwagoning trend reached its peak from 2002 on, as the abduction issue started to replace all other previous North Korean issues in the public mind. Between 2002 and 2006, Japanese media mostly performed the main role of confirming the already-prevalent societal discourse advocating pressure on North Korea, as all previous North Korea-related threats and provocations were by then incorporated into one mutually-reinforcing “package” around the abduction issue.

(3) The nature of the Japanese government while societal discourse on North Korea unfolded must be analyzed in the same context. The Japanese government, led by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), from 1998 experienced the first, large-scale generation shift, as an influx of a post-World War II generation of Diet members started to replace traditionally-minded politicians who had preferred more factional and elitist means of policy-making. In addition, the LDP regained the Prime Ministership from the political turmoil in the immediate aftermath of the post-Cold War period, which had briefly shifted political leadership to the hands of other parties. Despite the fact that the recovery was initially realized in the form of a coalition with the New Komeito Party (Kōmeitō) and New Conservative Party (Hoshutō), the dominant status of the LDP within it was undisputed. With this new political balance taking hold, the emergence of
Koizumi Junichirō as the Prime Minister in 2001 further facilitated an environment in which the LDP Cabinet could formulate foreign policies relatively free from the pressures of other coalition allies and traditional LDP factional considerations. Koizumi won his position by his populist tendency of reaching out directly to ordinary citizens (through his adeptness at using mass media), and his image as a new type of politician, bold enough to make political decisions on his own initiatives, was widely supported by the constituency and the new generation of Diet members.

The rise of Koizumi and the nature of his political power, as a result, led to a style of decision-making that put more powerful policy initiatives in the hands of the Prime Minister, at the cost of undermined bureaucratic and LDP factional considerations. As the power base of Koizumi strongly depended upon public support, the nature of his Prime Ministership gave popular preferences and societal atmosphere a significant influence on the government’s decision-making process in both domestic and foreign policy areas. Understandably, this political structural change facilitated by the emergence of Koizumi had crucial implications on how North Korea policies would unfold. As Chapters 6 and 7 illustrate, Koizumi’s bold initiative to meet Kim Jong-il as the first acting Prime Minister and to agree on Pyongyang Declaration in 2002 was an example of his political risk-taking. Despite his personal willingness to normalize bilateral relations and resolve all North Korea-related issues, and the initial public support for his courage, societal anger raised by the disclosure of the abduction subsequently forced him to abandon the agreed-upon framework, as the domestic discursive development had already swayed public preference to favour exerting pressure on North Korea from 2003 on.
When the developments at the international, societal and political levels between 1998 and 2006 are empirically traced, they demonstrate that during this historical juncture these levels mutually reinforced their interactions in the following way: accumulating North Korean provocations visibly convinced the public of the image of North Korea as the most direct threat to Japanese security (international/bilateral); the resulting public shock and re-evaluation of Japan’s traditional foreign policy posture led to a hardened domestic discourse toward North Korea, further facilitated by the media’s bandwagoning (societal); a concurrent, structural power-shift within the political realm, in turn, made public preferences more influential in foreign policy decision-making than in the pre-1998 period, and rising populist politicians – including, of course, Prime Minister Koizumi – were pressured to incorporate changing security discourse into their subsequent North Korea policies (political). From this context, it is unlikely that Japanese unilateral economic sanctions in 2006, immediately following the second Taepodong launch, would have been realized in the form they unfolded in the absence of the particular interactions of these three levels.

Tracing this process has thus provided us with a strong impression that rather than a rationally-calculated and long-term national strategy launched by the Japanese government, the unilateral sanctions in 2006 were more of an unintended consequence of domestic societal factors with an older origin, going eight years back; the discursive change toward North Korea as a result of various provocations by the North, especially by the official disclosure of the abduction issue in 2002, timely compelled the trajectory of Koizumi’s government’s originally planned approach to North Korea (as represented by the Pyongyang Declaration in 2002) to change direction. Also, the process-tracing
has shown that the whole process, through which the sanctions were proposed during 2002-2003, legislated in 2004, and implemented in 2006, was never dominated by governmental policy experts alone. It could be thus argued that the extent of public-media-government interaction here is one of the most vivid examples of Japanese foreign policy influenced by non-governmental societal discourse in post-World War II Japanese history.

In addition, empirical tracing disclosed the multifaceted nature of North Korea discourse within Japanese society. Surely, the sanctions were unprecedented in post-World War II Japanese history for their unilateral nature and substance. They allowed Japan to exert pressures toward a neighbouring state through economic means at its disposal for the first time, exactly because North Korean threats convinced citizens at the grassroots level of the need for “realism” in regional diplomacy and the re-evaluation of traditional self-limitations on the use of “power.” However, tracing the contents of discursive trends also provided us with equally important evidence that the sanctions, despite their historical significance, still must not be automatically regarded as a starting point or a symbol of Japan deliberately undermining its core, postwar security identity of upholding democratic control and self-limitations on the use of overall national power.

