

Japan-Korea Relations: “Containment Lite”

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We are under threat ourselves from another terrorist state, North Korea, which has kidnapped 150 of our citizens. 150 people! I don't think any of them are alive. Pyongyang is also sending boatloads of drugs to Japan to harm our youngsters, and it has missiles ready to hit 15 Japanese cities. What other country would tolerate this?...You mean the Sunshine Policy? Do you really think the policies of Kim Dae-jung were working? (All throughout), the North was becoming more dangerous. This is the country that says it is ready to deliver a 'sea of fire' over Japan.

Tokyo Gov. Ishihara Shintaro

The quarter saw Japan implement its own version of the Bush administration's “containment lite” policy toward North Korea, inspecting and detaining DPRK vessels. Pyongyang accused Tokyo of taking the first step to sanctions (which North Korea equates with war). Japan responded to the North's bluster not by cowering but by making serious steps toward a robust missile defense system as well as toward emergency security legislation that would give the government the power to respond to military crises. Meanwhile, South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun did his own rendition of a Madison Avenue-type media blitz of Japan, leaving summit observers with some choice memories of his off-the-cuff style.

Japan-DPRK Relations: Tense

The outspoken and recently re-elected Tokyo governor's words basically summed up this quarter's relations between Japan and North Korea, which grew more tense in both words and actions. In April, Japanese Defense Agency chief Ishiba Shigeru virtually lifted the words from the White House briefing book on North Korea, claiming that Japan would not be blackmailed nor threatened by Pyongyang's nuclear weapons drive. The following month at Crawford, Texas, Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro and President Bush stood shoulder to shoulder vowing that neither would tolerate a nuclear North Korea, and that they see the problem “exactly the same way” in seeking a complete, verifiable, and irreversible end to the North's nuclear weapons.

After the launch of Japan's first two military satellites at the end of March, *Korean Central News Agency* (KCNA) broadcasts blasted Tokyo for untold hostile acts and threatened retribution. Although the Japanese did not grace these statements with replies, they did take concrete actions when the North appeared to push the threats too far. In early April, the Air Self-Defense Force scrambled two F-15 jet fighters in response to an unidentified aircraft from the direction of North Korea that violated Japanese airspace without responding to identification requests. In addition, the Maritime Self Defense Forces reportedly undertook training exercises with their Aegis air-defense systems tracking mock North Korean ballistic missile tests in the Sea of Japan.

“Containment Lite”

The most significant set of concrete measures showing Japan's harder line toward the North related to Tokyo's participation in the Bush administration's "containment lite" approach to pressuring North Korea. In initial stages, this entails willing parties cracking down on illegal activities Pyongyang engages in for hard currency (missile sales, drugs, counterfeiting). Over the quarter, examples of this were evident in the Australian seizure of the heroin-laden North Korean *Pong Su* and a South Korean raid of a methamphetamine shipment. Japan did not raid any ships, but it did greatly ramp up existing customs and safety inspections of North Korean vessels. Japan detained two North Korean ships in early June, sending a clear signal of its newfound willingness to support the U.S.-led effort to crack down on illicit DPRK activities. The ship was detained for safety violations at the western Japanese port of Maizuru, including: missing maps, a hole in the bulkhead, and cabin doorsill violations. These appear to be minor violations and indeed the 16-member crew of the detained *Namsan 3* was released to sail the next day by safety inspectors after fixing the violations, but the message was clear: The Japanese were willing to take such actions at a major port for DPRK ships (the Maizuru port receives 25 percent of the 1,344 calls by DPRK ships in 2002). The other detention occurred in Otaru in northern Japan, where inspectors stopped the 178-ton freighter *Daehungrason 2*.

The formal explanation for these actions by Japan is merely the heightened efforts (with existing, not new legislation) at screening DPRK ships because of their horrendous safety record. Many of the unkept freighters become stranded and/or shipwrecked in Japanese waters and abandoned by the crew. But these actions are also intended to prevent the transfer of dual-use consumer goods into the North. These include titanium carbon fibers from golf clubs (that can be used for missiles); global positioning system hardware; Sony PlayStation 2 games; fishing equipment (that can be used for underwater sonar purposes); camera lenses; and other items. Moreover, as Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton testified in Congress in June, the vessel traffic between Japan and North Korea provides a conduit for millions of dollars of Yakuza money and missile technology that aids the North's programs (the former statement was made much to the chagrin of Japanese officials).

