

## Article

# Prime Minister in Command: Koizumi and Abduction Question Revisited<sup>1)</sup>

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## Preface

There are still many unknown facts about the abduction crimes by agents of Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Therefore the cases are far from reaching a complete settlement. Two Pyongyang visits by Japanese Prime Minister Jun-ichiro Koizumi, however, safely brought back five abduction survivors and their families. Accomplishing their return was not an easy task, since a state was involved in the abduction crimes.

Sovereign states are the highest authority in the modern world system. There is no higher absolute legal authority that is able to enact and enforce judgments against other states. Therefore state A, possibly with cooperation of friendly state(s), usually has to win the consent of state B in order to accomplish A's objective. State A may bluff or hint reward, but winning B's consent is the only way for A to avoid a serious military conflict. International relations are thus a game of political bargaining and moral justice is not always promised. Scholars of international politics call it anarchic and emphasize its difference from domestic societies.

This fundamental fact is not always understood by the domestic public and they often demand fair and morally justifiable results in international affairs. Especially when human rights questions such as the abductions are on the table, people tend to be highly moralistic and emotional. This gap of the international reality with the domestic mood often agonize chiefs of governments. How did Koizumi manage it when he dealt with the abduction question?

## 1. Domestic Environment

It is a well known fact that Prime Ministers in Japan usually stay in power for a very limited period of time. Among the thirty post World War II Prime Ministers, Jun-ichiro Koizumi stayed in office for a shorter time than only Eisaku Sato and Shigeru Yoshida and was undoubtedly one of the most popular Prime Ministers in postwar history. However, his achievements were less impressive in foreign policy. For example, his great name predecessors enjoy the glory of more outstanding foreign policy successes. Yoshida, for example, contributed much to the foundation of Japan's postwar relations with the US

through concluding the Peace Treaty and Japan-US. Security Treaty; Ichiro Hatoyama restored diplomatic relations with the Soviets; Sato did the same with the Republic of Korea, and Kakuei Tanaka normalized relations with People's Republic of China. Among neighboring nations, there remains only one country left to normalize ties with, and that is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Besides gaining a footprint in history, the Koizumi Administration aimed to achieve two major goals through its policy toward North Korea. Number one was to peacefully solve the North Korean nuclear weapon and missile questions, in cooperation with other related nations. And secondly, in the face of strong public demand, finding a solution to the abduction of Japanese nationals became an inescapable task.

No one can deny that nuclear weapon development by North Korea is a grave issue that may cause unprecedented destruction in the region. It is, however, a dilemma faced also by other nations in the region, and something that Japan alone cannot solve, while the question of kidnapping is more of a bilateral problem between Japan and North Korea.<sup>2)</sup> In the case of a North Korean nuclear attack, incredible numbers of the Japanese populace will no doubt perish, but it is still only a potential tragedy and has yet to overly worry ordinary Japanese citizens, who have enjoyed peace and prosperity for nearly 60 years. For them, nuclear weapon development by North Korea is more or less a technical, abstract topic. The Japanese public has, however, been strongly sympathetic to the actual living victims of the North Korean kidnappings and their families, because the abductees are no different from average Japanese who have neither a strong affiliation with any political organizations nor close relations with North Korea. While the North Korean kidnappings are an overt infringement of Japan's sovereignty for many conservatives, it remains a humanitarian and highly emotional issue for most Japanese citizens. Both sides, however, commonly cry for a solution. Therefore, in the eyes of the Japanese public, the North Korean abduction issue remains a more salient problem than the nuclear weapon development issue.

Most kidnappings were committed during 1970s, with a few occurring in the 80s.<sup>3)</sup> In fact, between July 7<sup>th</sup> and August 12<sup>th</sup> in 1978, barely over one month period, three couples, and a mother and her daughter went missing without single personal reason. The three cases took place in Japan Sea coast area and one at southern coast of Kyushu island. With these facts alone, one naturally suspects there should have been some organizational hands behind, if North Korea could not be singled out. There is, however, no public knowledge until today that there was any cross-prefecture police attempt before 1997 to investigate the relations of these four cases. In fact, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1980, *Sankei*, a well known nationally distributed newspaper began reporting through a series of articles cases of the three missing couples after the paper had learned a happening of another failed abduction attempt in 1978.<sup>4)</sup> In 1985, a North Korean agent named Shin Gansu was arrested in Seoul and confessed his abduction of Mr. Tada-aki Hara from Miyazaki prefecture in June, 1980.<sup>5)</sup> On November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1987, a North Korean agent couple, disguised with forged Japanese passports, exploded a Korean Airline airplane and killed 115 passengers. The both agents committed suicide, but the female agent, Kim Hyeonhee survived. Later she attested that a real Japanese woman trained Kim Hyeonhee to

impersonate a Japanese woman for that terrorist incident. In 1991 Saitama Prefecture Police identified that the trainer was Ms. Kumiko Taguchi who was probably abducted in Tokyo in 1978. Japanese Foreign Ministry finally took up the case at a normalization talk with North Korea in 1991, but North Korean delegation denied the facts and unilaterally left the conference so that the normalization talks were suspended.<sup>6)</sup> In September, 1988, a letter from Mr. Tohru Ishioka, another abducted Japanese, arrived at his parents' house in Hokkaido island. The letter was mailed from Poland and said Mr. Ishioka was living in Pyongyang with Miss Keiko Arimoto and Mr. Kaoru Matsuki both of whom were also abducted. After receiving the letter, their parents contacted each other and together submitted a petition for search to the Foreign Ministry. The response of a ministry official was that there was not anything the ministry could do since Japan did not have a diplomatic relations with North Korea. The parents sent letters to mass media and received no positive reply either.<sup>7)</sup>

