

Leadup to the Signing of the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration

Hiramatsu Kenji

How does a nation develop relations with a neighboring state with which it has no official diplomatic ties? In the case of Japan and North Korea, every time the two countries have attempted even modest steps toward better relations, their efforts have soon faltered. Foreign ministry official Hiramatsu recounts the process leading up to Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro's 17 September 2002 visit to Pyongyang, and considers how the visit may have broken the start-stop pattern of bilateral negotiations seen thus far.

At 9:15 A.M. on 17 September, 2002, a Japanese government plane touched down in Pyongyang carrying Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro, the first Japanese prime minister to visit the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK; North Korea) since it was founded in 1948. The brevity of the flight from Tokyo—a mere two hours—was a reminder to many how geographically close the two countries are to one another.

The question of how to deal with North Korea in the absence of official ties has been a constant priority of postwar Japanese diplomacy. Even as the two countries avoided dealing forthrightly with Japan's thirty-six years of colonial rule on the Korean peninsula (1910–45), critical events linked to the security of Japan have arisen, including alleged North Korean incursions into Japanese territory by “operations ships” (spy boats), North Korea's launch of a Taepodong missile across Japanese airspace, and suspicions of North Korea's development of nuclear arms. One especially sensitive issue, which impinges upon the personal security of Japanese citizens, has been the abduction of Japanese nationals by North Korean agents, the first of which occurred almost twenty-five years ago. (Prior to Prime Minister Koizumi's visit, Pyongyang insisted that no such abductions had taken place.)

Throughout the last fifty-four years, the North Korean regime has remained opaque and unpredictable, with very limited channels open for dialogue with Japan. The level of distrust between the people of the two countries has been great. Yet, even under these peculiar and difficult conditions, Japan has made overtures in the diplomatic arena to improve bilateral relations and to create a more favorable security environment for itself. Politicians from Japan, and North Korea as well, have spearheaded efforts toward normalization. In particular, from 1991 to 1992, representatives of

Japan and North Korea engaged in vigorous negotiations, mapping out a blueprint for settling issues of the past and establishing proper diplomatic ties.

Those talks were brought to a halt by the Lee Un-Hae case, in which Kim Hyon Hui, a North Korean woman convicted of bombing a Korean Airlines jet in 1987, told South Korean authorities that she had been taught the Japanese language in North Korea, apparently by an abducted Japanese woman named Lee Un-Hae. This revelation was the first indication that Japanese citizens may have been abducted by North Korea. Although negotiations then ceased between the two countries, the discussions that had taken place provided lessons that are still valuable for Japan today. In addition, Japan has since made several attempts to break the impasse, including visits to North Korea by political party members and programs of food aid.

Finding a solution to the abduction issue continues to be a high priority, with a succession of policymakers devising approaches to the challenge. Unfortunately, none has achieved much in the way of results. Even after the Japan-North Korea normalization talks were resumed in 2000, prospects for a solution to the abduction issue were dim, as that round of talks ended in October that year after convening eleven times.

The history of Japan-North Korea relations has thus been a pattern of promising beginnings followed soon by collapse. This state of affairs has led to the widespread sense in Japan that, due to the complexity of the issues involved, no amount of effort is sufficient to produce substantial progress in relations.

Clarification of Negotiation Channels

Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang was spurred by the awareness that this faltering pattern in negotiations had to be interrupted if bilateral relations were to be established and Japan's security thereby strengthened. This time, the negotiations were conceived as an extension of previous diplomatic overtures and based on the lessons learned in the past. With the addition of tactical issues, they were entered into as a process requiring time and patience. To allow both sides opportunity to voice their views candidly, the talks were conducted on an unofficial basis. Given their difficult nature, they frequently developed into heated exchanges that brought the entire process to the brink of collapse.

Following the instructions of the prime minister and foreign minister, the Japanese negotiators aimed first to clarify the fundamental principles upon which Japan would proceed, and to convey these principles in no uncertain terms to their North Korean counterparts. The point to be made was that Japan would not diverge in the slightest degree from these principles, which were: that Japan was prepared to work in good faith toward normalization of bilateral relations; that it hoped North Korea would in turn take earnest steps toward resolving abduction, security, and other issues of concern to Japan; and that Japan would not proceed with negotiations if, in particular,

the abduction issue was not addressed.

Prime Minister Koizumi has stated this position explicitly on many occasions since taking office, and throughout negotiations this policy has remained firm. In talks, North Korea has adhered strictly to its own ground rules, and it is to be expected that Japan, too, has essential conditions on which it will make no concessions. Naturally, negotiators also communicated Japan's willingness to accept fully and address sincerely issues arising out of the period of Japan's colonial rule on the Korean peninsula. Genuine improvement in Japan's relations with its neighbors is not possible unless it faces up to the problems of its past.

In this round of talks, the two countries also clarified their channels of negotiation, building a foundation of results while strengthening mutual trust. In past negotiations, North Korea employed any number of channels at both the political party and government levels, depending on the circumstances. Of course, maintaining multiple channels of communication has merit as far as gathering and comparing information is concerned. The present round of talks, however, was entered into with a clear delineation of channels on both sides. This is not without an element of risk. With North Korea beginning to respond positively, it has become critical for Japan to demonstrate to the Japanese people that actual progress is possible.

The first year of the new negotiation process brought the release, in February 2002, of Sugishima Takashi, a *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* reporter who had been detained in North Korea for two years, and the March announcement by the Red Cross Society of North Korea of the resumption of an investigation, suspended until then, into Japanese "missing persons." This was followed by a series of other positive steps, including the Japan-North Korea Red Cross talks in April, the Japan-North Korea foreign ministers meeting in July, and, in August, a further Japan North Korea Red Cross meeting and Japan-North Korea director-general-level consultations. Although these developments did not result in any concrete progress on the abduction issue and others high on Japan's list of concerns, they were an indication of forward movement.



Hiramatsu
Kenji

After graduating from the Kyoto University faculty of law, Hiramatsu entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he served as director of the Second South-east Asian Division of the Asian Affairs Bureau, director of the National Security Policy Division of the Foreign Policy Bureau, and secretary to the foreign minister, among other posts. He is currently director of the Northeast Asia Division.

Watching for Signs of Change in North Korea

The significance of improved relations between Japan and North Korea is not limited to the two countries themselves and must be linked with the broader task of building peace in Northeast Asia. This will require gaining concessions from Pyongyang on issues such as nuclear arms, missile development, and “operations ships,” and easing international tensions with North Korea.

The largest factor bearing on North Korea’s security is its relationship with the United States. Unlike the Clinton administration, which for a time considered a presidential visit to Pyongyang, the current Bush administration is unlikely to make any compromises with North Korea. It has indicated that no progress can be made in U.S.–North Korea relations until Pyongyang shows a willingness to deal comprehensively with all relevant issues, including missile development and weapons of mass destruction. Since the 11 September terrorist attacks, the United States has adopted an even tougher stance toward North Korea, which is considered a state sponsor of terrorism.

