

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

Japan – North Korea Relations

Major Issues, Future Prospects and the Impact on
East Asian Security

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AMB	Antiballistic Missiles
ASEAN	Association of East Asian Nations
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defence
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CVID	Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Dismantlement
DMZ	Demilitarised Zone
DPJ	Democratic Party of Japan
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
HEU	Highly Enriched Uranium
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles
(J)SDF	(Japan) Self-Defence Forces
KEDO	Korean Peninsula Energy Development
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party (Japan)
MOD	Ministry of Defence of Japan
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
NPT	Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
TCOG	Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction Weapons of Mass Destruction
WPK	Worker's Party of North Korea

Chapter 1

Introduction

Japan has diplomatic relations with every country in the world except the DPRK, even though it is one of Japan's closest neighbours. There has been a long history between the two countries, beginning with their cultural connections in ancient times and the Japanese occupation of the Korean Peninsula. Since then, distrust and antagonism have characterised the relations between the two countries. From North Korea's anger over the abuses by the Japanese during the colonial period to Pyongyang's abduction of Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s, this has been a deeply troubled relationship. Within Japan itself, North Korea is probably one of the most feared and disliked countries among the public¹. With over 150 missiles aimed at Japan, and Pyongyang's third nuclear test recently, North Korea has become one of the biggest threats to Japan and to regional stability as a whole². There have been many attempts at normalising the relations between Japan and North Korea, which started seriously in 1990. However only very minor successes were achieved at these meetings and often times they were followed by more resentment and provocations than ever before.

The relationship between Japan and North Korea should not be overlooked. Both countries are significantly affected by the policies of the other, and this in turn affects the way they deal with other states and the security of the East Asian region. North Korea is a significant force that shapes both the domestic and foreign policy of Japan. The DPRK poses a direct threat to Japanese security and its instability and belligerence has affected Japan's regional interests. On the other hand, Japan is also a major force in informing North Korean policies and goals. While Pyongyang feels that the US is the most significant threat to its security, Japan is deeply tied to this fear. Anti-Japanese sentiment is also fundamental in North Korea's ideology, which has given power and legitimacy to the Kim dynasty.

¹ Wada, Haruki. "Japan-North Korea Relations - A Dangerous Stalemate", *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 2, <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Wada-Haruki/3176>, 22 June 2009, p 1. (Accessed 12 September 2012)

² Loc cit.

Despite the mistrust and threat that exists within this relationship there is a positive side, where Japan could be of great help in improving the North Korean state. Japan is the potential source of significant aid and economic incentives and in 2003 Japan was North Korea's third largest trading partner³. With reports that food shortages are worsening in North Korea, Japan would be a great contributor in helping the North Korean state avoid further humanitarian crises⁴.

In general, academic literature and policy discourse have side-lined the role of Japan in the greater issue of North Korea. Most research has focused on North Korea's relationship with the United States (US) - Japan being an "obedient participant" and usually "yielding to US pressure"⁵. Japan should not be overlooked. It is a small but powerful country, one that is militarily weak by choice but strong in its nationalistic belief and confident in its position. While its military is passive, Japan's leadership is not, particularly current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. For the Japanese government, North Korea's missile and nuclear programmes are a huge source of instability in the region, and it has the potential to remake Japan into a strong military force. This situation would only further cause instability and a perception of threat within the region⁶. The obstacles that persist within the Japan-North Korea relationship need to be closely examined if any progress is to be made. Japan is an important player in the attempts to negotiate with North Korea, and its role should not be underestimated. Progress with Japan-North Korea relations would make a considerable difference in tackling the North Korean nuclear issue and helping North Korea to become a stable and non-threatening state.

Aim

The aim of this research report is to analyse the current relationship between Japan and North Korea, by looking at the major issues that persist between the two and the future prospects for the normalisation of relations. The report aims to show the importance and urgency of the

³ Manyin, Mark. "Japan-North Korea Relations: Selected Issues", *CRS Report for Congress*, Library of Congress, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Division: Washington, 26 November 2003, p. 1.

⁴ Cha, Victor. "Kim Jong-Un Is No Reformer", *Foreign Policy*, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/08/21/kim_jong_un_is_no_reformer, 21 August 2012., p. 1. (Accessed 12 November 2012)

⁵ Hagström, Linus and Söderberg, Marie. "Taking Japan-North Korea Relations Seriously: Rationale and Background", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 3, University of British Columbia, 2006, p. 374.

⁶ Loc cit.

normalisation of relations between Japan and North Korea within the larger context of the North Korean nuclear issue and regional security as a whole. There will be a focus on the key features that currently define this relationship, namely Japan's fixation on the issue of the kidnapping of Japanese citizens by North Korea in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as the perceived threat of North Korean missiles - a fear justified by the missile tests of 1998, 2006 and 2009. These issues will form the basis for looking at their relationship within the Six Party Talks and how the negotiating style of each country has worked to undermine progress on the nuclear issue. This report will also aim to give insight into the administrations and policies of the current leadership in Japan and North Korea. It will look at North Korea's transition to the leadership of Kim Jong-un and examine his policies and possible future directions. It will then look at the recent election of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe with regards to North Korea and the possible directions that his policies will take in the future.

Rational

The Japanese and North Korean relationship is important to look at as it falls within the greater issue of the North Korean nuclear threat and has major security implications for the East Asian region and beyond. North Korea is expected to have nuclear capability within a decade and therefore emphasising cooperation and seeking a peaceful resolution is vital. Japan has consistently put the abduction issue at the top of its agenda, which has obstructed negotiations within the Six Party Talks. Japan's insistence on the resolution of this issue before it will be willing to provide financial and development aid to North Korea, as well as Pyongyang's reluctance to cooperate, has resulted in little meaningful progress being made. If the Six Party Talks remain the prime method for resolving the North Korea nuclear threat, then these seemingly unsolvable issues that exist within the North Korea-Japan relationship require more analysis, new approaches and suggested solutions in order to move past such obstacles. The Six Party Talks in themselves represent a vast array, and often a clash, of interests and therefore it is necessary to isolate specific bilateral interests that will better inform the understanding of the dynamics of negotiations.

Another reason why the study of this relationship is so important is that Japan sees North Korea as a major threat to its national security and has meant that Japan has adopted a more defensive posture towards North Korea in recent years. Japan particularly fears that North

Korea will couple its nuclear technology with its missile programme and specifically target Japan. As a result there has been discussion in Japan over the possible revision its pacifist constitution, which will allow the country to regain full military power, and possibly nuclear power. If North Korea continues with its belligerent behaviour and its pursuit of a nuclear programme, Japanese military power could become a reality in the future. This will not only negatively affect the bilateral relationship, but also Japan's relationships with other regional powers such as South Korea and China, who still vividly recollect Japan's military aggression during World War Two.

While there has been much research into the North Korean nuclear issue and the Six Party Talks in general, there is not all that much research that focuses specifically on the relationship between Japan and North Korea. Research that has been done will soon be out of date as this is such a current and complex issue that is constantly revealing new dimensions. Already there are new trends that have emerged which will alter previously drawn conclusions on the nuclear issue and North Korea and Japan's place within it.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis of this topic will be done using the theory of Balance-of-Threat within Neo-Realist International Relations theory. This theory has its foundations in the Balance-of-Power theory in explaining the behaviour of states as they look to prevent competitive powers from being able to impose their will on others⁷. The Balance-of-Threat theory goes further than the mere considerations of *power* and places importance on the concept of *threat* in influencing state behaviour, particularly alliance formation. By forming alliances to balance against a threatening state, the system should move towards a state of equilibrium and the chance of violent conflict should be reduced⁸. This Neo-Realist theory also explains how the main objective of states within an anarchic international system is to pursue national security above all else. They do this by acquiring hard power in order to deter possible threats from

⁷ Sanjian, Gregory S. "Arms Transfers, Military Balances, and Interstate Relations: Modelling Power Balance versus Power Transition Linkages", *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 47, No. 6, Sage Publications, December 2003, p. 705.

⁸ Walt, Stephen. "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 4, The MIT Press, 1985, p. 8.

other states⁹. This explanation quite evidently fits the case of both North Korean and Japanese behaviour and policies. Japan has also been engaged in this Balance of Power dynamic as the threat that North Korea poses to Japan has led to more defensive policies, a strong alliance with the US, an increasing alliance with South Korea, as well as the possible revision of Article 9 of its constitution. These actions have all been in the bid to preserve national security and deter North Korea's belligerent behaviour. North Korea itself perceives a threat to its national security from the strong US-Japan alliance and, as this moves to become a trilateral alliance with the inclusion of South Korea, the DPRK pursues its nuclear weapons programme as a means of deterrence.

As the Balance-of-Threat theory informs the policies of both Japan and North Korea and therefore their bilateral relations, it will arise consistently throughout this research report and be used to give insight into future possibilities within the respective countries and their foreign relations.

Literature Review

This literature review will look at the previous work that has been done on the North Korean-Japanese relationship, which has helped the author in forming conclusions as well as showing the research gaps that exist. Linus Hagström is an important scholar in the area of the Japanese-North Korean relations as he has been one of the few to highlight the importance of the relationship and show how it has been overlooked. He wrote an article with Marie Söderberg which argues that many aspects of the relationship have been under-examined, such as the abduction issue, North Korea refugees and Korean unification¹⁰. They also examine how “domestic politics plays a significant role in shaping Japanese North Korea policy, and thus that “Japan” should be problematized by seriously delving into the country's domestic situation”¹¹. Hagström's research has provided a good foundation for examining the issues between North Korea and Japan, and why they continue to persist. At this point, Hagström's work needs to be updated.

⁹ Chatterjee, Patricia “The Classical Balance of Power Theory”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1972, p. 51.

¹⁰ Hagström, Linus and Söderberg, Marie. *Op cit.* p. 375.

¹¹ *Loc cit.*

Another important author is David Fouse, whose research focuses on the security policies within the Japanese-North Korean relationship. Fouse particularly shows how Japan's security policy toward North Korea has altered since the end of the Cold War, as changes emerged within the world order and power distribution¹². Japan's interest in the security side of its relations with North Korea was quite low until the nuclear crisis of 1994 and the United States' consequent dissatisfaction with Japan's response. This led to Japan taking a stronger stance against North Korea and strengthening its alliance with the US. The abduction issue and the missile tests done by North Korea broadened public support for a more hard-line policy toward Pyongyang and Japan moved toward greater military capability in the face of North Korea intransigence¹³. Fouse's work is valuable as his research on the security issue is thorough and gives good insight into the progression of the Japanese perception of North Korea. However his research does not cover the different dynamics within the respective administrations of Japan and North Korea and requires much updating at this point.

Christopher W. Hughes also focuses his research on the security threat that North Korea has increasingly posed toward Japan and how this has accelerated Japan's re-emergence as a "normal" military power¹⁴. He argues that Japan's defence posture has been significantly affected by the rise of the North Korean threat since the mid-1990s and that this has also given Japan the opportunity to play an expanded and legitimate role in regional and global security without stirring up South Korean and Chinese resentment¹⁵. He traces the development of the perceived North Korean threat, particularly shown in the Defence of Japan White Papers where North Korea moved in to become the number one threat to Japan's national security. He also traces events such as the Taepodong-1 missile test of 1998, missile tests in July 2006, and the nuclear test of October 2006, as well as bilateral tensions over North Korean incursions into Japanese territorial waters and the abductions. He shows how collectively these issues have accelerated Japan's post-war security policy (once an "immovable object") towards new possibilities for Japan's remilitarization¹⁶. Hughes also shows how the abduction of Japanese citizens has supported Japan's view of North Korea as

¹² Fouse, David. "Japan's Post-Cold War North Korea Policy: Hedging toward Autonomy?", *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Heldref Publications, Summer 2004, p. 102.

¹³ *Loc cit.*

¹⁴ Hughes, Christopher W. "Super-sizing the DPRK threat", *Asia Survey*, Vol. 49, No. 2, University of California, March/April 2009, p. 291.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 292.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 292.

a terrorist state, and therefore capable of becoming more of a destructive threat in the future. Another important area of Hughes' research is that of the US-Japan alliance and the effect that North Korea has had on it. Overall Hughes' research is valuable and recent, but it is focused specifically on the missile and nuclear threat, and only gives passing mention to other issues, like the abductions, that define the Japanese-North Korean relationship. There is also limited discussion of the effect of this relationship on the Six Party Talks and on regional security.

Substantial research has been done on the Japanese abduction issue. Michimi Muranushi gives a detailed explanation of the thirteen recognised abductees who were kidnapped on Japanese territory by North Korean agents or lured into North Korea during the 1970s and 1980s. Muranushi examines how the matter has remained a large part of the consciousness of Japanese society, many wanting justice for the violation of their security¹⁷. As these abductions took place in the 1970's, there is the necessity of time in order to allow those kidnapped to return home and to bring closure to this issue. Muranushi also examines how the abduction has affected the Six Party Talks, particularly as Japan has made the resolution of this issue a precondition for the normalisation of relations with North Korea¹⁸. Resolution on this issue would mean North Korea needs to establish and disclose the current status of the abductees and supply evidence for those who are said to have died¹⁹. Muranushi argues that North Korea will stick by its claim that the issue has been settled and as this will not be accepted by Japan, it is unlikely that relations will be normalised in the future²⁰.

There are also several other writers on the abduction issue. Emma Chanlett-Avery has done substantial research on the issue and has focused on how it will be resolved in the future. While most see resolution as impossible, she makes many important points as she looks at other possibilities with regards to the abduction issue, notably that there is some evidence of the Japanese public growing tired of the issue²¹. She also states that it remains to be seen whether Japan will continue to pursue this issue if true progress can be made with North

¹⁷ Muranushi, Michimi. "North Korea's Abduction of Japanese Citizens", *RIPS Policy Perspectives*, No. 10, Research Institute for Peace and Security: Tokyo, January 2010, p. 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 8.

²¹ Chanlett-Avery, Emma. "North Korea's Abductions of Japanese Citizens and the Six Party Talks", *CRS Report for Congress*, Congressional Research Service: Washington, 19 March 2008, p. 5.

Korea and if Japan continues to be marginalised within the Six Party Talks. While she does not go into detail, Chanlett-Avery also explains how the security threat may lead Japan to relent on the abduction issue²².

Tessa Morris-Suzuki is another important writer in this area of Japanese-North Korean relations. What is different, and quite valuable, about her work is that she focuses more on the human side of the relationship, and how this could be the potential answer to resolving the abduction issue. In her work, ““Re-Imagining Japan-North Korea Relations”, she speaks of the “freezing of the imagination” that has taken place in attempts to resolve Japanese-North Korean issues²³. She discusses how the security focus of the governments has not had any success and that there may be more potential in using the human and cultural connections between Japan and North Korea to change each other’s negative perceptions²⁴. She raises the important issue of ethnic Koreans who have lived in Japan since the colonial period and who have continuously suffered from discrimination. These ethnic Koreans still have strong ties to North Korea, where many still have relatives, and by engaging with these people it might begin the road to a better, more understanding relationship²⁵

While all of this previous research is valuable, it has quickly become out of date and I have noticed how the issues of the abductions and the missile threat have generally been studied separately. There is little research that aims to comprehensively and collectively discuss these issues that shape the Japan-North Korea alliance, and how these issues have impacted upon relations with other nations, particularly within the Six Party Talks. I feel this research is particularly important now as the North Korean situation has reached a difficult yet very interesting time. Both Japan and North Korea have recently changed leadership. North Korea’s leadership is as uncertain as ever, yet Japan has returned to a former, conservative Prime Minister, known for his hard-line policies.

²² *Ibid.* p. 6.

²³ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. “Re-Imagining Japan-North Korea Relations – Part 1”, *The Japan Institute*, Australia’s National University: Canberra, www.japaninstitute.anu.edu.au/japanese_studies/issue_01/1_Re-Imagining_Part_I.pdf, 2011, p. 4. (Accessed 26 October 2012)

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 6.

²⁵ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. “Re-Imagining Japan-North Korea Relations – Part 2”, *The Japan Institute*, Australia’s National University: Canberra, www.japaninstitute.anu.edu.au/japanese_studies/issue_02/Re-Imagining_Part_II.pdf, 2011, p. 21. (Accessed 26 October 2012)

Structure

This research report is structured as follows: The second chapter will look at the theoretical framework of the relationship. Stephen M. Walt's Balance-of-Threat theory will be applied to Japan and North Korea's perceptions of one another and how it has influenced their behaviour. It will particularly look at the regional dynamics that have evolved due to the troubled relations between Japan and North Korea. The second half of the chapter will take a more in-depth look at the alliance formations and see how various bilateral relations have been affected.

The third chapter will look at the historical relationship between North Korea and Japan. It begins by explaining the foundations of their historical perceptions and the various attempts for the normalisation of relations. The chapter then moves on to discuss the major issues that characterise the relationship such as the abductions and North Korea's missile and nuclear tests. It will also look at the Six Party Talks and how Japanese-North Korean tensions have negatively impacted the success of the negotiations.

The fourth chapter looks at the current situation in Japan and North Korea and examines the leadership and policies that are emerging. It begins by looking at the emergence of the young and inexperienced Kim Jong-un and how his leadership style is evolving. The chapter will then move on to look at Shinzo Abe and the various policies that he has towards North Korea and the region. It will conclude by looking at the prospects for Japan-North Korea relations and how the leaders will influence this behaviour.

The fifth chapter will be the conclusion and will give an overview of what has been discussed. It will then look at where the relationship is likely to be headed, and following the theoretical framework, how this will impact upon the rest of the region. It will also give suggestions for easing the tensions that exist and ways in which the two countries can cooperate.

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Chapter 2

Theoretical Application

When looking at International Relations theories as a guideline to understanding the relationship between Japan and North Korea, one cannot help being drawn into the Realist paradigm of thinking. While there are many International Relations theories that can explain states' behaviour, this particular case is unique in today's world as both states are distinctly Realist in nature and almost Cold War-like in their behaviour towards one another. Japan and North Korea are miles apart when it comes to their internal political systems, yet when it comes to their relations (or lack thereof), both governments have nationalist, security-orientated mind-sets which are inseparable from their history. Both states continue to place utmost importance on a history that has long past and represents a different world order that no longer exists, yet informs the very pride upon which their nations are built.

Putting specific historical grudges aside, what clearly defines this relationship is *security*. Realist theory is particularly relevant in explaining this and the behaviour that each state exhibits. Most importantly, Japan and North Korea cannot be looked at in isolation. Firstly, there are no formal relations between the two countries and therefore their interaction and reaction to one another takes place in a regional context, through other states and alliances. Japan and North Korea's relationship has to include the regional dynamics that occur and hopefully what this paper will make clear is that this relationship is deeply tied to the surrounding nations and to the future stability of the East Asian region. There is not a particular Realist theory that can perfectly explain the relationship between Japan and North Korea, without looking at the broader region. There is also no International Relations theory that can explain the pride and historical grudges that inform foreign policy in this case. When we look at this relationship, it becomes clear that it plays a significant role in the greater security dynamics of the region and the balancing that takes place in order to ensure security.

This chapter will first begin by explaining how both North Korea and Japan act in particularly Realist ways and how, in the broader region, this is translating into what can be called the "Balance-of-Threat" from the Neo-Realist paradigm. This chapter will look at how

both countries partake of alliance formation as they attempt to balance the multiple threats that exist within the region.

Realist States

One of the criticisms of IR theory in its application to the Asian region is that these theories have their foundation in European history and do not recognise the difference in histories, cultures, traditions and geographies that are found in East Asia²⁶. Specifically there are psychological factors, including basic human feelings of mistrust and holding a grudge, that have a very real and strong influence in the behaviour of many East Asian nations²⁷. This must continually be considered as it plays an important part in the relations of Japan and North Korea, as will be seen in the next chapter.

Japan and North Korea have internal systems that display Realist aims and behaviour and it extends into the relationship between the two states. Realist theory sees the international system as anarchic and made up of rational and self-interested states²⁸. The theory assumes that the leaders of countries seek to maximise their power and their resources and thereby ensure their sovereignty²⁹.