Notwithstanding the above cases which became public, despite the abductees' families organizing themselves<sup>8)</sup> and repeating the need for thorough investigation, the political parties, the Foreign Ministry, and even the Japanese police reacted rather coldly and kept indifferent attitude until the KAL airplane incident. Even after that, some were suspicious as to whether the kidnappings had in fact taken place, and Foreign Ministry officials were unwilling to become embroiled in trouble with a "difficult country" such as North Korea. In fact, it was not until January in 1997 after questioned by Singo Nishimura, a member of House of Representative that the Japanese government publicly recognized six abduction cases by North Korea.<sup>9)</sup> Around that time, voices of the victim families finally began to be taken seriously by the Japanese media and the government.

Angry at the North Korean attitude, organizations of Abductees' families and their supporters repeatedly demanded that the Japanese government implement economic sanctions against North Korea.<sup>10)</sup> Before an audience at one of his series of lectures, Mr. Shigeru Yokota, father of an abduction victim criticized the Japanese government for having done nothing even after the fact of abductions had come to light.<sup>11)</sup> To persuade politicians, an organization surveyed the opinions of Diet members on the issue and made the results public.<sup>12)</sup> They have also initiated a petition campaign and submitted to the government the signatures of 1.41 million people.<sup>13)</sup> The media coverage of their stories and opinions became so wide spread that a leader of an abductees' organization could hardly restrain his desire to run for the Upper House election. Other leaders publicly demanded at one time the resignation of Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi and the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hitoshi Tanaka,<sup>14)</sup> because they believed the Foreign Ministry had been too slow and too conciliatory in their negotiations with the North Korea.<sup>15)</sup>

On April 15, 1997, politicians also organized their own cross-party group to support the abductees' organizations.<sup>16)</sup> Naturally, many anti-communist and hawkish politicians became members of the group, but a surprising fact is that not only Diet members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, but also security experts in the largest opposition party, the Democratic Party (DP), joined the committee. This cross-party committee was possible, not only because of the public outcry for a solution of the abduction issue, but also due to the fact that both parties felt a grave security threat posed by the North Korean ICBM

experiment in 1998, and an indignation toward the allegedly continued secret nuclear weapon development, despite the Agreed Framework of 1994. According to the Agreed Framework, the US promised to construct two light-water type nuclear reactors for the compensation of North Korean discontinuation of nuclear weapon development, along with South Korea, Japan and other related nations. More fundamentally, this cross-party spirit was created because the LDP and DP are not divided by different ideologies, as the LDP and Japan Socialist Party (JSP) were during the Cold War. Unlike the former JSP, the DP is more pragmatic and differences with LDP are not always apparent. In addition, the LDP and DP are both eager for election victory and power. Besides the politicians' committee, former cabinet members such as Shizuka Kamei and Takeo Hiranuma, along with Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry (former MITI) of Koizumi administration, Shoichi Nakagawa, Minister of Defense, Shigeru Ishihara, LDP Secretary General, Shinzo Abe, and a former head of Democratic Party, Yukio Hatoyama, were among hard-liners.<sup>17)</sup>

The above domestic context made it impossible for Koizumi to brush aside both the nuclear weapon issue and the abduction problem. And, to bring back the remaining families of abductees from North Korea became an emotional national goal regardless of its objective importance relative to the nuclear weapon issue. In addition, the abductees' organizations maintained its influence, because media coverage was so intense and the bipartisan committee supported them. The Foreign Ministry no longer dominated Japan's policy toward North Korea. It was thus evident that Koizumi embraced a narrow domestic win-set in his North Korean policy.

## 2. International Context

What about the international context for Koizumi? Both in the nuclear weapon development or the abductions, the key factor is North Korea itself. Unless Pyongyang has a clear and strong desire to resolve the issues, no other state can settle the matter, at least peacefully. The most striking feature of North Korea is, however, an incredible contrast between the advanced technologies for nuclear weapon and missile development and the continuously serious famine. There is a common necessary condition for military build up and saving the people from starvations. Both require money. While China reformed and internationally opened up its economy for solving somewhat similar problems, North Korea opted for illegal and/or immoral measures of drug trafficking, counterfeiting, arms trade and use of military threat for money.<sup>18)</sup> In the last few years, Pyongyang seemed to have begun economic cooperation especially with South Korea,<sup>19)</sup> but until today North Korea's move for economic reform is indecisive at best, despite the mass hunger of its people.

Though no one truly knows whether the above-mentioned illicit state conducts and the appalling indifference to his people's misery reflect insufficient governing ability of Kim Jong Il or Kim Jong Il's own decisions, my hunch is that it's the latter. It appears that the only purpose for Kim Jong Il's rule is to maintain its own regime. The nuclear weapon development is the symbol of strength of his rule. Energy supply is necessary, because the military needs it. Energy and foods are sought only to the extent that North Korea's economic condition can prevent serious disorder of the society.

Can we really save this corrupted state? Does Kim Jong Il have the will and the political resources to so drastically reform his own state? Will his government work sincerely to resolve the abduction problem? Frankly, I am pessimistic. But there is no other way besides peaceful solutions and a state-conversion of sort, since Seoul is too close to defend and we do not opt for military solution of any kind.