Careful scrutiny of media sources, opinion polls, elite interviews and academic sources illustrated that the Japanese public came to strongly endorse an assertive response to North Korea by utilizing those means – which it had long refrained from using – available at its disposal, in the interests of national sovereignty and the safety of its citizens. However, it has also demonstrated that the majority public sentiment supporting the idea of pressure was conditional upon the legislations staying within
legally possible amendments made to current domestic laws. In other words, while the Japanese public became more sensitive to external threats and more inclined towards a more “proactive security policy” in principle, it concurrently showed its reluctance to see the trend spilling over to the debate on more extreme measures, such as military action. The eventual sanction legislations reflecting this duality reflects the nuanced nature of the underlying societal discourse, which supported an unprecedented change in Japan’s North Korea foreign policy-making on one hand, but refrained from giving equal support to “too much change” in its actual implementation on the other, since the latter would logically lead to the undermining of the more fundamental core of the postwar security identity.

In addition to the nuanced duality in societal security discourse concerning North Korea, the degree to which it was actually incorporated into the sanction legislation process set a new precedent for a more “democratic” foreign policy decision-making, never before seen in postwar Japanese political history. This element of “democratic foreign policy making” is another reason why we must be careful when asserting that the policy momentum which enabled the sanctions to materialize would soon and automatically lead to more extreme security policy transformations advocated by so-called “rightist” politicians.

It is debatable whether increased public involvement in foreign policy making has been beneficial for strategically pursuing Japan’s long-term national security goals in the

international arena. Rather, the particular case of Japanese policy change toward North Korea demonstrated that too much participation could even be, paradoxically, the primary factor hindering such pursuit. However, when it concerns the question of whether the same discursive momentum which helped the imposition of sanctions will spill over to undermine the broader security identities embraced by the mainstream public and politics, the dual-nature of current security discourse elaborated above and the substantial influence of mainstream public supporting such a nuanced line of thought in governmental decisions suggests that it is unlikely, at least in the near future.

While there have indeed been voices claiming that the Japanese welcoming recent foreign policy changes is a symbol of “rightists taking command,” this “democratic” participatory element within the sanction legislations, despite its assertive end-product, is in fact an example of a political process “motivated by the values and practices that the existing Constitution has nurtured” in Japanese society, which had not been sufficiently utilized before the emergence of the North Korean threats. As long as such degree of public participation in political processes is sustained in the future, it is unlikely at this point that the majority of Japanese citizens would be easily swayed by the “rightists,” even if some of them have – and will – continue to bandwagon with the opportunities offered by North Korean and other external threats as a justification to question principle security institutions. However, paradoxically, “the louder the voices denying postwar

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values and practices, the more likely the Japanese population will stick with postwar
“abnormality” (as the “rightists” perceive current Japanese security institutions based on
the Constitution self-limiting its use of military),” since “the public on the whole seems
to be more troubled by hawkish discourse at home than by anti-Japanese sentiments or
actions abroad.”

2 Going Back to the Literature Review: Theoretical Significance of the
Research

The findings of the dissertation can now be compared to other major
contemporary works covered in the Literature Review (Chapter 2) that both directly and
indirectly apply theoretical tenets of IR’s two major paradigms (realism or
constructivism) in analyzing recent Japanese security foreign policy postures.

Most contemporary literature on Japanese foreign policy postures largely focus on
explaining their overall trajectory in the midst of system-level international changes
affecting Japan, rather than delving into the details of its relations with North Korea.
While it could be argued that it is unfair to problematize the broad scope of these works’
research interests when the authors are not specifically intrigued by the focused case of
Japan-North Korea interactions, this dissertation has argued that it nevertheless presents a
limitation in the current scholastic direction, since at the same time the authors also
unanimously agree in their works that the “North Korea factor” has been one of the most
significant variables to influence overall security debates and policies of Japan. The

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5 Ibid., pp. 55, 65-68.
bulk of research methods employed in these contemporary works, while briefly providing the readers a number of narratives related to Japan-North Korea relations along with their main focus on more general systemic-level trends, nevertheless raises the North Korea variable in their conclusions as highly significant. However, they have done so without sufficiently presenting the underlying, in-depth empirical processes and mechanisms in their main analyses to specifically support their claim.

Admitting that the unfolding of bilateral relations is of crucial importance, but still locating North Korea as only a piece in their analyses, constitutes the most obvious shortcoming in the contemporary literature. Exactly because the dissertation agrees that North Korea has indeed been the most direct and influential motivator for both political and societal discussions on national security in Japan, it has engaged in tracing the “missing piece” in these literatures to illustrate the very process of how exactly this particular factor empirically influenced Japanese policies and discourse on national security.