*“Essentially, the violent nature of the Realist world treasures power and regards it as the means to fend off or defeat state adversaries.”*³⁰

In Realist thinking, the international system is a “self-help system... in which those who do not help themselves, or who do so less effectively than others, will fail to prosper, will lay themselves open to dangers, will suffer.”³¹.

²⁶Hwang, Jihwan. “Rethinking the East Asian Balance of Power”, *World Affairs*, Vol. 166, No. 2, World Affairs Institute: Washington, 2003, p. 95.

²⁷ Loc cit.

²⁸ Wagner, Harrison. “Peace, War, and the Balance of Power”, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 3, American Political Science Association, September 1994, p. 549.

²⁹ Niou, Emerson & Ordeshook, Peter. “A Theory of the Balance of Power in International Systems”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Sage Publications, 1986, p. 690.

³⁰ Nah, Liang Tuang. “The Case for Japanese National Security Independence: A Possible Future Imperative”, *Journal of Defence Studies & Resource Management*, Vol. 1, No. 2, SciTechnol Publishers, 2012, p. 2.

³¹ Pyle, Kenneth. *Japan Rising*, Public Affairs: Washington, 2007, p. 20.

Japan as a Realist State

Japan is a state that has long displayed a Realist attitude and in its history has sought to ensure its strength and survival. It is a highly nationalistic country. After World War II, Japan had to redevelop itself and it was with impressive resilience and effort that it became one of the most developed and economically successful states. Much of its success comes from how it has reacted and adapted to the international system. Kenneth Pyle sums up this behaviour by noting that Japan's leadership has been consistently "cognizant of the power structures in international relations and correspondingly... able to ally herself with the most suitable hegemon while pitting herself against weakening adversaries."³² Unlike North Korea, Japan's role in the international system "has not been driven by transcendent ideals or universal principles"³³. Throughout its history Japan's behaviour has mostly been the "pragmatic, often opportunistic pursuit of power"³⁴. In its thinking, particularly in foreign policy, Japan focuses on the Realist ideas of power and security, and this is particularly true with the case of North Korea.

Japan's approach toward Pyongyang has been determined by the threat it has posed to Japanese security as well as to the East Asian region. Stability in the Korean Peninsula has become one of the most important elements of Japan's national security. Firstly, Japan wants to ensure that the Peninsula is not dominated by a dangerous government (particularly one that is intensely hostile towards Japan)³⁵. Secondly, it wants a nuclear-free Peninsula which has no weapons that could target Japan. Thirdly, if there was collapse and chaos in the Peninsula, it would very likely lead to a mass exodus of refugees and a power vacuum that would severely threaten the stability of the East Asian region³⁶.

One of the unique factors of Japanese security is that, for one of the most economically powerful states, it is extremely limited in its military capabilities. After its defeat in World

³² Loc cit.

³³ Ibid. p. 45.

³⁴ Loc cit.

³⁵ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. "'North Korea Problems' and US-Japan Relations: A View from Japan", in *North Korea: Challenges for the US-Japan Alliance*, Tatsumi, Yuki (ed.), Henry L. Stimson Centre: Washington, March 2011, p. 29.

³⁶ Loc cit.

War II, Japan was obliged to renounce its military capabilities. This has been enforced by Article 9 of its constitution³⁷. To quote from the Japanese Constitutions preamble:

*“We...have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world. We desire to strive for the preservation of peace and the banishment of tyranny....oppression...for all time from the earth.”*³⁸

And from Article 9:

*“The Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right.... and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.”*³⁹

Specifically the constitution has limited the state in the following ways: the 1967 and 1976 bans on the export of arms and military technology; the adoption of the three non-nuclear principles of 1967 to not “produce, possess or introduce nuclear weapons” and to limit the country’s defence expenditure to 1% of its gross national product (GNP)⁴⁰. The constitution has been an important part of reassuring Japan’s neighbours that it will not return to its days of colonial aggression. Currently Japan has only “exclusively defence-orientated defence” in what has resulted in the Japanese Self-Defence Forces (JSDF)⁴¹. The Self-defence Forces (SDF) were created in 1954, as the government argued that the constitution did not prohibit the right of self-defence. Japan still retains its right as a sovereign state to legitimately deter aggression from other states⁴². It has been this Realist thinking that has caused Japan to spend large amounts of money on its security, despite the military restrictions that it must adhere to. Since the early 1970s, the Japanese government has acquired advanced equipment in its development of its navy and airforce⁴³. While China has been one of the reasons for this

³⁷ Hughes, Christopher. ““Super-sizing” the DPRK Threat: Japan’s Evolving Military Posture and North Korea”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 49, No. 2, University of California Press: California, March/April 2009, p. 295.

³⁸ Nah, Liang Tuang. *Op. cit.* p. 4..

³⁹ *Loc cit.*

⁴⁰ *Loc cit.*

⁴¹ *Loc cit.*

⁴² Hwang, Jihwan. *Op. cit.* p. 103.

⁴³ *Loc cit.*

military development, it has been the threat of North Korea that has made it more urgent and caused Japan to reconsider becoming a normal military power⁴⁴.

North Korea as a Realist State

North Korea is a Communist country, and still retains some Marxist-Leninist principles⁴⁵. However when it comes to its military strength, security and its foreign policy, it is particularly Realist in nature. It truly seems to have remained in the Cold War era, while the rest of the world has moved on. As Victor Cha explains in his book, *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*: "... for North Korea, the Cold War is not only its past, it is also its present and future."⁴⁶. Pyongyang's mentality has remained the same and it still holds its view about "American imperialists and South Korean puppets"⁴⁷. North Korea has still not made peace with South Korea (ROK), Japan or the United States⁴⁸. South Korea on the other hand moved past this Cold War mentality and by the early 1990s it had already normalised relations with the Soviet Union and China.⁴⁹

The main reason that North Korea chooses to remain in the Cold War era is because it was the 'golden-age' of the DPRK. While today it is an incredibly poor and mismanaged state, after World War II and for the next 35 years, the North Korean state was functioning very well. It was particularly during the 1950s and 1960s that the DPRK began to thrive and there was large scale development of infrastructure, public spaces and monuments dedicated to North Korea's first leader, Kim Il-sung⁵⁰. By the late 1960s, North Korea had 408,000 troops and was the fourth largest army in the Communist bloc⁵¹. At this time North Korea was receiving large amounts of funding from its Communist allies China and Russia, and in fact was doing much better than South Korea, which remained in political turmoil⁵². This time of strength is one that Pyongyang has in recent years been trying to relive. However the real

⁴⁴ Loc cit.

⁴⁵ Cha, Victor. *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*. The Bodley Head: London. 2012, p. 20.

⁴⁶ Loc cit.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 20-21.

⁴⁸ Loc cit.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 21.

⁵⁰ Loc cit.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 23.

⁵² Ibid. p. 21.

situation in North Korea is dramatically different. In order for the leadership to maintain its legitimacy, it has convinced its people that it is still a strong nation which is constantly under “imperialist” threats⁵³. The fundamental policy of Pyongyang is therefore to ensure the spread of its ideology.

Juche

The foundation of North Korean behaviour, thinking and belief is *juche*. This is the ideology that was developed by North Korea’s first leader Kim Il-sung, which encapsulated the nationalism and divinity of the Korean ethnic identity⁵⁴. In 1970 *juche* was formally adopted as the “sole guiding principle of the state”⁵⁵. The best translation for *juche* is “self-determination”, in the sense of self-reliance in a world that threatens the success and true identity of the Korean people. *Juche* has four formal beliefs:

- 1) *Man is the master of his fate*
- 2) *The master of the Revolution is the people*
- 3) *The Revolution must be pursued in a self-reliant manner*
- 4) *The key to the Revolution is loyalty to the supreme leader, or Suryŏng, Kim Il-Sung.*⁵⁶

These underlying beliefs took on some views of Marxism and Leninism, viewing capitalists and imperialists as the enemy and that class Revolution would bring about the success of the labourers⁵⁷. However this ideology is essentially very Realist in nature. *Juche* is intensely nationalistic and privileges the state and its sovereignty over class issues⁵⁸. While North Korea saw the supremacy of its self-reliance, and the fight against foreign imperialists, they saw the South as the opposite of their beloved values, referring to them as *sadaejjuŭi* – the slave of another big power⁵⁹. Even though the DPRK was proud of its self-reliance, it was a contradiction in terms as they continued to receive aid from the Soviet Union and China. However the regime explained this contradiction by explaining that this dependence was for

⁵³ Ibid. p. 20.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 37.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 39.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 37.

⁵⁷ Loc cit.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 38.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 40.

the benefit of Korea and served its national interests⁶⁰. After Kim Il-sung's death, his son Kim Jong-un continued to promote the *juche* ideology, particularly strict loyalty to leadership. He also expanded the ideology to include a "military-first" policy ("*sŏn 'gun*") and promoted the proliferation of nuclear weapons as a means to achieve the North Korea goal of *kangsŏng tae'guk*" ("rich nation, strong army")⁶¹. In pursuit of this goal and through adherence to its out-dated ideology, North Korea has emerged as a threatening military power that is affecting the stability of the East Asian nation.

Balance-of-Power vs. Balance-of-Threat Theory

It is very difficult to have a theory that describes the specific, isolated bilateral relationship between Japan and North Korea. Since World War II there have been no formal, normalised relations between the two countries. Their relationship has been one that exists primarily through the alliances that occur in the region. Therefore to examine this relationship more deeply it is necessary to look at the theories that explain this alliance behaviour.

The Neo-Realist theories of Balance-of-Power and Balance-of-Threat are particularly useful in explaining the situation that is playing out in East Asia, whereby states are aligning themselves against the power or threat of other states. Following this thinking, if a dominant country emerges it will be instinctive for other countries to find allies in order to balance this power and check its expansion⁶². One of the most famous Neo-Realist theories is that of Balance-of-Power theory. It posits that the anarchic international system causes states to be insecure and dislike unbalanced power⁶³. The crux of balance-of-power theory is that states will join alliances to prevent domination by a stronger state and thereby protect itself or gain the additional security resources of its allies⁶⁴. The first reason for this balancing behaviour is to ensure their own survival by restricting the "potential hegemon" before it gains too much

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 41.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 59.

⁶² Niou, Emerson & Ordeshook, Peter. "A Theory of the Balance of Power in International Systems", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Sage Publications, 1986, p 686.

⁶³ Walt, Stephen. "Keeping the World "Off-Balance": Self-Restraint and U.S. Foreign Policy", *KSG Working Paper*, No. 13, Harvard University, October 2000, p. 124.

⁶⁴ Walt, Stephen. "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 4, The MIT Press, 1985, p. 5.

power. It is safer to join an opposing alliance rather than allying with the stronger state, as trust has to be put in its continued goodwill⁶⁵. The second reason for balancing is that joining the more “vulnerable” side means that the new alliance member has increased influence. If the state were to join the stronger side, it would reduce its level of influence and would therefore be at the will of its new allies⁶⁶.

Stephen Walt argues that one of the main faults of the balance-of-power theory is that it considers balancing only in terms of power. He states that it ignores other factors that are taken into consideration when states determine their potential friends and foes⁶⁷. Balance-of-power theory has not been able to explain alliance formation which balances against a state that is not a hegemon and that is essentially weak. This is particularly pertinent when examining the dynamics within North East Asia.

“The status quo has been most forcefully and dangerously challenged not by a rising or established power, but by a second-tier country that has seen a marked decline in capabilities”.⁶⁸

North Korea is not the hegemon of the region, yet there is there is definite balancing behaviour against it and increasingly in-depth alliance formation as North Korea’s provocations increase. For this deficiency in the Balance-of-Power theory, Stephen Walt has developed upon this theory to create the “Balance-of-Threat” theory. Walt considers power as an important factor, but he feels it is more accurate to say that “states will ally with or against the most *threatening* power”⁶⁹. Balancing may therefore be the result of states joining with the stronger side as they seek to curb the danger of a weaker state displaying threatening behaviour⁷⁰. He argues:

⁶⁵ Loc cit.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 6.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 8.

⁶⁸ Haggard, Stephen. “The Balance of Power, Globalization, and Democracy: International Relations Theory in Northeast Asia”, *Journal of East Asian Studies*, No.4, 2004, p 2.

⁶⁹ Walt, Stephen. Op. cit. p. 8-9.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 9.

*“Threats... are a function of power, proximity, offensive capabilities, and aggressive intentions. Other things being equal, an increase in any of these factors make it more likely that other states (and especially other major powers) will regard the possessor of these traits as threatening and begin to look for some form of protecting themselves.”*⁷¹

The four main sources of *threat* are:

- Power
- Proximity
- Offensive Power
- Offensive Intentions

The first principle of *power* refers to how the increase in relative power of one state causes other states to be feel insecure about how that power will be used and whether it be for non-peaceful purposes. This power refers to state’s resources such as population, industrial and military capability and technological expertise⁷². The other states will therefore look to prevent this. The second principle of *proximity* refers to how states will align in response to threats from a power that is close by, as the “ability to project power declines with distance”⁷³. The third principle of *offensive power* refers to the military capabilities such as “highly mobile, long-range military forces” or political capacities such as “potentially contagious ideology” that would threaten the “territorial integrity or political stability” of other powers⁷⁴. The greater the offensive capabilities of the threatening state, the more likely states with a weak military of only defensive capability will seek to form an alliance⁷⁵. The fourth principle of *offensive intentions* refers to how states will likely balance when they believe a particular state has “aggressive intentions” in order to stop the imminent threat⁷⁶. Aggressive states are likely to provoke balancing behaviour from other states as they seek to enhance their defence capabilities.

⁷¹ Walt, Stephen. *Op. cit.* p. 133.

⁷² Walt, Stephen. *Op. cit.* p. 9.

⁷³ Walt, Stephen. *Op. cit.* p. 136.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 137.

⁷⁵ Walt, Stephen. *Op. cit.* p. 10.

⁷⁶ Walt, Stephen. *Op. cit.* p. 138-139.

Application of the Threat Principle

For both Japan and North Korea, these categories of *threat* apply. For the first point of *power*, North Korea's increase in power, particularly due to its strong military and improving missile and nuclear weapon capabilities, are a direct threat to Japan. The DPRK has a considerable military force with around 950,000 soldiers and is estimated to have 1000 ballistic missiles⁷⁷. On the second point of *proximity*, North Korea's missile tests have landed in Japanese territory and flown over Japanese airspace. In May 1993, North Korea tested a Nodong-1 which landed in the Sea of Japan, making the Japanese aware that it was exposed to North Korean attack⁷⁸. Then in August 1998, North Korea tested a Taepodong-1 missile over Japanese airspace⁷⁹. For the third point of *offensive power*, the successful tests of Nodong and Taepodong missiles as well as improved nuclear tests have justified the fear that the DPRK is looking to mount nuclear weapons or biological weapons on its missiles, which could easily reach Japan⁸⁰. On the fourth point of *offensive intentions*, North Korea's tests have been in direct violation of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) principles and have been purposefully provocative. Japan is also aware of the DPRK's reputation for 'terrorist' activity, which particularly affected Japan in the 1970s and 1980s when 13 Japanese citizens were abducted by North Korean agents⁸¹. From Japan's perspective, North Korea definitely fits the criteria of a *threat*.

The threat from North Korea has been a significant factor in Japan's push to increase its defensive capabilities. In 2004 the Ground Self-Defence Force (GSDF) began to emphasise "rapid-reaction style forces" and it established a Central Readiness Group which would be able to respond to "North Korea-type" guerrilla incursions⁸². The Maritime Self-Defence Force (MSDF) focused its investment in six destroyers with Aegis sea-mobile BMD systems to intercept missiles launched at Japan. The MSDF also acquired 200-tonne high-speed missile patrol boats to deal with North Korean *fushinsen* (suspicious ships) which had come

⁷⁷ Nah, Liang Tuang. Op. cit. p. 2-3.

⁷⁸ Hughes, Christopher. Op. cit. p. 298.

⁷⁹ Loc cit.

⁸⁰ Loc cit.

⁸¹ Nah, Liang Tuang. Op. cit. p. 2-3.

⁸² Hughes, Christopher. Op. cit. p. 298.

into Japanese waters on several occasions and were believed to be spying⁸³. The Air Self-Defence Force (ASDF) has acquired precision-guided munitions which are capable of striking North Korean missile bases⁸⁴. Japan has also improved and increased its intelligence capabilities for dealing with North Korean missile tests. It launched four intelligence gathering satellites between March 2003 and February 2007, whose main military use has been monitoring North Korea's preparations for its missile launches⁸⁵. It was estimated that Japan would spend \$10 million dollars in developing a two-layer defence shield in the past decade⁸⁶. If a missile were to be launched at Japan, first one of Japan's destroyers with the Aegis weapons system would attempt to intercept the missile with a ship-to-air missile. If this missed, Patriot missiles which are based around key Japanese cities would attempt to hit the North Korean missile⁸⁷. Currently Japan has four Kongo-class destroyers with the Aegis weapons system and standard missiles. On land there are also batteries of the PAC-3 version of the Patriot surface-to-air missile system⁸⁸. In 2012 it was announced that the US is to deploy a second advanced radar system in Japan to assist Japan in the North Korean missile threat, much to the unease of China⁸⁹.

North Korea, on the other hand, also perceives Japan as a threat. The ideology that allows North Korea's leaders to maintain its tight grip on the country stems from days of Korea's colonisation by Japan. This ideology is fundamentally anti-Japanese and anti-imperial. It still feels the remnants of a historical threat from Japan as 'imperialists'⁹⁰. Japan today would not pose a viable threat to North Korea as it is severely limited in its military capabilities. The DPRK perceives its main threat from the United States. However Japan is very much part of that threat, due to its strong, long-standing alliance with the US. Following World War II, the

⁸³ Loc cit.

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 306.

⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 307.

⁸⁶ Onishi, Norimitsu. "Japan Support of Missile Shield Could Tilt Asia Balance", *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/03/world/japan-support-of-missile-shield-could-tilt-asia-power-balance.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>, 3 April 2004, p. 1. (Accessed 14 January 2013)

⁸⁷ Loc cit.

⁸⁸ Marcus, Jonathan. "China's concerns over US-Japan missile deal", BBC Asia-Pacific News, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-19622514><http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-19622514>, 17 September 2012, p. 1.(Accessed 14 January 2013)

⁸⁹ Loc cit.

⁹⁰ Cha, Victor. Op cit. p. 20.

United States and Japan signed the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security⁹¹. The fundamental idea in the alliance is that in exchange for protection from the US military, Japan provides military bases on its territory to enhance the US's power projection in the region⁹². The US is obliged to come to the defence of Japan if it is attacked. It currently has around 50,000 service members on Japanese territory, as well as its largest airbase in Asia⁹³. Over time there has been a move by Japan to decrease its heavy reliance on the US by increasing its own defence capabilities in case of a situation where Japan is abandoned by the US due to its involvement in other global interests or is entrapped⁹⁴. In such a strong alliance, which involves the threat of nuclear exchange possibly by North Korea, China and the US, there is a real danger that Japan could become a "proxy target" in such a war⁹⁵. US military strength is ultimately Japanese military strength. The threat that North Korea feels from Japan is tightly woven with the threat that it feels from the US.

When applying Walt's principles, we can see how Japan could be viewed as a threat. For the first principle of *power*, Japan has high industrial and technological capability. While it is restricted militarily, it has been increasing its defence capabilities and it has the added support of US military bases and US service members on its territory⁹⁶. On the second principle of *proximity*, the Japan-US security alliance has allowed US power to be extended into the East Asian region and closer to the DPRK. For the third principle of *offensive power*, while Japan is a pacifist state, the threat it perceives from North Korea and China has led to enhanced security and military cooperation with the US and regular military drills off the Japanese coast. One of the major military drills between the US and Japan is called *Keen Sword* and takes place every two years⁹⁷. In December 2003, Japan decided to officially start joint development of a missile defence system with the US and in 2004, the US Navy

⁹¹ Flake, L. Gordon. "Different Beds, Same Nightmare: US-Japan Policy Coordination on North Korea and Implications for the US-Japan Alliance", in *North Korea: Challenges for the US-Japan Alliance*, Tatsumi, Yuki (ed.), Henry L. Stimson Centre: Washington, March 2011, p. 93.