Among the five nations other than North Korea which compose the Six-Party Talks, the US is undoubtedly most important. In the interest of the argument for this paper, only five points will be addressed about the administration of President George W. Bush. First, the Bush administration did not exclude the possibility of preemptive strike since weapons of mass destruction were at stake. Second, the "Axis of Evil" rhetoric symbolized the highly moralistic nature of Bush's foreign policy. Third, the disclosure of continuous nuclear weapon development by North Korea, in violation of the spirit of the Agreed Framework of 1994, angered the entire administration and implanted a deep sense of betrayal. The above three points gave a hawkish and uncompromising nature to Bush's North Korea policy. However, because of the second and third points, hawkish groups in Bush administration opted for the Six-Party Talks rather than a bilateral bargaining with North Korea. Bush believed he needed witnesses.

There were two other circumstantial points to be explained here. Around the same time, Bush faced another serious crisis with Iraq and needed cooperation with allied nations including Japan and South Korea. The two nations obviously believed that continuous US commitment would be required for the defense of South Korea and Japan against possible North Korean attack. Therefore the relations of the three nations were basically complimentary, but intricate bargaining among them may have occurred any time. The final point was that of the bilateral relationship between US and Japan. Since he became Prime Minister, Koizumi took great pains to cultivate personal friendship with Bush. The question here was whether Koizumi could grab the dividend of his efforts for the benefit of his policy toward North Korea.

The Six-Party Talks are useful, not simply because they provide witnesses for possible agreements, but because they avoid a direct bilateral collision. In other words, there is always the possibility that certain power(s) will act as the balancer(s) of two extreme opinions. In addition, constant participation by the six powers will implant them with a sense of responsibility and encourage the divisions of labor. Indeed, while the US is expected to provide important intelligence information and technical expertise for the nuclear development and acts as a tough negotiator, China, and to some extent Russia, are asked to mediate between North Korea and the rest. Since the question is not just the demolition of nuclear weapon capability, but the economic rehabilitation of North Korea that is also indispensable for a permanent solution, economic assistance and cooperation by South Korea, Japan, China and to some extent Russia are also significant.

The Six-Party Talks however also possess inherent difficulties. The transaction cost for interpretations among five different languages are incredibly high. And more importantly, the possibility for an easy compromise is almost zero. Multilateral negotiations are in theory less flexible than bilateral ones.

Therefore participants naturally dislike dealing with sidetrack issues, such as the

abduction problem, because the nuclear weapon development issue was already difficult to negotiate. In this international environment, could Koizumi change the negative attitude of Pyongyang on the abduction issue with the support of Bush? That was the challenge the Prime Minister faced.

### 3. Koizumi flies to Pyongyang

Koizumi's first visit to North Korea on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2002 changed the situation drastically, because Chairman Kim Jong Il admitted to Koizumi's face that, in fact, there had been kidnappings of Japanese Nationals by North Korean agents.<sup>20)</sup> In a gesture of apology, the North Koreans released five abductees and allowed them safe passage to Japan on October 15<sup>th</sup>. Despite the news that eight had already died among listed 13 abductees were overwhelming, the fact Koizumi had successfully brought five survivors back home remains as quite an achievement. How did he make it? Compared to his process to have abductees' families back to Japan, how Koizumi realized his first visit to Pyongyang is relatively unknown.

In 1997, after a Pyongyang visit of Diet leaders headed by a LDP leader Yoshiro Mori, Red Cross of North Korea began its search for "missing Japanese," not abductees according to DPRK's terminology. But the organization soon announced nonexistence of such personnel in North Korea in 1998. The Red Cross resumed its investigation in 2000 because of repeated demand by Japanese government, but the search was suspended again in December 2001. Since the beginning of 2002, however, along with resumption of the search by Red Cross, North Korean government made public the resumption of Red Cross meeting between Japan and DPRK and release of a former journalist of *Nikkei* Newspaper who were arrested under the suspicion of being a spy.<sup>21)</sup> Thus it seemed evident that North Korea was approaching to Japan side. Japan-DPRK Red Cross meeting was held in April in Beijing after two years of suspension and again on August 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> in Pyongyang. On July 31<sup>st</sup>, Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi met with her North Korean counterpart in Brunei and agreed to hold a senior officer level meeting in August in order for the normalization of Japan-DPRK relations.<sup>22)</sup> The senior officer level meetings were held on August 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> and Asia-Pacific Bureau Chief Hitoshi Tanaka met First Deputy Foreign Minister Kang Sok-ju.<sup>23)</sup> In fact, a day before the meeting, at his arrival in Pyongyang on August 24<sup>th</sup>, Tanaka was surprisingly received by North Korean Prime Minister Hong Song Nam who was usually considered number four in the rank.<sup>24)</sup> Utilizing the occasion, Tanaka conveyed Koizumi's message that he would guarantee Japan's sincere negotiation attitude and request equal sincerity on the part of North Korea.<sup>25)</sup> Seemingly with these steps alone, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda suddenly announced on August 30<sup>th</sup> that Prime Minister Koizumi would visit Pyongyang on September 17<sup>th</sup>.<sup>26)</sup> To many, the announcement was so abrupt that some politicians even warned of gambling diplomacy on the part of Koizumi without appropriate preparation and confirmation of real intention of Kim Jong Il. Further to their worries, Fukuda informed the visit will be as short as a day trip.<sup>27)</sup> Koizumi himself repeated that there would not be diplomatic normalization without the settlement of the abduction questions. "Comprehensive"



