

**The Origins and Evolution of
the Korean-American Alliance:
A Japanese Perspective**

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Introduction

This paper examines the importance of the Korean-American alliance for Japan from a historical perspective.

The U.S.-Japan alliance is important for the security of South Korea because it provides logistic support for the U.S. activities on the Korean peninsula. This is obvious if we look into the reasons why the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation were revised in September 1997. At the same time, the U.S.-ROK alliance is also important for the security of Japan because it functions as a buffer or shield for Japan. Bounded on the north by China and Russia, and only thirty miles from the closest Japanese island, the Korean peninsula is the fulcrum where the major powers' interests in Asia converge. Tokyo is about one hour from Seoul by jet aircraft.

Nonetheless, Tokyo has been very reluctant to express its concern for the security of the Korean peninsula—at least in public. Tokyo has occasionally done so in the context of U.S.-Japan relations. When Tokyo feels the necessity to sustain a credible U.S. defense commitment to Japan, it tends to express Japan's security concern over the Korean peninsula. Once declaring that security concern, however, Tokyo seems reluctant to assume real responsibilities on the peninsula.

If alliances are “marriage of convenience,” they are faced with various dilemmas. Glen Snyder points out a typical security dilemma in alliance politics: that between “abandonment” and “entrapment.” The former is the fear that an ally may leave the alliance or may not fulfill its obligations. The latter refers to “being dragged into a conflict over an ally's

interests that one does not share, or shares only partially.”¹ In the U.S.-Japan alliance, Japan has been more concerned about entrapment. But in the U.S.-South Korea alliance, South Korea has been more worried about being abandoned. Japan’s reluctant attitude toward the security of Korea represents its fear of entrapment.

In this paper, I will trace Japanese reactions to the U.S.–South Korea alliance by focusing on two discrepancies: the discrepancy between Japanese and American attitudes and that between Japan’s declaratory and actual policies toward the security of Korea. These discrepancies stem from the dilemma in the U.S.-Japan alliance: while Japan does not want to be dragged into a military conflict in Korea, it needs credible security ties with the United States.

In particular, I focus on Japanese reactions to President Jimmy Carter’s decision to withdraw U.S. ground combat forces from South Korea in the late 1970s. This is interesting as a case study because this decision had a serious impact upon the U.S.–South Korean alliance, and also because the late 1970s witnessed sea changes in Japan’s defense policies. Both the National Defense Program Outline (NDPO) and the “Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation were adopted in this period.

Before entering into the case study, we need to trace the historical background of the U.S.-ROK alliance and Japan until the 1970s, dividing the period into several phases.

Historical Background

Prewar Period

Historically, Korea has been of central importance for Japan’s security. *Genro* or senior leaders of the Meiji Government often called the Korean peninsula a “dagger pointed at the heart of Japan.” In 1876, for example, when Japan forced Korea to open to diplomatic and trade relations, Minister to Russia Enomoto Takeaki sent a letter to Foreign Minister Terashima Munenori and observed:

While Japan’s economic interest in Korea is negligible...its political and strategic interests there are profound.²

It was Tokyo’s nightmare that another power would dominate the Korean peninsula. This fear led Japan to fight two wars: the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War. Japan annexed Korea in 1910. It should be noted, however, that it colonized Korea not mainly out of economic needs but because of military motivations. Tanaka Akira, a leading Korea specialist in Japan, says:

It is not precise to call Japan’s invasion of Korea a “Japanese imperial invasion.” The fragile Japanese economy in the Meiji Period was far from “imperialism as the last stage of capitalism.” Japan invaded Korea for its military needs.³

Japan’s further expansion in Asia also stemmed from its desire to secure its position in the Korean peninsula. Japan wanted Manchuria in order to secure control over the peninsula. The ultimate logic of this outward expansion was Japan’s invasion of the mainland of China.

Of course, Japan exploited the Koreans intensely. The number of Korean residents in Japan increased from 2,500 in late 1911 to 2.5 million by the end of the war. Even now about 680,000 Koreans live in Japan. Discrimination against Korean residents of Japan is a serious social problem.

Unlike Japan, the United States has considered Korea far from the center of its security interests in Asia. After the Russo-Japanese War, the Theodore Roosevelt administration exchanged the Katsura-Taft Memorandum with Tokyo, recognizing Japan's special interests in Korea. By so doing, Washington discarded the Kingdom of Chosun in exchange for Japan's recognition of U.S. interests in the Philippines. President Roosevelt noted:

Korea is absolutely Japan's. To be sure, by treaty it was solemnly covenanted that Korea should remain independent. But Korea was itself helpless to enforce the treaty, and it was out of the question to suppose that any other nation ... would attempt to do for the Koreans what they were utterly unable to do for themselves.⁴

For the Koreans, who had wanted American protection from Japanese expansionism, the Katsura-Taft Memorandum represented the first U.S. "betrayal" in the history of U.S.-Korean relations.