⁹² Hughes, Christopher. *Op. cit.* p. 295.

⁹³ Talmadge, Eric. "Abe Bid to Boost Military This Time Around May Resonate", *The Japan Times*, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121226f1.html>, 26 December 2012., p. 1. (Accessed 8 January 2012)

⁹⁴ Hughes, Christopher. *Op. cit.* p. 295.

⁹⁵ *Loc cit.*

⁹⁶ Talmadge, Eric. *Op. cit.* p. 1.

⁹⁷ Kang, David & Lee, Ji-Young. "Japan-Korea Relations: The New Cold War in Asia", *Comparative Connections*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies: Washington, January 2011, p. 3.

deployed a destroyer in the Sea of Japan as part of its missile interception project⁹⁸. North Korea responded that it saw this act as a preparation for war and part of the US's "attempt to dominate the Asia-Pacific region"⁹⁹. With regards to the fourth principle of *offensive intentions*, Japan has in recent years considered revising Article 9 of its constitution to make it a regular military power not completely dependent on the US, with the ability to make pre-emptive strikes on North Korean missile sites. While Japan views this as mostly defensive capability, considering Japan's past, North Korea can easily view this revision as Japan seeking offensive capability.

In order to deter this perceived threat from Japan and the US, the DPRK has explained that its pursuit of nuclear weapons and missile capability is to guarantee its security. When George W. Bush developed a hard-line policy toward North Korea, Pyongyang began to refer to their nuclear weapons programme as a "massive deterrent"¹⁰⁰. The DPRK stated:

*"Our strengthening of the nuclear deterrent is an irrefutable exercise of our independent right and sovereignty for the defence of our dignity, system, and the safety of the nation against the nuclear threat of the United States"*¹⁰¹.

When the Obama administration took over, there was hope for improvements in the relationship between Washington and Pyongyang. However when a North Korean delegation visited New York, they informed their American counterparts that the US would have to accept North Korea "as a nuclear state" and live with the fact that it is armed with nuclear weapons¹⁰². They also stated that the only way that North Korea would denuclearise would be through the elimination of the US "threat" in the East Asian region. This "threat" particularly refers to the US military presence on the Peninsula and in Japan, and its commitment to its allies in defending them against North Korean aggression¹⁰³. The Obama

⁹⁸ Hwang, Balbina. "America's "North Korea Problem" and US-Japan Relations", in *North Korea: Challenges for the US-Japan Alliance*, Tatsumi, Yuki (ed.), Henry L. Stimson Centre: Washington, March 2011, p. 16.

⁹⁹ Onishi, Norimitsu. *Op. cit.* p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Hayes, Peter. "Extended Nuclear Deterrence, Global Abolition, and Korea," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 50-2-09, <http://japanfocus.org/-Peter-Hayes/3268>, December 14, 2009, p. 1. (Accessed 14 January 2013)

¹⁰¹ *Loc cit.*

¹⁰² Revere, Evans. "Re-Engaging North Korea After Kim Jong-il's Death: Last, Best Hope or Dialogue to Nowhere?", *Foreign Policy at Brookings*, Policy Paper, No. 29, The Brookings Institution: Washington, 29 January 2012, p. 13.

¹⁰³ *Loc cit.*

administration released its Nuclear Posture Review in 2010 in which it reassured that it allies would continue to be included in the nuclear umbrella¹⁰⁴. Although this is merely a defensive policy, North Korea viewed the US policy as justifying Pyongyang's own nuclear deterrent¹⁰⁵.

Balancing in the North-east Asian Region

This section will now focus on the specific relationships in the region and the balancing behaviour that has been occurring. The other countries in the region cannot be separated from the North Korean–Japanese relationship as they continue to shape the various countries policies towards the unstable situation on the Peninsula. The perception of threat in the East Asian region has led to balancing behaviour and alliance formation. David Kang and Ji-Young Lee in their paper “Japan-Korea Relations: The New Cold War in Asia” have noted that insecurity and instability in the East Asian region has caused the return of the “Cold War structure of alliances”¹⁰⁶. On the one side there is the US-ROK-Japan alliance and on the other the DPRK-China alliance. Looking at the North Korean threat, Japan has sought to balance this threat by increasing security cooperation with the United States and South Korea. With the threat of this opposing alliance, fellow Communist China has been North Korea's strongest ally. This chapter will now move on to look at these alliance formations and how the balancing behaviour has played out.

The US-Japan-ROK Alliance

An important point that Victor Cha raises in his discussion of the alliance of US, South Korea and Japan, is that crises have been an important factor in strengthening the relationship between the allies¹⁰⁷. North Korea's missile and nuclear tests have caused increased trilateral coordination between Washington, Tokyo and Seoul. The relationship between South Korea

¹⁰⁴ Park, John. “Regional Factors: China-North Korea Relationship”, in *North Korea: Challenges for the US-Japan Alliance*, Tatsumi, Yuki (ed.), Henry L. Stimson Centre: Washington, March 2011.

¹⁰⁵ Loc cit.

¹⁰⁶ Kang, David & Lee, Ji-Young Op. cit. p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Cha, Victor. “Japan-Korea Relations: The Sweet, the Sour, and the Bittersweet”, *Comparative Connections*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies: Washington, January 2003.

and Japan has been a difficult one as it still carries resentment and unresolved issues from the period of Japan's colonisation of the Korean Peninsula. However, what helps bring the countries together is that they are both US allies and they face mutual threats. During the Cold War, they formed part of the security triangle in East Asia in the face of threats from North Korea, China and the Soviet Union¹⁰⁸. Even though there is still historical antagonism between Japan and South Korea, their increased cooperation shows how security factors have overcome cultural boundaries within alliance formations. The mutual threat from North Korea is causing Japan and the ROK to overlook their differences and align with each other in a security context.

This cooperation became enhanced during the 1990s as North Korea's behaviour became more provocative. When it became clear that North Korea was striving to acquire nuclear weapons through uranium enrichment and was violating the 1994 Agreed Framework, Tokyo, Washington and Seoul responded by working together on the desired outcome of the issue¹⁰⁹. North Korea proceeded to unseal the Yongbyon reactor facilities which were frozen under the 1994 Agreed Framework and expelled International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors from its territory¹¹⁰. During this time of concern, there were various trilateral meetings between South Korea, the US and Japan in order to come to a consensus on how to deal with North Korea and what type of negotiations should take place. Initially these meetings were bogged down by diverging national policies and priorities with regards to North Korea. However after the Taepodong missile launch, security concerns took precedence over the differences between the nations and it marked the start of the Perry Process which saw the establishment of the Trilateral coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) in 1999¹¹¹. In October 1998, South Korean President Kim Dae Jung visited Tokyo, and both leaders agreed to increase consultations on security and defence and to begin having regular bilateral cabinet meetings¹¹². Then in 1999, the two countries had their first joint naval exercises, which mainly concentrated on search and rescue operations. This coordination has gradually been enhanced. When Pyongyang confirmed that it planned to

¹⁰⁸ Hwang, Jihwan. *Op. cit.* p. 95.

¹⁰⁹ Cha, Victor. *Op. cit.* p. 2.

¹¹⁰ *Loc cit.*

¹¹¹ Sahashi, Ryo. "The North Korea Challenge and Resonance with Regional Security Arrangements", in *North Korea: Challenges for the US-Japan Alliance*, Tatsumi, Yuki (ed.), Henry L. Stimson Centre: Washington, March 2011, p. 85.

¹¹² Hwang, Balbina. *Op. cit.* p. 13.

launch a Tapodong-2 missile in September 1999, the US, the ROK and Japan worked more closely together and warned North Korea against the missile launch, which eventually never happened¹¹³. On the 12th September 1999 President Bill Clinton, President Kim Dae Jung and Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi had a summit meeting at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), where they reaffirmed their stance that North Korea would have to face penalties if they went through with the missile launch¹¹⁴. Lee Myung Bak's administration also sought to strengthen its alliance with the US and to develop more reasonable relations with Japan and China. When there were troubles within the US-Japan relations over US military bases during the Hatoyama administration, Lee became concerned as US military presence on Japanese territory is an important part of its own security reassurance¹¹⁵.

The alliance between the US, the ROK and Japan became clear during the Six Party Talks as they agreed on how to approach North Korean denuclearisation. A characteristic of the Six Party Talks was the prior consultation and coordination between the US, Japan and the ROK¹¹⁶. Both the US and Japan supported President Lee Myung-bak's policy of responding firmly to North Korean provocations¹¹⁷. While Tokyo and Seoul each have their own separate security alliance with the US, Japan and South Korea Korea have started to look to their own defence cooperation. In December 2010, during a meeting in Tokyo with Defence Minister Toshimi Kitazawa, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Admiral Mike Mullen spoke of the importance of the three countries organising joint military drills¹¹⁸. South Korea also sent observers to the Japan-US military drill called *Keen Sword* and officers from Japan SDF were sent to observe US-ROK joint military exercises in July 2010¹¹⁹.

Recent events have also strengthened this trilateral relationship. The DPRK's behaviour became more aggressive in 2010 when it launched a torpedo attack on the South Korean warship, *Cheonan*, on the 10th of March killing 46 South Korean servicemen, and then in

¹¹³ Ibid. p. 14.

¹¹⁴ Loc cit.

¹¹⁵ Furukawa, Katsuhisa. "Japan-US Cooperation on North Korea: Regional Perspectives", in *North Korea: Challenges for the US-Japan Alliance*, Tatsumi, Yuki (ed.), Henry L. Stimson Centre: Washington, March 2011, p. 55.

¹¹⁶ Flake, L. Gordon. Op. cit. p. 103.

¹¹⁷ Kang, David & Lee, Ji-Young Op. cit. p. 3.

¹¹⁸ Loc cit.

¹¹⁹ Loc cit.

November 2010 when the DPRK shelled South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island¹²⁰. After both instances, Japan and the US enhanced their support for the ROK. The foreign ministers of Japan, the US and South Korea held a meeting in December 2012¹²¹. Seoul emphasised that until the *Cheonan* is resolved, the Six Party Talks will not resume¹²². Former Japan Prime Minister Naoto Kan spoke out calling the event an "impermissible, atrocious act" and Japan and South Korea's security cooperation began to increase as a result of this North Korean provocation¹²³. Tokyo's defence strategy emphasised the importance of defence cooperation with South Korea and suggested a possible formal security alliance in the future¹²⁴.

Japan has recently emerged with a new defence posture, termed a "dynamic defence capability" for the fiscal years 2011 to 2015, as it will look to convert the Self-Defence Forces (SDF) into more mobile forces and more adaptable to the emerging security situations within and surrounding Japan¹²⁵. The strategy is focusing on boosting its naval power, particularly directed on defending its south-western chain of islands. This new strategy aims to dispatch the SDF beyond Japanese waters to counter threats to its national interests. Japan's new strategy also looks to increase its military cooperation with South Korea¹²⁶. Japan's Vice Defence Minister Jun Azumi in 2010 stated:

*"Given our history, there might have been reluctance on the South Korean side [for security cooperation with Japan]. But due to the North Korean situation, the environment for such talks is developing."*¹²⁷.

The security concern posed by North Korea has clearly been the driver in Japan's efforts to strengthen its alliance with the US. At a joint press conference in April, President Obama and former Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda reaffirmed the strength of their alliance. President Obama stated that the US-Japan alliance "will remain the foundation of the security and

¹²⁰ Furukawa, Katsuhisa. Op. cit. p. 50.

¹²¹ Furukawa, Katsuhisa. Op. cit. p. 50.

¹²² Ibid. p. 55-56.

¹²³ Kang, David & Lee, Ji-Young Op. cit. p. 1.

¹²⁴ Loc cit.

¹²⁵ Kang, David & Lee, Ji-Young Op. cit. p. 2.

¹²⁶ Loc cit.

¹²⁷ Ibid. p. 4.

prosperity of our two nations but also a cornerstone of regional peace and security”¹²⁸. In referring to the North Korean threat to regional peace, he said that the US and Japan will continue to have “close consultations on the provocative actions of North Korea, which are a sign of weakness and not strength, and only serve to deepen Pyongyang's isolation”¹²⁹. In response, Prime Minister Noda said that the bilateral alliance is the “lynchpin” of Japan’s diplomacy and that the alliance is “unshakeable”. Noda stated:

*“We also need to work with regional partners to build a multi-layered network that is open, comprehensive and building on international rules utilizing such frameworks as trilateral dialogues among Japan-U.S.-ROK”*¹³⁰.

In November 2012, the US and Japan had their largest-ever joint military training exercises, called the *Keen Sword* exercise, which is held every two years. Over 47,000 troops from US and Japan, as well as large numbers of warships and combat aircraft took part in the training session around the islands of Japan¹³¹. Such provocative behaviour could influence China’s recent moderate behaviour into more of a balance against the enhancement of US-Japanese power.

China – North Korea

The strong relationship between China and North Korea has formed the opposing alliance to the US-ROK-Japan alliance. It aims to balance against the US which has increased its power through Japan and South Korea. The increased security cooperation and missile defence systems that have been developed between the US and Japan are of concern to China, as its regional interests are facing the threat of increased US presence¹³².

¹²⁸ Obama, Barack & Noda, Yoshihiko. “Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Noda of Japan at Joint Press Conference, April 2012”, *Council on Foreign Relations*, <http://www.cfr.org/japan/remarks-president-obama-prime-minister-noda-japan-joint-press-conference-april-2012/p28103>, 30 April 2012., p. 1.(Accessed 8 January 2013)

¹²⁹ Loc cit.

¹³⁰ Loc cit.

¹³¹ Spitzer, Kirk. “Big Exercise, Low Profile, In Japan-China Dispute”, *Time.com*, <http://nation.time.com/2012/11/08/big-exercise-low-profile-in-japan-china-dispute/>, 8 November 2012, p. 1. (Accessed 8 January 2013).

¹³² Marcus, Jonathan. “China's concerns over US-Japan missile deal”, *BBC Asia-Pacific News*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-19622514><http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-19622514>, 17 September 2012, p. 1. (Accessed 14 January 2013)

The relationship between China and North Korea is certainly an interesting one and one that is quite difficult to define. China's support of North Korea has kept the other states guessing, particularly about the degree of influence that China wields over North Korea. There certainly seems to have been some of Beijing's influence in times where North Korea has gone back on its threats. One thing that is clear with regards to China is that it considers stability on the Korean Peninsula as paramount to its national interest¹³³. Sharing a border with the DPRK, Beijing is aware of the consequences of having a neighbouring failed state, with an outflow of refugees. China does not balance against North Korea, but since the Cold War has rather sided with it against the alliance of democracies that developed in the region, led by the US. China appears to be content with a North Korea that has nuclear weapons, so long as that does not provoke conflict in the region¹³⁴.

China's involvement with the Six Party Talks has been interpreted as due to its concern for possible military intervention by the United States in the East Asian region, partially justified by the US intervention in Iraq and the interventionist policies of the Bush administration¹³⁵. China's behaviour regarding North Korea has worked at constraining cooperation between Japan and the US. When the UN Security Council drafted a resolution in reaction to North Korea's nuclear test in 2006, China and Russia insisted that Japan and the US withdraw several of the strictest sanctions from the resolution. These sanctions included prohibiting North Korea aircrafts from taking off or landing in other countries as well as UN members freezing assets from North Korea's illicit activities, such as money laundering and drug-trafficking¹³⁶. Despite the strong pressure from the US, the ROK and Japan, China refused to accept a new UNSC Resolution after the *Cheonan* incident in March 2010, which would condemn the DPRK's actions. In fact, China has made it clear that they would not interdict vessels going to or from the DPRK. China also voiced its opinion against the joint naval exercises between South Korea and the US, calling them provocative and inviting a response from North Korea¹³⁷.

¹³³ Blumenthal, Dan. "The Power Projection Balance in Asia", *Competitive Strategies for the 21st Century: Theory, History and Practice*, edited by Thomas G. Mahnken, Stanford University, 2012, p. 172.

¹³⁴ Loc cit.

¹³⁵ Furukawa, Katsuhisa. Op. cit. p. 56.

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 57.

¹³⁷ Loc cit.

China's assistance to North Korea has been aimed at preventing state collapse as Chinese researchers have estimated that the North Korea's production of grain is 4.74 million tons annually, which falls below the 6 million tons that is needed at a minimum to sustain the population¹³⁸. This is counter to the North Korean propaganda that the country "is at the highest tide of its development ever in history"¹³⁹. When it comes to negotiations and influence, China certainly has the most economic leverage over North Korea. Bilateral trade between China and North Korea reached a record \$5 billion in 2011 according to the Korean Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA). China exports minerals, machinery and motor vehicles to the DPRK¹⁴⁰. It appears that North Korea is considerably supported by Chinese economic assistance in trying to be a successful nation. There has also been an increase in joint industrial projects between the northeastern provinces of China and the northern border region of North Korea¹⁴¹.

In May 2010, Kim Jong-il visited China and was presented with five proposals for strengthening China-DPRK relations by Chinese Premier Hu Jintao. These proposals included: "trade cooperation, increasing personnel exchanges, and strengthening coordination in international and regional affairs"¹⁴². There has been uncertainty of the level of contact that Beijing has had with Pyongyang since the death of Kim Jong-il. However according to Japanese media, after the death of Kim Jong-il, Beijing sent considerable food and fuel aid to the DPRK in what can be seen as contributing to a successful transition of power¹⁴³. The first high-level meeting since Kim Jong-il's death took place in February 2012 when China's Vice Foreign Minister Fu Ying discussed with the DPRK's Kim Sung Gi the future of Chinese aid to North Korea. The press statement after the meeting was that "China welcomes giving various forms of assistance Chosun" and later confirmed by Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin, who stated that "China will continue to provide support and assistance within its

¹³⁸ Snyder, Scott & Byun, See-won. "China-Korea Relations: China's Post Kim Jong-Il Debate", *Comparative Connections*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies: Washington, May 2012, p. 4.

¹³⁹ Loc cit.

¹⁴⁰ Loc cit.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p. 5.

¹⁴² Snyder, Scott & Byun, See-won. Op. cit. p. 4.

¹⁴³ Ibid. p. 4.

capacity to the DPRK”¹⁴⁴. There have been no reports as to the extent of this assistance and what it entails.

Russia-North Korea

The other important relationship to North Korea is that with Russia. While it has become a weak relationship, it has strong foundations in their Cold War history and their support of one another helps to legitimise their Communist ideology and leadership. During the first part of Vladimir Putin’s rule, North Korea and Russia’s relations improved. In 2000, the two countries signed the Treaty on Friendship, Good-Neighbourly Relations and Cooperation and in July 2003, Kim Jong-il insisted that Russia be included in the Six Party Talks¹⁴⁵. Russia, like North Korea, is wary of the US military presence in Asia and its ballistic missile defence as well as the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in the region¹⁴⁶. Russia also has strategic interest with North Korea as it has signed on to large-scale multilateral infrastructure projects on the Peninsula, such as oil and gas pipelines and Trans-Siberian railroads¹⁴⁷. Stability in their neighbouring country is therefore very important to Russia. With the possibility of unification, there are also fears in Russia of Korea’s unified military and its strategic interests could cause “a region-wide strategic re-evaluation and militarization”¹⁴⁸. Instability and conflict on the Korean Peninsula could also result in the spread of the US in the region as well as more assertive military capability from Japan. Russia has therefore been cautious with regards to the North Korean issue and has drawn closer to China. Within the Six Party Talks Russia has been reluctant to impose harsh disciplinary action against the DPRK¹⁴⁹.