solution of various matters, such as nuclear weapon development, missile question, compensation for Japan's wartime misconduct and so forth, along with the abduction problem, was emphasized by Koizumi.<sup>28)</sup> In other words, if there would not be any concrete progress in the abduction questions, the negotiation for normalization would not resume and Koizumi would return from Pyongyang empty handed. The statement obviously raised Koizumi's political risk if it also imposed "pressure" on Kim Joing Il to make a meaningful compromise on the abduction question for the success of the summit. Indeed it was Koizumi's consistent policy to raise the level of pressure for North Korea along with opening a window for dialogue. For example, in July, 2001, by emphasizing the abduction issue, he successfully included a demand for human rights improvement in North Korea in the G8 Summit communiqué. Since, Koizumi repeatedly raised the abduction issue in his meeting with George Bush, Kim Dae-jung, Vladimir Putin, and Zhu Rongji so that he raised international pressure for Kim Jong Il to the settlement of the abduction question.<sup>29)</sup>

A little later from the announcement of Pyongyang visit on August 30<sup>th</sup>, former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori confessed that during his premiership there was also possibility of summit between himself and Kim Jong Il. In January 2001, a leader of North Korean Labor Party proposed Mori to send his trust for a meeting with Kang Sok-ju. Thus his Chief Cabinet Secretary Hidenao Nakagawa was sent to Singapore for the meeting. During their five hour session, Kang told Nakagawa that the abduction question, along with other issues, could also be solved at a summit meeting between Mori and Kim Jong Il. On a different occasion, President Kim Dae-jung also advised Mori to meet Kim Jong Il in person. Then Prime Minister Mori directed Administrative Vice Minister and Asia-Pacific Bureau Chief of Foreign Ministry to "take care of the matter." Mori remembered perplexed faces of the two when they were told by Mori, "They (North Koreans) really mean it". In April, Mori resigned from premiership and the idea was quietly shelved. But, Mori conveyed Koizumi the episode when the latter took over the premiership.<sup>30)</sup>

Even with the above scattered information concerning Koizumi's decision to visit Pyongyang, it seemed evident that first, it was rather North Korea, not Japan that approached first and proposed the summit. Second, the facts that Koizumi's visit was planned as a short day trip from the beginning, the lives and deaths of abductees were told at 10:30 am, almost as the first thing in the morning of the Koizumi's visit,<sup>31)</sup> and Kim Jong Il apologized without much of hesitancy, tell eloquently that there was a understanding between Tokyo and Pyongyang for a breakthrough of the abduction question before the day of the Summit. Unlike Mori, Koizumi was courageous and lucky enough to grab the opportunity.

#### **4. Second Visit**

Despite the release of five survived abductees, Kim Jong Il kept their families in North Korea. It was this unreasonable separation of the families that kept the media and the public focused on the issue. Therefore after October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2002, the repatriation of abductees' families became the foremost important task for Koizumi.

Koizumi often repeated two phrases that explained his policies toward North Korea.

First, he emphasized Japan's "comprehensive approach" to solving various North Korean issues.<sup>32)</sup> Second, to reach a workable compromise with North Korea, Koizumi believes that both "dialogue and pressure" are necessary. According to Koizumi, dialogue or pressure alone is not sufficient for solving the North Korean problems. Therefore, he tries to use both "sunshine" and "north wind" policies to bring North Korea back to the international community. Indeed, at the summit meeting with President Bush on May 23, 2003, Koizumi explained the above two points in person.<sup>33)</sup>

Koizumi's comprehensive approach is best depicted in the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration that was issued after his first face-to-face talks with Kim Jong-Il on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2002. Along with Japan's apology for damages inflicted upon the Korean people prior to 1945 and a promise of economic assistance as compensation, the document touched upon the necessity for a solution to the problems of North Korean nuclear weapon development and abductions of Japanese citizens. According to the declaration, these issues should be sincerely discussed during the course of normalization of Japan-DPRK diplomatic relations.<sup>34)</sup> Thus, finding solutions to both the development of nuclear weapons by North Korean and the abduction problem have become necessary conditions for normalization of ties.

Since then the Japanese government and Koizumi himself emphasized at various international conferences the need for the solution of the abduction question along with the nuclear weapon development problem.<sup>35)</sup> One such example is the G8 Summit Conference at Evian, France from June 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2003. The Chair's summary supported the effort to peacefully solve the nuclear weapon development and abduction problem.<sup>36)</sup> Among the international conferences, the most significant occasion for Japan was, of course, the Six-Party Talks. Though China, as the host nation, naturally disliked complications<sup>37)</sup>, Japan's repeated appeal for an inclusion of the abduction issue as an agenda for the Six-Party Talks was a Koizumi tactic to avoid the issue being passed over in favor of the graver question of nuclear weapon development.<sup>38)</sup> Indeed, Koizumi administration was under the pressure of public opinion. Governors of Niigata and Fukui prefectures on the Japan Sea requested Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda to negotiate the abduction problem at the Six-Party Talks.<sup>39)</sup> Hence the Foreign Ministry has asked from time to time for US and South Korea to support Japan's position on the abduction question.<sup>40)</sup> The cooperation among the three nations helped Japan especially in abating North Korea's claim that Japan should be ousted from the Six-Party Talks.<sup>41)</sup> The Japan's tactic to utilize the Six-Party Talks in seeking a solution of the abduction issue became possible, because the Bush administration distrusted a potential bilateral agreement with North Korea and opted for multilateral negotiations. In addition, there is circumstantial evidence that the Foreign Ministry tactfully used Japan's consent for the US request to send Self-Defense Forces to Iraq in exchange for the US support for the Japan's position at the Six-Party Talks and, of course, in order to consolidate a US commitment for the peace in East Asia.<sup>42)</sup>