After the Japanese annexation of Korea, the United States did not have formal contacts with Korea. When Samil Undong, the large scale anti-Japanese nationalistic riot, occurred in Korea on March 1, 1919, the Japanese Government-General brutally repressed it. President Woodrow Wilson, in spite of his strong commitment to the doctrine of self determination, ignored this incident. This was the second U.S. "betrayal" for the Koreans.

Once the Pacific War broke out in December 1941, however, the United States sought to destroy the Japanese Empire. During the war, the United States, with Britain and China, issued the following statement in the Cairo Declaration in December 1943:

The foresaid three great powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent.⁵

By the expression "in due course," President Franklin Roosevelt expected a forty-year international trusteeship. This estimation was based on the U.S. experience in the Philippines. When the Koreans, who had expected immediate independence from Japan, learned of this delay, they were greatly disappointed. This was the third U.S. "betrayal" for them.

In fact, Washington was indifferent to Korea even at the end of World War II. At a meeting in the State Department in August 1945, for example, Secretary of State Edward Stettinius is said to have asked his aide where the Korean peninsula was located on the map.⁶

In short, until the end of World War II Japanese and American security interests in Korea were quite asymmetrical: while Japan had paramount strategic interests in Korea, the United States had none at all.

The Korean War: 1950–53

With the end of the Pacific War, Japan, now nothing as a military entity, lost its hold over the Korean peninsula. The collapse of thirty-five years of Japanese control in Korea created an immediate vacuum there. This left the United States, by default, in charge of the security of Korea. On August 10, 1945, two U.S. army colonels, Charles Bonesteel and Dean Rusk,

drew a line to divide Korea into separate U.S. and Soviet zones of occupation. Gregory Henderson, a renowned Korea specialist, said “No division of a nation in the present world is so astonishing in its origin as the division of Korea.”⁷

The American occupation of Korea, unlike that of Japan, was ill-prepared. Henderson cynically said, “The GIs lacked background even for a routine Korean situation. ... They had no files; indeed, they had no information to put in them. ... They had no selfish aims; indeed, they did not have aims at all, lacking policy.”⁸

In September 1947, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) reported that the United States had little strategic interest in maintaining troops in South Korea. In April 1948, the National Security Council (NSC) recommended facilitating “the liquidation of the U.S. commitment of men and money in Korea with the minimum of bad effects.”⁹ George Kennan, then director of the State Department Policy Planning Staff, assumed that if the Soviet Union were to attack Korea, then the United States should move to ally with Japan; otherwise, Japan could hold neutral as far as the United States could retained its military bases in Okinawa.¹⁰

In August and September 1948, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), respectively, were established. In late June 1949, the last of the U.S. troops departed from the ROK, and in October of the same year the communists dominated mainland China and established the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The United States was going to abandon the newly born ROK.

The outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, however, forced Washington to become much more serious about the security of Korea in the context of the security of Japan. Dean Acheson stated that the attack against South Korea “was an open, undisguised challenge to our internationally accepted position as the protector of South Korea, an area of great importance to the security of American-occupied Japan.”¹¹

The Korean War prompted the United States to alter its occupation of Japan and to transform its former enemy into its most important ally in Asia. In particular, China’s military intervention in Korea in December 1950 justified the conclusion of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. Kennan recalls: “The shock thrown into SCAP by this development and the extent to which, in the course of the ensuing hostilities, we were obliged to draw on our military, naval, and air facilities in Japan as bases for the conduct of hostilities in Korea converted everyone who had not yet been converted to the view that the American military presence in Japan was wholly essential to any future security of the area.”¹² While the United States intervened in the Korean War in the context of the security of Japan, now it reconfirmed the strategic importance of Japan due to the Korean War. As Ahn Byung-joon notes, “it is an irony of history that Korea served to cement the U.S.-Japanese alliance in the formative years of the cold war.”¹³

Tokyo, however, had little concern about an attack from Beijing against Japan’s island archipelago, because China lacked sufficient air and naval forward projection capabilities. Although Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru was more concerned about Soviet military capabilities, even these were downplayed as a potential threat. He did not regard the Sino-Soviet bloc as monolithic because of historical and cultural differences. Tokyo’s major security concerns were domestic political instability caused by economic poverty and, consequently, the indirect infiltration of communism into Japanese society (in 1947, Japan’s industrial production was less than half of the 1930–34 average). By allying with the United States, Japan sought to join the international community, especially the Western market economies led by the United States. Yoshida stated:

Japan is an island nation in which a population in excess of ninety-one million must be provided with a civilized standard of living. This can only be accomplished through an expanding volume of overseas trade. That we should, to that end, pay special regard to our relations with Great Britain and the United States ... is a matter of prudent policy unconnected with any considerations of political ideology.¹⁴

By concluding the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty of 1951, Washington received military bases in Japan to “maintain the peace and security in the Far East” (Article 1), but without a clear obligation to protect Japan. While Japan, which was not faced with a direct military threat, gained independence and access to Western markets, the United States retained military bases in Japan for the security of the Far East including Korea.

In October 1953, with an armistice reached in Korea, the United States concluded the Mutual Defense Treaty with the ROK. The heart of the treaty, Article III, stated that “an armed attack in the Pacific area on either of the Parties in *territories now under their respective administrative control*, or hereafter recognized by one of the Parties as lawfully brought under the administrative control of the other, would be dangerous to its own peace and safety” and that “it would act to meet the common danger *in accordance with its constitutional processes*” [emphasis added].

First, this article implies that the United States has no treaty obligation to help South Korea if the South should attack the North. This is because North Korea does not belong to territories under South Korean administrative control. Second, the United States, in accordance with its constitutional processes, would avoid being automatically embroiled in a war on the Korean peninsula. This is the so-called Monroe Doctrine approach to collective defense.¹⁵ Also, the United Nations commander, who was also the U.S. commander in Korea, retains operational control over the South Korean armed forces. Washington, concerned about being entrapped, wanted to prevent Seoul as well as Pyongyang from initiating offensive military action.

As a consequence, even after the end of the Korean War the United States had to deploy large-scale military forces to protect South Korea. Furthermore, while even before the Korean War the ROK could not have survived without American military and economic aid, during the war South Korea’s industrial base was completely destroyed. The war is said to have cost South Korea twice its gross domestic product (GDP). From a material perspective, then, the ROK was a major burden for the United States. Ironically, thanks to special procurements for the Korean War, Japan, which had exploited the Korean peninsula during the colonial era, began to reconstruct its economy.

As for the strategic value of the alliances with Korea and Japan, Edward Olsen notes:

The U.S.-ROK alliance was characterized by its focus on the North Korean adversary—not on the key cold war Soviet adversary. In contrast, the U.S.-Japan alliance, although fuzzy about what country to the north was Japan’s hypothetical adversary, left no serious doubt that the alliance was part of the core Western system aimed at the Soviet Union.¹⁶

In sum, for the United States, the U.S.-ROK alliance was an alliance with lower strategic value and higher cost than the U.S.-Japan alliance.

Given this asymmetry between the two alliances, Washington was much more sensitive to anti-American sentiment in Japan than in Korea. In the joint communiqué between

President Dwight Eisenhower and Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke in June 1957, the United States abolished the Far Eastern Command in Tokyo and withdrew its ground forces from the mainland of Japan. The Third Marine Division was moved to American-occupied Okinawa and, as the UN Command unofficially acknowledged in early 1958, Honest John rockets, tactical nuclear weapons, were introduced to South Korea. Stationing the ground forces and nuclear weapons in Japan would have facilitated anti-American sentiment there. Yet it was essential for the United States to maintain its naval and air bases in Japan for its strategy in the region. Later, in May 1963, General Maxwell Taylor, the chairman of the JCS, proposed to withdraw the U.S. forces from South Korea and to guarantee the defense of South Korea by nuclear weapons. Alexis Johnson, deputy under secretary of state, however, was strongly opposed. Johnson noted that in political and legal terms the president of the United States could not guarantee the use of nuclear weapons and that such a policy would provoke anti-nuclear sentiment in Japan and make it difficult to use the military facilities there in case of a Korean conflict.¹⁷ While many Japanese were indifferent, the Japan factor in the U.S.–South Korean alliance justified stationing the U.S. forces in Korea and nuclearizing the Korean peninsula.

Revision of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty: 1960

Even after Japan recovered its independence in 1951, Tokyo did not express concern for the security of Korea. One reason is that the United States maintained its armed forces in Korea. As long as the United States sustained peace on the peninsula, Tokyo could enjoy a free ride in terms of the security of Korea. Although U.S. military bases in Japan were essential to U.S. military operations on the Korean peninsula, the Japanese government did not try to educate the public on the importance to Japan of the security of Korea.