Just before North Korea’s Taepodong-2 missile test in April 2009 Japan, the ROK and the US increased cooperation and coordination to pressure North Korea to not follow through with the test and warned of the consequences. China and Russia however initially supported the

¹⁴⁴ Loc cit.

¹⁴⁵ Furukawa, Katsuhisa. Op. cit. p. 52-53.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 52.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 53.

¹⁴⁸ Loc cit.

¹⁴⁹ Loc cit.

test as it believed North Korea's claim that it was launching a satellite¹⁵⁰. After the missile launch, Japan and the US pushed for international condemnation of the test. China and Russia's however objected and prevented the passing of a UNSC Resolution. Japan and the US's pressure, however, were able to have a strong UNSC Presidential Statement adopted that criticized Pyongyang¹⁵¹.

The Ideology Factor

It is important to mention another sub-factor in Stephen Walt's Balance-of-Threat theory, which goes beyond simple power and security dynamics. This is the idea of "ideological solidarity", which explains the beliefs, be they political, cultural or other, that are shared between states and make them more likely to align with each other¹⁵². While such factors are mostly seen to be secondary explanations for alliances, Walt shows that such ideas show up in the rhetoric of leaders, in giving their justification for their stance against a threatening state¹⁵³. He shows the importance of the political and cultural principles within alliances' rhetoric as it is a way of defending the member states' own political principles. He also states how states with similar principles may feel less fearful of each other as they "find it harder to imagine an inherently "good" state deciding to attack them."¹⁵⁴. Walt also states that some ideologies promote alignment, such as Marxism-Leninism¹⁵⁵.

This idea is very important in the situation in Northeast Asia. While the security alliances are based on threat, proximity and relative power, there is also alignment of ideology. An important concern for all states in the region is the idea of Korean unification and this situation retains the ideological underpinnings left over from the Korean War during the Cold War era. On the one side is the alliance of democracies, now all first world, capitalist countries of the US, South Korea and Japan, who seek the opening up and reform of the DPRK and the eventual rule of the ROK government over a unified Korean state. On the

¹⁵⁰ Park, John. Op. cit. p. 66.

¹⁵¹ Loc cit.

¹⁵² Walt, Stephen. Op. cit. p. 19.

¹⁵³ Loc cit.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 20.

¹⁵⁵ Loc cit.

opposite side is the Communist alignment. While the limits in this alliance are becoming evident, certainly in security terms, North Korea, China and Russia adhere strongly to their Communist ideology and remain anti-capitalist and anti-democratic. While China and Russia are at times reticent to support North Korea in all its actions, they are reluctant to have a unified Korea, which is democratic and strongly aligned with the US, as a neighbour. The spread of democracy and capitalism threatens their state ideology and therefore the legitimacy of their own leadership. North Korea is especially ideological in its outlook as the very authority of the Kim dynasty relies on its anti-Capitalist, anti-Japanese/American/ROK propaganda.

While clearly ideology plays an important role for North Korea, as well as for China, the balancing alliance has also relied on ideology to justify its position. The ideology espoused by Washington was also a factor in stalling negotiations with North Korea and making the situation more difficult to solve. It was particularly the Bush administration that pushed its foreign policy principles of its own ideology and manner of dealing with “rogue” regimes and assumptions on how such regimes operate¹⁵⁶.

The next chapter will look specifically at the history of relations between Japan and North Korea. However, it will become clear the the theory of balance-of-threat and the alliance structures of the region have played a large part of this history and have had a strong influence in shaping the two countries’ approach to one another.

¹⁵⁶ Hwang, Balbina. Op. cit. p. 17-18.

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Chapter 3

Historical Overview

This chapter will now look at the specific interactions between North Korea and Japan and examine how the major issues in their relationship have prevented them from normalising relations. It will start with their modern history from the period of Japanese colonisation of the Korean Peninsula and the effect that it had on the perceptions of both populations. It will then move on to their more recent interactions and attempts at normalisation, setting the scene for the major issues that have emerged in their relationship, mainly the abduction issue and the missile threat from North Korea.

Historical Perceptions

The Japanese-North Korea history is one based on threat and conflict, where both sides have at one time or another feared the rising power of the other and the danger it poses to its own territory. Throughout the history of what is now North Korea, it has had to face threatening external powers and has been a victim of wars between these powers, such as the Sino-Japanese War from 1894 to 1895¹⁵⁷. As China was defeated in the war, Korea was declared independent. However competition over control of territory persisted. The Russo-Japanese War from 1904 to 1905 saw Japan victorious and the Portsmouth Peace Treaty recognised its “paramount interest” in Korea¹⁵⁸. This paved the way for Japan’s formal annexation of Korea in 1910 and the following 35 years of Japanese colonialism on the peninsula. North Korea’s infrastructure and economy became highly developed by the Japanese imperial system and it was part of Japan’s industrialisation scheme that extended into Manchuria¹⁵⁹. Anti-Japanese sentiments remained in both Koreas due to the harshness of Japanese rule during this time.

¹⁵⁷ Hagström, Linus and Söderberg, Marie. “Taking Japan-North Korea Relations Seriously: Rationale and Background”, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 3, University of British Columbia, 2006, pp. 376.

¹⁵⁸ Loc cit.

¹⁵⁹ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. “Re-Imagining Japan-North Korea Relations – Part 1”, *The Japan Institute*, Australia’s National University: Canberra, www.japaninstitute.anu.edu.au/japanese_studies/issue_01/1_Re-Imagining_Part_I.pdf, 2011, p. 6. (Accessed 26 October 2010)

The North Korean leadership and ideology is deeply tied to anti-Japanese sentiment¹⁶⁰. This is seen with the first leader of North Korea Kim Il-sung, who in his youth fought against Japanese imperialists. He was considered a “true independence fighter”, as an anti-Japanese guerrilla in the Manchurian hills¹⁶¹. He was highly sought by Japanese police who put a price on his head, “which was a badge of honour by Korean standards”¹⁶². As father of the DPRK and of the *Juche* ideology, nationalism and anti-imperialism were firm foundations for the North Koreans. It has been only natural to continue to be enemies with Japan.

When Japan was defeated in World War II, it lost possession of the Korean Peninsula. At this time, Japanese soldiers who were located north of the 38th parallel surrendered to the Soviet Union, while the soldiers to the south gave in to the United States¹⁶³. Korea was then under administration of the allied powers for five years. The difficulties in deciding on an independent Korea government meant that the country remained divided, with this formal division being recognised in 1948 through the proclamation of the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea) and the DPRK (North Korea)¹⁶⁴. The governments of both the north and the south claimed the whole peninsula as their own, leading to tensions between the two and in 1950 the Korean War was ignited. During this period of war, ROK was supported by US-led forces and the DPRK was backed by Chinese and Soviet forces¹⁶⁵. This is the same alliance structure that persists today in the North East Asian region. While Japan did not play a combatant role in the Korean War, it was significantly involved in supporting the South Korean side of the war and was the place from where many US-led troops were dispatched to Korea. Tokyo was also the base of the headquarters for the United Nations Command, which oversaw the military activities against the DPRK side¹⁶⁶. It was only transferred to the military base Yongsan in Seoul four years after the war. There were also a large number of Japanese people who were involved in combat-support operations, particularly for the navy,

¹⁶⁰ Cha, Victor. *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*. The Bodley Head: London. 2012, p. 35.

¹⁶¹ Loc cit.

¹⁶² Loc cit.

¹⁶³ Hagström, Linus and Söderberg, Marie. Op. cit. p. 376.

¹⁶⁴ Loc cit.

¹⁶⁵ Loc cit.

¹⁶⁶ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. Op. cit. p. 10.

and also performed minesweeping operations¹⁶⁷. In 1953 an armistice agreement was reached which ended fighting; however the Korean War has never officially ended¹⁶⁸.

Relations Towards the End of the Cold War

In the early 1970s there began a trend for détente, as seen with the normalisation of relations between Japan and China, as well as between China and the US. Japan and North Korea's relations looked set to improve, however by the mid-1970s things began to deteriorate¹⁶⁹. This state of affairs was further impacted by the North Korean bomb attack in Burma in 1983, aimed at the South Korean cabinet, to which Japan responded by imposing sanctions on North Korea. Pyongyang was not one to be insulted and soon after North Korea imprisoned two members of the crew of the Japanese fishing vessel Fujisanmaru which had been found in North Korean waters¹⁷⁰. There began a new impetus from the Japanese side to engage in dialogue as Japan looked to bring about the release of the imprisoned crew. This process took time and it was only in 1990 that Japan sent a delegation to visit Pyongyang and hold talks with Korean Workers' Party officials. These negotiations, plus the private talks between the leader of the Japanese delegation Kanemaru Shin and North Korean President Kim Il-sung, resulted in the release of the Fujisanmaru crew¹⁷¹. After the talks the Three-Party Joint Declaration was issued, whereby Japan pledged to apologise for its previous colonial rule of Korea; provide economic compensation for this period as well as the period following World War Two; and aim for the normalisation of diplomatic relations. However this agreement was not well received when the delegation returned to Japan and Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) said the agreement was not binding on the Japanese government¹⁷².

Despite this issue, there was a general improvement in regional affairs. Both North and South Korea were admitted to the United Nations in September 1991, followed by both countries

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 11.

¹⁶⁸ Hagström, Linus and Söderberg, Marie. Op. cit. p. 376.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 376-277

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 377

¹⁷¹ Loc cit.

¹⁷² Loc cit.

signing the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula¹⁷³. The US administration stated that it would withdraw all its tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea and this was followed by North Korea signing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Safeguards Agreement in 1992¹⁷⁴. Japan and North Korea then held eight rounds of normalisation talks between January 1991 and November 1992. The multiple rounds however ended in failure. The first reason for this was that the Japanese government did not satisfy Pyongyang's demand for an apology and the appropriate compensation for the period of colonisation¹⁷⁵. The second reason was that Japan demanded that North Korea should allow the Japanese-born spouses of North Korean citizens ("*nihonjinsuma*") to visit Japan. In the 1950s, these spouses were repatriated to North Korea with their Korean husbands under a Red Cross "returnee" programme¹⁷⁶. The third reason was that Japan pressed North Korea to provide guarantees about the safety of a Japanese citizen taken to North Korea and who later proved to be involved with the bombing of a South Korean airliner in 1987. This was the first of the abduction cases ("*rachijiken*") which has become a significant problem in bilateral relations¹⁷⁷.

The Emergence of a Nuclear North Korea

North Korea's successful development during the Cold War could not endure by the end as its Communist patrons began to decrease economic and military support for Pyongyang¹⁷⁸. North Korea's increasing weakness and feelings of vulnerability as South Korea began to grow in strength, were an important factor in the development of its nuclear weapons programme. The discovery of the programme by the US led to President Jimmy Carter visiting Pyongyang in 1994 after which the Agreed Framework was established. With the Agreed framework, Japan was asked to give a considerable amount of funding to help provide North Korea with two Light Water Reactors through the Korean Peninsula Energy

¹⁷³ Ibid. p. 378.

¹⁷⁴ Loc cit.

¹⁷⁵ Loc cit.

¹⁷⁶ Loc cit.

¹⁷⁷ Loc cit.

¹⁷⁸ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. "Re-Imagining Japan-North Korea Relations – Part 2", *The Japan Institute*, Australia's National University: Canberra, www.japaninstitute.anu.edu.au/japanese_studies/issue_02/ Re-Imagining_Part_II.pdf, 2011, p. 2. (Accessed 26 October 2010)

Development Organisation (KEDO)¹⁷⁹. At this time North Korea began to lose Soviet aid and was finding itself in increasing economic difficulty. These economic difficulties only got worse when Kim Il-sung died in 1994. When Kim Jong-il took over power, he pushed through the “military-first” policy which directed most of North Korea’s finances to the defence sector¹⁸⁰. There was a consequent famine within North Korea which has been termed “the Arduous March” (*Gunan ui Haenggun*) and it is estimated that between 600,000 and 1 million North Koreans died¹⁸¹.

When North Korea lost the support of the Soviet Union, Japan stepped in to become its second-largest trading partner after China¹⁸². This only ended in 2002 when Japan was overtaken by South Korea. (Japan’s main exports to North Korea are cars, machinery, electrical components and woollen fabrics. North Korea in turn exports men’s suits, mushrooms, clams and coal to Japan¹⁸³). Japan became aware of reports of the North Korea food crisis and energy shortages in 1992 and then by 1994 of the refugees escaping to South Korea. Despite the many years of antagonism with North Korea, the Japanese public, NGOs and local governments were very responsive to the crisis¹⁸⁴. At first Pyongyang were slow in calling for help with the crisis. However when there were extensive floods in the middle of 1995, the North Korean leadership began to ask for food assistance from other countries, in particular Japan. Japan was in a good position to help as it had a considerable rice surplus as a result of its protectionist agricultural policies. Japan responded in 1995 by sending North Korea 300,000 tons of rice¹⁸⁵. In October 1995 Japan then exported 200,000 tons of rice. In 1997 Japan donated \$27 million to the UN World Food Programme’s relief efforts in North Korea, as well as a donation of \$776,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross’s missions in North Korea¹⁸⁶. While there was a great effort for positive relations coming from Japanese

¹⁷⁹ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. ““North Korea Problems” and US-Japan Relations: A View from Japan”, in *North Korea: Challenges for the US-Japan Alliance*, Tatsumi, Yuki (ed.), Henry L. Stimson Centre: Washington, March 2011, p. 31.

¹⁸⁰ Gause, Ken. “The Army of Un”, *Foreign Policy*, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/07/18/an_army_of_un, 18 July 2012, p. 1 (Accessed 12 November 2012)

¹⁸¹ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. *Op. cit.* p. 2.

¹⁸² Manyin, Mark. “Japan-North Korea Relations: Selected Issues”, *CRS Report for Congress*, Library of Congress, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Division, 26 November 2003, pp. 1-18.

¹⁸³ *Loc cit.*

¹⁸⁴ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. *Op. cit.* p. 2-3.

¹⁸⁵ *Loc cit.*

¹⁸⁶ *Loc cit.*

civil society, its assistance became caught up with the political problems between the leaders of Japan and North Korea. Food aid has been one of the leverage tools used by Japan in negotiations with North Korea. Following the Taepodong missile launch in 1998, Japan suspended its food shipments¹⁸⁷. The shipments were only resumed in 2001, when headway was made on the abduction issue, and then suspended once again in December 2001 due to the North Korean spy incident¹⁸⁸.

The Japanese attempted to restart bilateral negotiation with North Korea for the normalisation of relations and in March 1995 it sent a LDP-SDPJ-Sakigake delegation to Pyongyang. It sent another LDP-SDPJ-Sakigake delegation to Pyongyang in November 1997¹⁸⁹. These attempts at restarting negotiations were ultimately blocked when the Japanese delegation demanded Pyongyang's cooperation on the "*nihonjinzuma*" issue. The *nihonjinzuma* refers to the people that have been termed "the Japanese wives"¹⁹⁰. These were Japanese women who moved to North Korea with their Korean husbands during the mass repatriation programme in the early 1960s. The Japanese Ministry of Justice estimated that there were about 1,800 of these 'wives'¹⁹¹. Japan wanted to know the fate of these women and demanded freedom of return for them to visit their families in Japan. In these times of a deteriorating humanitarian situation in North Korea, as well as stories of human rights abuses in labour camps, it became more urgent for the Japanese to find out the position of these women. The government began to pressure Pyongyang for information in the early 1990s. However in response North Korea went to the UN Committee on Human Rights to criticise Japan on its failure to deal with the issue of "Comfort Women"¹⁹². This refers to Korean women who were used as sex slaves by the Japanese military during World War II.

After increased pressure from Japan, an agreement was reached on the 10th of September 1997 between Tokyo and Pyongyang on the "Japanese wives" issue and shortly after Japan announced that it was committed to providing considerable aid to North Korea¹⁹³. In a promising move for improved relations, groups of "*nihonjinzuma*" were permitted to visit

¹⁸⁷ Manyin, Mark. Op. cit. p. 14.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 15.

¹⁸⁹ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. Op. cit. p. 4.

¹⁹⁰ Loc cit.

¹⁹¹ Loc cit.

¹⁹² Loc cit.

¹⁹³ Ibid. p. 5.

Japan during 1997 and 1998, however this was disappointed when the North Korean military fired a Taepodong-1 missile over Japanese territorial waters in 1998¹⁹⁴. While the North Korean government claimed that it was launching a satellite into orbit, Japan suspended its contribution of \$1 billion to KEDO and stopped its humanitarian aid to the DPRK¹⁹⁵. Japan also withdrew its offer for normalisation talks, banned chartered flights between Japan and North Korea and purportedly enhanced defence cooperation with South Korea¹⁹⁶. On top of this the Japanese Diet adopted resolutions which condemned the tests and in case of another missile test, parliamentarians prepared legislation which would halt remittances to the North from North Korean residents in Japan and tighten export controls. The Japanese government also took the matter to the UN Security Council, which in turn “expressed its ‘concern and regret’ and urged the North not to make further announced launches”¹⁹⁷. Japan also displayed a position tending towards military containment of North Korea. In August 1999, the Japanese government began joint research into a ballistic missile defence (BMD) system with the US and launched four intelligence satellites. It had also begun to chase North Korea spy ships (“fushinsen”) out of its territorial waters in March 1999¹⁹⁸.

When North Korea’s uranium nuclear programme was revealed in October 2002, Japan sided with the Bush administration in its pressure on North Korea and its policy of multilateral dialogue. In November 2002, Japan joined the US, the European Union and South Korea in voting to suspend shipments of heavy oil fuel to the DPRK¹⁹⁹. Then in 2003, the Japanese government began putting measures in place to restrict exports to North Korea and also had customs, immigration, and the coast guard to increase their safety inspection and searches on North Korean cargo and passenger ships²⁰⁰. Export restrictions were partly the result of the evidence that businesses and organisations run by ethnic North Koreans in Japan were sending important missile parts to the DPRK. It was found that over 90% of the parts used in

¹⁹⁴ Chanlett-Avery, Emma. “North Korea’s Abduction of Japanese Citizens and the Six Party Talks”, *CSR Report for Congress*, Congressional Research Service: Washington, 19 March 2008, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ Hagström, Linus and Söderberg, Marie. *Op. cit.* p. 379-380.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 380.

¹⁹⁷ *Loc cit.*

¹⁹⁸ *Loc cit.*

¹⁹⁹ Manyin, Mark. *Op. cit.* p. 4.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 5.

building North Korea's missiles were smuggled on ships by the *Chosen Soren*, which is an association of ethnic Koreans in Japan²⁰¹.

Breakthrough Talks

Kim Jong-il was interested in improving DPRK relations with Japan, when in 2000 he approached Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori suggesting that Japan and North Korea resolve their issue at a summit between the two countries²⁰². In 2001, Prime Minister Mori sent a delegation to Singapore to meet the North Koreans in secret. It appeared that both sides were willing to compromise on the outstanding issues. However, there was reluctance from within Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and after Prime Minister Mori resigned, the matters were stalled. Soon after Prime Minister Koizumi took over the leadership of Japan, Kim Jong-il once again approached Japan and several secret negotiations were held in September 2001 with MOFA's Hitoshi Tanaka²⁰³. At this time, the Bush administration designated North Korea as part of the "Axis of Evil" and expressed the more hard-line policy of his administration²⁰⁴. North Korea's concern over the aggressive US policy was probably an important factor in Pyongyang looking to improve its relations with Japan. It is believed that one of the reasons why Prime Minister Koizumi agreed to have secret negotiations with Pyongyang was because of his plummet in popularity and he was unsure of his political survival within the LDP²⁰⁵. Koizumi therefore needed a significant policy achievement to improve his public image. When Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang in September 2002 became known, the Japanese public were highly supportive as was shown by a poll conducted by *Asahi Shimbun* where 80% of respondents said they approved of Koizumi's visit. Koizumi's approval rating also increased to 61%²⁰⁶.