North Korea has been sensitive to these shifts in the political climate. With Washington applying the brakes to its dialogue with Pyongyang, it is very difficult for Japan to go the road alone. On the other hand, the fact that the United States, an ally of Japan, is taking a tough stance can be used as leverage to resolve outstanding problems between Japan and North Korea. It seems likely that Pyongyang wants improved relations with Washington. Thus, if Japan were to promote dialogue between North Korea and the United States, then improved relations with Japan would be in North Korea’s own security interests.

In light of Tokyo’s promoting dialogue between the United States and North Korea, particularly during President George W. Bush’s visit to Japan in February 2002, as well as Tokyo’s efforts to quell hostilities between North and South Korea after the gunfire incident in the Yellow Sea in June, it is not unreasonable to assume that North Korea has gained a better understanding of Japan’s role in the stability of the region.

The problem of the Korean peninsula, however, is primarily a matter between North Korea and South Korea (Republic of Korea; ROK). For South Korea, which has pursued dialogue with the North under ROK President Kim Dae Jung’s policy of engagement, it is critical that there be progress in dialogue between Japan and North Korea as well as between the United States and North Korea, and that tensions on the Korean peninsula ease. Both Japan and the United States support South Korea’s engagement policy. Conversely, Tokyo has always enjoyed support from Seoul in its efforts to foster U.S.–North Korea talks and to improve its own relations with Pyongyang. This trilateral cooperation among Japan, the United States,

and South Korea remains the core of policy toward North Korea.

Through summit meetings, foreign minister consultations, and other forums, the Koizumi administration has endeavored to explain to Russia, China, and various European and Asian countries the significance of its policy toward North Korea, including the abduction issue, and to gain these countries’ understanding of its position. Koizumi’s Pyongyang visit was made in the context of such support by the international community.

For Japan, it is also important to identify promptly any signs of change in North Korea itself. After many years of food shortage and economic stagnation, Pyongyang senses that it has reached an impasse both domestically and in its foreign relations. Signs of change in North Korea have been evident since 2001, especially in developments since the summer of 2002, including the country’s introduction of price and other economic adjustment measures and its clarification of willingness to engage in dialogue with Japan, the United States, and South Korea. Of course, in the military-led regime itself, centered around Kim Jong Il as chairman of the North Korean National Defense Commission, there has been no real change, and this even appears to have strengthened the unity of the government.

Now more than ever, it is essential to ascertain whether these developments in North Korea are mere temporary measures to ensure the regime’s survival or signs of larger change. It is too early to make an assessment of the recent economic measures; interpretations are split between the view that they will lay the foundations for a market economy by introducing competition, and the view that they will lead to uncontrollable inflation. But while it would be foolish to be overoptimistic, the current situation does present an opportunity for North Korea to evolve toward a more open system. Prime Minister Koizumi’s visit to Pyongyang may have unlocked a door toward that goal.

Outstanding Issues Require Top-Level Political Decisions

The Japan–North Korea negotiation process that began in the autumn of 2001 has been far from smooth. Initially, it was not expected to lead to a summit-level meeting. It was a process initiated to gauge how sincerely Pyongyang would address the abduction and other bilateral issues of import to Japan. Although the focus was on restarting official negotiations on normalization, the talks were not to become a case of negotiating the terms of further negotiations, as previous encounters had always been. That is, given their mutually exclusive positions—North Korea hoping to “settle the past” (a reference to Japan’s colonization of the Korean peninsula) as a prerequisite for resolution of other issues, and Japan insisting on first resolving the abduction and other issues—it was obvious that taking a similar path would only lead to another dead end.

Gradually it was realized that the only way to break the deadlock was to discuss, in a comprehensive manner, both the settling-the-past issue and Japan’s outstanding issues and to establish a footing for addressing these issues; then official normalization talks could resume. On the question of

Japan must make vigorous efforts to persuade North Korea to put an end to its nuclear arms development program.

settling the past, however, there was a wide gap between North Korea's demands for an official apology and reparations and Japan's requirement for basing the settlement on economic cooperation and the mutual waiver of rights of property and claim, which was part of Japan's agreement with South Korea on the same issue.

Nor was there any change at that time in North Korea's position on the abduction of Japanese citizens, which it denied the fact of. In the course of several official meetings, however, North Korean representatives came to show some appreciation of Japan's uncompromising stance on this point. At the Japan–North Korea Red Cross talks, for example, the North Korean delegation did not get up and leave the table when a Japanese representative raised the abduction issue; and at the July conference of foreign ministers, the issue was addressed forthrightly and remarks alluding to it were included in the joint statement issued later.

The talks between senior foreign ministry officials in August affirmed the need for political will if diplomatic relations were to be normalized, and it was also agreed that efforts should be made to lay the foundations for comprehensive resolution within one month. North Korea's prerequisite of settling the past and Japan's prerequisite of addressing abduction and security issues would have little prospect of resolution without decision making at the highest level of political leadership in both countries. This is especially true of North Korea, where power is concentrated in Chairman Kim Jong Il. Thus it became apparent to both sides that direct talks at the summit level alone could open a path through the current impasse.

The view that a summit would be beneficial was also expressed by ROK President Kim Dae Jong and Russian President Alexander Putin, both of whom had held summit meetings with Chairman Kim Jong Il. North Korea is aggressively pursuing diplomatic contact with the United States, South Korea, and Russia. It has made particular progress in strengthening its ties with Russia, through steps such as Chairman Kim Jong Il's visit to the Russian Far East. Russia, meanwhile, has indicated that it wishes to contribute to the improvement of relations between Japan and North Korea. In fact, all countries that have anything to do with North Korea are hoping for progress in the Japan–North Korea relationship.

North Korea needs assistance from leading nations, including Japan, to implement the economic adjustment measures mentioned above. The need to hasten the normalization process with Japan is thus, presumably, more keenly felt on the North Korean side, and as bilateral negotiations continue, there have been signs of its readiness to compromise, including on the issue of settling the past.

Prime Minister Koizumi's decision to visit Pyongyang stemmed from the assessment that, given these circumstances, the time was ripe to act. The announcement on 30 August of his plan to visit came as a surprise to many Japanese, and the decision was criticized by some as hurried and poorly prepared. It is true that, from the standpoint of usual procedure, whereby the envisioned process would be fully mapped out prior to any summit-level talks, the prime minister's decision involved some risk. But in the context of

the progress of the previous year, I believe the decision was based on careful consideration of the situation and was in no sense reckless.

Toward Greater Peace and Security in Northeast Asia

With a short schedule that put him back in Japan the same day, Prime Minister Koizumi visited Pyongyang on 17 September 2002, with the straightforward goal of establishing a platform for resolving outstanding issues and breaking the deadlock in bilateral negotiations. In accordance with the prime minister's strict instructions, the itinerary dispensed with all but the bare minimum of courtesies and focused on the summit meeting itself.

The meeting resulted in the signing of the Japan–DPRK Pyongyang Declaration.

Immediately prior to the summit, Japan was given the shocking news that several of the abductees were now dead. During the meeting, Chairman Kim Jong Il acknowledged the abductions as fact, called them regrettable, expressed his wish to apologize, and vowed to prevent further abductions. He also admitted that North Korean operations ships had been violating Japanese territorial waters, and promised there would be no recurrence of such activities.