Major works on Japanese security and foreign policy by scholars such as Richard J. Samuels, Kenneth B. Pyle, and Mike M. Mochizuki employ – although without explicitly declaring – realist tenets of IR theories in their analyses. They, therefore, show an especially strong tendency to view international system-level structural shifts – mainly the rise of China, the resulting Sino-American rivalry, and Japan’s comparative economic downfall – as the primary driving force behind Japanese security policy. North Korea is frequently mentioned, but the overall impression is that the North is an additional justification for Japan’s re-evaluation of its postwar “grand strategy,” when the true motive is governed by “big power relations” between China and the United States.
Also reflecting the realist tradition, they primarily interpret the current and the future trajectory of Japanese foreign policy and security postures as a product of rational and strategic thinking by political elites in the government and the Diet.

The two main characteristics of these realism-based analyses – the primacy of system-level, big power politics, and rational policy-making by governmental elites to maximize Japan’s national interest and prestige in response to turbulent international power shifts – lead these scholars to predict that Japan’s traditional, postwar security principles as symbolized by the Yoshida Doctrine and the current Constitution are on the verge of being discarded, or at least fundamentally revised. They claim that it is because Japanese elites, sensitive to ongoing external changes in the region, have been convinced that Japan must release itself from its self-restrained national power projection and revise the current, “foreign origin” Constitution if the nation is to maintain its security and distinct identity, given its diminishing comparative regional status. The authors, therefore, conclude that although Japan is maintaining its alliance with the United States and its Constitution for the time being, it has already launched its “hedging” tactics to guarantee a new, more “independent” position between the United States and rising China, and that it will soon replace the ideas of “economy-first” and “no external military power projection” embedded in the Yoshida Doctrine and the Constitution as a result of their heightened sense of vulnerability. From this perspective North Korea, rather than the primary cause, serves as a more up-close-and-personal source of additional legitimacy to push for this new, grand strategy, since the true goal is much more substantial in scope.
Of course, this dissertation does not claim that the system-level shifts currently taking place in East Asia are irrelevant; there must surely be a broader strategic element, encompassing the North Korea factor, to the current security policy shifts of Japan. However, what the dissertation has problematized is that the most significant and actual security-related policy changes introduced in recent years – particularly the Emergency Legislations and the unilateral sanctions, but also including the empowerment of the Maritime Self Defence Forces (MSDF) and the Japan Coast Guards (JCG) which the authors also mention as part of their supporting evidence – were all directly motivated by none other than North Korea, and developed into concrete policies with societal backing as the process-tracing of the dissertation empirically demonstrated.

Also, concerning the realist assertion that Japanese security policies are led by the strategic calculations of rational political elites (and the authors have a tendency to focus only on well-known and provocative politicians) rather than the public, the dissertation has argued that it can also easily be the other way around. The processes of policy formulations during 1998-2006 have revealed that it was public pressure, motivated by visible, proximate, and timely North Korean provocations, that allowed policymakers to implement some of their strategic designs into relevant legislations only with societal consent. Exactly because the policy changes were not monopolized by governmental elites, the dissertation illustrated that despite the public’s new willingness to see the materialization of more realistic security policies, this trend would not necessarily lead to extreme revisions with further implications for the more fundamental, traditional postwar security identity, at this point. The Japanese public, despite their accumulating anger toward the North, has at least demonstrated so far their support for particular policy
means that can be implemented and justified within the confines of existing security principles. As long as the democratic influence on security policy-making is assured – as the Japanese foreign policy toward North Korea has illustrated – the public is unlikely to easily consent to a more fundamental revision in its national security principles, even if some politicians would like to push the limit and use societal momentum created by the North Korea factor to legitimize additional policy changes with broader national and regional security implications.

In contrast to the realists, the second category of scholars, such as Peter J. Katzenstein and Thomas U. Berger who are regarded in the discipline as “constructivists,” re-introduced the importance of the “societal” element in empirical analyses by emphasizing the primacy of ideational and normative influences on Japanese foreign policies. During the 1990s, the constructivist literature successfully highlighted the consistent, internal identity of “antimilitarism” and “pacifism” framing the postwar strategy, based on Yoshida Doctrine and the Constitution. However, oddly similar to the realists, they also preferred focusing on the “big picture” indicated by the status of formal doctrines and legal institutions in domestic politics to gauge the current and future trajectory of Japanese security strategy, despite their significant contribution in bringing social and normative aspects into our analytic attention.

While the constructivist literature did not face a significant challenge to their overall claims until the 1990s, recent policy shifts taking place since the late 1990s and especially during the early 2000s eventually forced them to somewhat update their original claims. As they were pressured to explain the “continuity of the principal security identities” in the midst of new policy changes seemingly not compatible with
previous Japanese “pacifist” doctrines, more recent works published in the 2000s by these scholars have started to employ a subtle change of nuance in their arguments, asserting that the observable policy changes are predictable and minor adjustments and an adaptation to the changing international environment. Thus, rather than being evidence for the weakening of their original assertions, the recent changes in Japanese policies are, in fact, the newest version of Japan’s own skilful maneuver to strengthen its “liberal” and “antimilitaristic” identity – by implementing peripheral adjustments – before this national principle becomes too anachronistic and invalid in the face of turbulent regional and international dynamics.