As for the issues of nuclear weapons, Japan acted as a medium between the hawkish US and the dovish South Korea, and tried to keep the three nations in line against North Korean maneuverings.<sup>43)</sup> For example, Foreign Minister Kawaguchi visited Seoul on August 22, 2003 to dissuade South Korea taking a position too close to the conciliatory



China and Russia.<sup>44)</sup> During discussions regarding the issue of development of nuclear weapons by North Korea, Japan was no more than a supporting actor, but its role and participation were indispensable, especially when the energy supply and rehabilitation of the North Korean economy were placed on the negotiation table. Therefore, Japan's insistence in discussing the abduction question had some influence on, and even irritated North Korea. In the end, even China began persuading North Korea engage in serious "dialogue" with Japan on the abduction question.<sup>45)</sup> Such "pressure" at the Six-Party Talks thus carried some weight, but they were not sufficient.

North Korea protested to the Foreign Ministry of Japan that Japan did not keep a promise to bring the abductees back to Pyongyang again for the future permanent return of entire abductees' families to Japan.<sup>46)</sup> Thus, despite the Foreign Ministry's repeated approaches at the time of the Six-Party Talks and through bilateral channels, Pyongyang remained evasive, for more than a year after Koizumi's first visit, of serious negotiations with Japan, regarding the return of abductees' families.<sup>47)</sup> Meanwhile, in December 2002, the North Korean government announced the reactivation of a nuclear reactor, development of which had been frozen according to the Agreed Framework of 1994. By the spring of 2004, the Six-Party Talks had been held twice, without any concrete results. The Japanese public increasingly became impatient and more sympathetic to abductees organizations' demand for economic sanctions.

Responding to this situation, young, realist LDP Diet members proposed a resolution to revise the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Laws.<sup>48)</sup> The new law would allow the administration to impose unilaterally trade restriction as well as prohibition of remittances, if the administration believed a certain nation posed a sufficient security threat. The law was obviously targeted at North Korea. Despite protests by Pyongyang, the law was passed with cross-party support in February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2004.<sup>49)</sup> The Koizumi administration welcomed the passing of the law and gained another means of placing pressure on North Korea. As Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda commented at a press conference, "It is not bad to have options."<sup>50)</sup>

After the revised Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Law passed both Houses of the Diet, anti-North Korean politicians prepared yet another measure for pressuring the North Koreans. After China and South Korea, Japan is the third important supplier of necessary goods to North Korea. Most imports from Japan are carried by North Korean ships from Japanese ports on the Japan Sea. Allegedly, these ships were being used for the illegal trade of prohibited dual-use high-tech products and narcotics. In fact, on May 15<sup>th</sup> 2003, an exiled North Korean engineer stated in Washington D.C. that 90% of North Korean missile parts had come from Japan.<sup>51)</sup> In addition, it is alleged that North Korean intelligent agents infiltrated Japan via these ships. The Diet began discussing another cross-party time-limited bill for port call restrictions. The bill provides the government the authority to tentatively prohibit the entry of a ship that is believed harmful to the peace and security of Japan. The bill was enacted by the Diet on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Some local governments followed the Diet. Mayor of Niigata city announced the halt of a fixed property tax reduction for a non-profit organization of North Koreans in Japan, "Cho-sen Sohren", because it had close relations with activities of the North Korean boats. The statement by

the Mayor of Niigata was the third example after Tsuchiura city and Tokyo prefecture.<sup>52)</sup>

Obviously the two Diet laws mentioned above were passed to put political pressure on North Korea. But at the same time, the Koizumi administration, including the Prime Minister himself, announced at times that the two economic sanctions acts would not be actually implemented for the moment, thus keeping a window open for “dialogue”.<sup>53)</sup> Indeed Koizumi himself remarked before a Budget Committee meeting of the House of Representative, “A sword is not made simply for killing human beings. It is desirable that the final weapon is not used. Economic sanctions are not always effective.”<sup>54)</sup> It is certain that Koizumi understood where sanctions and retaliation might bring Japan and North Korea.

North Korea apparently loathed Japan’s taking up the abduction matter at the Six-Party Talks, because it damaged their dignity before the major neighboring powers.<sup>55)</sup> Pyongyang also seemed worried at just how far Japan would adopt anti-North Korean measures and whether it would take up the similar hawkish position of the US. This could wreck havoc on the already deadlocked Six-Party Talks. About a year after Koizumi’s first visit and the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, North Korea began searching for a way out.<sup>56)</sup> In retrospect, Pyongyang seemed to have avoided taking a formal diplomatic route toward the Japanese Foreign Ministry, and may have considered that it had already lost face by the series of Japanese Foreign Ministry actions.<sup>57)</sup> North Korea also seemed afraid of a possible public failure, if its compromised proposal was flatly denied by the MOFA of Japan. Most of all, North Korea wanted to see exactly how Koizumi and anti-North Korean politicians of the LDP and DP would react to a possible compromise proposal. Therefore, Pyongyang opted initially for an informal dealing with key politicians rather than formal negotiations with diplomats.