As regards the abductions, although the Japanese delegation had, prior to the meeting, requested information on the welfare of the abductees and a clear apology from North Korea, the response it received exceeded its expectations. But in Japan, the foreign ministry was roundly criticized for its handling of the information about the abductions and its treatment of the abductees' families. In the face of such criticism, the ministry must now step up its efforts to uncover the truth of the abductions and effect the repatriation to Japan of the surviving abductees and their children. No progress will be made in negotiations toward normalizing bilateral relations without further progress on this issue. With the revelation of the death of eight abductees, the prime minister's decision to sign the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration and resume official normalization talks cannot have been an easy one to make. However, little hope would have remained for resolving this and other issues if the channels for dialogue had been left closed.

The step taken at this summit was simply the decision to resume negotiations toward normalizing relations, not a commitment to normalization nor any promise of concrete economic cooperation. In this round of talks, North Korea dropped its demand for reparations for Japan's colonization of Korea, indicating a willingness to discuss a settlement package similar to that agreed upon by South Korea when its relations with Japan were normalized—that is, a settlement involving economic cooperation and the mutual waiver of rights of property and claim.

Given the history of the normalization talks, this agreement was in itself groundbreaking, though whether cooperation will actually be carried out depends on the progress of negotiations henceforth. Cooperation, furthermore, will be implemented only after relations between the two countries are

normalized. Japan should proceed with a careful eye to Pyongyang's response to such issues as the abduction of Japanese citizens, covert operations ships, and concerns about regional security. In other words, using the prospect of normalization of official relations as leverage, Japan must adamantly insist that North Korea fulfill the promises made in the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration.

The declaration includes numerous commitments by North Korea on the issue of security, reflecting Japan's aim to create a safer and more peaceful Northeast Asia. Until now, the issues of nuclear capability and missile development have been discussed between North Korea and the United States, with talks on the former based on the Agreed Framework between the United States and North Korea in 1994. However, suspicions about North Korea's nuclear arms development have yet to be dispelled, and it is believed that North Korea has some one hundred Nodong missiles with a range wide enough to reach almost all of Japan. Further, North Korea's export of missiles and related technology is a matter of no small concern.

Japan cannot remain indifferent to these problems, which bear directly on its security. How the situation will develop is impossible to predict. North Korea's development of nuclear weapons using enriched uranium, revealed in October, not only violates the framework it agreed to with the United States but is also a serious obstacle in terms of the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration. With so much at stake, Japan must make vigorous efforts to persuade North Korea to put an end to its nuclear arms development program.

Japan should also use the newly formulated framework of Japan-U.S. security talks to increase its involvement in this issue. From a slightly different perspective, it may be said that on the basis of the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, Japan, while exercising no military sway, has taken on a greater responsibility for security in this region. Discussing security issues with North Korea, with which Japan has had no diplomatic relations and which it has regarded and been regarded by as hostile, will be no easy task. But while concrete results cannot be expected overnight, it is hoped that the Pyongyang Declaration will provide a platform on which to build mutual trust, and an opportunity to transform the bilateral relationship from antagonism into cooperation. The Pyongyang Declaration has, moreover, given the two countries, through a common understanding, the opportunity to create a broader arrangement for confidence building in the region as a whole. This arrangement, which Japan has long advocated, has as its aim the six-party talks involving the United States, China, Russia, South Korea, North Korea, and Japan. By helping to create such a framework, Japan could make an invaluable contribution to peace in the region.

An Unpredictable Outlook

The Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration called for negotiations toward normalization of diplomatic relations to be resumed at the end of October 2002. These talks promise to be complicated by a number of factors, includ-

ing the effort put toward resolving the abduction issue; the progress of the U.S.–North Korea dialogue, which is expected to run into difficulties over North Korea's nuclear development program, among other issues; and conditions within North Korea, particularly its economic problems. While maintaining its trilateral relationship with South Korea and the United States, Japan should proceed with these negotiations with tenacity and vigilance as to whether the principles and spirit of the Japan–DPRK Pyongyang Declaration are being upheld. North Korea's pattern of behavior cannot be expected to change overnight, but Japan has a responsibility to make concerted diplomatic efforts toward creating a safer international environment, even if only by a small step at a time.

Of course, Japan, too, must adhere to the terms of the declaration. Can it nourish the seed planted by the prime minister's visit into a successful normalization of diplomatic relations that will contribute significantly to regional peace and stability? The obstacles remain formidable. Can Japanese look forward to living in a more secure environment where abductions no longer occur, where spy boats and secret agents are no longer active inside Japanese territory, and where the nation no longer lives under the threat of missile attack? This response must, somehow, be affirmative.

The prime minister's visit and the resulting declaration have provided a basis from which to work toward that goal. But with the process set in motion just getting under way, it is still too early to make any evaluation. The outlook is highly uncertain, and difficulties are sure to arise. Can the thorny issues between Japan and North Korea be dealt with properly in this new phase of their relationship? The historical value of the prime minister's visit to Pyongyang depends on the efforts that both sides make from now on.

About this Article

No.173 (December 2002)



WINTER 2003

Translated by Dean Robson from the original Japanese, "Sori ho-Cho to Nit-Cho pyongyang sengen shomei e no michi," published in the December 2002 issue of the Japanese edition of *Gaiko Forum* featuring the Korean peninsula and Japanese diplomacy.