It has to be admitted that the conclusion of the dissertation is, therefore, apparently closer to this constructivist claim than those of the realists, as the nuanced, dual security discourse during the sanction legislation process indeed demonstrated a strong element of “change within continuity.” While their argument in principle is thus empirically valid, the dissertation has, however, also shown that it is not the claim of these literatures but the employed supporting evidence which constitute their shortcoming. Like the realists, their interest in overall trajectory of Japanese security rather than on more focused empirical cases has forced the constructivist works to limit their main analyses on the current status of well-known official security institutions – the yet-to-be-revised Constitution above anything else – as the chief evidence for arguing in favour of the “continuity.” But this dissertation has demonstrated that more contextual proof for the same conclusion could have been obtained by shifting the focus away from legal doctrines and instead to the actual contents of societal discussions that has taken
place concerning particular security issues, in which actual policies have empirically experienced “changes within continuity.”

3 The Future of Japan-North Korea Relations

At the time of this writing, the North Korean regime has not collapsed, and the abductions, along with all other North Korea-related security issues barring better Japan-North Korea bilateral relations, are still in a stalemate. This is despite the fact that the Japanese government has appointed Ministers of the Abduction Issue (Rachi-mondai Tantō-shō) to handle the case specifically at the ministerial level. Although Japanese sanctions toward North Korea have been in effect for more than four years, they have failed to produce the results envisioned by the original policymakers, who expected the North to either collapse or yield to Japanese economic might. Even if North Korea collapses in the future, it will surely not be because of Japanese sanctions, despite sanction supporters in Japan who will argue otherwise.

After more than four years of saturated abduction coverage since September 2002, current Japanese society seems comparatively calmer toward the North. The abduction-fever, although still very much alive, has somewhat lost the momentum it once had. While the security and historical discourses facilitated by the abduction issue are still strongly valid, the public also seems “fed up” by sensational, daily media coverage of the issue itself, and it has partially lost its exciting “entertainment value.”

6 Masao Okonogi, interview with the author, December 11, 2009; Makoto Iokibe, interview with the author, December 18, 2009.
is indicative that Abe, who became the Prime Minister in 2006 only for his hawkish stance on the abduction (hence his image as a “single-issue” minister), quickly resigned his post barely a year later with dwindling popularity among domestic constituents who realized that he lacked competence to address domestic economic issues – such as the reform of the pension system – but was too obsessed with constitutional revision and “patriotic education” in public schools, in addition to the abduction issue.7

However, despite the fact that North Korea issues – still mainly concerning the abductions – in the minds of ordinary Japanese have relatively lost their appeal to mobilize societal attention as they once did, that does not mean that the governments of the two states, if they wished, are now able to freely re-negotiate for diplomatic renormalization or another bilateral agreement similar to the Pyongyang Declaration, without worrying about domestic repercussions in Japan. Even if the absolute amount of North Korea coverage has decreased, the negative image of North Korea among the public is still closely locked to the stalemate in the abduction issue, and the Japanese government by itself, whether LDP or DPJ-led, cannot take unnecessary political risk unless there is a major breakthrough, which is unlikely at this point.

Therefore, all Cabinets since 2002 have been locked into a situation in which they have had to keep insisting on “not budging from a principled stance” in accordance with the still-pervasive societal atmosphere.8 Even if experts have long realized that this

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8 Yoshihide Soeya, “Diplomacy for Japan as a Middle Power,” Japan Echo (April, 2008), p. 36.
“foreign policy principle solely for domestic consumption (kokunai shohiyō no taigai seisaku)” without realistic analysis of the situation has already proven to be ineffective,9 Japan has been thus inclined to maintain its sanction policies, renewing them every six months from April 2007, despite their dubious effect and at the cost of undermining its international role as a significant player in regional security dialogues, in frustrating attempts to resolve the abduction issue above others.10

Besides the obvious unwillingness of the North Koreans to cooperate, what has also consistently prevented a “major breakthrough” for the resolution of the abduction – and hence for bilateral relations in general – has been the Japanese definition of what exactly constitutes the “resolution of the abduction” in the first place. Ever since the issue came to dominate domestic discourse on North Korea, the Japanese government, Sukuu-kai and Kazoku-kai, and the media have agreed that the absolute minimum requirement the North would have to clear in order to put bilateral negotiations back on track was Pyongyang’s acceptance of a transparent, joint re-investigation allowing Japanese officials full access to locations, documents, and persons related to the issue.