The politicians chosen were former LDP Secretary General Taku Yamazaki and a Member of the House of Representatives, Katsuei Hirasawa. The two politicians secretly visited Dalian, China in April 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> 2004 to have talks with the Ambassador for normalization with Japan, Jong Thae Hwa and other officials of North Korean government.<sup>58)</sup> Yamazaki later admitted the meeting time extended over nine hours, showing how serious the North Koreans were.<sup>59)</sup> Hirasawa was the Secretary General for the Diet member’s committee on the abduction question as well. As mentioned previously, the committee was cross party in nature and chiefly consisted of hawkish or at least realist politicians on North Korean issues. Therefore, North Korea might have considered that Hirasawa was a suitable person for gauging just how much tougher Japan could possibly be against them.

In fact, even before the spring of 2004 when the substantial negotiations for the return of abductees’ families began, Hirasawa and Democratic Diet member Jinshu Matsubara had held meetings with Ambassador Jong Thae Hwa in Beijing, namely on December 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, 2003.<sup>60)</sup> Through Hirasawa, Ambassador Jong informally proposed a meeting with a former leader of the Diet members’ committee on the abduction issue, Shoichi Nakagawa and the then leader of the committee, Takeo Hiranuma. Since Nakagawa was also Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry at that time, some government officials interpreted that the move was intended to divide the Japanese government. Nakagawa

flatly refused the proposal by saying, “It’s a laughing matter.”<sup>61)</sup> A former ambassador to Uzbekistan and Special Adviser to the Cabinet Secretariat at that particular time, Kyoko Nakayama also disliked the informal route. She was unhappy about the fact that two persons with questionable backgrounds played as brokers for the Hirasawa’s meetings in December. Nakayama also emphasized, “It’s not a deal in exchange for rice or fish. Human beings are at stake.”<sup>62)</sup>

Indeed, around that time, there was a possibility that the Foreign Ministry itself would break the deadlock. Five MOFA officials including the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Hitoshi Tanaka visited Pyongyang from February 11 to 14 in 2004 for the negotiation of the abduction problem. MOFA did not disclose much on the meetings, but there was no clear sign that the negotiation made progress.<sup>63)</sup> In fact, even after the February visit, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda was pessimistic about the resolution of the abduction issue.<sup>64)</sup> Although the Foreign Ministry requested a meaningful resumption of abduction negotiations, there was no response by the North Korean government before the Yamazaki and Hirasawa’s visit of April.<sup>65)</sup>

There is no way to know exactly how the North Korean government switched to Yamazaki, in addition to Hirasawa, for the decisive meetings on April 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. But Yamazaki has been a long-time close political ally of Koizumi and had recently been defeated in the Lower House election. Therefore, despite his weight in politics, Yamazaki was relatively unmarked at that time, and for North Korea, the right person for knowledge regarding Koizumi’s opinions. Though there is no clear evidence that Koizumi personally had Yamazaki approach the North Korean government, when one considers the possible impact of his actions, it is difficult to imagine that he made the trip without first informing the Prime Minister. It appears that the two politicians and North Korean Ambassador Jong Thae Hwa agreed at their meetings on April 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> that a visit to Pyongyang by a top Japanese leader to bring back the remaining families of the abductees would save face for Kim Jong-Il, making it easier for him to release them.<sup>66)</sup> The North Korean government had informally hinted in March a possible compromise with a visit by Koizumi. To find its possibility, Pyongyang had approached Hirasawa and Yamazaki.<sup>67)</sup> Yamazaki later confessed that he had Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda in his mind.<sup>68)</sup>

Reactions against the conduct of Yamazaki and Hirasawa were harsh at home. The Foreign Ministry, the abductees’ organizations, and Hirasawa’s own committee commonly criticized it as an independent move that would cause unnecessary confusion in Japan’s North Korean policy.<sup>69)</sup> Hirasawa even had to give up his position as Vice Minister of Public Management and Home Affairs, because he had traveled abroad without notifying the Ministry.<sup>70)</sup> The Special Adviser to the Cabinet Secretariat, Kyoko Nakayama called the visit risky laymen’s diplomacy, which had taken place without a Japanese interpreter. She also doubted the authority of the North Korean officials with whom the two politicians met and lamented that they should have met a higher official who are closer to Kim Jong Il, such as First Deputy Foreign Minister Kang Sok-ju.<sup>71)</sup> Yamazaki responded simply, “You’ll see later.”<sup>72)</sup>

Indeed, Koizumi himself flatly denied having any knowledge of their visit beforehand. Reading the political mood, Koizumi cleverly and ruthlessly avoided giving any impression

of his own involvement. But a few days after their return, Koizumi met Yamazaki at a traditional Japanese members-only restaurant.<sup>73)</sup> Since then, things have been on the move. Dialogue started between the two Foreign Ministries to determine the details regarding the possibility of a top official's visit and the abductees' families return.<sup>74)</sup> The MOFA requested First Deputy Foreign Minister Kang Sok-ju as its counterpart, but the choice of North Korea was Ambassador Jong Thae Hwa, whom Yamazaki and Hirasawa met at Darien.<sup>75)</sup> In any case, the preparation went smoothly and, instead of Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda, Koizumi decided to visit Kim Jong Il himself again on May 22<sup>nd</sup> with a "souvenir" of 250,000 tons of foods and \$10 million of medicine to bring the abductees' families back.<sup>76)</sup>