Given the experiences of Japanese imperialism, the Korean people did not want Japan to be involved in the security of Korea again. Japan's colonization of Korea was quite different from the European powers' colonization of Asian and African areas. First, when Japan colonized Korea, Korea was already an independent state. Second, because the geographical distance between the suzerain and the colony was so short, Japan's domination over the Korean peninsula was intense.¹⁸ Both of these factors encouraged the rise of anti-Japanese sentiment among the Korean people. President Syngman Rhee utilized Korean anti-Japanese sentiment in order to sustain his autocratic regime in Seoul.

Furthermore, repeated remarks by senior Japanese officials justifying Japan's colonization of Korea frustrated the Koreans. Kubota Kanichiro's remarks in October 1953, for instance, made Japanese–South Korean normalization talks impossible until 1958. Kubota, Japan's chief representative at the normalization talks, stated that Japan's rule over Korea benefited the Koreans and that the South Korean government's confiscation of Japanese assets in Korea was illegal. In order to resume the negotiation in 1958, Yatsugi Kazuo, Prime Minister Kishi's secret envoy, reportedly brought a message to President Rhee that Kishi was eager to make amends for Ito Hirobumi's "imperialistic" initiative to annex Korea. Ito was in charge of annexation of Korea and Kishi and Ito were from the same prefecture. Kishi later said that the remarks were Yatsugi's and not his own.¹⁹ How to face the legacy of history remains a very sensitive issue for the Japanese.²⁰

The polarization of postwar Japanese politics has prevented Tokyo from being positively involved in the security of Korea. Japan's Socialist Party (JSP), the biggest opposition party, for example, was even opposed to recognizing the ROK. The JSP called the South Korean

government a “puppet” of the United States, and said that recognition of the ROK would lead to the division of the Korean peninsula. After a large-scale anti-government movement against the revision of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in 1960, the Japanese government wanted to avoid unnecessary friction with highly ideological opposition parties over Korean affairs. Even some members of the LDP such as Utsunomiya Tokuma were opposed to normalizing diplomatic relations with the ROK. Utsunomiya argued that Japan should feel guilty for the division of the Korean peninsula.

It is reported, however, that there was a secret agreement between Tokyo and Washington in the revision of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty: the U.S. forces in Japan could be redeployed for contingencies on the Korean peninsula without prior consultation. A recently declassified U.S. government document stated:

Under the treaty arrangements, the United States is committed to consult with Japan prior to the introduction of nuclear weapons, including intermediate and long-range missiles, and prior to launching from the bases military combat operations not directly related to the defense of Japan except for combat operations in immediate response to an attack against the UN forces in Korea.²¹

The opposition parties feared being embroiled in U.S. military actions in the Far East, including Korea. The Japanese government was caught between the opposition parties and public opinion in Japan and the U.S. government. In order to escape this dilemma, the Japanese government needed a secret agreement. The discrepancy between Japanese declaratory and actual policies was clear.

Even though Japan permitted U.S. forces in Japan to conduct military combat operations in Korea by secret agreement, Japan did not have its own contingency plan for Korea. Officials of the Self Defense Forces (SDF) were trying to prepare for it through the *Mitsuya Kenkyu* or Three Arrows Plan. This plan hypothesized North Korean and Chinese surprise air attack and North Korean ground invasion of South Korea. This would create a state of emergency in Japan. In February 1965, this secret plan was revealed in the National Diet by Okada Haruo, a JSP Lower House member. Prime Minister Sato Eisaku knew nothing about this plan. Faced with a strongly negative public reaction, the SDF had to disavow its contingency plan for Korea, and the Japanese government lost an opportunity to educate the public on the importance of the security of Korea for Japan.²² This experience caused a trauma for the SDF which endured for a long time.

Diplomatic Normalization: 1965

Japan and South Korea did not establish diplomatic relations until 1965. The United States had strongly encouraged its two allies in Northeast Asia to establish ties. Also, President Park Chung Hee, who came to power in the coup d'état of 1961, was very eager to establish ties to facilitate South Korean economic development. In November 1961, Park dropped by Tokyo after his visit to Washington and met Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato. This meeting was a breakthrough to promote normalization talks. Secretary of State Rusk, who had drawn the line of division on the Korean peninsula in 1945, visited Seoul via Tokyo, and emphasized the importance of Japanese-ROK normalization for the growth of the Korean economy.