While this might be possible at some point in the future, what is more problematic is that the re-investigation is largely regarded in Japan as an initial process to “bring all abductees and families” back to Japan alive. “All abductees and families” here means the ones already repatriated to Japan plus the ones claimed by the North to be already

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9 Kiichi Fujiwara, “Gaikō wa Seron (Yoron) ni Shitagau bekika – Minshushugi no Seijuku to Taigai Seisaku (Should Diplomacy Follow Public Opinion? The Democratic Maturation and Foreign Policy),” Ronza (March, 2008), pp. 78-79.

deceased. In the midst of the societal anger surging after the disclosure of the issue, and especially after the DNA result of Yokota Megumi in 2004, the government, under pressure from abduction-related interest groups and public, had to subsequently formulate its policies based on the societal assumption that North Korea was hiding the real fate of those victims, and that those supposedly-dead were likely to be still alive. Although it is unlikely that all policymakers shared this presupposition, societal discourse in Japan has largely adhered to this belief and the government, at least officially, had to incorporate it in dealing with the issue. Therefore, even if North Korea agreed to a joint re-investigation, it is plausible that the public would not believe the result if it turned out that those victims still not repatriated to Japan had indeed already died.11

Moreover, what further complicates the “resolution” is the exact number of the persons actually abducted. While the government has recognized twelve as the official figure, it has admitted that there could be more. Although the government at present maintains a list of so-called “special missing persons (tokutei shissōsha)” prepared in conjunction with the Sukuu-kai, the list itself is flexible and neither the government, Sukuu-kai, nor Kazoku-kai have been able to establish the exact number of those who may have additionally ended up in North Korea.12

In short, as long as the “resolution” is officially understood in the Japanese domestic context as the rescue of all abductees – including the allegedly-deceased-but-presumed-alive, plus the flexible number of “special missing persons” – it is unlikely that

11 Tōru Hasuike, Rachi: Sayū no Kakine wo Koeta Tatakai e (The Abduction: Toward a fight beyond the left-right hedge) (Kyoto: Kamogawa Shuppan, 2009), p. 41.

we will ever witness the resolution in the form Japan is demanding. Since the unilateral economic sanctions were originally designed to force the North to “yield” to this exact demand, it is little wonder that the pressure has failed to achieve the desired result after more than four years, even before considering its actual effectiveness.

Accordingly, some experts of Korean affairs in Japan have carefully raised their opinion that Japan must formulate a more achievable goal and systematically approach the North with more realistic policy guidelines, if both parties are to ever overcome the deadlock.13 Despite the fact that such arguments seem to be gaining more support in the policy sphere, politicians openly suggesting the need for a more realistic diplomatic target incorporating the possibility of some abductees’ death is still like opening a Pandora’s box – as nobody can predict the likely public reaction with any certainty – requiring significant political risk and courage on the part of the initiator. For this reason, the Japanese government has relied on “time” as the only solution, until the public further cools down and a new opportunity might present itself in the future.14

Even if Japan were to reach a consensus on a more negotiable diplomatic target, it would also have to make a strategic choice as to how it would balance other North Korea related issues against the abductions in future bilateral negotiations, and there seems to be no concrete agreement in this regard. Since Japan is currently imposing sanctions for both bilateral (the abductions) and multilateral (ballistic missiles and nuclear programs)


threats posed by North Korea, despite the fact that the pressure had been undoubtedly first envisioned for the resolution of the former, some experts in Japanese academia claim that Japan is bound to be further frustrated if it keeps chasing two hares of a different nature. Since the bilateral portion at least has the possibility of progress through future negotiations directly between Japan and North Korea, and since the abduction still constitutes the foremost priority in the minds of Japanese citizens, separating bilateral and multilateral issues and focusing on a breakthrough in the former, they argue, would be a more prudent and realistic approach for Japan.\footnote{For example, Masao Okonogi, interview with the author, December 11, 2009; Narushige Michishita, interview with the author, December 16, 2009.}

However, not everyone agrees. The opposing stance asserts that North Korean problems have been from the very beginning multifaceted, including both bilateral and multilateral issues, and thus cannot be separated. North Korea is not only dealing with Japan and it is naive to assume that progress in one would lead to an equal breakthrough in the other, since the North, more than any other related party, has preferred “comprehensive resolution” involving all concerned states, especially including the United States. From this perspective, the problem is not that Japan is chasing two hares of a different nature; the problem is that while chasing both is correct, Japan has been nevertheless overly concentrating on one over the other. What Japan needs is to chase both, by giving equal attention to both. What Japan needs, especially for the resolution of the abduction issue, is to go back to the strategy envisioned by the Koizumi government when it first drafted the Pyongyang Declaration, seeking to reach an agreement concerning all bilateral and multilateral security concerns in one
comprehensive package deal and also promoting regional and international participation in the process. Paradoxically, only by re-framing the abduction issue as a part in this broader framework, as originally designed during the first summit, and only by giving equal considerations to all North Korean threats, would it be possible for Japan to expect any headway concerning the abduction.  