²⁰¹ Ibid. p. 6.

²⁰² Wada, Haruki. "Kim Jong-il and the Normalization of Japan-North Korea Relations", *The Asia Pacific Journal*, Vol. 10, Issue 9, No 3, <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Wada-Haruki/3699><http://www.japanfocus.org/-Wada-Haruki/3699>, February 27, 2012, p. 1. (Accessed 14 January 2013)

²⁰³ Loc cit.

²⁰⁴ Loc cit.

²⁰⁵ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. Op. cit. p. 34.

²⁰⁶ Loc cit.

The negotiations eventually resulted in a summit held in Pyongyang between Japan and North Korea on the 17th of September 2002²⁰⁷. Present at the 2002 summit were Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, Hitoshi Tanaka and then Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary (current Prime Minister) Shinzo Abe. Kim Jong-il reportedly said at the beginning of the summit:

*“Together with the Prime Minister, and through our joint determination, we want to open a new page in the history of bilateral relations between the DPRK and Japan.”*²⁰⁸.

In response, Prime Minister Koizumi said that he would “work seriously towards normalization” and requested the “sincere response” of North Korea to the abduction and security issues and he said he wished the meeting would be a “chance to advance Japan-North Korea relations substantially.”²⁰⁹. Prime Minister Koizumi expressed Japan’s “deep remorse and heartfelt apology” for the “tremendous damage and suffering” that Japanese imperialists inflicted on the Korean people²¹⁰. The positive start to these discussions however did not last long. As Prime Minister pushed on the abduction issue, Kim Jong-il admitted that 13 Japanese citizens were abducted by North Korean agents. He said that five of the abductees were still alive and the others had died. Koizumi responded by saying that this news was a “huge shock” and that he “strongly objected”²¹¹. He then demanded that Pyongyang “continue investigation, return the surviving abductees, and ensure they take proper measures to prevent the recurrence of such regrettable acts”²¹². Kim Jong-il claimed that he had no prior knowledge of the abduction and explained the North Korean position saying:

“We have carried out investigations, including internal investigations. Its context is the decades of hostile relations between us, but it is truly an unfortunate incident. I want to talk about it frankly. We have created a special investigation committee, and its conclusion was the report which we have communicated to you. Personally, I think that these incidents took

²⁰⁷ Wada, Haruki. *Op. cit.* p. 1.

²⁰⁸ *Loc cit.*

²⁰⁹ *Loc cit.*

²¹⁰ Wada, Haruki. “Japan-North Korea Relations - A Dangerous Stalemate”, *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 2, <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Wada-Haruki/3176>, 22 June 2009, p. 1. (Accessed 12 September 2012)

²¹¹ Wada, Haruki. *Op. cit.* p. 1.

²¹² *Loc cit.*

place in the 1970s and early 1980s because certain elements in the special agency became impulsive and were carried away by what they considered heroic actions. There are two reasons for their actions. First, in order that North Korean agents could learn the Japanese language; and secondly, so that North Korean agents could travel to the Republic of Korea using other people's identities. Now that I have learned of these things, those who were responsible have been punished. No such incidents will occur again in the future... I want to apologise now; it was regrettable. I will take appropriate measures to prevent it happening again”²¹³.

Pyongyang Declaration

At the end of the summit the two leaders signed the “Pyongyang Declaration”²¹⁴. In this declaration, the North Korean side pledged to extend its suspension on missile testing which was to expire in 2003 and promised that both countries would “abide by all relevant international agreements in order to comprehensively resolve the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula”²¹⁵. These “agreements” are presumed to include the North-South Korean Denuclearisation Declaration of 1992 (prohibiting the possession of uranium enrichment facilities); the nuclear safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of 1992; and the US-DPRK Agreed Framework of 1994, where North Korea was committed to freeze its plutonium nuclear programme²¹⁶. The Declaration included the pledge that both countries would discuss the status of Korean residents in Japan. During the Pyongyang summit, the admissions and concessions made by Kim Jong-il were done most likely expecting a large amount development aid from Japan to help its failing economy. It was estimated that this aid would be between \$5 billion and \$10 billion²¹⁷.

When the public heard of the abductions, there was an outcry. Polls conducted by *Asahi Shimbun* revealed that 76% of the respondents did not think North Korea had settled the abduction issue satisfactorily and a poll conducted by *Yomiuri Shimbun* revealed that 90.6 %

²¹³ Loc cit.

²¹⁴ Manyin, Mark. Op. cit. p. 2.

²¹⁵ Ibid. p. 4.

²¹⁶ Loc cit.

²¹⁷ Loc cit.

of respondent felt that a satisfactory resolution of the abduction issue should be a precondition for the normalisation of Japan-DPRK relations²¹⁸. This made it very difficult for Koizumi's government to move forward in its normalisation talks and to appease the public it had to prioritise the abduction issue.

The Abduction Issue

For the Japanese people, the abductees and their outcome remain the most important issue in dealing with North Korea. For many years, the North Korean government denied their involvement in the kidnappings and they insisted on referring to the abductees as “missing persons”²¹⁹. Most of the abductees were teenagers or in their early twenties. The first abductee was Megumi Yokota who was taken by North Korean agents in November 1977²²⁰. This was the start of a series of at least nine abductions in 1977 and 1978 when Japanese nationals were taken from the coastal parts of Japan and taken to North Korea on boats. There were another three abductions of Keiko Arimoto, Toru Ishioka and Kaoru Matsuki who in the early 1980s were taken from Europe to the DPRK²²¹. There is little known about the circumstances of the abduction of Yaeko Taguchi, however Pyongyang did admit to her kidnapping²²². The reasons for the abductions seem to have been to train North Korean spies in the language and culture of Japan. However as Tessa Morris-Suzuki explains:

*“The apparently senseless campaign of kidnappings becomes slightly more comprehensible if it is seen, not so much as a bizarre method for obtaining language teachers, but rather as linked to dreams of destabilizing Japan (and possibly other Asian countries) via revolutionary cells, composed either of kidnap victims themselves or of North Korean agents who had assumed the identities of the kidnap victims”*²²³.

²¹⁸ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. Op. cit. p. 34.

²¹⁹ Manyin, Mark. Op. cit. p. 7.

²²⁰ Loc cit.

²²¹ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. Op. cit. p. 31.

²²² Loc cit.

²²³ Ibid. p. 32.

Kim Jong-Il's admission and apology, however, did not resolve the issue. The Japanese public were shocked at the number of abductees that had died and there were demands for a full accounting of each victim, particularly from the relatives and conservative groups within the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)²²⁴. Of the eight abductees that were reportedly deceased, the North Korea provided a very brief account – two of the relatively young abductees had died of heart attacks, another of liver cirrhosis, two of poisoning from a heater, one suicide and two by car accidents (even though there are very few cars in North Korea)²²⁵. The Japanese found these explanations implausible and assumed that the eight abductees were still alive. This deception heightened the anger of the Japanese public and bolstered more conservative politicians in their distrust of North Korea²²⁶. After the Pyongyang summit, hard-line politicians in Tokyo started to have more influence over Japan's policy toward North Korea. They took advantage of the anti-North Korean sentiment that was increasing amongst the Japanese public over the abduction issue. The hardliners criticised the more pragmatic people at MOFA for having a naïve approach toward the DPRK²²⁷.

The five abductees were returned to their families in Japan on 15 October 2002. The agreement made between Pyongyang and Tokyo was that the abductees could return to Japan for a short visit but thereafter return to North Korea²²⁸. The return of the abductees was heavily reported on by the media, televising the emotional reunions with their family and friends and became a very popular issue for the Japanese public²²⁹. Problems arose when some of the abductees requested to stay in Japan permanently and there was much debate within parliament over whether to break the agreement with the DPRK. North Korea in fact claimed that the abductees were being held in Japan against their will²³⁰. Another problem that remained was that the abductees had to leave their children behind in North Korea as a condition to visit Japan. The Japanese government demanded Pyongyang allow the abductees' children be sent to Japan to be reunited with their parents, which was immediately

²²⁴ Manyin, Mark. *Op. cit.* p. 7.

²²⁵ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. *Op. cit.* p. 7.

²²⁶ Chanlett-Avery, Emma. *Op. cit.* p. 3.

²²⁷ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. *Op. cit.* p. 36.

²²⁸ *Loc cit.*

²²⁹ Cha, Victor. "Japan-Korea Relations: The Sweet, the Sour, and the Bittersweet", *Comparative Connections*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies: Washington, January 2003, p. 1.

²³⁰ *Loc cit.*

refused²³¹. At the time, the deputy chief of the North Korean Foreign Ministry's Asia Bureau, Pak Ryong Yon said that the abduction issue had been "settled" and that the family members of the abductees would not be allowed to visit Japan any time soon²³². Prime Minister Koizumi responded by refusing to send the abductees back to North Korea. In a meeting on the 24th of October 2003, one of the pragmatists, Hitoshi Tanaka, contended that Japan should adhere to the agreement otherwise North Korea would feel betrayed and Japan would have a more difficult time resolving the abduction issue. However hardliners, such as Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe and Special Advisor to the Cabinet on the Abduction Issue Kyoko Nakayama, disagreed with this argument, saying that once the abductees return to North Korea it was unlikely that they would ever be allowed to return to Japan²³³. They proposed that the five abductees should resettle in Japan and that their children in North Korea should be sent for. As the abductees requested to remain in Japan, Prime Minister Koizumi accepted the hardliner argument. It was suggested by insiders that if Koizumi had allowed the abductees to be taken back to North Korea, he would be forced to resign²³⁴.

During the time of the Koizumi government, there was considerable pressure from politicians and media to make progress on the abduction issue before normalisation could take place. Support groups were formed by relatives of the alleged abductees, which attracted the attention of the Japanese media and thereby were successful in gaining sympathy from the public. The abduction issue had a notable impact on public perception in Japan. Opinion polls were conducted regularly in Japan by Jiji Press Agency, which specifically asked the Japanese public to name the three countries they disliked the most²³⁵. Prior to the 1970s, the countries that topped the list were the Soviet Union, the Republic of Korea (ROK / South Korea) and China. The list changed in the 1970s and 1980s as China and South Korea became more popular. The Soviet Union by contrast decreased in popularity, as did North Korea. By 2006, over 80% of those surveyed named North Korea as one of their most disliked countries²³⁶.

²³¹ Ibid., p. 2.

²³² Manyin, Mark. Op. cit. p. 8.

²³³ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. Op. cit. p. 36.

²³⁴ Loc cit.

²³⁵ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. Op. cit. p. 4..

²³⁶ Loc cit.

Due to the public's overwhelming reaction to the abduction issue, there has been little opposition to the Japanese government's policy. Advocacy groups, such as the Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea and the National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea (NARKN), gained in strength and have been able to have a strong influence within Japan and have become major figures in the media²³⁷. Another reason that this abduction issue has persisted, is that the media has created a "poster child" to appeal to the public's sentiments. The case of Megumi Yokota has received widespread media attention. She was 13 years old when she was kidnapped on her way home from school by North Korea agents²³⁸. Pyongyang claimed that she committed suicide in 1993 and provided Japan with her cremated remains. However it has been proven that the remains did not belong to Megumi²³⁹. Her parents have pushed for the resolution of the issue and looked for widespread support. In 2006, President George W. Bush had a meeting with the Yokotas, and afterwards stated that it was "one of the most moving meetings" he had had since becoming president²⁴⁰. North Korea admitted that Megumi Yokota had a daughter and it has been thought that resolving the fate of Megumi and reuniting the daughter with her grandparents would be a significant stride in improving the Japanese public's perception of North Korea²⁴¹.

The Second Summit

Prime Minister Koizumi paid a second visit to Pyongyang on 22 May 2004, and at a press conference beforehand, Prime Minister Koizumi said that he wanted the summit to be "a chance to normalize the abnormal relations between Japan and North Korea, to change the relationship from hostility to friendship, opposition to cooperation"²⁴². At this time the five abductees had been returned to Japan, yet their families were not allowed to leave North Korea. In response to the failure of progress after the last summit, Kim Jong-il stated:

²³⁷ Chanlett-Avery, Emma. Op. cit. p. 4.

²³⁸ Loc cit.

²³⁹ Loc cit.

²⁴⁰ Loc cit.

²⁴¹ Loc cit.

²⁴² Wada, Haruki. Op. cit. p. 1.

*“Last time, we had thought that the abduction issue was solved since we took courageous measures. But as soon as the Prime Minister returned to Japan there appeared some complex issues. This disappointed us. We had thought that even in democratic societies the leader would have authority; but we were disappointed to learn that the authority of the Prime Minister as the head of the government crumbled so easily”*²⁴³

As Japan had broken the agreement to return the abductees to North Korea, the Japanese negotiators, like MOFA’s Tanaka, found it difficult to get North Korea to consider the idea of having the abductees children sent to Japan²⁴⁴. However Prime Minister Koizumi was able to make progress with Kim Jong-il and by the end of the meeting the North Korean side had agreed to the repatriation of the families of the five abductees and to do a “thorough investigation” into the fate of the other eight supposedly deceased abductees²⁴⁵. In return, Japan would provide North Korea with 250,000 tons of food aid and \$10 million worth of medical supplies²⁴⁶. While this was a major breakthrough, things once again fell apart. In December 2004, in the third round of these bilateral talks, North Korea handed over the remains of Megumi Yokota and after several DNA tests were run, it proved to be the remains of two different people²⁴⁷. The Japanese public and media reacted with anger and called on the government to impose economic sanctions on Pyongyang, and food aid was suspended²⁴⁸

The Rise of Shinzo Abe

Shinzo Abe has had a much experience within Japanese politics and has been one of leading conservative figures. Abe is the grandson of Nobusuke Kishi a former wartime industry minister who was arrested under suspicion of war crimes. Kishi was eventually never charged for the crimes and later became Prime Minister²⁴⁹. Shinzo Abe became the Secretary General of the LDP in September 2003 and he publicly voiced his opinion that Japan should place

²⁴³ Loc cit.

²⁴⁴ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. Op. cit. p. 37.

²⁴⁵ Wada, Haruki. Op. cit. p. 1.

²⁴⁶ Loc cit.

²⁴⁷ Hagström, Linus and Söderberg, Marie. Op. cit. p. 383.

²⁴⁸ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. Op. cit. p. 37.

²⁴⁹ Spitzer, Kirk. “Japan’s Not-Quite-So-Nationalist Leader”, *Time.com*, <http://nation.time.com/2013/01/03/japans-not-quite-so-nationalist-leader/>, 3 January 2013, p. 1. (Accessed 8 January 2013)

more pressure on North Korea to settle the abduction issue and he made it one of his campaign issues for the general election in October 2003²⁵⁰. In October 2005 Shinzo Abe was appointed Chief Cabinet Secretary and it is thought that he was behind the Japanese government initiatives to pressure North Korea and garner support from the US²⁵¹. In September 2006, Shinzo Abe took over from Koizumi as Prime Minister of Japan placing emphasis on nationalism and improving Japan's security environment. Prime Minister Abe also stated that the resolution of the abduction issue was "the most important problem our country faces"²⁵² He explained:

*"There can be no normalization of relations between Japan and North Korea unless the abduction issue is resolved. In order to advance comprehensive measures concerning the abduction issue, I have decided to establish the "Headquarters on the Abduction Issue" chaired by myself, and to assign a secretariat solely dedicated to this Headquarters. Under the policy of dialogue and pressure, I will continue to strongly demand the return of all abductees assuming that they are all still alive."*²⁵³

The "Headquarters on the Abduction Issue" (HAI) had its first meeting in 2006 where it outlined its purpose to "further enhance efforts to raise the awareness of the Japanese people regarding the abduction issue" and to pressure North Korea to return all abductees to Japan immediately and "hand over those who carried out the abductions". It also stated that the government had already imposed a series of economic sanctions against North Korea and it "will consider implementing further measures, in accordance with the future stance adopted by North Korea"²⁵⁴. The HAI's budget increased from 226 million yen in 2006 to 480 million yen in 2007 and then to 667 million yen in 2008²⁵⁵.

When North Korea conducted its first nuclear test on the 9th of October 2006, the Japanese government reacted strongly, condemning Pyongyang for its belligerent behaviour. It then submitted a proposal to the UNSC to ban essentially all economic activity between UN

²⁵⁰ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. Op. cit. p. 37.

²⁵¹ Loc cit.

²⁵² Wada, Haruki. Op. cit. p. 1.

²⁵³ Loc cit.

²⁵⁴ Loc cit.

²⁵⁵ Loc cit.

members and North Korea²⁵⁶. When this proposal was not fully adopted by the UNSC, Japan once again imposed its own unilateral sanctions. The main sanctions that Japan placed against North Korea are prohibiting exports from North Korea to Japan and preventing North Korean vessels to visit Japan²⁵⁷. There have also been reports of harassment of Koreans in Japan who are affiliated with the DPRK by local police and governments, which included many house searches, arrests, the abolishment of tax exemptions for Korean associations and schools within Japan²⁵⁸. The Japanese government also started to increase its defence measures and military capability. Hardliners in the government argued that Japan needed to improve its defence in order to protect itself from the missile and nuclear threat from the DPRK. Prime Minister Abe and Foreign Minister Taro Aso called for an increase in military capability to allow Japan to launch pre-emptive strikes against North Korea's missile facilities²⁵⁹. In July 2006, Japan sped up the development of its ballistic missile defence system and hardliners such as Shoichi Nakagawa, Chairman of the Policy Research Council of the LDP and Foreign Minister Taro Aso supported the argument for "discussion" of Japan acquiring nuclear capabilities²⁶⁰. The North Korean threat made it less difficult to form closer relations with the US that might have previously met with criticism from Japanese nationalists. The defence cooperation with the US was enhanced through the development of the ballistic missile defence system²⁶¹.

In September 2007, Prime Minister Abe resigned and Yasuo Fukuda took over the leadership of Japan. Fukuda stated from the beginning:

"The resolution of issues related to the Korean Peninsula is indispensable for peace and stability in Asia... The abduction issue is a serious human rights issue. We will exert our maximum efforts to realize the earliest return of all the abductees, settle the "unfortunate past," and normalize the relations between Japan and North Korea" ²⁶².

²⁵⁶ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. Op. cit. p. 39.

²⁵⁷ Wada, Haruki. Op. cit. p. 1.

²⁵⁸ Loc cit.

²⁵⁹ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. Op. cit. p. 39.

²⁶⁰ Loc cit.

²⁶¹ Ibid. p. 40.

²⁶² Wada, Haruki. Op. cit. p. 1.

Fukuda was different from Abe in that he made the nuclear issue Japan's top priority yet he also wanted the abduction issue to be solved within the process of the normalisation of relations. During Fukuda's time, the Parliamentarians' League for Promotion of Japan-DPRK Normalisation was established and two meetings were held in June and August 2008, where Head of the Foreign Ministry's Asia Pacific Bureau, Saiki Akitaka negotiated with North Korean Ambassador Song Il-ho²⁶³. The result of these meetings was the re-investigation into the fate of the abductees by the North Koreans and the partial removal of sanctions from Japan's side. However when these negotiations became known to the public, there was such a strong reaction that Japan said it would only remove the sanctions once it had checked the DPRK's results into reinvestigation of the abductees²⁶⁴. North Korea however rejected this condition. When Prime Minister Fukuda resigned in September 2008, all progress on these agreements was lost²⁶⁵.

The Japanese public sentiment has been an incredibly strong force in Japan's policy toward North Korea. Due to the unique type of democracy that Japan has, leadership cannot seem to last long without full public support. It is for this reason that Japanese Prime Ministers have had to keep the abduction issue at the top of their agenda. While this issue has been detrimental to Japan-North Korea relations, it has also had a profound impact on regional relations and the attempts to pressure North Korea to denuclearise through the Six Party Talks.