The seriousness with which Japan pursued these custom operations drew fire from the North. Pyongyang canceled the ferry, *Mangyongbong-92*, that runs between Niigata and Wonsan (the Japanese reportedly had a small army of customs inspectors waiting to rummage

through the ship's passenger records and cargo manifests). North Korea accused Japan of implementing economic sanctions against the country and warned Japan that such actions constituted an act of war, but no apologies were forthcoming on Tokyo's side.

Normal Japan?

North Korea arguably has contributed more than any other single variable to Japan's slow, plodding move toward normalization as a military power. The North Korea problem provided the backdrop for larger changes in this direction during the quarter. In May, JDA chief Ishiba met in New Delhi with Indian counterpart George Fernandes to discuss regional and international security problems. Japan's relations with India cooled significantly after India's nuclear tests when Tokyo imposed economic sanctions. But these sanctions were lifted after Sept. 11 and the purpose of this trip was to engage India directly on the issue of security cooperation between Pakistan and North Korea and to build a broad international coalition beyond northeast Asia vis-à-vis the nuclear crisis. This represented a form of extraregional diplomacy on security issues rarely seen in Japanese foreign policy, but that is more likely given the problems posed by North Korea.

Even more significant were the votes in the lower and upper houses of the Diet in May and June allowing for the passage of three bills that will give the prime minister and the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) greater authority to respond to security emergencies. The Bill to Respond to Armed Attacks, Bill for Revision on the Self-Defense Forces Law, and Bill for Revision on the Law Governing the Security Council of Japan allow the Cabinet to bring immediate military courses of action directly to the legislature for approval. Once approved, the Prime Minister's Office would then have legal authority to exert executive power. These decisions give the Japanese government the first legal framework for responding to imminent military threats. In particular, they enable the SDF, in theory, to launch preemptive strikes when a military attack is deemed imminent, which would be a major departure from Japan's pacifist Constitution. The SDF is also exempted from having to follow laws and regulations that obstruct defense operations, such as traffic regulations, said the report.

The quarter saw several statements and actions by Japanese defense officials moving Japan further along the path to fielding a more robust missile defense system. This newfound enthusiasm derives from clear-eyed evaluations of the growing missile and WMD threat from North Korea at both the government-elite and public levels. In April, JDA chief Ishiba stated that the DPRK missile threat logically could be targeted no place else except Japan. Although Japan had been involved in missile defense research with the U.S., in April, the government reportedly also began moving to study the introduction of various systems separate from the joint research with the U.S. Strong interest initially was expressed in a sea-based interceptor system using Aegis destroyers as well as a ground-based Patriot-3 capability. Coinciding with a visit to Tokyo in May by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, the Japanese press reported that the government would begin deploying a new missile defense system in 2006-2007 in response to the DPRK threat, conservatively estimated at over \$4 billion. These moves would be taken in conjunction with a review of the National Defense Program Outline. What is so interesting about these measures is that they reflect the new urgency in Japan with regard to the proximate threat posed by the North.

Decisions by Tokyo to purchase already-made U.S. systems such as the Standard Missile 3 (SM3) system for Aegis and the Patriot-3 system would potentially run counter to the investments that the government has already made in joint research of separate systems with the U.S. Rumors during the quarter of North Korea's capabilities targeting Japan, however, raised for the Japanese public the specter of a real imminent threat by the North. Given the mood in Japan, Koizumi himself had to calm speculation in newspapers that Pyongyang had weaponized nuclear warheads aimed at Japan.

Mr. Roh goes to Tokyo

Japan-South Korea relations this quarter were marked by South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun's big splash in Japan with an all-out media blitz that few foreign leaders have tried in recent memory (e.g., Bill Clinton in 1998). Roh's four-day tour (June 6-9) included interviews with major Japanese dailies, a special forum telecast live on the *Tokyo Broadcasting* system, a speech to the Japanese Diet, a news forum with *Japan Broadcasting* (in which average Japanese citizens in Osaka could ask the South Korean president questions in a *CNN Talkback* live-type format). And, oh yes, there was also the summit with Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro. The agenda for the meeting was dominated by North Korea, but also included the opening of South Korean markets to Japanese cultural products as well as a Korea-Japan free trade agreement. With regard to the nuclear crisis, the two leaders engaged in private discussions about different scenarios and likely responses by each government, particularly if North Korean behavior grew more provocative. In their joint news conference, Roh and Koizumi basically stayed on message with North Korea policy pronouncements similar to those made in the preceding summits (the South Korea-Japan meeting followed both Bush-Roh and Bush-Koizumi meetings in the U.S. in May). They emphasized the need for parallel tracks of "dialogue and pressure" in turning back the North's drive for nuclear weapons. The South Korean president was more hesitant to expound on the types of pressure and preferred to keep the discussion on the positive incentives. Media reported Roh's verbal gymnastics as evidence of a divergence in Seoul and Tokyo's views on North Korea. Indeed summit-watchers noted that Roh opposed language in the joint statement referring to the necessity of "further measures" if the crisis gets worse.