It is always risky to make predictions. Concerning Japan-North Korea relations, obviously no one can foretell with certainty how bilateral interactions will unfold in the near future, as any development either related to the abductions or to other North Korea-linked issues can certainly produce unforeseeable repercussions on the nature and the direction of the current deadlock between the two countries. For this reason, this dissertation does not venture into any particular policy prediction on how Japan and North Korea are likely to behave, or how their interactions will eventually unfold.

However, the process-tracing of the dissertation has demonstrated that one fact is currently valid and is likely to be so in the near future: Japanese policies toward North Korea will continue to be strongly linked to the resolution of the abduction issue however Japan defines the term, despite the fact that North Korea continues to pose equally serious military threats in the region with its ever-expanding missile and nuclear capabilities.

Under the current circumstances, Japan-North Korea bilateral diplomatic normalization, if it were ever to occur, will likely to require a substantial amount of time,

as Japanese diplomacy toward the North has become one foreign policy area in which the Japanese public has maintained its undeniable position as the main participant. Despite the fact that Japan is now engaging in various other regional and international issues not solely concerned with the North, any development involving North Korea will, nevertheless, surely remind the Japanese public of the anger that overwhelmed society between 2002 and 2006, and thus any progress with the North in the future will not be feasible without societal consent. It will also require strong political leadership on the part of Japan, a Prime Minister who will be willing to take risks, as Koizumi had done with perseverance, in order to convince both North Korea and the Japanese public.

4 Addendum: Constitutional Revision

The nature of nuanced national security discourse, as demonstrated by the Japanese public toward North Korea during the sanction legislation process, can be equally applied to the current domestic controversies surrounding the constitutional amendment. Although this dissertation has not directly covered the constitutional issue as the main focus of analysis, some final thoughts will be presented here.

As elaborated in the main section, issues related to North Korea had direct implications on broader national security debates in Japan, and they had especially been well used by the “rightists” to propagate dissatisfaction with postwar, Japanese security institutions. The abduction issue was especially useful, and as we have observed in Chapter 7, there were various domestic claims that the Constitution – especially the Peace Clause (Article 9) which forced Japan to be overly “pacifist” and “antimilitarist” – was
the true villain behind the incident.  

Indeed, some family members of the abduction victims belonging to the Kazoku-kai were deliberately called by constitutional revisionists and were asked to make speeches denouncing Article 9 as the main hindrance to the resolution of the abduction issue. During the same period, the former Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro claimed (in February 2004) that contrary to the 1980s when the LDP Cabinets could not even schedule an official meeting to openly discuss the constitutional amendment issue, the time had now ripened to discuss the possibility as a legitimate political agendum.

Linking constitutional revision to North Korean threats was not confined to the arguments promoted by the “rightists.” Opinion polls especially from 2003 resulted in a slight majority always favouring the revision, and the media widely interpreted the figures as one example of Japanese citizens’ increased embracing of “realism” facilitated by the North Korean threats. Even scholars of “leftist” inclinations – who are against the amendment motion – have come to accept the domestic reality that more Japanese citizens now desire that something be done about the unusual gap between the security

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17 For example, Tsunemi Koyama, “Mattanashi! Ima Koso Nihon-koku Kenpō wo Mukō to Seyo (Now or never!  This is the moment to annul the Japanese Constitution),” Seiron (September, 2004), p. 71.

18 Hasuike, op.cit., pp. 84-85.


20 Yasuhiro Nakasone and Shintarō Ishihara, “Tate! Nihon-yo Ima Koso Sengo no Jubaku wo Tachikire (Rise Japan!  This is the moment to cut off the spell of the postwar),” Seiron (February, 2004), p. 61.

21 Yomiuri Shimbun editorial, April 2, 2003, p. 3.
reality and idealistic principles – what Sakamoto Yoshikazu calls the “prescribed standard” – upheld in the current Constitution.\textsuperscript{22}

It is, therefore, an undeniable fact that there has been increased support for the revision, and the movement has been largely led by “rightists” who have bandwagoned with the public’s anxiety over North Korea and national security vulnerability to push their long-held dissatisfaction over the origin of the current Constitution and especially of Article 9.\textsuperscript{23} However, although such revisionist claims based on extreme and emotionally-charged reactions to external factors and self-denial of Japan’s positive postwar trajectory – what Soeya Yoshihide calls “gyaku-funsha kaiken-ron (Reverse-thrust constitutional amendment debate)” – could likely to be detrimental to Japan’s future, open debates on constitutional revision widely participated in by citizens possessing balanced views about Japan’s postwar achievements under the current institutions, as well as realistic assessments of national security in a changing external environment, would be a healthy societal development that must be distinguished from the movement led by the “rightists.”\textsuperscript{24}