The Six Party Talks

When the United States became aware of North Korea's plans to develop a nuclear weapons programme using Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU), the Bush administration placed pressure on Japan to forego its attempt at bilateral negotiations with North Korea and move towards multilateral negotiations on the nuclear issue²⁶⁶. China's and Russia's role agreement ultimately helped ensure the talks, which became known as the Six-Party Talks (SPT). The

²⁶³ Loc cit.

²⁶⁴ Loc cit.

²⁶⁵ Loc cit.

²⁶⁶ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. Op. cit. p. 35.

talks included the United States, Japan, South Korea, Russia, China and North Korea²⁶⁷. It is thought that the strength of the relationship between Japan and the US was an influencing factor in getting North Korea to join the Six Party Talks²⁶⁸. As North Korea was dealing with Prime Minister Koizumi, who was open to negotiations, and an increasingly tough Bush administration, Kim Jong-il may have looked to have Japan mediate between North Korea and the US. The relationship between the US and Japan was particularly strong during this period due to the close relationship between Prime Minister Koizumi and President Bush. However once Koizumi left office, its relationship within the Six Party Talks became less effective and China took a leading role within these negotiations²⁶⁹.

The Six-Party Talk's agenda was the "complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement (CVID) of the North Korean nuclear weapons programme, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the future role of peaceful nuclear energy, security guarantees and economic aid, and the use of sanctions and force"²⁷⁰. There were three rounds of the Six-Party Talks between August 2003 and June 2004, however little headway was made. One of the main problems in making progress within the Six Party Talks is that each party has different goals, which have also changed over time, making the matter far more complicated²⁷¹. The Japanese stance has particularly been a major obstacle in the Six Party Talks as it placed the utmost importance on the abduction issue above a nuclear deal, and at times has refused to partake in the obligations of agreements²⁷². The Six Party Joint Statement emphasises the importance of improved Japan-North Korea relations. Therefore in order for the Six Party Talks to be successful, the abduction issue would have to be settled²⁷³. The US is obliged to support Japan in this matter, therefore it cannot be put aside, nor can Japan be asked to leave the talks.

²⁶⁷ Romberg, Alan & Soeya, Yoshihide. "Introduction" in *North Korea: Challenges for the US-Japan Alliance*, Tatsumi, Yuki (ed.), Stimson Centre: Wahsington, March 2011, p. 2.

²⁶⁸ Furukawa, Katsuhisa. "Japan-US Cooperation on North Korea: Regional Perspectives", in *North Korea: Challenges for the US-Japan Alliance*, Tatsumi, Yuki (ed.), Henry L. Stimson Centre: Washington, March 2011, p. 45.

²⁶⁹ Loc cit.

²⁷⁰ Hagström, Linus and Söderberg, Marie. Op. cit. p. 382.

²⁷¹ Furukawa, Katsuhisa. Op. cit. p. 44.

²⁷² Wada, Haruki. Op. cit. p. 1.

²⁷³ Snyder, Scott. "North Korea: A Catalyst for Policy Coordination between the United States and Japan", in *North Korea: Challenges for the US-Japan Alliance*, Tatsumi, Yuki (ed.), Henry L. Stimson Centre: Washington, March 2011, p. 79.

The first round of the Six Party Talks was held in August 2003 in Beijing, where Japan said it was willing to give economic assistance to North Korea. However, this was dependent on diplomatic normalisation between the two countries, which in turn was dependent on the resolution of abduction issue and the DPRK's missile development²⁷⁴. Another issue that has arisen has been the accusation by Japanese relatives and support groups that North Korea agents were also behind the disappearance of nearly one hundred other cases of missing Japanese. During the talks in August 2003, the Japanese delegation asked North Korea to account for 10 other allegedly knapped individuals²⁷⁵. However at this stage Japan was still flexible enough for some progress to be made in the first round.

The second round of talks took place in February 2004. The nuclear issue had once again emerged as a US delegation visited North Korea soon after the Koizumi-Kim meeting and stated its suspicion that Pyongyang had started a secret nuclear programme using highly enriched uranium (HEU)²⁷⁶. The use of HEU was thought to be in dispute with the Agreed Framework and therefore the US, South Korea and Japan halted oil deliveries to Pyongyang as retaliation. North Korea responded by stating that the Agreed Framework was dead and once again made a decision to leave the IAEA Nuclear Safeguards Agreement and the NPT (NSA). Pyongyang then restarted its old plutonium- based nuclear programme²⁷⁷. North Korea refused to participate in the talks from August 2004 and facing US criticism in February 2005, the North Korean government declared itself a “nuclear weapons state”²⁷⁸. The Six-Party Talks were managed to be restarted in July 2005 and in September 2005, at the fourth Round of the Six Party Talks, the members reached an “Agreed Statement of Principles”²⁷⁹. Concerning Japan, the agreement stated that North Korea and Japan should “take steps to normalize [bilateral] relations in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration, on the basis of the settlement of unfortunate past and the outstanding issue of concern.”²⁸⁰. North Korea was thereby obliged to settle the abduction issue.

²⁷⁴ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. *Op. cit.* p. 35.

²⁷⁵ Manyin, Mark. *Op. cit.* p. 8.

²⁷⁶ Hagström, Linus and Söderberg, Marie. *Op. cit.* p. 381.

²⁷⁷ *Loc cit.*

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 382.

²⁷⁹ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. *Op. cit.* p. 38.

²⁸⁰ *Loc cit.*

In November 2005, at the fifth round of the Six Party Talks, the Japanese delegation suggested that two working groups should be created - one for the nuclear issue and the second for energy and economic assistance²⁸¹. However these negotiations were stalled when North Korea refused to return to the talks due to unilateral sanctions from the US. As no progress was made on the abduction issue, the Japanese government started to place economic pressure on Pyongyang and in February 2006 it looked at imposing unilateral sanctions on North Korea²⁸². Then in July 2006, North Korea tested seven missiles, one of which was a Taepodong-2 missile with a range of 3,500 to 6,000 kilometres²⁸³. The Japanese government reacted immediately by introducing nine countermeasures. This included the prohibition of a North Korean vessel, the Man Gyong Bong 92, from entering Japanese ports, as it was suspected that it was the carrier of goods and money from Japan to North Korea²⁸⁴. Then at an unofficial UNSC meeting, Japan presented a draft binding resolution, which would require other UN members to impose further economic sanctions on the DPRK. When the final resolution fell short of the level of sanctions that Japan desired, it imposed its own additional economic sanctions²⁸⁵. The missile test was finally condemned by the UNSC through the UNSC Resolution 1695 of October 2006²⁸⁶. While the test was not judged as highly successful by experts outside North Korea, it did show that the DPRK was moving towards offensive capability.

In February 2007, progress was made in the Six Party Talks as one of the five working groups was dedicated to the bilateral issues between Japan and North Korea. The group was aimed at settling “outstanding issues of concern”, which can be inferred as the abduction issue and Japan’s payment of compensation for its colonisation of Korea²⁸⁷. However the two rounds of meetings held in Vietnam and Mongolia made very little progress. Delegating the abduction issue to a separate working group suggests the importance of the issue as well as the impact it was having on preventing other negotiations from moving forward. On the 13th of February 2007, the third session of the fifth round of the Six Party Talks was held. At this meeting, the actions for implementing “Agreement on Principles” from 2005 were accepted

²⁸¹ Loc cit.

²⁸² Ibid. p. 40.

²⁸³ Hagström, Linus and Söderberg, Marie. Op. cit. p. 383-384.

²⁸⁴ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. Op. cit. p. 39.

²⁸⁵ Loc cit.

²⁸⁶ Romberg, Alan & Soeya, Yoshihide. Op. cit. p. 2.

²⁸⁷ Chanlett-Avery, Emma. Op. cit. p. 5.

by all members. One of these actions was giving North Korea 50,000 tons of heavy oil in exchange for Pyongyang shutting down and sealing its Yongbyong nuclear facility²⁸⁸. The US also pledged to take steps to full normalisation of its relations with North Korea, starting by taking North Korea off of its list of states that sponsor terrorism, which it did the following year on 11 October 2008²⁸⁹. However Japan refused to abide by the agreement and would not provide its share of the heavy oil to North Korea. Japan tried to gain leverage in the talks by increasing the cost for the other members. North Korea responded by saying that Japan should not remain in the Six Party Talks²⁹⁰.

Towards the end of 2008, the whole Six Part Talks process went off the rails. When Barack Obama took over the US presidency he looked to resume dialogue with North Korea and restart the Six Party Talks process²⁹¹. However in April 2009, North Korea tested a ICBM, only to be once again condemned through the UNSC President's Statement on 13 April 2009. North Korea's response was to stage a second nuclear test on 25 May 2009, which was condemned in UNSC Resolution 1874 on 12 June 2009²⁹². This nuclear test showed how North Korea had developed a more sophisticated plutonium-based nuclear weapon²⁹³. The DPRK later revealed that it was also capable of uranium enrichment and that it now had two paths to create nuclear weapons²⁹⁴.

The Obama administration tried to get the Six Party Talks going again, by sending Special Representative Stephen W. Bosworth to Pyongyang in December 2009. While it seemed some progress was made, this came to an abrupt halt in March 2010 when North Korea sank the South Korean warship *Cheonan* and later shelled South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island²⁹⁵. Currently, the future of the Six Party Talks does not look bright. It appears North Korea has used the forum when it is in need of aid, but has never really had any intention of giving up its nuclear deterrent.

²⁸⁸ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. Op. cit. p. 40.

²⁸⁹ Loc cit.

²⁹⁰ Wada, Haruki. Op. cit. p. 1.

²⁹¹ Romberg, Alan & Soeya, Yoshihide. Op. cit. p. 2.

²⁹² Loc cit.

²⁹³ Revere, Evans. "Re-Engaging North Korea After Kim Jong-il's Death: Last, Best Hope or Dialogue to Nowhere?", *Foreign Policy at Brookings*, Policy Paper, No. 29, The Brookings Institution: Washington, 29 January 2012, p. 8.

²⁹⁴ Loc cit.

²⁹⁵ Romberg, Alan & Soeya, Yoshihide. Op. cit. p. 2.

Recent Relations

In 2010, North Korea was the main source of Japan's 10 most important foreign news items, according to the yearend survey by *Yomiuri Shimbun*. Three of the top stories were the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island; Kim Jong-un's appointment to a top position in North Korea's military and the sinking of the South Korean Navy vessel *Cheonan*²⁹⁶. In Japanese politics in 2010, the policies of Hatoyama and Kan of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) towards North Korea differed very little from the previous more hawkish policies of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Both the administrations of Hatoyama and Kan pushed for the resolution of the abduction issue and the halting of North Korea's nuclear and missile programmes²⁹⁷. They also kept various sanctions in place from the previous administrations. Prime Minister Naoto Kan had a more pragmatic approach to foreign policy and security issues, however he still held strong views on North Korea and during his leadership he worked to tighten control over remittances sent to North Korea and pushed through legislation to enforce UNSC Resolution 1974 by having the Japan Coast Guard inspect North Korean cargo ships in international waters²⁹⁸.

It was not long before the DPJ began to lose public support and the conservative LDP started to make its way back to power²⁹⁹. In December 2012, Shinzo Abe was once again appointed Prime Minister. He is known for his hard-line views on North Korea and his many years of political experience and it will be interesting to see how his leadership pans out as he looks to deal with the new North Korean leadership of Kim Jon-un, who has just over a year of experience. The next chapter will look at specifically at the current leadership of Japan and North Korea and the future of their policies towards each other and the region.

²⁹⁶ Kang, David & Lee, Ji-Young. "Japan-Korea Relations: The New Cold War in Asia", *Comparative Connections*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies: Washington, January 2011, p. 1.

²⁹⁷ Loc cit.

²⁹⁸ Furukawa, Katsuhisa. Op. cit. p. 50.

²⁹⁹ Loc cit.

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<http://nation.time.com/2013/01/03/japans-not-quite-so-nationalist-leader/>, 3 January 2013.
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Accessed 12 September 2012 11:42

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<http://www.japanfocus.org/-Wada-Haruki/3699><http://www.japanfocus.org/-Wada-Haruki/3699>, February 27, 2012. (Accessed 14 January 2013)

Chapter 4

Leadership Moving Forward

Currently the relations between Japan and North Korea are at an extremely tense point. With the uncertainty and lack of clarity over the new leadership in North Korea, led by Kim Jong-un, and the return of the well-known and hard-line Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, it will be particularly interesting to see how this situation evolves. This chapter will look specifically at the two current leaders and their emerging policies and the prospects for future relations. It will begin by looking at the enigmatic figure of Kim Jong-un, his style of leadership that is emerging, and how this looks to influence North Korean behaviour for the foreseeable future. The chapter will then look at the Japanese political situation and the leadership of Shinzo Abe. It will look at how his policies have changed and what this could mean for Japan's approach towards North Korea.

The Emergence of Kim Jong-un

In August 2008, Kim Jong-il disappeared from public eye for a long period and had reportedly suffered a stroke³⁰⁰. This was the beginning of a period of anticipation for the US, the ROK and Japan, as they spotted the possibility for sudden change in North Korea. There were many assumptions of what would happen after the death of Kim Jong-il, ranging from a smooth transition to a designated successor to a power vacuum and the violent struggle for leadership which could cause state collapse³⁰¹. This uncertainty started to disappear when the world began to see the sudden rise of Kim Jong-il's youngest son, Kim Jong-un. Since Kim Jong-il's stroke in 2008, it seemed that the succession of Kim Jong-un was carefully planned. From 2009 to 2010, the leadership in Pyongyang began to boost Kim Jong-un's position. Even though Kim Jong-un never served in the military, he was made a four-star general in September 2010 and became Deputy Chairman of the party's Central Military

³⁰⁰ Stares, Paul & Wit, Joel. *Preparing for Sudden Change in North Korea*, Council Special Report No. 42, Council on Foreign Relations: New York, January 2009, p. 4.

³⁰¹ Loc cit.

Commission³⁰². There were also suggestions made retrospectively that Kim Jong-un was partly responsible for the sinking of the South Korean warship, the *Cheonan*, as well as the shelling of Yeongpeong Island³⁰³. There was an obvious need to give Kim Jong-un credentials in order to make him a legitimate candidate for the leadership of the DPRK.

On the 17th of December 2011, Kim Jong-il was reported to have died from a heart-attack – the result of overwork for the sake of his people³⁰⁴. His son Kim Jong-un immediately took over as the supreme leader of the DPRK and the keeper of the Kim family dynasty. Kim Jong-un has been the source of much speculation by outside observers simply because very little is known about him. He has only very recently come out into the spotlight. His exact age is not known, except that he is in his twenties, which is very young for leader³⁰⁵. At the start, Kim Jong-un was considered by many foreign experts to lack experience and unable to handle the responsibility of being North Korea’s leader³⁰⁶. However over 2012, Kim Jong-un worked hard to establish himself as a legitimate leader. This culminated with the successful rocket launch in December 2012 and at the anniversary of his father’s death, when the head of the military’s political division, Choe Ryong-hae, declared: “*Kim Jong-un is North Korea’s fate and future*”³⁰⁷.

Prospects for Change

Outside observers grew hopeful with this new leader as he studied in Switzerland and had become fond of certain aspects of Western culture³⁰⁸. Kim Jong-un was exposed to Western influences and a well-functioning, affluent society when he studied in Switzerland. One would assume he has seen the benefits of an open, democratic country and it was hoped that

³⁰² Aoki, Naoko. “North Korea’s Third Kim: Will Anything Change?”, *World Affairs Journal*, <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/korea%E2%80%99s-third-kim-will-anything-change>, March/April 2012, p. 1. (Accessed 12 November 2012)

³⁰³ Loc cit.

³⁰⁴ Hancocks, Paula. “A Year at Helm, Kim Jong Un Asserts Himself”, *CNN*, http://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/17/world/asia/kim-jong-un-review/index.html?hpt=hp_t3http://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/17/world/asia/kim-jong-un-review/index.html?hpt=hp_t3, 17 December 2012, p. 1. (Accessed 20 December 2012)

³⁰⁵ Loc cit.

³⁰⁶ Loc cit.

³⁰⁷ Loc cit.

³⁰⁸ Aoki, Naoko. Op. cit. p. 1.

he would naturally be a reformer. These hopes were sparked soon after Kim Jong-un took power when he spoke of improving the economy and standard of living for North Koreans³⁰⁹. He stated that the “Party is determined our people will not have to tighten their belts but will enjoy wealth and the honor of socialism”³¹⁰. Kim Jong-un also called on the Cabinet and State Planning Commission to devise a plan to deal with the problems of land management as well as to guard the country’s natural resources³¹¹. He then has also sent delegations to Southeast Asia looking for foreign investment. On top of this, in April 2012 Pyongyang kept defence at 15.8% of the total state budget, which suggested that Kim Jong-un was not completely focused on maintaining his father’s “military-first” policy³¹². There were also signs that change was occurring in Kim Jong-un’s new rule, when in July 2012 the DPRK’s top general Ri Yong-ho, was fired from his position. In July 2012, it was announced that Kim Jong-un had been given the title of Marshal and that Vice Marshal Ri Yong-ho had been removed from his position³¹³. This came as a surprise to observers as Ri was a powerful figure and it suggested the possibility of a power play within the new leadership. Some also suggested that the Kim family might be distancing itself from the military³¹⁴.

These signs for change have most likely been misleading and the lack of transparency in Pyongyang makes it very difficult to interpret the reality of the situation. It does seem unlikely that there are true prospects for change. Kim Jong-un is facing a deeply entrenched system, which has maintained its power structures for many decades³¹⁵. In order to have legitimacy as leader, Kim Jong-un would be following by continuing his father’s legacy. Kim Jong-un is supported by the two key bodies in the DPRK, the Worker’s Party of North Korea and the military, for the basic reason that he is the son of Kim Jong-il³¹⁶. If Kim Jong-un looked at reformation it would threaten the power of these bodies, and they would therefore

³⁰⁹ Ascione, Ben. “Kim Jong-un and the Future of North Korean Reform”, *East Asia Forum*, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/10/20/kim-jong-un-and-the-future-of-north-korean-reform/>, 20 October 2012, p. 1. (Accessed 5 November 2012)

³¹⁰ Hancocks, Paula. *Op. cit.* p. 1.

³¹¹ Ascione, Ben. *Op. cit.* p. 1.

³¹² Gause, Ken. “The Army of Un”, *Foreign Policy*, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/07/18/an_army_of_un, 18 July 2012, p. 1. (Accessed 12 November 2012)

³¹³ *Loc cit.*

³¹⁴ *Loc cit.*

³¹⁵ Revere, Evans. “Re-Engaging North Korea After Kim Jong-il’s Death: Last, Best Hope or Dialogue to Nowhere?”, *Foreign Policy at Brookings*, Policy Paper, No. 29, The Brookings Institution: Washington, 29 January 2012, p. 14.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.* p.5.

retract their support for him. For the moment there definitely seems to be continuity in the rule of North Korea. Regarding the “military-first” policy, right after Kim Jong-il’s death the Korean Central News Agency announced that it would be given “steady continuity at all times” under the new heir³¹⁷. There also seems to be continuity in foreign policy as soon after the death of Kim Jong-il, the National Defence Commission said that “the foolish politicians” from other countries “should not expect any change from us”³¹⁸. As argued by Han Park of the University of Georgia’s Centre for the Study of Global Issues, Kim Jong-un has shown signs of wanting to improve North Korea’s economic growth but he is trapped by his father’s “military first” policy and he does not yet have the political clout to change this policy³¹⁹.

As Revere states:

*“We do not know if he will be able to dominate the decision-making and policy-making process, as his father and grandfather did. It is not hard to imagine that he will be more, not less, dependent on the “security” that nuclear weapons provide against real or imagined threats and that he will have to tread carefully in dealing with entrenched military and security bureaucracies”*³²⁰.

Through shows of military bravado, such as the December 2012 rocket launch and the February 2013 nuclear test, Kim Jong-un may be trying to win support and legitimacy from the top figures in the military hoping to influence them in the future. Kim Jong-un may have plans for reform but it seems unlikely that he will be able to change North Korea’s policies anytime soon. These ideas for reform may also fade over time as he becomes used to his prestige and way of life.