Roh's visit to Japan produced other newsworthy items besides statements on North Korea. The South Korean president made obligatory statements during his speech in the Diet about Japan needing to be more sincere about its historical past with countries in the region. In a nod to the policies of his predecessor Kim Dae-jung, Roh also admitted in his Japanese television "town hall" appearances that South Koreans are not enthusiastic about reunification and could wait for such an event if peaceful coexistence with the North were achieved. In conjunction with the Kim Dae-jung era, Roh's remark offered truly astounding commentary on how South Korean conceptions of national identity appear to no longer accrue with the vision of unification, given the pragmatic costs. (Ironically, North Korea remains the only entity on the Peninsula that still directly identifies its Koreanness with such a vision.) Arguably, Roh's unification statement might have been the talk of the summit ... until the political maverick-turned-president opened his mouth about the communist party. In a meeting with the Japan Communist Party leader, Roh stated that he would be willing to meet in South Korea with Shii Kazuo. Given the fact that such a meeting would be illegal

according to South Korea's national security law, Roh's presidential spokesman was forced to rationalize and parse his boss' words, trying to limit the damage domestically.

TCOG

Trilateral meetings among Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo continued to provide an institution in which the three allies could deal with the North Korean threat. The summits that Roh and Koizumi held with George Bush in May were effectively a high-level TCOG given the proximity of the two visits with the U.S. president. At the TCOG meetings in Honolulu in June, the ROK proposed a comprehensive package as an initial template for a counter to the offer North Korea presented to Assistant Secretary James Kelly in Beijing. The South Koreans expressed confidence in their proposal, which the U.S. and Japan have indicated will be subject to further study. No doubt Seoul's proposal – as well as that of Congressman Curt Weldon and numerous NGO proposals – will be floating around Washington in the next quarter as the allies prepare for another round of talks involving Beijing and Pyongyang.

Chronology of Japan-Korea Relations April-June 2003

April 1, 2003: Conflicting intelligence assessments by the U.S., Japan, and ROK over apparent firing of a surface-to-surface missile by the DPRK.

April 2, 2003: In a *Washington Post* interview, Japanese PM Koizumi supports the Bush administration's policy toward North Korea, stating that the likelihood of a hostile outcome to the crisis is small.

April 7, 2003: *Korean Central News Agency* (KCNA) broadcasts condemn Japan for March 28 military satellite launches as a violation of the Kim-Koizumi Pyongyang Declaration and as the start of a new arms race in Asia.

April 9, 2003: *KCNA* broadcast warns Japan against remilitarizing based on its support of the U.S. in the war against Iraq, warning Japan that it is within "striking distance" of North Korea.

April 9, 2003: *Mainichi Shimbun* reports that Japanese fighters sought to intercept an unidentified aircraft that flew into Japanese airspace without authorization on April 1.

April 11, 2003: In Japan, Koizumi and Russian DM Ivanov call on North Korea to allow international inspectors to monitor nuclear facilities.

April 11, 2003: Japanese officials note that North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT may not be official because Pyongyang did not fulfill the second condition for withdrawal, which is to notify all signatories.

April 14, 2003: Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda welcomes North Korea's apparent shift in policy toward accepting multilateral talks.

April 16, 2003: Koizumi welcomes news of trilateral U.S.-DPRK-PRC talks on the nuclear crisis in Beijing April 23. Expresses hope that Japan will be involved in future talks.

April 17, 2003: Koizumi calls for DPRK to heed resolution on human rights abuses in North Korea passed by UN Human Rights Commission.

April 17, 2003: Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe reaffirms that progress in Japan-North Korea normalization talks cannot occur without resolution of the abduction issue.

April 20, 2003: Outspoken Tokyo Gov. Ishihara calls the DPRK a “terrorist state” because of its kidnappings, missile sales, and drug-smuggling.

April 26, 2003: Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly debriefs Japanese officials on Beijing talks.

May 1, 2003: *Yomiuri Shimbun* reports that DPRK proposal at the April Beijing talks included Japan-DPRK normalization as a precondition for ending its nuclear program.