### Conclusion

Between the issues of the nuclear weapon development and the abductions, the latter was keenly significant within the domestic scene of Japan. It was, however, entirely the opposite in the international environment. To fill the gap, Koizumi administration cleverly utilized support by US and South Korea at the occasions of the Six-Party Talks. It was possible, not only because Japan had long time ties with both countries, but also because Koizumi nurtured his friendship with Bush, and Bush opted for multilateral negotiations at which Japan was able to play an important role. Thus, Japan had constant opportunities for dialogues with North Korea and imposed pressure on North Korea at the Six-Party Talks to resolve the abduction issue. Hence the abduction issue was not left out at the international negotiations by the six neighboring powers and Koizumi's comprehensive approach was maintained.

The "dialogue and pressure" tactic was more overtly used in domestic politics. Two Diet laws for economic sanctions were enacted with cross-party support. Despite the concern by the Foreign Ministry that the laws might cause unwanted repercussion, Koizumi never prevented the enactment of the two laws. But he never made them effective either in order to keep a window for dialogue open. Thus, Koizumi made Pyongyang choose whether it would take "sunshine" or "north wind."

When moments for decisive negotiation came, Koizumi wisely used his formal and informal agents. His political manner was ruthless and secretive. Koizumi never gave his full trust to the Foreign Ministry and dared to take an informal approach by using Yamazaki. In order to avoid unnecessary public repercussion, Koizumi even flatly denied any prior knowledge of the secret mission by his long-time ally. At the final moments, Koizumi courageously visited Pyongyang twice to bring back the abductees and their families respectively. As a whole, Koizumi safely sailed the narrow strait sandwiched between dangerous domestic and international rocks.

However, whether the entire people of the North East Asian region can reach the final goal of solving the nuclear weapon problem in North Korea has yet to be seen.

**Notes**

- 1) The paper is amended and expanded to the original paper that was published by Korea University. Keiji Nakatsuji, "Prime Minister in Command: Koizumi and the Abduction Question," *Korea Review of International Studies*, vol. 7, No. 1, December 2004.
- 2) Of course, the author does not deny the fact that close to 500 South Koreans were also abducted by North Korean agents.
- 3) For a brief chronology of Japan-DPRK relations, see <http://new.kyodo.co.jp/kyodonews/2004/nkorea/ayumi0522.html>. If not otherwise mentioned, all the notes are from Japanese language sources.
- 4) Kazuhiro Araki, *2000 Days to Save Abductees*, (Sohshisha, 2002) pp. 21-33. Originally from Masami Abe, *Seiron*, March 1988.
- 5) Kazuhiro Araki, *2000 Days to Save Abductees*, (Sohshisha, 2002) pp. 203-206.
- 6) Araki, *ibid.*, pp. 348-349.
- 7) *Asahi Shimbun*, September 19, 2002. evening edition.
- 8) For a detailed account, see Araki, *ibid.*, pp. 58-61.
- 9) Kazuhiro Araki, *2000 Days to Save Abductees*, (Sohshisha, 2002) pp. 52-57.
- 10) *Kyodo News Agency*, July 26, 2003. Also, *Kyodo*, August 3, 2003 and *Kyodo*, November 10, 2003.
- 11) *Kyodo*, July 6, 2003.
- 12) *Kyodo*, September 28, 2003. See also, *Kyodo*, November 3, 2003.
- 13) *Kyodo*, July 31, 2003.
- 14) *Kyodo*, September 22, 2003. See also, *Kyodo*, February 16, 2004.
- 15) For the cautiousness of the Foreign Ministry, see, *Kyodo*, May 7, 2003 and also *Kyodo*, May 13, 2003.
- 16) Araki, *ibid.*, p. 62. For the difference of opinions between hard-liner politicians and cautious Foreign Ministry officials, see *Kyodo*, May 27, 2003.
- 17) *Kyodo*, June 23, 2003. Also see, *Kyodo*, September 7, 2003 and *Kyodo*, December 10, 2003.
- 18) For an example of North Korean drug trafficking in Australia, see *Kyodo*, May 27, 2003. About the cooperation among Japan, South Korea and US on the drug trafficking and counterfeiting control, see *Kyodo*, June 14, 2003. About North Korean drug trafficking to Japan, see *Kyodo*, July 12, 2003 and also August 21, 2002. For North Korea's missile export, see *Kyodo*, June 16, 2004 and also, *Kyodo*, September 27, 2003. About illegal imports of dual-use high-tech products from Japan, see *Kyodo*, November 5, 2003 and *Kyodo*, November 6, 2003.
- 19) For example, *Kyodo*, April 30, 2003.
- 20) On the Koizumi's press conference after his first Pyongyang visit, see *Asahi*, September 18, 2002.
- 21) *Asahi*, March 24, 2002, Also *Asahi*, March 30, 2002.
- 22) See the home page of Foreign Ministry of Japan. [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/kaidan/g\\_kawaguchi/asean+3\\_02/nnk\\_announce.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/kaidan/g_kawaguchi/asean+3_02/nnk_announce.html)
- 23) *Asahi*, August 26, 2002.
- 24) *Shu-kan Asahi* (Weekly Asahi), September 13, 2002.
- 25) *Asahi*, August 27, 2002.
- 26) *Asahi*, August 30, 2002.
- 27) *Asahi*, August 31, 2002.
- 28) *Asahi*, September 3, 2002.