Japan-ROK Relations

1965	Feb.	Foreign Minister Shiina Etsusaburo visits the Republic of Korea (ROK; South Korea), expressing "deep regret" over the "unhappy" period between Japan and ROK, and the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and ROK is provisionally signed	July	Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting	
	June	Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and ROK and supplementary agreements are signed	1995	Nov.	President Kim Young Sam visits Japan and attends the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Osaka; Japan-ROK summit meeting
	Dec.	Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and ROK takes effect and diplomatic ties are normalized	1996	Mar.	Japan-ROK summit meeting in Bangkok
1966	Mar.	Trade Agreement between Japan and ROK is signed and takes effect		May	Co-hosting of FIFA World Cup by Japan and ROK is decided
1971	July	Prime Minister Sato Eisaku visits ROK, attending the inauguration of President Park Chung Hee		June	Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting on Cheju Island
1973	Aug.	Kim Dae Jung is abducted from a hotel in Tokyo	1997	Jan.	ROK President Kim Young Sam visits Japan for Japan-ROK summit meeting in Beppu
1974	Aug.	Assassination attempt on President Park, who eludes bullets, but his wife, Yuk Young Soo, is killed. Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei visits ROK to attend the national funeral for Yuk	1998	Mar.	Japanese Foreign Minister Obuchi Keizo visits ROK and meets with President Kim Dae Jung
1978	June	Agreements take effect between Japan and ROK concerning joint development of the southern part of the continental shelf adjacent to both countries, and establishment of boundary in the northern part		Apr.	Japan-ROK summit meeting in London
1982	July	ROK government calls on the Japanese government to correct statements in some Japanese history textbooks		Oct.	President Kim Dae Jung visits Japan for Japan-ROK summit meeting; Japan-ROK Joint Declaration, new agreement on fisheries between Japan and ROK, and others are signed; ROK government begins the first round of liberalization on products of Japanese culture
1983	Jan.	Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro visits ROK, and Japan-ROK joint communique is issued		Nov.	First round of gatherings by Japan-ROK cabinet ministers takes place in Kagoshima
1984	Sept.	President Chun Doo Hwan visits Japan, and Japan-ROK joint communique is issued	1999	Feb.	Japanese Foreign Minister Komura Masahiko visits ROK and holds Japan-ROK foreign ministers' meeting
1985	Dec.	Agreement between the Japanese government and ROK government on cooperation in the fields of science and technology is signed and takes effect		Mar.	Prime Minister Obuchi visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting
1986	July	Fingerprinting requirement becomes heated issue.		Sept.	Kim Jong Pil, ROK prime minister, visits Japan
	Sept.	Japanese minister of education Fujio Masayuki makes controversial remarks and is dismissed. Prime Minister Nakasone visits ROK, attending the opening ceremony of the 10th Asian Games held in Seoul; Japan-ROK summit meeting held		Oct.	Second round of gatherings by Japan-ROK cabinet ministers takes place on Cheju Island
1988	Feb.	Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru visits ROK, attending the inauguration of President Roh Tae Woo	2000	May	Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting
	Sept.	Prime Minister Takeshita visits ROK, attending the opening ceremony of the Seoul Olympic Games; Japan-ROK summit meeting		June	President Kim Dae Jung visits Japan, attending the funeral of the former Prime Minister Obuchi, and holds Japan-ROK summit meeting
1990	May	President Roh Tae Woo visits Japan for Japan-ROK summit meeting		Sept.	President Kim visits Japan for Japan-ROK summit meeting in Atami
1991	Jan.	Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting	2001	Oct.	On 15th, Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting; on 20th, Japan-ROK summit meeting held in Shanghai
1992	Jan.	Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting	2002		The Year of Japan-Korea National Exchange
	Nov.	President Roh Tae Woo visits Japan for Japan-ROK summit meeting in Kyoto		Mar.	Prime Minister Koizumi visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting; Japan-ROK Investment Agreement is signed
1993	Nov.	Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting in Kyongju		May	Japan and ROK co-host FIFA World Cup (to June); Prince and Princess Takamado and Prime Minister Koizumi attend opening ceremony of World Cup in Seoul
1994	March	President Kim Young Sam visits Japan for Japan-ROK summit meeting		June	Treaty on Extradition between Japan and ROK is signed; President Kim visits Japan to attend the closing ceremony of the World Cup; Japan-ROK summit meeting is held and joint message on the future by the leaders of the two countries issued
				July	Japanese Foreign Minister Kawaguchi Junko visits ROK for Japan-ROK foreign ministers' meeting

Major Events between Japan and North Korea

1965	June	At the time of the signing of the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea, North Korea declares its right to demand compensation from Japan	2000	Mar.	Japan decides to send North Korea 100,000 tons of rice in aid via World Food Plan
				Apr.	Ninth round of Japan-North Korea normalization talks is held in Pyongyang
1987	Sept.	Japan Socialist Party chairman Doi Takako visits North Korea		June	North-South summit meeting takes place in Pyongyang
	Nov.	Korean Airlines jet crashes as result of bomb		July	First Japan-North Korea foreign ministers' meeting takes place in Bangkok, agreeing on the agenda for the tenth round of Japan-North Korea normalization talks
1989	Mar.	Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru expresses his deep regret and remorse over Japan's "past" on the Korean Peninsula		Aug.	Tenth round of Japan-North Korea normalization talks is held in Tokyo and Chiba
1990	Sept.	Japanese delegation from Liberal Democratic Party and Socialist Party led by ex-Deputy Prime Minister Kanemaru Shin visits North Korea, and along with Worker's Party of Korea, a three-party joint communique is issued, including an agreement to begin diplomatic normalization talks		Oct.	Eleventh round of Japan-North Korea normalization talks is held in Beijing; Japan decides to send North Korea 500,000 tons of rice in aid
1991	Jan.	First round of Japan-North Korea normalization talks is held in Pyongyang	2001	May	A man suspected to be son of General Secretary Kim Jong Il is temporarily detained and then expelled from Japan
1993	May	North Korea conducts a launch test of intermediate-range No-dong missile in the Sea of Japan		Nov.	Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department searches headquarters of General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, on suspicion of illegal transactions with the Chogin Tokyo Shinkumi Bank
1994	July	President Kim Il Sung dies		Dec.	Unidentified boat is sunk after exchanging fire with Japan Coast Guard patrol boats off Amami Oshima Island
1995	Mar.	Japanese delegation from the three governing parties (LDP, JSP, and Sakigake) led by ex-Deputy Prime Minister Watanabe Michio visits North Korea	2002	Jan.	U.S. President George W. Bush calls North Korea part of the "axis of evil"
	June	Japan decides to send North Korea 300,000 tons of rice in aid		Mar.	National Police Agency recognizes Arimoto Keiko as a victim of abduction by North Korea; Red Cross Society of North Korea announces resumption of its investigation into missing Japanese nationals
1997	May	Japanese government officially concludes that seven cases involving a total of ten missing Japanese nationals, including Yokota Megumi, were cases of abduction by North Korea		Apr.	General Secretary Kim remarks that the missing persons issue can be a topic of bilateral discussion
	Sept.	First round of Japan-North Korea Red Cross talks is held in Beijing		July	Japan-North Korea foreign ministers' meeting takes place in Brunei
	Oct.	Kim Jong Il takes office as general secretary of Workers' Party of Korea		Aug.	Japan-North Korea foreign ministry director-general level consultations take place in Pyongyang; Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro's plan to visit North Korea is announced
	Nov.	Japanese delegation from the government parties led by Mori Yoshiro, Chairman of the LDP Executive Council, visits North Korea		Sept.	Unidentified boats painted with North Korean flags are spotted off Noto Peninsula; the unidentified boat sunk off Amami Oshima Island is salvaged; Prime Minister Koizumi visits North Korea and the first Japan-North Korea summit meeting takes place
1998	June	Red Cross Society of North Korea declares there are no "missing Japanese nationals" in its country		Oct.	Japanese abductees return to Japan temporarily; twelfth round of Japan-North Korea normalization talks is held in Kuala Lumpur
	Aug.	North Korea launches a Taepo-dong ballistic missile		Nov.	Pyongyang threatens to abandon its missile test freeze; KEDO (Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization) decides to suspend provision of heavy oil to North Korea; Japan sounds out North Korea's feelings about prior negotiations
	Sept.	Japanese government announces sanctions, including suspension of food aid			
1999	Mar.	Japanese government issues first order for the deployment of Maritime Self-Defense Force in policing seas when two suspected North Korean spy boats intrude into Japanese territorial waters			
	Dec.	Japanese delegation led by ex-prime minister Murayama Tomiichi and Workers' Party of Korea jointly announce that bilateral normalization talks will be resumed by the end of the year; preliminary meetings for normalization talks are held in Beijing			

Leadup to the Signing of the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration

Hiramatsu Kenji

How does a nation develop relations with a neighboring state with which it has no official diplomatic ties? In the case of Japan and North Korea, every time the two countries have attempted even modest steps toward better relations, their efforts have soon faltered. Foreign ministry official Hiramatsu recounts the process leading up to Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro's 17 September 2002 visit to Pyongyang, and considers how the visit may have broken the start-stop pattern of bilateral negotiations seen thus far.