Similar to the Japanese public’s demonstrated posture during the process of the unilateral sanction legislation, increasing societal support for constitutional revision should not, therefore, simply be regarded as Japanese citizens wholly agreeing with the ideological claims of the “rightists” at face value. Many citizens who support the


\textsuperscript{23} Yoshihide Soeya, \textit{Nihon no Midoru Pawā Gaikō} (Japan’s “Middle Power” Diplomacy) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shinshō, 2005), pp. 16-29, 198-205.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}
revision, contrary to popular belief, do so because they believe that the supreme law of
the nation must reflect the “modern sensibility” of the people in the twenty-first century,
and they thus desire to see new clauses dealing with clearly-defined responsibilities and
citizen rights concerning the environment, privacy, and intellectual property. 25

Concerning national security, 70% of the citizens favouring the amendment prefer
that a new Constitution clearly state the legitimate existence and activity of the Self
Defence Forces (SDF) under the condition that a clause concurrently emphasizing
Japan’s upholding of “pacifism” is maintained. 26 As we can surmise, “pacifism” here is
not the dogmatically antimilitaristic utilization of the term first incorporated into the
Constitution after World War II; in this regard, the currently-prevalent definition of
pacifism indeed reflects the influence of more “realistic” assessment of national security
among the majority public, as we have also seen in the sanction debates. However, it
must be equally noted that more Japanese in recent years have come to embrace the
notion of such “active” pacifism because the public is increasingly supporting the notion
that clearly stating the legitimate status and the missions of the SDF in a new
Constitution would, in fact, be more effective to ensure democratic control of the military
as well as better enable Japan to contribute to peace-building activities abroad openly,
without inviting misconceptions from abroad. 27

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
In this regard, this line of public discourse favouring the amendment is also influenced by the “values and practices that the existing Constitution has nurtured.” Therefore, this citizen-led public discourse concerning the amendment – known as “goken-teki kaiken-ron (constitutional amendment debate upholding the current Constitution)” – must be separated from our understanding of the one led by the “rightists,” even if they both seem to pursue the same goal on the surface, since the vision of what a new Constitution should look like differs between the two.

Of course, the claim for constitutional amendment advocated by “rightists” is also undeniably a powerful factor in contemporary Japanese society, and as we have observed in Chapter 7, these extreme revisionists have indeed gained considerable success in mobilizing broader societal support, especially since 2002. Considering that the regional repercussions are not solely confined to Japan’s stance toward North Korea, if the amendment were to actually materialize along the “rightist” line, the extent of their ideas spreading in Japan should, of course, be watched by the international community, and Japan’s neighbors’ concerns should be clearly communicated to the Japanese public.

In this regard, it is indicative that in addition to South Korea and China, which have traditionally been vocal in their anxiety, the United States – the most important ally of Japan – has also been paying closer attention to the “revisionist views of World War II and the U.S. occupation of Japan (1942-1952) increasingly seeping into the mainstream.

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28 Tadokoro, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-68.

29 *Asahi Shimbun* editorial, May 3, 2005, p. 3.
in Japan” in recent years. Some American Japan-watchers have been advising Washington to “take heed of the development in Tokyo, and fast,” and it is interesting that the United States House of Representatives, in July 2005, decided to pass Resolution 191 commemorating the 60th anniversary of the end of the Pacific War that specifically re-confirmed the judgements rendered by the International War Crime Tribunal in Tokyo after the war.

But as mentioned, it is important to note at the same time that political discourses currently taking place in Japan, including those that concern the constitutional revision, are not solely dominated by the “rightists” and that there are more than one strand of argument concerning this issue. Although Japan’s neighbours and friends must surely continue to monitor and provide productive feedback for better mutual relations for the future, those who are watching Japan should also recognize that how Japan will handle its “historical memory” – which is inseparable from the current constitutional debates as well as Japan’s posture towards the outside – “ultimately depends on the soundness of Japanese democracy” led by balanced-minded, ordinary Japanese citizens.


31 For example, refer to Eugene Matthews, “Japan’s New Nationalism,” Foreign Affairs 82:6 (November/December, 2003), pp. 74-90.