Park's military coup, however, intensified opposition to normalization. Japanese progressive writers and intellectuals, for example, such as Ishikawa Tatsuzo, Kamei Katsuichiro,

Takami Jun, and Yoshino Genzaburo, among others, organized a rescue activity for anti-government journalists in South Korea. Park's concession to Tokyo on wartime reparations further hardened the opposition in South Korea. While the Rhee government had asked Japan for \$3.6 billion (\$100 million for each year of Japanese colonization), the Park government reduced the amount to \$500 million in total.

Washington tried to persuade Seoul again in 1964. In August, Winthrop Brown, U.S. ambassador to Seoul, promised U.S. assistance to the ROK after Japan-ROK normalization. In October, William Bundy, assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs, reconfirmed this. Park is said to have noted that "I do not care to be another Yi Wanyoung." Yi was prime minister of Korea when Japan annexed it. In February 1965, Japanese Foreign Minister Shiina Etsusaburo visited South Korea and finally concluded the normalization treaty. His apology for Japan's colonization of Korea, though unclear whether personal or official, eased anti-normalization movements in Korea. It had taken almost fourteen years for the two countries to conclude the treaty since talks had begun during the American occupation of Japan. Maeda Toshikazu, former Japanese ambassador to South Korea, recalls: "They may say that we should have made clearer the expressions of the treaty and apologized to South Korea. In those days, there were strong anti-normalization movements in Japan, however, and we could not do more than we did."²³

The division of labor in Northeast Asia now became clear: South Korea, as the front line of the Cold War in Asia, bottled up the North Korean threat and assisted U.S. military activities in Vietnam; Japan assisted South Korea's economic development. Japan, however, could not overcome domestic anti-military feeling and its past history with Korea. Even after diplomatic normalization, Tokyo was still cautious about expressing its concerns over the security of Korea and tried to limit its relations with South Korea mainly to economic issues. South Korea, therefore, has been called a "geographically close but psychologically far country" for Japan.

The "Korea Clause"

As the 1960s progressed, and as the United States became more and more involved in the quagmire of the Vietnam War, its defense commitment to Korea seemed to become less credible. U.S. military assistance to South Korea, for example, gradually declined to \$124 million in FY1964, an all-time low from a 1956 baseline.²⁴

Sang-Woo Rhee argues that there are two types of national interests: essential and situational. According to him, U.S. security interests in Japan fall into the former category, U.S. interests in Korea into the latter.²⁵ If so, perhaps U.S. defense commitments became fragile when the United States needed to allocate more resources to other areas in Asia, especially Vietnam.

Sung-joo Han says:

South Korea's participation in the Vietnam conflict, extensive and long-lasting as it was, can be understood as a product of its alliance relationship with the United States. Korea sent troops to Vietnam not as an ally of South Vietnam, but as an ally of the United States. ...it was the declining credibility of U.S. power and the possible withdrawal of U.S. security commitments from Asia rather than the survival of the South Vietnamese state as such that Korea viewed with the utmost concern.²⁶

While Seoul tried solidify America's defense commitment by participating directly in the Vietnam War, Tokyo tried to avoid any direct involvement in this unpopular war. For Japan, the Vietnam War was something like a "fire across the sea."²⁷ As the object of U.S. essential interest in Asia, Japan did not have to worry much about being abandoned. Quite the contrary, the Japanese public was more concerned about being entrapped by the U.S. "imperialistic" war.

The United States, however, began reducing its defense commitments in Asia, and expected Japan to expand its role there. In July 1969 the Nixon Doctrine was announced. According to a public opinion poll conducted in October 1969, while 31 percent of Japanese said they thought the United States would defend Japan in case of emergency, 47 percent said it would not.²⁸ Like the Koreans, the Japanese now began to fear abandonment. The late Kyoto University professor Kosaka Masataka observed: "a real danger will be the possibility of Japan placing too little trust in the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, in contrast to the excessive trust she had before."²⁹

Also, Tokyo wanted to have Okinawa reverted to Japan's administrative control. According to Prime Minister Sato, the postwar period for Japan would not end until reversion was achieved. Sato admitted in the U.S.-Japan Joint Statement in November 1969 that "the security of the Republic of Korea is essential to the security of Japan." This is called the "Korea Clause." In his National Press Club speech, Sato also noted that Japan would "positively and promptly" respond to prior consultation with the U.S. for the use of U.S. bases in Japan in the event of contingencies in Korea or Taiwan.³⁰ He in fact publicly reconfirmed the content of the secret agreement on prior consultation. As Seoul sent troops to Vietnam in the context of U.S.-Korean relations, Tokyo needed to express its security interest in Korea in the context of U.S.-Japan relations. The core of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty was the bargain struck between America's defense commitment to Japan and U.S. military facilities in Japan. The latter was essential to U.S. military activities in the Far East. In fact, Alexis Johnson admitted:

Our position in our facilities, bases in Japan as well as in Okinawa, are not so much related directly to the defense of Japan and Okinawa as they are to our ability to support our commitments elsewhere ... in Korea and Taiwan.³¹

A few days before the Nixon-Sato Joint Communiqué, former prime minister Kishi, Sato's elder brother, flew to Seoul. Unlike Yoshida Shigeru, who hated the arrogant Syngman Rhee, Kishi represented a conservative pro-South Korean group in the LDP. It should be noted, however, that Kishi was at least as pro-American as pro-South Korean. More nationalistic members of the LDP were likely to repeat disputes over the interpretation of history between Japan and Korea.

Sato's positive attitude toward the security of Korea stirred trouble in Japan. Even Matsumoto Shunichi, former vice minister of foreign affairs, thought the "Korea Clause" went too far. He stated that "[i]f a threat to the security of Korea means that to the security of Japan, logically speaking, the SDF should be dispatched" to the Korean peninsula.³² Although it was doubtful if it was "logical" or not, the Japanese public still found it psychologically difficult to admit the existence of a security connection between Japan and Korea.

Furthermore, America's policy toward South Korea was changing. In 1970, the Nixon administration unilaterally decided to withdraw the Seventh Infantry Division from the

ROK. Thanks to South Korean participation in the Vietnam War, President Lyndon Johnson had publicly promised President Park that U.S. troop levels in the ROK would not be reduced without thorough consultation with Seoul. Nixon's decision therefore infuriated Park. He told William Porter, American ambassador to Seoul, that he would not allow the U.S. troops to leave his country and that the U.S. government had no right to remove them. Park's protest, however, was in vain. Porter replied that though the United States and South Korea were friends, the United States had no intention of giving a foreign country control over its troops. The president of the United States was commander in chief of the U.S. armed forces and would remain so.³³ The South Korean armed forces became directly in charge of defending the southern part of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between South and North Korea. This incident became a trigger for the so-called Koreagate scandal, large-scale bribes to U.S. Congressmen conducted by the South Korean government.

When the Japanese government first expressed its positive will to be involved in the security of South Korea, the United States became less eager to commit itself to defending South Korea. But the "Korea Clause," which only confirmed the essence of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in public, was too much for many Japanese. Tokyo was, therefore, far from ready to talk directly and frankly with Seoul about security issues. In the Fourth Japanese-South Korean Periodical Cabinet Meeting of July 1970, for example, while the Japanese side expressed its "deep interest" in South Korean defense efforts, it refused to use such expressions as "aggressive provocation by North Korea."³⁴ The Japanese government did decide, however, to give South Korea \$100 million in economic aid, most of which would be used for Seoul's military buildup program.

The discrepancies between Japanese and U.S. attitudes and Japanese declaratory and actual policies would continue throughout the 1970s.

Japanese Reactions to Carter's Troop Withdrawal Policy from the ROK

Japan's Defense Policy

In the 1970s, Japan's defense policy shifted from autonomous defense to defense cooperation with the United States. In answer to the diminishing U.S. defense commitment to Asia, and based on his strong belief in autonomous defense, in October 1970 Defense Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro launched the very ambitious Fourth Defense Buildup Program (*Yojibo*). The original budget of *Yojibo* was 5,200 billion yen, twice the amount of the previous plan. Because of this huge budget, public opinion reacted negatively to Nakasone's favorite plan. The oil shock of 1972 made it almost impossible to implement the plan. Also, when the United States moved to improve its ties with China and then Japan established diplomatic ties with China, the strategic environment in East Asia seemed to become favorable to Japan. Thus, Nakasone's ambitious defense plan suffered a setback. Even the downscaled *Yojibo* was not completely implemented.

By the time Saigon fell to the communists in April 1975, the Japanese government was faced with two important tasks: improving public support for its defense policy and keeping a credible U.S. defense commitment to Japan. Tokyo needed a post-*Yojibo* defense plan which would meet these tasks.

The Gerald Ford administration also felt the necessity of improving U.S. relations with its allies in Asia and of making Japan take more responsibility in the region. Thus, Ford visited Tokyo and Seoul in November 1974 as his first presidential foreign travel. It was also the first time a United States president had visited Japan. In the same year, the Japanese emperor paid his first official visit to the United States.