At 9:15 A.M. on 17 September, 2002, a Japanese government plane touched down in Pyongyang carrying Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro, the first Japanese prime minister to visit the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK; North Korea) since it was founded in 1948. The brevity of the flight from Tokyo—a mere two hours—was a reminder to many how geographically close the two countries are to one another.

The question of how to deal with North Korea in the absence of official ties has been a constant priority of postwar Japanese diplomacy. Even as the two countries avoided dealing forthrightly with Japan's thirty-six years of colonial rule on the Korean peninsula (1910–45), critical events linked to the security of Japan have arisen, including alleged North Korean incursions into Japanese territory by “operations ships” (spy boats), North Korea's launch of a Taepodong missile across Japanese airspace, and suspicions of North Korea's development of nuclear arms. One especially sensitive issue, which impinges upon the personal security of Japanese citizens, has been the abduction of Japanese nationals by North Korean agents, the first of which occurred almost twenty-five years ago. (Prior to Prime Minister Koizumi's visit, Pyongyang insisted that no such abductions had taken place.)

Throughout the last fifty-four years, the North Korean regime has remained opaque and unpredictable, with very limited channels open for dialogue with Japan. The level of distrust between the people of the two countries has been great. Yet, even under these peculiar and difficult conditions, Japan has made overtures in the diplomatic arena to improve bilateral relations and to create a more favorable security environment for itself. Politicians from Japan, and North Korea as well, have spearheaded efforts toward normalization. In particular, from 1991 to 1992, representatives of

Japan and North Korea engaged in vigorous negotiations, mapping out a blueprint for settling issues of the past and establishing proper diplomatic ties.

Those talks were brought to a halt by the Lee Un-Hae case, in which Kim Hyon Hui, a North Korean woman convicted of bombing a Korean Airlines jet in 1987, told South Korean authorities that she had been taught the Japanese language in North Korea, apparently by an abducted Japanese woman named Lee Un-Hae. This revelation was, perhaps, the first indication that Japanese citizens may have been abducted by North Korea. Although negotiations then ceased between the two countries, the discussions that had taken place provided lessons that are still valuable for Japan today. In addition, Japan has since made several attempts to break the impasse, including visits to North Korea by political party members and programs of food aid.

Finding a solution to the abduction issue continues to be a high priority, with a succession of policymakers devising approaches to the challenge. Unfortunately, none has achieved much in the way of results. Even after the Japan-North Korea normalization talks were resumed in 2000, prospects for a solution to the abduction issue were dim, and that round of talks ended in October that year.

The history of Japan–North Korea relations has thus been a pattern of promising beginnings followed soon by collapse. This state of affairs has led to the widespread sense in Japan that, due to the complexity of the issues involved, no amount of effort is sufficient to produce substantial progress in relations.

Clarification of Negotiation Channels

Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang was spurred by the awareness that this faltering pattern in negotiations had to be interrupted if bilateral relations were to be established and Japan's security thereby strengthened. This time, the negotiations were conceived as an extension of previous diplomatic overtures and based on the lessons learned in the past. With the addition of tactical issues, they were entered into as a process requiring time and patience. To allow both sides opportunity to voice their views candidly, the talks were conducted on an unofficial basis. Given their difficult nature, they frequently developed into heated exchanges that brought the entire process to the brink of collapse.

Following the instructions of the prime minister and foreign minister, the Japanese negotiators aimed first to clarify the fundamental principles upon which Japan would proceed, and to convey these principles in no uncertain terms to their North Korean counterparts. The point to be made was that Japan would not diverge in the slightest degree from these principles, which were that Japan was prepared to work in good faith toward normalization of bilateral relations; that it hoped North Korea would in turn take earnest steps toward resolving abduction, security, and other issues of concern to Japan; and that Japan would not proceed with negotiations if, in particular, the abduction issue was not addressed.

Prime Minister Koizumi has stated this position explicitly on many occasions since taking office, and throughout negotiations this policy has remained firm. In talks, North Korea has adhered strictly to its own ground rules, and it is to be expected that Japan, too, has essential conditions on which it will make no concessions. Naturally, negotiators also communicated Japan's willingness to address sincerely issues arising out of the period of Japan's colonial rule on the Korean peninsula. Genuine improvement in Japan's relations with its neighbors is not possible unless it faces up to the problems of its past.

In this round of talks, the two parties also clarified their channels of negotiation, building a foundation of results while strengthening mutual trust. In past negotiations, North Korea employed any number of channels at both the political party and government levels, depending on the circumstances. Of course, maintaining multiple channels of communication has merit as far as gathering and comparing information is concerned. The present round of talks, however, was entered into with a clear delineation of channels on both sides. This is not without an element of risk. With North Korea beginning to respond positively, it has become critical for Japan to demonstrate to the Japanese people that actual progress is possible.

The first year of the new negotiation process brought the release, in February 2002, of Sugishima Takashi, a former *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* reporter who had been detained in North Korea for two years, and the March announcement by the Red Cross Society of North Korea of the resumption of an investigation, suspended until then, into Japanese "missing persons." This was followed by a series of other positive steps, including the Japan–North Korea Red Cross talks in April, the Japan–North Korea foreign ministers meeting in July, and, in August, a further Japan–North Korea Red Cross meeting and Japan–North Korea director-general-level consultations. Although these developments did not result in any concrete progress on the abduction issue and others high on Japan's list of concerns, they were an indication of forward movement.

Watching for Signs of Change in North Korea

The significance of improved relations between Japan and North Korea is not limited to the two countries themselves and must be linked with the broader task of building peace in Northeast Asia. This will require gaining concessions from Pyongyang on issues such as nuclear arms, missile development, and "operations ships," and easing international tensions with North Korea.

The largest factor bearing on North Korea's security is its relationship with the United States. Unlike the Clinton administration, which for a time considered a presidential visit to Pyongyang, the current Bush administration is unlikely to make any compromises with North Korea. It has indicated that no progress can be made in U.S.–North Korea relations until Pyongyang shows a willingness to deal comprehensively with all relevant issues, including missile development and weapons of mass destruction.

Since the 11 September terrorist attacks, the United States has adopted an even tougher stance toward North Korea.

North Korea has been sensitive to these shifts in the political climate. With Washington applying the brakes to its dialogue with Pyongyang, it is very difficult for Japan to go the road alone. On the other hand, the fact that the United States, an ally of Japan, is taking a tough stance can be used as leverage to resolve outstanding problems between Japan and North Korea. It seems likely that Pyongyang wants improved relations with Washington. Thus, if Japan were to promote dialogue between North Korea and the United States, then improved relations with Japan would be in North Korea's own security interests.