Kim Jong-un’s Leadership Style

³¹⁷ Aoki, Naoko. Op. cit. p. 1.

³¹⁸ Loc cit.

³¹⁹ Basu, Moni. “Experts: Rocket Launch Bolsters North Korean Leader”, *CNN*, http://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/16/world/asia/northkorealeader/index.html?hpt=ias_t2http://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/16/world/asia/north-korea-leader/index.html?hpt=ias_t2, 17 December 2012, p. 1. (Accessed 20 December 2012)

³²⁰ Ibid. p. 13-14.

There are big differences between Kim Jong-il's and Kim Jong-un's rise to leadership. When Kim Jong-il took over leadership after the death of his father he was already 52 years old and well respected within the party and military³²¹. His father had gradually transferred power to him before his death and Kim Jong-il had already started carrying out many of the functions of government before he became leader. Kim Jong-un however was prepared for his position in a relatively short period of time³²². Kim Jong-un's legitimacy as leader is dependent on the legacy of his father and grandfather, and it can be reasonably assumed that in his inexperience he is being guided by powerful figures in the Kim family, the Workers' Party of North Korea and in the military³²³. The figures that are most likely influencing Kim Jong-un include Jang Song-taek, his uncle and Vice Chairman of the National Defence Commission as well as Kim Kyong-hui, Kim Jong-il's sister, who was also promoted during the succession process³²⁴. Within the military there are also three powerful figures, Vice Marshal Ri Yong-ho (head of the general staff of the military), Vice Marshal Kim Yong-chun (minister of the People's Armed Forces), and General O Kuk-ryol (former head of the general staff who has long been connected with the Kim family)³²⁵. With such powerful, experienced figures keeping their place among the elite, there will likely be a long period of consolidation during Kim Jong-un's leadership before his own policies become known to the outside world.

In order to consolidate his power, he will need political ideology behind him. According to Victor Cha, Kim Jong-un has been associating himself with his grandfather's original concept of *juche*.

*"For juche, the priority was on man making his own history by showing complete loyalty to the leader so that Korea could be non-subservient to outside powers and could progress to the final phase of human development, which was defined as unification of the peninsula under Kim Il-sung"*³²⁶.

³²¹ Aoki, Naoko. *Op. cit.* p. 1.

³²² *Loc cit.*

³²³ *Loc cit.*

³²⁴ *Loc cit.*

³²⁵ *Loc cit.*

³²⁶ Cha, Victor. *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*. The Bodley Head: London. 2012, p. 38.

The importance of this ideology in the present day is that it has started to make a greater appearance since the death of Kim Jong-il in 2011. In his book *The Impossible State*, Victor Cha calls it the “*neojuche* revivalism”, as the next generation of leadership is bringing back the propaganda of the 1960s and 1970s³²⁷. This form of *juche* continues to preach of strict loyalty to the leadership, yet it rejects the attempts at reform that were made by Kim Jong-il from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s³²⁸. These are now seen as mistakes that only worked to undermine the prosperity of the DPRK. “*Neojuche* revivalism” also emphasises the “military-first” policy (“*sŏn ’gun*”), as well as promoting the proliferation of nuclear weapons which is related to the North Korea achieving its desired goal, “*kangsŏng tae ’guk*” (“rich nation, strong army”)³²⁹. When I participated in a meeting on the 23rd of September 2012 with the North Korean Ambassador of South Africa, he told me of the importance of the “rifle philosophy, which is the basic principle that forms the foundation of the *sŏn ’gun* idea” and it is this philosophy that will “defend the destiny of the country”³³⁰. He also mentioned that in April 2012 Kim Jong-un published a work called “Let Us Brilliantly Accomplish the Revolutionary Cause of Juche, Holding the Great Comrade Kim Jong Il in High Esteem”³³¹. Kim Jong-un certainly does not seem to be moving away from his forefather’s ideology and it appears that he is using it as a tool to cement his authority. It has even been noted that Kim Jong-un has based his appearance on Kim Il-sung, including his haircut, and Mao suit. It appears Kim Jong-un is not taking after the image of his father, but emulating his grandfather both in physical appearance and also his interactions with the general public:

*“The third-generation Kim has been shown putting his arms around soldiers, walking arm-in-arm with them, and even putting his hand up to a person’s cheek. The pictures convey a more personal and caring image than any of Kim Jong-il.”*³³²

³²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 58.

³²⁸ *Loc cit.*

³²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 59.

³³⁰ Interview with the North Korean Ambassador to South Africa. The University of the Witwatersrand. 23 September 2012.

³³¹ *Loc cit.*

³³² Aoki, Naoko. *Op. cit.* p. 1.

A Strong Leader

Kim Jong-un has recently shown tougher behaviour, more reminiscent of the Kim dynasty in defying outside pressure. On 15 April 2012, the DPRK launched a rocket to coincide with the 100th anniversary of grandfather King Il-sung's birth³³³. This rocket flew over southern Japan³³⁴. The 100th anniversary of Kim Il-sung in 2012 was very important as it was the date by which Kim Jong-il promised North Korea would become a "strong and prosperous nation"³³⁵. As the deadline was missed, it was necessary for a great event like a satellite launch (or missile test) to prove North Korea's strength. During Kim Jong-un's first national address for the 100th anniversary, he stated that "the time has gone forever when enemies threatened and intimidated us with atomic bombs"³³⁶. The failure of the launch was likely very embarrassing for Kim Jong-un as the entire world watched his first major act as leader of the DPRK. However, Kim Jong-un was determined to prove himself and in December 2012, the DPRK launched a long-range Unha-3 rocket which sent a satellite into orbit. While North Korea claimed that the rocket launch was purely to put a satellite into orbit, the US, the ROK and Japan said that it was a cover for a missile test and condemned the action³³⁷. This marked a significant victory for Kim Jong-un's legitimacy as supreme leader, especially coming just before the first anniversary of Kim Jong-il's death on 17 December 2012. This was particularly important as the launch was a continuation of a project started by Kim Jong-il and may have been a way to show honor to his father's memory and to his dynastic succession³³⁸. It was also an important victory for North Korea, as South Korea has not yet launched a satellite into space³³⁹.

After the rocket launch on 12 December 2012, the UNSC unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the test as violation of the prohibition of nuclear and missile activity and it imposed further sanctions on the DPRK. Most interestingly, this resolution was supported by North Korea's ally, China. The reaction from Pyongyang to this resolution was strong as it

³³³ Basu, Moni. *Op. cit.* p. 1.

³³⁴ BBC News. "North Korea plans third nuclear test", *BBC Asia-Pacific News*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21175466>, 24 January 2013, p. 1. (Accessed 24 January 2013)

³³⁵ Revere, Evans. *Op. cit.* p. 10.

³³⁶ Gause, Ken. *Op. cit.* p. 1.

³³⁷ Hancocks, Paula. *Op. cit.* p. 1.

³³⁸ Basu, Moni. *Op. cit.* p. 1.

³³⁹ *Loc cit.*

vowed to “counter the U.S. hostile policy with strength, not with words,” and that North Korea will continue to “bolster the military capabilities for self-defense including the nuclear deterrence”³⁴⁰. North Korea’s Foreign Ministry made another statement saying that there can be “talks for peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula and the region in the future, but no talks for the denuclearization of the peninsula”³⁴¹. Two days after the release of the UNSC resolution, North Korea’s National Defence Commission announced that it would proceed with its third nuclear test. It made its intentions clear by stating:

*“We do not hide that the various satellites and long-range rockets we will continue to launch, as well as the high-level nuclear test we will proceed with, are aimed at our arch-enemy, the United States”*³⁴²

On 12 February 2013, Pyongyang conducted the promised third nuclear test. The KCNA news agency said it was “carried out at a high level in a safe and perfect manner using a miniaturised and lighter nuclear device with greater explosive force than previously”³⁴³. The statement released by the DPRK said that the test was in response to the “reckless hostility of the United States”³⁴⁴. Once again this situation showed how the Balance-of-Threat theory comes into play. The test has been perceived as highly threatening, particularly by Japan, as the test has very likely brought North Korea closer to producing a miniaturised nuclear warhead that can be mounted on a missile³⁴⁵. This situation is causing the strengthening of the alliance in opposition to North Korea. Immediately following the test, US President Obama contacted the South Korea President Lee Myung-bak and there were also talks between Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the South Korean president. President Obama’s statement in response to the test was:

³⁴⁰ Associated Press. “Japan, North Korea Hold First Talks in 4 Years Amid Hopes of a Fresh Approach from Pyongyang”, *The Washington Post Online*, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/japan-north-korea-hold-first-talks-in-4-years-amid-hopes-of-a-fresh-approach-from-pyongyang/2012/08/29/37f1fafc-f1a0-11e1-b74c-84ed55e0300b_story.html, 29 August 2012, p. 1. (Accessed 12 September 2012)

³⁴¹ Loc cit.

³⁴² BBC News. “North Korea plans third nuclear test”, *BBC Asia-Pacific News*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21175466>, 24 January 2013, p. 1. (Accessed 24 January 2013)

³⁴³ BBC News. “Obama: Nuclear Test ‘Isolates North Korea Further’”, *BBC Asia-Pacific News*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21437876>, 13 February 2013., p. 1. (Accessed 13 February 2013)

³⁴⁴ Loc cit.

³⁴⁵ Loc cit.

*“Provocations of the sort we saw last night will only isolate them further as we stand by our allies, strengthen our own missile defence and lead the world in taking firm action in response to these threats”*³⁴⁶

China has started to distance itself from its ally and supported the UN condemnation of the test³⁴⁷. China was also in opposition to the December 2012 rocket launch. China’s behaviour shows how states distance themselves from alliance when its ally compromises its national interests more than the opposing threat (i.e. the US-Japan-ROK alliance).

Kim Jong-un Going Forward

There are elements of the outside world creeping into North Korea, which could suggest the potential for change to come from the people instead of the leadership. One example is that of markets, where it has been found that 60% of North Koreans who have recently defected said that they got their food from unofficial markets outside of the government’s ration system³⁴⁸. These markets have emerged due to the food shortages that started to occur in the 1990s. There has also been an increase in North Koreans using cell phones, which is currently estimated at 1 million subscribers and an increased use of the internet³⁴⁹. While there is strong censorship of content, other countries such as China have shown how this can lead to threats against the government stronghold. As Cha states:

*“New leadership exercising a more rigid ideology seeks greater control over an increasingly independently-minded society and disgruntled elements of the military. This is not sustainable. With true reform, North Korea would open itself up to foreign influences and create an immediate spiral of expectations in its society that it could not control. Which is exactly why ... it's just not going to happen”*³⁵⁰

³⁴⁶ Loc cit.

³⁴⁷ Loc cit.

³⁴⁸ Cha, Victor. “Kim Jong-Un Is No Reformer”, *Foreign Policy*, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/08/21/kim_jong_un_is_no_reformer, 21 August 2012, p. 3. (Accessed 12 November 2012)

³⁴⁹ Loc cit.

³⁵⁰ Loc cit.

It is becoming evident that Kim Jong-un will continue on the same path as his grandfather and father. He may have had reforms in mind, and may still, but in order to maintain his position and legitimacy he cannot afford to deviate away from the well-worn path. As long as the US-Japan-ROK alliance still poses a threat, the DPRK will continue to be rebellious and use provocations to seek economic rewards. The effect of propaganda may also continue to last for quite a while. As long as US troops remain in South Korea and Japan and hold regular military exercises, it is not difficult to convince the population that they are under threat³⁵¹. The situation in the region makes it quite easy for Pyongyang to make villains of their democratic opponents and emphasize their ‘imperialist’ natures. The only other prospects of change in North Korea is a possible backlash from powerful military and party figures against Kim Jong-un followed by a power struggle³⁵². However it is becoming obvious that Kim Jong-un is playing it safe and sticking with decisions that will not anger the military or the party.

Japan’s Response to Kim Jong-un

Japan’s Ministry of Defence released a report in March 2012 talking about the uncertainty of the future of the Korean Peninsula, as a new young leader looks to consolidate his power by continuing to develop nuclear and ballistic missile technology³⁵³. The report states that it is “entirely unclear whether a young leader short of experience and charisma can, over the longer term, cement the foundations of the regime by securing the support of the military, maintaining internal stability, reviving the economy and achieving a favorable shift in external relations”³⁵⁴. It goes on to say that this uncertainty “marks a potential new level of danger for regional security” and raised the fear that the DPRK has possibly succeeded in

³⁵¹ Ascione, Ben. Op. cit. p. 1.

³⁵² Loc cit.

³⁵³ Olsen, Kelly. “Pyongyang’s New Leader, Nuclear Policy Worry Tokyo”, *Wall Street Journal Asia*, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304177104577311333691064456.html?mod=googlenews_wsj, 29 March 2012, p. 1. (Accessed 30 March 2012)

³⁵⁴ Loc cit.

nuclear miniaturisation which would allow North Korea to mount its nuclear weapons on its ballistic missiles³⁵⁵. This only increases Japan's perception of threat from North Korea.

In August 2012, there was a positive sign in Japanese-North Korean relations. Early in August the Red Cross societies from both Japan and North Korea met in China to discuss the return of the remains of Japanese soldiers, and later a Japanese delegation went to Pyongyang to request the return of the remains of the relatives who died during World War II on the Peninsula³⁵⁶. These government-to-government talks were the first in four years. Japan was particularly hopeful that Kim Jong-un was looking to take a less confrontational approach in his foreign policy. The talks were described as preliminary discussion which would hopefully lead to fully-fledged official talks with a broader agenda³⁵⁷. Chief Cabinet Secretary of Japan Osamu Fujimura said before the talks: "We have been working based on the principle of settling the unfortunate past and on restoring normal relations"³⁵⁸. Japan once again looked to have the abduction issue placed on this agenda. While the talks were an opportunity for improvement, after the recent missile and nuclear tests, as well as changes within the Japanese government, it is unlikely that anything will come of these meetings.

The Return of Shinzo Abe

On 16 December 2012, Shinzo Abe led his conservative party, the LDP, to victory in the election. The LDP is very familiar to the Japanese public as the party has been in power for the majority of Japan's post-war history, only recently losing power in 2009 to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)³⁵⁹. Within the Diet, Abe is still labelled as a hawk and a historical revisionist. Abe stated that he would lead a fundamental review of Japan's security and defence and he also emphasised above all the importance of collective defence³⁶⁰. Abe is still very much in support of the security alliance with the US and its increasing security

³⁵⁵ Loc cit.

³⁵⁶ Associated Press. Op. cit. p. 1.

³⁵⁷ Loc cit.

³⁵⁸ Al Jazeera. "Japan and N Korea hold talks in Beijing", *Al Jazeera Online*, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2012/08/201282953932178501.html>, 29 August 2012, p. 1. (Accessed 12 September 2012)

³⁵⁹ Rahil, Siti. "Abe Seen Pursuing Strong Yet Pragmatic Foreign Policy", *The Japan Times*, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20130105a6.html>, 5 January 2013, p. 1. (Accessed 8 January 2013)

³⁶⁰ Talmadge, Eric. "Abe Bid to Boost Military This Time Around May Resonate", *The Japan Times*, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121226f1.html>, 26 December 2012. (Accessed 8 January 2012)

cooperation with South Korea. Abe said it was necessary to increase the capabilities of the Self Defence Forces (SDF) to be able to support the US in military engagement³⁶¹. In his election campaign Abe stated: “With the U.S. defence budget facing big cuts, a collapse of the military balance of power in Asia could create instability”³⁶². He emphasised that he would look to improve the collective defence issue. In strengthening diplomatic relations, Abe has sent envoys to meet South Korea’s president elect Park Geun-hye to convey the message that “South Korea is Japan's most important neighbouring country”³⁶³. Abe also said that Japan wanted to make a good start in building better bilateral relations, especially with the new government in South Korea³⁶⁴. Park responded that she desired a conciliatory and cooperative partnership, particularly with regards to the North Korean issue³⁶⁵.

A Revisionist?

Japanese conservatives have for a long time looked to revise Article 9 of the constitution. However they have continued to meet opposition from those within the Diet as well as the public and the media. In 2007, Prime Minister Abe spoke of the need for a “new era” where Japan takes a larger role in global security³⁶⁶. In his first term as Prime Minister, Abe made the revision of the constitution one of his main priorities, even though it was opposed by China and South Korea³⁶⁷. When speaking about the constitution, Abe said: “We gave up a nation’s most important mission of protecting the safety of its own citizens on the strange assumption that the rest of the world is made up of peace-loving people...”³⁶⁸. Abe was also supportive of the idea of Japan acquiring nuclear weapons, saying that “the possession of

³⁶¹ Loc cit.

³⁶² Loc cit.

³⁶³ Yunbi, Zhang & Hong, Cai. “Abe Seeks to Boost Ties with Neighbours”, *Asia News Net*, http://africa.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2013-01/05/content_16084754.htm, 5 January 2013, p. 1. (Accessed 5 January 2013)

³⁶⁴ Jiji Press. “Abe Envoy, Park Agree to Improve Japan-ROK Ties”, *Yomiuri Shimbun* <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T130104004064.htm>, 5 January 2013, p. 1. (Accessed 5 January 2013)

³⁶⁵ Loc cit.

³⁶⁶ BBC News. “Japan PM Calls for Defence Review”, *Asia-Pacific News*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6618119.stm>, 3 May 2007, p. 1. (Accessed 19 January 2013)

³⁶⁷ Loc cit.

³⁶⁸ Hayashi, Yuka. “Abe’s World View: In His Own Words”, *Wall Street Journal*, [http://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2012/12/18/abes-world-view-in-his-own-words/](http://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2012/12/18/abes-world-view-in-his-own-words/http://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2012/12/18/abes-world-view-in-his-own-words/), 18 December 2012, p. 1. (Accessed 20 December 2012)

nuclear bombs is constitutional, so long as they are small”³⁶⁹. In May 2007 Prime Minister Abe was able to put a law through the Diet which detailed the procedures for making such a revision to Article 9. However this was negatively received by the public and led to the LDP’s loss in the Upper House elections two months later. Prime Minister Abe resigned soon after³⁷⁰. During his campaign in the run-up to the 2012 elections, Abe spoke strongly about Japan’s territorial disputes and Japan’s defence. He promised to push for the revision of Japan’s pacifist constitution³⁷¹.

The LDP had a landslide victory in the December 2012 elections and the hawkish Abe once again took the position of Prime Minister. Interestingly though, he has emerged more pragmatic than expected. According to Katsuhiko Togo, a professor at Kyoto Sangyo University and a former foreign ministry official, he observed that Prime Minister Abe “seems to have adopted policies based on pragmatic and creative realism, and not chauvinistic nationalism, as was feared by some before he took office”³⁷². Abe has chosen a mostly moderate Cabinet and has already sent various envoys to improve Japan’s relations with its neighbours³⁷³. The heads of the defence and foreign ministries are believed to be relatively moderate and liberal. The Komeito Party, who is now a strong force within the Diet, is strongly opposed to revising Japan’s military capabilities as well as other revisions to the constitution³⁷⁴. It therefore seems that it will be difficult for Prime Minister Abe to keep pushing for the revision.

One of the main reasons that Abe has emerged with a more pragmatic approach, is due to the fact that the public did not choose the LDP for its policies on defence. The Japanese polls during the election showed that the public were primarily concerned with the economy, its nuclear power problems and its displeasure with DPJ leadership. Nationalistic issues were not

³⁶⁹ Loc cit.

³⁷⁰ McCormack, Gavan. ““Conservatism” and “Nationalism”: The Japan Puzzle”, *Japan Focus*, The Asia-Pacific Journal, <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Gavan-McCormack/2786>, June 22 2008, p. 1. (Accessed 19 January 2013)

³⁷¹ Hayashi, Yuka. Op. cit. p. 1.