May 3, 2003: JDA Director General Ishiba Shigeru meets Indian DM Fernandes to discuss North Korean-Pakistani nuclear and missile cooperation.

May 7, 2003: At a rally for families of Japanese abductees, JDA chief supports a tough approach to the DPRK and promises that Japan would not be “blackmailed.”

May 14, 2003: LDP lawmakers introduce legal revisions for discussion that would enable Japan to implement sanctions against the DPRK as necessary.

May 21, 2003: DPRK defector testifies before Congress that over 90 percent of North Korean missile technology is smuggled into the country through Japan.

May 23, 2003: Bush-Koizumi summit at Crawford, Texas. Two leaders confirm that nuclear weapons in North Korea are intolerable; that they will not give in to North Korean blackmail; and that complete, verifiable, and irreversible nuclear dismantlement was their joint goal.

May 23, 2003: Osaka appeals court overturns ruling by a previous lower court relieving the Japanese government of responsibility for compensating victims of boat accident at the end of World War II killing 524 Koreans being sent back to Korea

May 24, 2003: *Kyodo News Agency* reports during Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz’s visit to Japan that government officials admitted a revision of the National Defense Outline is imminent and that Japan will deploy new missile defenses from 2006.

May 27, 2003: *KCNA* broadcasts warn Japan against supporting the Bush administration’s hardline approach, saying that Japan will meet a “fatal fiasco.”

May 28, 2003: *Chosun Ilbo* reports that FM Kawaguchi confirmed to her counterpart Yoon Young-kwan that Japan was prepared to support economic sanctions against North Korea if diplomacy failed.

June 6, 2003: Japanese Diet enacts special legislation, the Three Laws Regarding Response to Armed Attacks, to respond to security emergencies.

June 6, 2003: Fifty-eight Japanese and South Korean citizens' groups submit a written request to both governments to take measures that will result in Japan apologies and compensation to victims of Japan's militarism before and during World War II.

June 6, 2003: U.S. Under Secretary of State John Bolton in congressional testimony says that North Korea uses funds from numerous sources, including from Yakuza-related activities in Japan, to fund their WMD programs.

June 7, 2003: Roh-Koizumi summit. Both agree to seek a peaceful resolution to the nuclear crisis with North Korea.

June 8, 2003: DPRK authorities decide not to send the controversial *Mangyongbong-92* ferry from Wonsan to Niigata in anticipation of extremely harsh customs and safety inspections by Japanese authorities.

June 9, 2003: Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and FM Kawaguchi praise Japan-Korea summit; agree on the need for "further measures" if the DPRK proves uncooperative; and for multilateral talks.

June 9, 2003: In a speech before Japanese Diet, President Roh calls on Japan to be more sensitive to its history. States that he would be willing to meet with Japanese communist party leaders despite history of Korea anti-communism.

June 10, 2003: Senior officials from Japan, the U.S. and Australia agree to cooperate in cracking down on DPRK ships suspected of smuggling weapons and drugs.

June 11, 2003: Japan Transport Ministry detains two DPRK cargo ships at ports in western Japan (Maizuru) and in Hokkaido (northern Japan) for safety violations (the ship at Maizuru departs the next day after rectifying safety violations).

June 12, 2003: *KCNA* broadcasts warn Japan against using safety inspections of DPRK freighters as a form of "sanctions" against the country.

June 12-13, 2003: TCOG meeting in Hawaii to discuss North Korean nuclear weapons issues.

June 12, 2003: *Mainichi Shimbun* reports 30 South Koreans conscripted by Japanese forces during World War II into labor camps in Siberia after Japan's defeat sued the Japanese government for unpaid wages. The plaintiffs demanded ¥300 million in damages.

June 17, 2003: Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe says that pressure is necessary to deal with the DPRK and that Pyongyang should not expect economic aid from Japan if it fails to take the necessary steps to normalize relations.

June 21, 2003: *KCNA* blasts Japan for implementing economic sanctions against the DPRK, and considers this a declaration of war. *KCNA* complained about DPRK ships being barred from Japanese ports, and condemned calls for Japan to restrict the sale of goods to its neighbor.

June 23, 2003: At a joint news conference, Korean and Japanese families with DPRK abductees in Seoul call for two governments to demand return of abductees and make this top priority.

June 24, 2003: *KCNA* broadcast warns Japan not to follow U.S. embargo strategy, calls it attempted reinvasion of Peninsula.

June 27, 2003: FM Kawaguchi states that it was too early to terminate KEDO activities pending more dialogue with North Korea over nuclear crisis.