In light of Tokyo's promoting dialogue between the United States and North Korea, particularly during President George W. Bush's visit to Japan in February 2002, as well as Tokyo's efforts to quell hostilities between North and South Korea after the gunfire incident in the Yellow Sea in June, it is not unreasonable to assume that North Korea has gained a better understanding of Japan's role in the stability of the region.

The problem of the Korean peninsula, however, is primarily a matter between North Korea and South Korea (Republic of Korea; ROK). For South Korea, which has pursued dialogue with the North under ROK President Kim Dae Jung's policy of engagement, it is critical that there be progress in dialogue between Japan and North Korea as well as between the United States and North Korea, and that tensions on the Korean peninsula ease. Both Japan and the United States support South Korea's engagement policy. Conversely, Tokyo has always enjoyed support from Seoul in its efforts to foster U.S.–North Korea talks and to improve its own relations with Pyongyang. This trilateral cooperation among Japan, the United States, and South Korea remains the core of policy toward North Korea.

Through summit meetings, foreign minister consultations, and other forums, the Koizumi administration has endeavored to explain to Russia, China, and various European and Asian countries the significance of its policy toward North Korea, including the abduction issue, and to gain these countries' understanding of its position. Koizumi's Pyongyang visit was made in the context of such support by the international community.

For Japan, it is also important to identify promptly any signs of change in



Hiramatsu
Kenji

After graduating from the Kyoto University faculty of law, Hiramatsu entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he served as director of the Second Southeast Asian Division of the Asian Affairs Bureau, director of the National Security Policy Division of the Foreign Policy Bureau, and secretary to the foreign minister, among other posts. He is currently director of the Northeast Asia Division.

North Korea itself. After many years of food shortage and economic stagnation, Pyongyang senses that it has reached an impasse both domestically and in its foreign relations. Signs of change in North Korea have been evident since 2001, especially in developments since the summer of 2002, including the country's introduction of price and other economic adjustment measures and its clarification of willingness to engage in dialogue with Japan, the United States, and South Korea. Of course, in the military-led regime itself, centered around Kim Jong Il as chairman of the North Korean National Defense Commission, there has been no real change, and this even appears to have strengthened the unity of the government.

Now more than ever, it is essential to ascertain whether these developments in North Korea are mere temporary measures to ensure the regime's survival or signs of larger change. It is too early to make an assessment of the recent economic measures; interpretations are split between the view that they will lay the foundations for a market economy by introducing competition, and the view that they will lead to uncontrollable inflation. But while it would be foolish to be overoptimistic, the current situation does present an opportunity for North Korea to evolve toward a more open system. Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang may have unlocked a door toward that goal.

Outstanding Issues Require Top-Level Political Decisions

The Japan–North Korea negotiation process that began in the autumn of 2001 has been far from smooth. Initially, it was not expected to lead to a summit-level meeting. It was a process initiated to gauge how sincerely Pyongyang would address the abduction and other bilateral issues of importance to Japan. Although the focus was on restarting official negotiations on normalization, the talks were not to become a case of negotiating the terms of further negotiations, as previous encounters had always been. That is, given their mutually exclusive positions—North Korea hoping to “settle the past” (a reference to Japan's colonization of the Korean peninsula) as a prerequisite for resolution of other issues, and Japan insisting on first resolving the abduction and other issues—it was obvious that taking a similar path would only lead to another dead end.

Gradually it was realized that the only way to break the deadlock was to discuss, in a comprehensive manner, both the settling-the-past issue and Japan's outstanding issues and to establish a footing for addressing these issues; then official normalization talks could resume. On the question of settling the past, however, there was a wide gap between North Korea's demands for an official apology and reparations and Japan's requirement for basing the settlement on economic cooperation and the mutual waiver of rights of property and claim, which was part of Japan's agreement with South Korea on the same issue.

Nor was there any change at that time in North Korea's position on the abduction of Japanese citizens, which it denied the fact of. In the course of several official meetings, however, North Korean representatives came to show some appreciation of Japan's uncompromising stance on this point. At

the Japan–North Korea Red Cross talks, for example, the North Korean delegation did not get up and leave the table when a Japanese representative raised the abduction issue; and at the July conference of foreign ministers, the issue was addressed forthrightly and remarks alluding to it were included in the joint statement issued later.

The talks between senior foreign ministry officials in August affirmed the need for political will if diplomatic relations were to be normalized, and it was also agreed that efforts should be made to lay the foundations for comprehensive resolution within one month. North Korea's prerequisite of settling the past and Japan's prerequisite of addressing abduction and security issues would have little prospect of resolution without decision making at the highest level of political leadership in both countries. This is especially true of North Korea, where power is concentrated in Chairman Kim Jong Il. Thus it became apparent to both sides that direct talks at the summit level alone could open a path through the current impasse.

The view that a summit would be beneficial was also expressed by ROK President Kim Dae Jong and Russian President Vladimir Putin, both of whom had held summit meetings with Chairman Kim Jong Il. North Korea is aggressively pursuing diplomatic contact with the United States, South Korea, and Russia. It has made particular progress in strengthening its ties with Russia, through steps such as Chairman Kim Jong Il's visit to the Russian Far East. Russia, meanwhile, has indicated that it wishes to contribute to the improvement of relations between Japan and North Korea. In fact, all countries that have anything to do with North Korea are hoping for progress in the Japan–North Korea relationship.

North Korea needs assistance from leading nations, including Japan, to implement the economic adjustment measures mentioned above. The need to hasten the normalization process with Japan is thus, presumably, more keenly felt on the North Korean side, and as bilateral negotiations continue, there have been signs of its readiness to compromise, including on the issue of settling the past.

Prime Minister Koizumi's decision to visit Pyongyang stemmed from the assessment that, given these circumstances, the time was ripe to act. The announcement on 30 August of his plan to visit came as a surprise to many Japanese, and the decision was criticized by some as hurried and poorly prepared. It is true that, from the standpoint of usual procedure, whereby the envisioned process would be fully mapped out prior to any summit-level talks, the prime minister's decision involved some risk. But in the context of the progress of the previous year, I believe the decision was based on careful consideration of the situation and was in no sense reckless.

Japan must make vigorous efforts to persuade North Korea to put an end to its nuclear arms development program.

Toward Greater Peace and Security in Northeast Asia

With a short schedule that put him back in Japan the same day, Prime Minister Koizumi visited Pyongyang on 17 September 2002, with the straightforward goal of establishing a platform for resolving outstanding issues and breaking the deadlock in bilateral negotiations. In accordance with the prime minister's strict instructions, the itinerary dispensed with all but the bare minimum of courtesies and focused on the summit meeting itself.

The meeting resulted in the signing of the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration.

Immediately prior to the summit, Japan was given the shocking news that several of the abductees were now dead. During the meeting, Chairman Kim Jong Il acknowledged the abductions as fact, called them regrettable, expressed his wish to apologize, and vowed to prevent further abductions. He also admitted that North Korean operations ships had been violating Japanese territorial waters, and promised there would be no recurrence of such activities.