32 CRS (Congressional Research Service), op.cit., p. 5.

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330


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340


3    NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS & ARTICLES

Yomiuri Shimbun

September 1, 1998 Editorial p. 3
September 3, 1998 Editorial p. 3
September 12, 1998 Editorial p. 3
December 27, 1998 Editorial p. 3
January 1, 1999 Editorial p. 3
February 5, 1999 Editorial p. 3
March 25, 1999 Editorial p. 3
April 1, 1999 Editorial p. 3
May 3, 1999 Editorial p. 3
June 17, 1999 Editorial p. 3
September 1, 1999 Editorial p. 3
December 4, 1999 Editorial p. 3
December 15, 1999 Editorial p. 3
March 8, 2000 Editorial p. 3
April 8, 2000. p. 3
April 8, 2000 Editorial, p. 3
May 22, 2000 Editorial p. 3
June 18, 2000 Editorial p. 3
September 19, 2000 Editorial p. 3
October 7, 2000 Editorial p. 3
October 24, 2000 Editorial p. 3
November 13, 2000 Editorial p. 3
May 5, 2001, p. 3
May 5, 2001 Editorial p. 3
December 23, 2001 Editorial p. 3
January 22, 2002 Editorial p. 3
January 26, 2002 Editorial p. 3
February 26, 2002 Editorial p. 3
March 21, 2002 p. 3
April 17, 2002 Editorial p. 3
May 3, 2002 Editorial p. 3
May 9, 2002 Editorial p. 3
May 11, 2002 Editorial p. 3
June 19, 2002 Editorial p. 3
September 4, 2002 Editorial p. 3
September 7, 2002 Editorial p. 3
September 18, 2002, p. 1
September 18, 2002, p. 2
September 18, 2002, p. 3
September 18, 2002 Editorial p. 3
September 19, 2002 Editorial p. 3
September 20, 2002, p. 2
September 28, 2002, p. 1
October 5, 2002, p. 2
October 11, 2002 Editorial p. 3
October 16, 2002, p. 1
October 16, 2002 Editorial p. 3
October 25, 2002, p. 2
November 13, 2002, p. 4
December 5, 2002 Editorial p. 3
December 11, 2002 Editorial p. 3
January 30, 2003 Editorial p. 3
February 2, 2003 Editorial p. 3
February 8, 2003, p. 3
April 2, 2003 Editorial p. 3
April 3, 2003 Editorial p. 3
April 24, 2003 Editorial p. 3
April 27, 2003 Editorial p. 3
May 23, 2003 Editorial p. 3
May 26, 2003 Editorial p. 3
May 28, 2003 Editorial p. 3
June 7, 2003, p. 1
June 7, 2003 Editorial p. 3
June 10, 2003 Editorial p. 3
June 19, 2003 Editorial p. 3
August 26, 2003 Editorial p. 3
September 17, 2003 Editorial p. 3
October 15, 2003, p. 3
December 14, 2003 Editorial p. 3
December 28, 2003 Editorial p. 3
February 1, 2004 Editorial p. 3
February 18, 2004 Editorial p. 3
February 26, 2004 Editorial p. 3
March 4, 2004 Editorial p. 3
April 23, 2004 Editorial p. 3
April 24, 2004 Editorial p. 3
July 19, 2004 Editorial p. 3
September 17, 2004, p. 3
October 11, 2004 Editorial p. 3
November 5, 2004, p. 3
December 9, 2004, p. 3
December 9, 2004 Editorial p. 3
December 14, 2004 Editorial p. 3
December 18, 2004, p. 3
December 25, 2004 Editorial, p. 3
January 30, 2005 Editorial p. 3
February 15, 2005 Editorial p. 3
March 24, 2006 Editorial p. 3
April 4, 2006 Editorial p. 3
July 6, 2006, p. 1
July 6, 2006, p. 2
July 7, 2006, p. 3
July 17, 2006. p. 3
July 18, 2006, p. 3
July 24, 2006, Editorial p. 3
September 20, 2006 Editorial p. 3
October 13, 2006 Editorial p. 3
October 16, 2006, p. 1
November 15, 2006 Editorial p. 3

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(http://xs-tyr01.asahi-np.co.jp/voronopen/servlet/MainServlet: Accessed by
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September 1, 1998 p. 1
September 1, 1998 Editorial p. 5
September 5, 1998 Editorial p. 5
September 18, 1998 Editorial p. 5
September 22, 1998 Editorial p. 5
October 21, 1998 Editorial p. 5
March 25, 1999 Editorial p. 5
August 28, 1999 Editorial p. 5
December 4, 1999 Editorial p. 5
March 8, 2000 Editorial p. 5
March 25, 2000 Editorial p. 5
May 3, 2000 Editorial p. 2
December 9, 2002 Editorial p. 2
December 27, 2002, pp. 12-13
January 1, 2003 Editorial p. 2
January 26, 2003, p. 2
June 25, 2003 Editorial, p. 2
July 1, 2003, p. 2
September 17, 2003 Editorial p. 2
January 30, 2004 Editorial, p. 2
March 12, 2004 Editorial, p. 2
May 15, 2004 Editorial, p. 2
May 15, 2004, p. 3
May 23, 2004, p. 4
July 2, 2004 Editorial p. 3
December 9, 2004, p. 2
December 9, 2004 Editorial, p. 3
December 25, 2004, p. 2
May 3, 2005 Editorial p. 3
July 12, 2005 Editorial p. 3
November 3, 2005 Editorial p. 3
July 5, 2006, p. 1
July 5, 2006, p. 2
July 6, 2006, p. 1
July 17, 2006, p. 1
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