- 29) *Asahi*, September 1, 2002.
- 30) *Asahi*, September 1, 2002. Also *Asahi*, September 12, 2002.
- 31) *Asahi*, September 18, 2002.
- 32) See, *Kyodo*, May 7, 2003. See also, *Kyodo*, August 17, 2003 and *Kyodo*, October 19, 2003.
- 33) *Kyodo*, May 9, 2003. See also, *Kyodo*, May 24, 2003.
- 34) For the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, see the English homepage of the Foreign Ministry of Japan: [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n\\_korea/pmv0209/pyongyang.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/pmv0209/pyongyang.html)
- 35) *Kyodo*, August 6, 2003.
- 36) For Chair's summary at the Evian Summit, see the English homepage of the Foreign Ministry of Japan. [http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/summit/2003/c\\_summary.pdf](http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/summit/2003/c_summary.pdf)
- 37) *Kyodo*, August 12, 2003. Also, *Kyodo*, August 21, 2002 and *Kyodo*, August 25, 2003.
- 38) *Kyodo*, August 17, 2003.
- 39) *Kyodo*, August 27, 2003.
- 40) *Kyodo*, November 17, 2003.
- 41) *Kyodo*, October 7, 2003. Also, *Kyodo*, October 8, 2003, *Kyodo*, November 8, 2003 and *Kyodo*, February 10, 2004.
- 42) *Kyodo*, November 18, 2003.
- 43) *Kyodo*, August 15, 2003.
- 44) *Kyodo*, August 22, 2003.
- 45) *Kyodo*, January 19, 2003.
- 46) *Kyodo*, August 28, 2003.
- 47) *Kyodo*, August 28, 2003. Also, *Kyodo*, September 9, 2003.
- 48) *Kyodo*, January 16, 2004.
- 49) *Kyodo*, January 29, 2004 and *Kyodo*, February 9, 2004.
- 50) *Kyodo*, February 16, 2004.
- 51) *Kyodo*, May 19, 2003. See also, *Kyodo*, May 22, 2003.
- 52) *Kyoto*, June 18, 2003. See about a Japanese government's statement on the abductions at UN, *Kyodo*, August 14, 2003.
- 53) *Kyodo*, January 23, 2004 and *Kyodo*, January 27, 2004.
- 54) *Kyodo*, March 3, 2004.
- 55) For example, *Kyodo*, February 14, 2004.
- 56) *Kyodo*, October 10, 2003. See also, *Kyodo*, October 14, 2003.
- 57) *Kyodo*, December 24, 2003. Also, *Kyodo*, January 7, 2004.
- 58) *Kyodo*, April 1 and April 2, 2004.
- 59) *Kyodo*, April 7, 2004.
- 60) *Kyodo*, December 24, 2003. See also, *Kyodo*, January 7, 2004.
- 61) *Kyodo*, January 7, 2004.
- 62) *Kyodo*, January 28, 2004.
- 63) About the February visit; see, *Kyodo*, February 10, 12, 13 and 14, 2004.
- 64) See, *Kyodo*, February 26, 2004.
- 65) See, *Kyodo*, March 17, 2004.
- 66) *Kyodo*, May 9, 2004.
- 67) *Kyodo*, May 9, 2004.
- 68) *Kyodo*, May 7, 2004.
- 69) *Kyodo*, April 4, 2004.
- 70) *Kyodo*, April 2, 2004.



- 71) *Kyodo*, April 20, 2004.
- 72) *Kyodo*, April 5, 2004.
- 73) *Kyodo*, April 7, 2004.
- 74) *Kyodo*, April 8, 2004.
- 75) *Kyodo*, May 2 and May 4, 2004.
- 76) *Kyodo*, May 2, May 4 and May 5, 2004. For domestic reactions for the Koizumi's visit in English, see, James Brooke, "Koizumi's Trip Gets Lukewarm Reviews," *New York Times*, May 24, 2004. See also, James Brooks, "North Korea and Japan Signed a Deal on Abductions," *New York Times*, May 23, 2004.

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## 「小泉首相と拉致問題」再訪

北朝鮮当局による日本人拉致問題は完全解決にはほど遠い状況にある。しかしながら5名の拉致被害生存者並びにその家族の帰国は、一国の政府による犯罪であることを考えれば、武力によらない交渉による成果としては驚くべきものがある。とりわけ北朝鮮における拘留が長年にわたってただけになおさらである。なぜ帰国が実現したのであろうか。本稿は小泉純一郎元首相による二回の訪朝に焦点を当てながら帰国実現の理由について議論する。考えてみれば小泉訪朝自体が多くの謎に満ちており、それがなぜ成果をもたらしたのかということに関しては殆ど体系だった説明がなされていない。小泉首相はなぜ政治的リスクを覚悟で二度までも自ら訪朝したのか、成算はあったのか、事前交渉はどう進められたのかについて本稿では独自の説明を試みる。

論文ではまず、北朝鮮による日本人拉致の足跡並びに日本政府・警察の初期対応（あるいはその欠如）、この問題が注目を集めるに至った背景を明らかにし、続いて小泉訪朝の国内・国際政治的背景を構造的に分析する。その後第一回訪朝と第二回訪朝の下準備、訪朝の実現とその成果についてていねいに振り返る。

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