As regards the abductions, although the Japanese delegation had, prior to the meeting, requested information on the welfare of the abductees and a clear apology from North Korea, the response it received exceeded its expectations. But in Japan, the foreign ministry was roundly criticized for its handling of the information about the abductions and its treatment of the abductees' families. In the face of such criticism, the ministry must now step up its efforts to uncover the truth of the abductions and effect the repatriation to Japan of the surviving abductees and their children. No progress will be made in negotiations toward normalizing bilateral relations without further progress on this issue. With the revelation of the death of eight abductees, the prime minister's decision to sign the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration and resume official normalization talks cannot have been an easy one to make. However, little hope would have remained for resolving this and other issues if the channels for dialogue had been left closed.

The step taken at this summit was simply the decision to resume negotiations toward normalizing relations, not a commitment to normalization nor any promise of concrete economic cooperation. In this round of talks, North Korea dropped its demand for reparations for Japan's colonization of Korea, indicating a willingness to discuss a settlement package similar to that agreed upon by South Korea when its relations with Japan were normalized—that is, a settlement involving economic cooperation and the mutual waiver of rights of property and claim.

Given the history of the normalization talks, this agreement was in itself groundbreaking, though whether cooperation will actually be carried out depends on the progress of negotiations henceforth. Cooperation, furthermore, will be implemented only after relations between the two countries are normalized. Japan should proceed with a careful eye to Pyongyang's response to such issues as the abduction of Japanese citizens, covert operations ships, and concerns about regional security. In other words, using the prospect of

normalization of official relations as leverage, Japan must adamantly insist that North Korea fulfill the promises made in the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration.

The declaration includes numerous commitments by North Korea on the issue of security, reflecting Japan's aim to create a safer and more peaceful Northeast Asia. Until now, the issues of nuclear capability and missile development have been discussed between North Korea and the United States, with talks on the former based on the Agreed Framework between the United States and North Korea in 1994. However, suspicions about North Korea's nuclear arms development have yet to be dispelled, and it is believed that North Korea has some one hundred Nodong missiles with a range far enough to reach almost all of Japan. Further, North Korea's export of missiles and related technology is a matter of no small concern.

Japan cannot remain indifferent to these problems, which bear directly on its security. How the situation will develop is impossible to predict. North Korea's development of nuclear weapons using enriched uranium, revealed in October, not only violates the framework it agreed to with the United States but is also a serious obstacle in terms of the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration. With so much at stake, Japan must make vigorous efforts to persuade North Korea to put an end to its nuclear arms development program.

Japan should also use the newly formulated framework of Japan-U.S. security talks to increase its involvement in this issue. From a slightly different perspective, it may be said that on the basis of the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, Japan, while exercising no military sway, has taken on a greater responsibility for security in this region. Discussing security issues with North Korea, with which Japan has had no diplomatic relations and which it has regarded and been regarded by as hostile, will be no easy task. But while concrete results cannot be expected overnight, it is hoped that the Pyongyang Declaration will provide a platform on which to build mutual trust, and an opportunity to transform the bilateral relationship from antagonism into cooperation. The Pyongyang Declaration has, moreover, given the two countries, through a common understanding, the opportunity to create a broader arrangement for confidence building in the region as a whole. This arrangement, which Japan has long advocated, has as its aim the six-party talks involving the United States, China, Russia, South Korea, North Korea, and Japan. By helping to create such a framework, Japan could make an invaluable contribution to peace in the region.

An Unpredictable Outlook

The Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration called for negotiations toward normalization of diplomatic relations to be resumed at the end of October 2002. These talks promise to be complicated by a number of factors, including the effort put toward resolving the abduction issue; the progress of the U.S.-North Korea dialogue, which is expected to run into difficulties over North Korea's nuclear development program, among other issues; and con-

ditions within North Korea, particularly its economic problems. While maintaining its trilateral relationship with South Korea and the United States, Japan should proceed with these negotiations with tenacity and vigilance as to whether the principles and spirit of the Japan–DPRK Pyongyang Declaration are being upheld. North Korea’s pattern of behavior cannot be expected to change overnight, but Japan has a responsibility to make concerted diplomatic efforts toward creating a safer international environment, even if only by a small step at a time.

Of course, Japan, too, must adhere to the terms of the declaration. Can it nourish the seed planted by the prime minister’s visit into a successful normalization of diplomatic relations that will contribute significantly to regional peace and stability? The obstacles remain formidable. Can Japanese look forward to living in a more secure environment where abductions no longer occur, where spy boats and secret agents are no longer active inside Japanese territory, and where the nation no longer lives under the threat of missile attack? This response must, somehow, be affirmative.

The prime minister’s visit and the resulting declaration have provided a basis from which to work toward that goal. But with the process set in motion just getting under way, it is still too early to make any evaluation. The outlook is highly uncertain, and difficulties are sure to arise. Can the thorny issues between Japan and North Korea be dealt with properly in this new phase of their relationship? The historical value of the prime minister’s visit to Pyongyang depends on the efforts that both sides make from now on.

About this Article



Translated by Dean Robson from the original Japanese, “Sori ho-Cho to Nit-Cho Pyongyang sengen shomei e no michi,” published in the December 2002 issue of the Japanese edition of *Gaiko Forum* featuring the Korean peninsula and Japanese diplomacy.

No.173 (December 2002)