Watanabe Akio speculates that the center of U.S. policy toward East Asia shifted from China under the Nixon administration to Japan under the Ford administration, from Japan to China under the Carter administration, and from China to Japan again under the second half of the first Reagan administration.³⁵ If so, each time the center of U.S. policy toward East Asia shifted to China, Washington moved to reduce or withdraw the U.S. forces in South Korea.

As for Japanese-ROK relations, in July 1972 Foreign Minister Kimura Toshio under the Tanaka Kakuei cabinet said that the peace and security of not only the ROK but the entire Korean peninsula was essential for Japan. He also said that a North Korean threat to the ROK did not exist.³⁶ While his remarks were based on the improvement in South Korean–North Korean relations, it was obviously a retreat from Sato’s “Korea Clause.” In 1973 Kim Dae-jung was kidnapped by the Korean Central Agency (KCIA) in Japan, and in 1974 a Korean resident in Japan assassinated the First Lady of South Korea in Seoul. Japanese–South Korean relations fell into a bad state.

In December 1974, Miki Takeo came to power. Miki needed to restore public support of the LDP government following the Lockheed incident in which former prime minister Tanaka was arrested.

The Miki cabinet moved to promote U.S.-Japan defense cooperation. Keeping a credible U.S. defense commitment to Japan was one of the tasks of Japan’s defense policy. In highly ideologically divided issues such as defense Miki, a liberal in the LDP, was relatively immune from attacks by the opposition parties. In the National Diet, the opposition parties criticized even the fact that the Air SDF exchanged information daily with the South Korean air traffic control authority.³⁷ In his visit to Washington in August 1975, Prime Minister Miki affirmed the “Korea Clause.” In the following month, Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger visited Seoul and Tokyo. Miki’s defense minister, Sakata Michita, and Schlesinger agreed on promoting U.S.-Japan defense cooperation, which produced the first defense “Guidelines” in 1978. Let us look at the memorandum of conversation between Prime Minister Miki and Secretary Schlesinger.

Mr. Miki said the Korean problem is unique given the nature of confrontation there. He reiterated that the security of the ROK and peace on the peninsula are important to Japanese security. One can see this clearly from the map. He had pointed that out to the opposition when they asked if he were going to Washington to reaffirm the Korea clause in the Nixon-Sato communiqué. Mr. Miki added that the geographic evidence is convincing, that “we feel it in our bones.”

The Secretary replied that there is nothing about a unified Korean state under Northern control—some 50 million plus people at the height of their revolutionary fervor—that should enhance Japan’s feeling of security. SecDef said there is no question that US forces will remain in Korea and there will not be any congressional attempts to bring about reductions before 1977. Even in the unlikely event of a change in administration, he did not expect any substantial change in our deploy-

ments or US policy. While there may be some minor changes in units, the general level of forces would be roughly the same.³⁸

Japan reconfirmed its security interest in Korea, and the United States seemed to become more involved in the security of East Asia again. Under these circumstances, in December 1976 the Miki cabinet adopted the National Defense Program Outline (NDPO), which placed quantitative constraints on equipment levels. By adopting the NDPO, Defense Minister Sakata and Vice Defense Minister Kubo Takuya wanted to achieve another task: improving public support for Japan's defense policy. In order to improve public support, given the experience of the failure of Yojibo, the Japanese government needed to limit its defense budget; in order to limit its defense budget, the Japanese government needed to maintain a credible U.S. defense commitment; and in order to maintain a credible U.S. defense commitment, Tokyo felt obliged to express its regional security interests. Hoping to garner public support, Sakata also issued the second Defense White Paper in 1975 (the first had been issued by Defense Minister Nakasone in 1970).

Kubo brought the Concept of Standard Defense Force to the NDPO. This concept meant that the force level should be standardized so that the defense structure would be able to meet any major international changes. The NDPO assumed the following international preconditions:

- (1) The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty will continue to be effectively maintained;
- (2) The United States and the Soviet Union will continue to avoid nuclear war and large-scale conflicts that could escalate into nuclear war;
- (3) Even if there is partial improvement in Sino-Soviet relations, this will not lead to the resolution of the fundamental conflict;
- (4) There will continue to be moderation in Sino-U.S. relations;
- (5) A large military conflict will not break out on the Korean peninsula.³⁹

The autonomous Yojibo was then altered by the détente-oriented NDPO under the Miki cabinet.