³⁷² Ramstad, Evan & Hayashi, Yuka. “Japan’s New Leader Reaches Out to Seoul”, *The Wall Street Journal*, Asia News, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323689604578218973198861946.html>, 3 January 2013, p. 1. (Accessed 5 January 2013)

³⁷³ Spitzer, Kirk. “Japan’s Not-Quite-So-Nationalist Leader”, *Time.com*, <http://nation.time.com/2013/01/03/japans-not-quite-so-nationalist-leader/>, 3 January 2013, p. 1. (Accessed 8 January 2013)

³⁷⁴ Loc cit.

a priority for the public³⁷⁵. The public are also increasingly concerned with the government's large debt, increasing unemployment, and lack of support for working women³⁷⁶. For the LDP to stay in power, it is most important that Abe improves the country's economy and develops social infrastructure for its changing demographics³⁷⁷. Currently Abe's first priority is to stimulate the Japanese economy and it may still be some time before he starts pushing on the military issue³⁷⁸. Recent security issues with China may speed the process along however.

While increasing Japan's military capabilities may not be the government's priority, Abe has not relented on ensuring that it will happen. North Korea's recent provocations will only make it easier for him to push ahead with his plans. One of the moves that Prime Minister Abe has already made is increasing Japan's defence budget for the first time in 10 years³⁷⁹. Currently Japan's defence budget is the sixth-largest in the world and in March 2012 it amounted to 4.65 trillion yen³⁸⁰. The Defence Ministry has asked for \$2.1 billion (180.5 billion yen), which would be mostly spent on acquiring PAC-3 surface-to-air anti-ballistic missile systems and modernising four of its F-15 fighter jets³⁸¹. The reason for this budget increase was ascribed to Japan's need to adjust to the changing security environment³⁸². This particularly refers to the security threats from North Korea and China. If Japan continues to increase its military capabilities, we could see a shift in the regional security structure as Japan's pre-emptive strike capability becomes viewed as a very real threat. It still remains to be seen whether Prime Minister Abe will ever get his dream of Japan returning to normal military capability. The threat that North Korea poses will certainly allow him to push forward with his plans, but there is still enough resistance within Japan to make sure that it does not happen too quickly.

³⁷⁵ Loc cit.

³⁷⁶ Smith, Sheila. "Japan's New Legislative Balance", *Council on Foreign Relations*, <http://www.cfr.org/japan/japans-new-legislative-balance/p29682>, 17 December 2012, p. 1. (Accessed 14 January 2013)

³⁷⁷ Loc cit.

³⁷⁸ Talmadge, Eric. Op. cit. p. 1.

³⁷⁹ BBC News. "Japan Seeks to Boost Military Spending", *BBC Asia-Pacific News*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20955042>, 9 January 2013, p. 1. (Accessed 14 January 2013)

³⁸⁰ Loc cit.

³⁸¹ Loc cit.

³⁸² Loc cit.

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Yunbi, Zhang & Hong, Cai. "Abe Seeks to Boost Ties with Neighbours", *Asia News Net*, http://africa.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2013-01/05/content_16084754.htm, 5 January 2013. (Accessed 5 January 2013)

*Interview with the North Korean Ambassador to South Africa at the University of the Witwatersrand, 23 September 2012.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

This research report has looked to examine Japan-North Korea relations, both nations' pursuits and desires, the major issues that have come from their historical interaction and the direction in which these relations are headed. This has all been done within the theoretical framework of Realism, focusing particularly on the security and power dynamics of the Balance-of-Threat theory to explain these countries' behaviour. The prospects for positive change seem unlikely in the near future as both leaders are in intransigent positions and are pursuing consolidation of power and their own national interest. However it is still important to examine the issues and see if anything can be done to improve the relations despite the dim prospects. Although the leadership is stubborn, change can arise from the ordinary people within both states.

A New Approach Needed

This report has shown that the status of the relationship between Japan and North Korea has a definite impact on the rest of the region and on the future of the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. The abduction issue has proved to be resilient and for the time being it remains an important issue for the Japanese population and for Prime Minister Abe. If the abduction issue could be resolved, it would be a significant move towards the normalisation of bilateral relations and would help restart negotiations for denuclearisation in North Korea. The current approach by Japan however is not helping the situation. For Japan, its continued use of sanctions has had very little effect on the behaviour of the DPRK. Japan's trade and communications with the DPRK have shrunk to virtually nothing and therefore there is nothing left to sanction³⁸³. Japanese sanctions can be argued to be "symbolic rather than

³⁸³ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. "Re-Imagining Japan-North Korea Relations – Part 1", *The Japan Institute*, Australia's National University: Canberra, www.japaninstitute.anu.edu.au/japanese_studies/issue_01/1_Re-Imagining_Part_I.pdf, 2011, p. 3. (Accessed 26 October 2010 13:50 pm)

substantive” and ultimately have only spurred Pyongyang to act more provocatively³⁸⁴. While Japan will continue to persist with this strategy, it is very unlikely that the DPRK will relent on its missile and nuclear proliferation. This military power continues to be its bargaining chip with the US and so it will be very reluctant to give it up. The only leverage Japan has over North Korea is that of providing economic assistance³⁸⁵. However economic incentives in the past have had little effect on influencing Pyongyang’s behaviour, even during its famine in the 1990s³⁸⁶. This approach alone cannot solve the problem. All states involved need to re-examine their positions if any headway is to be made. The failure of the Six Party Talks can be attributed to North Korea, but equally to blame is the lack of consistent policy among the other members and their consequent indecisiveness³⁸⁷. For the Six Party Talks to work, the other five members will need to form a strong united front against North Korea and thereby influence it.

Ryo Sahashi believes that a stronger framework of deterrence is needed. To truly balance the threat of North Korea, the ROK, the US and Japan will need to increase the strength of their alliance³⁸⁸. The deterrence demonstrated by the US, ROK and Japan did not prevent the shelling of Yeonpyong Island and further rocket launches by North Korea. To prevent further escalation of North Korea belligerence it is necessary to strengthen multilateral deterrence³⁸⁹. While this may work to deter further aggressive behaviour, it is unlikely to make the DPRK more amenable to negotiations and to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons. North Korea is a realist state in a realist arena. Security guarantees need to be provided to North Korea if progress is to be made. If Japan continues to bolster its military capabilities and goes through with the revision of the constitution, it must make it clear to its neighbours that these capabilities are purely defensive. This will be very difficult to do. The security dynamics within the East Asian region are unique, because negative perceptions and historical

³⁸⁴ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. ““North Korea Problems” and US-Japan Relations: A View from Japan”, in *North Korea: Challenges for the US-Japan Alliance*, Tatsumi, Yuki (ed.), Henry L. Stimson Centre: Washington, March 2011, p. 31.

³⁸⁵ Sahashi, Ryo. “The North Korea Challenge and Resonance with Regional Security Arrangements”, in *North Korea: Challenges for the US-Japan Alliance*, Tatsumi, Yuki (ed.), Henry L. Stimson Centre: Washington, March 2011, p. 84.

³⁸⁶ Haggard, Stephen. “The Balance of Power, Globalization, and Democracy: International Relations Theory in Northeast Asia”, *Journal of East Asian Studies*, No.4, 2004, p. 31.

³⁸⁷ Tanaka, Hitoshi. “Five Myths About Dealing with North Korea: A Japanese Perspective”, *East Asia Insights*, Vol. 2, No. 3, Japan Centre for International Exchange, June 2004, p. 2.

³⁸⁸ Sahashi, Ryo. *Op. cit.* p. 91.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p.81.

resentment remain strong forces within the relationships of these states. While Japan in reality may not be an offensive threat to others and only has defensive capabilities, its former period of colonisation and the brutalities that came with it, remain in the minds of its neighbours³⁹⁰. If Japan continues to pursue normal military power, it is likely that it would only cause more insecurity within the region and China may look to balance against increasing US-Japanese power.

Prospects for Cooperation?

As I mentioned in the introduction, Tessa Morris-Suzuki has been an important scholar with regards to the relations between Japan and North Korea. Unlike other authors who focus on the security aspects of the relationship, Morris-Suzuki looks at the human aspects. While it can certainly be said that security issues dominate the relationship and most likely will continue to do so, if there is to be any improvement or normalisation of relations between Japan and North Korea, both countries need to look beyond security and the balancing of threats. They will have to deal with the issues of historical resentment and the consequent perception of distrust and enmity. This is particularly proved with the abduction issue. Although North Korea's missile and nuclear capabilities are far more of an actual threat, Japan has insisted on focusing on this issue despite the fact that it has often interfered with making any progress on the denuclearisation of the peninsula. This issue is driven by the emotions of the Japanese population and their negative perceptions of North Korea. The political system of Japan allows the population's sentiment to shape its policy, which unfortunately is not the case in North Korea. It is therefore necessary to take this aspect of public perception seriously as it may be able to initiate a thawing in relations.

Morris-Suzuki has written about the “freezing of the imagination” that has happened in Japan³⁹¹:

³⁹⁰ Talmadge, Eric. “Abe Bid to Boost Military This Time Around May Resonate”, *The Japan Times*, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121226f1.html>, 26 December 2012, p. 1. (Accessed 8 January 2012)

³⁹¹ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. *Op. cit.* p. 4.

“This mood of aversion has encouraged a forgetting of the complex range of economic and social ties which had connected the two countries in earlier decades, and this amnesia in turn has added to the difficulties of conceiving any positive image of a future relationship between Japan and North Korea... North Korea quickly came to be seen as an incomprehensible and terrifying pariah, and any form of contact with this rogue state came to be viewed as suspect, if not potentially treasonous” ³⁹².

Due to this intense emotional issue and the severing of ties, ordinary Japanese citizens have forgotten their connection to the Peninsula. On the Korean side, its perception of the Japanese is dominated by the harsh, brutal events that occurred during the colonial period. More complex connections and social linkages that were formed during that time between Japan and North Korea have been long forgotten or buried³⁹³. Japanese society has made a lot of effort to do research into the evolving relationship between Japan and South Korea and their history, as well as the colonial society of Japanese who lived in Seoul and other parts of what is now South Korea. Yet little has been done to look at North Korea and Japanese history above the 38th parallel and the colonial society that existed there³⁹⁴. Instead of looking at the impassable issues between North Korea and Japan, it would probably be more useful to look at areas where they can cooperate.

An important place to start would be the ethnic Koreans that live in Japan, and who have for a long time been the victims of discrimination. These *Zainichi* Koreans have lived in Japan since the colonial period and are a key component in the relationship between North Korea and Japan³⁹⁵. After the end of Japan’s colonial era, there were 600,000 Koreans that remained in Japan, many of them sympathisers with North Korea³⁹⁶. They formed the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (*Chongryun* in Korean and *Chōsen Sōren* in Japanese) in 1955 and have since made efforts to improve the relationship between Japan and North Korea. In the 1970s and 1980s particularly, they were the key players in trade and

³⁹² Loc cit.

³⁹³ *Ibid.* p. 6.

³⁹⁴ Loc cit.

³⁹⁵ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. “The Forgotten Japanese in North Korea: Beyond the Politics of Abduction”, *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 43-2-09, http://japanfocus.org/-Tessa-Morris_Suzuki/3241, October 26, 2009, p. 1. (Accessed 15 May 2012)

³⁹⁶ Loc cit.

investment activities which made Japan one of North Korea's major trading partners³⁹⁷. They have also been instrumental in sending shipments of aid to North Korea. However the *Zainichi* Koreans have continually been discriminated against in Japan. Morris-Suzuki suggests that a positive proposal put forth by the Japanese government to address these problems could help to revive the negotiations between Japan and North Korea³⁹⁸. These ethnic Koreans, as well as other Japanese citizens who have relatives in North Korea, probably have a better understanding than most about life in the DPRK and possibilities for social change³⁹⁹. They could be very helpful with creating alternative ways of dealing with the DPRK.

Another positive area in the relationship between Japan and the DPRK has been the support of Japanese civil society during North Korea's great famine in the 1990s. Although this has been long forgotten, local governments and NGOs worked hard to collect and send aid to North Korea. For example, the wife of former Prime Minister Takeo Miki, Mutsuko Miki, established an NGO to send "eggs and fruit" to North Korean children. She emphasised that no matter the relations between the governments, it was still a humanitarian crisis that required Japanese help⁴⁰⁰. Japanese society has in the past shown that it is willing to build positive relations with North Koreans.

Although these seem like small issues and are unlikely to affect the policies of the respective governments, public opinion in Japan is ultimately hugely influential. If the public's perceptions of North Korea can be changed overtime into something more positive, they may be less stringent on the abduction issue. It would be important to return to the Pyongyang Declaration as this lays out the fundamental principles for Japan-North Korea relations. The Pyongyang Declaration included the pledge that both countries would discuss the status of Korean residents in Japan. Although this declaration has been breached by North Korea

³⁹⁷ Loc cit.

³⁹⁸ Loc cit.

³⁹⁹ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. "Re-Imagining Japan-North Korea Relations – Part 2", *The Japan Institute*, Australia's National University: Canberra, www.japaninstitute.anu.edu.au/japanese_studies/issue_02/ Re-Imagining_Part_II.pdf, 2011, p. 21. (Accessed 26 October 2010)

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 3.

through its missile and nuclear tests, the Japanese government has not yet nullified it⁴⁰¹. It still marks the foundations from which relations can improve in the future.

Stability is in Everyone's Interests

There is another issue in this relationship that is starting to emerge and may become more prominent in the future. The humanitarian crisis in North Korea has been of great concern to the China and South Korea, particularly because it has led to an increasing number of refugees to cross over the North Korean border. This trend is not something that Japan has paid much attention to. However it is starting to become clear that some North Korean refugees are crossing the border into China and then making their way to Japan⁴⁰². In October 2010, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Minister Takeaki Matsumoto revealed that there were over 100 North Korean refugees in Japan. It is estimated that the figure is actually around 200⁴⁰³. While this number is still small, it has the potential to increase in the future. Japan may then have to rethink its strategy in order to ensure the improvement of conditions for the North Koreans, and like China and South Korea, make sure that the state does not collapse.

Is China the Answer?

The repeated pattern of missile tests, UNSC condemnation, followed by a nuclear test has shown there is little change in North Korea's strategy and thinking. While this indicates that nothing may change, it also may reflect a lack of creativity on the DPRK's part, thinking that using the same behaviour will result in the same results of concessions from fearful neighbours. Therefore if it does not receive what it expects, they might be forced to rethink their threat strategy. Real progress can only be made if the alliance starts to court China. Beijing is the only power with influence in Pyongyang and the one that has kept the regime

⁴⁰¹ Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. "“North Korea Problems” and US-Japan Relations: A View from Japan”, in *North Korea: Challenges for the US-Japan Alliance*, Tatsumi, Yuki (ed.), Henry L. Stimson Centre: Washington, March 2011, p. 42.

⁴⁰² Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. Op. cit. p. 16.

⁴⁰³ Loc cit.

afloat⁴⁰⁴. Japan and China's relations, especially, need to drastically improve. Isolating China would be a very unwise move as it would only tempt China to strengthen its alliance with North Korea and balance against the trilateral alliance of the US, Japan and the ROK. Engaging China, would mean that the alliance must avoid focusing on human rights issues and democracy, which China is sensitive to, and focus completely on security and nuclear issues⁴⁰⁵.

With regards to the balance-of-threat, it is important for the opposing balancing powers, China and Russia, to see their ally the DPRK as a greater threat to themselves. This is beginning to occur due to the potential refugee threat and the instability that could extend across their borders. If China and Russia begin to see the regime of Kim Jong-un as a threat to themselves, they might see that threat as far more costly than agreeing with the US position. The situation could become far more tense and unstable in the future if China continues to move away from its rebellious ally. Power in the region would therefore no longer be balanced, and North Korea may find itself caged and surrounded. The danger of this is explained by Victor Cha as North Korea's "double-or-nothing" behaviour:

*"...what is concerning is that sometimes even rational actors, when they become especially stressed, can do dangerous things... If Pyongyang is in the domain of losses, it is likely to see "double or nothing" bets – such as disrupting the peaceful status quo – as a useful way to try to recoup losses and threaten others into assisting it. Because Pyongyang benefits less from the prosperous peace in Asia than others, it has less interest in the status quo. Moreover, if this status quo is a losing one for Pyongyang, the leadership will start to look for any measures to stop the losses from occurring"*⁴⁰⁶.

It would probably be a wise approach for the US and Japan to improve their relations with China and reassure it that their alliance does not threaten it. Therefore China will not feel a need to balance and may be persuaded to reduce its economic assistance to North Korea. However with the increase in tensions between China and Japan at the moment and Abe's

⁴⁰⁴ Sahashi, Ryo. . Op. cit. p. 91.

⁴⁰⁵ Loc cit.

⁴⁰⁶ Cha, Victor. *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*. The Bodley Head: London. 2012, p. 234-235.

hard-line foreign policy, this may take a while. In the balance-of-threat theory, North Korea has to become a real threat to China for Beijing to change sides and balance against the DPRK. China's interest above all is stability on the Korean Peninsula⁴⁰⁷. In all Beijing's rhetoric and actions it prioritises stability. It seems China does have an interest in the denuclearization of North Korea, however it has been argued by Chinese academics that a nuclear DPRK actually improved stability by deterring US-ROK aggression. While it is clear China would like particularly economic reforms in North Korea, it is not about to do this with harsh sanctions to influence the government⁴⁰⁸.

Future Prospects

It is unlikely that any major breakthroughs will occur in the future. All of the powers involved in the North Korean nuclear issue show reluctance to take any drastic action and seem interested in playing a delicate balancing game in the region to prevent the eruption of military conflict. I held an interview with Minister Ken Okaniwa of the Embassy of Japan in South Africa on the 30th of January 2013. He gave his insights on the future of the North Korea from the Japanese perspective and said there is unlikely to be change anytime soon in the DPRK. This is particularly because none of the other countries have any interest in engaging in military conflict due to the incredible costs it would incur⁴⁰⁹. In Okaniwa's opinion:

*“North Korea will fight to the very end to keep control. Outside forces will not be an influence in the final outcome of North Korea. We need to follow the North Korean domestic situation to its final death”*⁴¹⁰

With no prospects of change from within North Korea, it is unlikely that Japan will make any drastic moves to encourage it. As history has shown, Japan will not take an independent

⁴⁰⁷ Sims, Calvin; Cha, Victor; McDevitt, Michael & Snyder, Scott. “Korea Update – Conference Transcript”, *Council on Foreign Relations*, <http://www.cfr.org/south-korea/korea-update/p28132>, 30 April 2012, p. 1. (Accessed 26 October 2012)

⁴⁰⁸ Loc cit.

⁴⁰⁹ Interview with Minister Ken Okaniwa at the Embassy of Japan in Pretoria. 30 January 2013.

⁴¹⁰ Loc cit.

position away from the US and South Korea. It values this alliance highly for the protection of its national security. If it continues to desire stability in the region, it will pursue it in the old Realist ways of balancing and relying on US military protection. Putting aside the threat from North Korea, the US would be very reluctant to remove its military force from the region. Its strategic placement is important in its future in dealing with the rise of China. For the foreseeable future, these “Cold-War Structures” look as if they will remain as each side seeks to keep the balance. Japan and North Korea have a long way to go before these structures evolve and they can finally put its bitter past to rest.

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* Interview with Minister Ken Okaniwa at the Embassy of Japan in Pretoria. 30 January 2013.

Appendix

A. Map showing Japan and North Korea. It shows the path of North Korean missile launches.



Source: <http://time-az.com/main/detail/24209>

B. The full text of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution

第九条

日本国民は、正義と秩序を基調とする国際平和を誠実に希求し、国権の発動たる戦争と、武力による威嚇又は武力の行使は、国際紛争を解決する手段としては、永久にこれを放棄する。

二

前項の目的を達するため、陸海空軍その他の戦力は、これを保持しない。国の交戦権は、これを認めない。

The official English translation of the article reads:

ARTICLE 9. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, 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. (2) To accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

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