WINTER 2003

Japan-ROK Relations

1965	Feb.	Foreign Minister Shiina Etsusaburo visits the Republic of Korea (ROK; South Korea), expressing “deep regret” over the “unhappy” period between Japan and ROK, and the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and ROK is provisionally signed	July	Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting	
	June	Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and ROK and supplementary agreements are signed	1995	Nov.	President Kim Young Sam visits Japan and attends the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Osaka; Japan-ROK summit meeting
	Dec.	Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and ROK takes effect and diplomatic ties are normalized	1996	Mar.	Japan-ROK summit meeting in Bangkok
1966	Mar.	Trade Agreement between Japan and ROK is signed and takes effect		May	Co-hosting of FIFA World Cup by Japan and ROK is decided
1971	July	Prime Minister Sato Eisaku visits ROK, attending the inauguration of President Park Chung Hee		June	Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting on Cheju Island
1973	Aug.	Kim Dae Jung is abducted from a hotel in Tokyo	1997	Jan.	ROK President Kim Young Sam visits Japan for Japan-ROK summit meeting in Beppu
1974	Aug.	Assassination attempt on President Park, who eludes bullets, but his wife, Yuk Young Soo, is killed. Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei visits ROK to attend the national funeral for Yuk	1998	Mar.	Japanese Foreign Minister Obuchi Keizo visits ROK and meets with President Kim Dae Jung
1978	June	Agreements take effect between Japan and ROK concerning joint development of the southern part of the continental shelf adjacent to both countries, and establishment of boundary in the northern part		Apr.	Japan-ROK summit meeting in London
1982	July	ROK government calls on the Japanese government to correct statements in some Japanese history textbooks		Oct.	President Kim Dae Jung visits Japan for Japan-ROK summit meeting; Japan-ROK Joint Declaration, new agreement on fisheries between Japan and ROK, and others are signed; ROK government begins the first round of liberalization on products of Japanese culture
1983	Jan.	Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro visits ROK, and Japan-ROK joint communique is issued		Nov.	First round of gatherings by Japan-ROK cabinet ministers takes place in Kagoshima
1984	Sept.	President Chun Doo Hwan visits Japan, and Japan-ROK joint communique is issued	1999	Feb.	Japanese Foreign Minister Komura Masahiko visits ROK and holds Japan-ROK foreign ministers’ meeting
1985	Dec.	Agreement between the Japanese government and ROK government on cooperation in the fields of science and technology is signed and takes effect		Mar.	Prime Minister Obuchi visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting
1986	July	Fingerprinting requirement becomes heated issue.		Sept.	Kim Jong Pil, ROK prime minister, visits Japan
	Sept.	Japanese minister of education Fujio Masayuki makes controversial remarks and is dismissed. Prime Minister Nakasone visits ROK, attending the opening ceremony of the 10th Asian Games held in Seoul; Japan-ROK summit meeting held		Oct.	Second round of gatherings by Japan-ROK cabinet ministers takes place on Cheju Island
1988	Feb.	Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru visits ROK, attending the inauguration of President Roh Tae Woo	2000	May	Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting
	Sept.	Prime Minister Takeshita visits ROK, attending the opening ceremony of the Seoul Olympic Games; Japan-ROK summit meeting		June	President Kim Dae Jung visits Japan, attending the funeral of the former Prime Minister Obuchi, and holds Japan-ROK summit meeting
1990	May	President Roh Tae Woo visits Japan for Japan-ROK summit meeting		Sept.	President Kim visits Japan for Japan-ROK summit meeting in Atami
1991	Jan.	Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting	2001	Oct.	On 15th, Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichiro visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting; on 20th, Japan-ROK summit meeting held in Shanghai
1992	Jan.	Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting	2002		The Year of Japan-Korea National Exchange
	Nov.	President Roh Tae Woo visits Japan for Japan-ROK summit meeting in Kyoto		Mar.	Prime Minister Koizumi visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting; Japan-ROK Investment Agreement is signed
1993	Nov.	Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro visits ROK for Japan-ROK summit meeting in Kyongju		May	Japan and ROK co-host FIFA World Cup (to June); Prince and Princess Takamado and Prime Minister Koizumi attend opening ceremony of World Cup in Seoul
1994	March	President Kim Young Sam visits Japan for Japan-ROK summit meeting		June	Treaty on Extradition between Japan and ROK is signed; President Kim visits Japan to attend the closing ceremony of the World Cup; Japan-ROK summit meeting is held and joint message on the future by the leaders of the two countries issued
				July	Japanese Foreign Minister Kawaguchi Junko visits ROK for Japan-ROK foreign ministers’ meeting

Aug.	Japan-ROK foreign ministers' meetings are held in Brunei and Tokyo	Oct.	Japan-U.S.-ROK summit meeting is held in Los Cabos
Sept.	Japan-ROK foreign ministers' meetings are held in Johannesburg and New York; Japan-ROK summit meeting is held in Copenhagen	Nov.	Japan-China-ROK summit meeting is held in Phnom Penh

Major Events between Japan and North Korea

1965	June	At the time of the signing of the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea, North Korea declares its right to demand compensation from Japan	2000	Mar.	Japan decides to send North Korea 100,000 tons of rice in aid via World Food Plan
1987	Sept.	Japan Socialist Party chairman Doi Takako visits North Korea		Apr.	Ninth round of Japan-North Korea normalization talks is held in Pyongyang
	Nov.	Korean Airlines jet crashes as result of bomb		June	North-South summit meeting takes place in Pyongyang
1989	Mar.	Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru expresses his deep regret and remorse over Japan's "past" on the Korean Peninsula		July	First Japan-North Korea foreign ministers' meeting takes place in Bangkok, agreeing on the agenda for the tenth round of Japan-North Korea normalization talks
1990	Sept.	Japanese delegation from Liberal Democratic Party and Socialist Party led by ex-Deputy Prime Minister Kanemaru Shin visits North Korea, and along with Worker's Party of Korea, a three-party joint communique is issued, including an agreement to begin diplomatic normalization talks		Aug.	Tenth round of Japan-North Korea normalization talks is held in Tokyo and Chiba
1991	Jan.	First round of Japan-North Korea normalization talks is held in Pyongyang	2001	May	A man suspected to be son of General Secretary Kim Jong Il is temporarily detained and then expelled from Japan
1993	May	North Korea conducts a launch test of intermediate-range No-dong missile in the Sea of Japan		Nov.	Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department searches headquarters of General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, on suspicion of illegal transactions with the Chogin Tokyo Shinkumi Bank
1994	July	President Kim Il Sung dies		Dec.	Unidentified boat is sunk after exchanging fire with Japan Coast Guard patrol boats off Amami Oshima Island
1995	Mar.	Japanese delegation from the three governing parties (LDP, JSP, and Sakigake) led by ex-Deputy Prime Minister Watanabe Michio visits North Korea	2002	Jan.	U.S. President George W. Bush calls North Korea part of the "axis of evil"
	June	Japan decides to send North Korea 300,000 tons of rice in aid		Mar.	National Police Agency recognizes Arimoto Keiko as a victim of abduction by North Korea; Red Cross Society of North Korea announces resumption of its investigation into missing Japanese nationals
1997	May	Japanese government officially concludes that seven cases involving a total of ten missing Japanese nationals, including Yokota Megumi, were cases of abduction by North Korea		Apr.	General Secretary Kim remarks that the missing persons issue can be a topic of bilateral discussion
	Sept.	First round of Japan-North Korea Red Cross talks is held in Beijing		July	Japan-North Korea foreign ministers' meeting takes place in Brunei
	Oct.	Kim Jong Il takes office as general secretary of Workers' Party of Korea		Aug.	Japan-North Korea foreign ministry director-general level consultations take place in Pyongyang; Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro's plan to visit North Korea is announced
	Nov.	Japanese delegation from the government parties led by Mori Yoshiro, Chairman of the LDP Executive Council, visits North Korea		Sept.	Unidentified boats painted with North Korean flags are spotted off Noto Peninsula; the unidentified boat sunk off Amami Oshima Island is salvaged; Prime Minister Koizumi visits North Korea and the first Japan-North Korea summit meeting takes place
1998	June	Red Cross Society of North Korea declares there are no "missing Japanese nationals" in its country		Oct.	Japanese abductees return to Japan temporarily; twelfth round of Japan-North Korea normalization talks is held in Kuala Lumpur
	Aug.	North Korea launches a Taepo-dong ballistic missile		Nov.	Pyongyang threatens to abandon its missile test freeze; KEDO (Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization) decides to suspend provision of heavy oil to North Korea; Japan sounds out North Korea's feelings about prior negotiations
	Sept.	Japanese government announces sanctions, including suspension of food aid			
1999	Mar.	Japanese government issues first order for the deployment of Maritime Self-Defense Force in policing seas when two suspected North Korean spy boats intrude into Japanese territorial waters			
	Dec.	Japanese delegation led by ex-prime minister Murayama Tomiichi and Workers' Party of Korea jointly announce that bilateral normalization talks will be resumed by the end of the year; preliminary meetings for normalization talks are held in Beijing			