The Carter Shock

Soon after adoption, however, the NDPO suffered from a serious challenge from the United States. Contrary to Schlesinger's prediction, President-elect Jimmy Carter reconfirmed his campaign promise to withdraw the Second Infantry Division from the ROK "after consultation with South Korea and Japan."⁴⁰ This withdrawal plan had two possible implications for Japan's defense policy. First, it might produce instability on the Korean peninsula, and therefore, one of the international conditions which the NDPO assumed might be lost. Second, Japan might have to take more responsibility for the security of Korea after the U.S. military withdrawal. It would destroy the public consensus on defense policy under the NDPO.

Vice Defense Minister Maruyama Ko, Kubo's successor, therefore expressed his strong opposition to Carter's pullout plan. He said that even when South Korea became strong enough to defend itself, the U.S. military presence there would be "an absolutely essential prerequisite for retaining stability" on the peninsula.⁴¹ Foreign Minister Hatoyama Ichiro noted that "if you look at history, it is a fact that war occurred once in Korea because of

withdrawal of U.S. troops there. Hence, our anxiety.”⁴² Prime Minister Miki, though more reserved, also mentioned “conventional Japanese thinking that drastic changes in the military balance on the Korean peninsula are unfavorable to peace and security there.”⁴³

At the end of 1977, Fukuda Takeo came to power. Fukuda was well known as a pro-Korean, hawkish politician. His reaction to Carter’s withdrawal plan was, however, calmer than expected. In an interview with *Newsweek*, Fukuda modestly stated that under the present circumstances withdrawal would not be “particularly wise.”⁴⁴ Unlike Miki, Fukuda, the conservative successor to the Kishi faction in the LDP, was relatively free from attacks from the right wing on this issue. Also, he was believed to have special relations with President Park.

More importantly, Japanese public opinion was divided over and indifferent to U.S. troop withdrawal from the ROK. Washington realized this. A memorandum prepared for Vice President Walter Mondale’s trip to Tokyo noted the results of a Japanese public opinion poll on U.S. troops in Korea conducted in December 1976:

About a third (34 percent) considered the U.S. troop presence in the ROK important for peace and stability in Korea, but an about equal proportion (31 percent) disagreed. Similarly, another 34 percent who thought that these troops were vital to Japan’s own security was matched by 32 percent who did not.

Moreover, some 40 percent favored reduction or even removal of U.S. troops in Korea, as compared with 31 percent who preferred maintenance of the status quo in troop strength. On this issue, the ideological split between conservatives and the leftist opposition was particularly evident.

This somewhat ambiguous division of public opinion on an issue given widespread publicity in the media must be assessed against the low public concern with Korea. Among fourteen “diplomatic problems and international issues” listed, Japanese ranked the “situation on the Korean peninsula” in the bottom third, with no more than five percent thinking of it as an “important issue for Japan.” Not surprisingly, therefore, sizable proportions (roughly one-third) did not express an opinion either on the value of the American troop presence for “preserving peace and stability on the Korean peninsula” or for Japan’s own security.⁴⁵

Japan’s Defense Agency (JDA) began to realize that “it is not wise for Japan to be strongly opposed to the U.S. withdrawal policy because it may cause criticism of Japan as a security free rider in the United States.”⁴⁶ The JDA was concerned about the following points: first, the withdrawal policy might facilitate a South Korean drive for “nuclear weapons, even without shoes”; second, because of the withdrawal policy, foreign capital, which was essential to the South Korean economy, might be decreased; third, given the deadlock between the LDP and opposition parties in the National Diet, Japan had great difficulty substituting for the United States in helping South Korea even in economic fields.⁴⁷ Since Washington was not well aware of these points, according to the JDA, Japan’s strong opposition to the withdrawal policy would induce Washington to pressure Tokyo to take more responsibility for Korea’s security.

In February 1977, Vice President Mondale visited Tokyo in order to explain the new administration’s basic policies. Mondale discussed the Korean issue with Prime Minister Fukuda:

The Prime Minister said with respect to Korea, in the Diet and elsewhere he had taken the line that Japan had no right to intervene in a bilateral matter between the US and the ROK. He had not done this only for domestic political purposes but also because the ROK had indicated that it did not wish Japan to give the impression that it did not think the South Koreans were capable of defending themselves.

The Vice President said that the U.S. understood and accepted the Japanese formulation that the issue was a bilateral one between the U.S. and the ROK; however, we did not view it that way. We continued, privately, to consider it a matter of the gravest importance to the U.S.-Japan relationship. The U.S. would continue to need Japanese opinions and advice in this matter.

The Prime Minister said that he was very aware of some of the anti-democratic actions of the ROK government. Japan also deplored them and there was adverse public reaction in Japan too. At the same time it was important to bear in mind that there was real, not imaginary, tension between the North and the South, and ROK concern over the maintenance of internal security was in some measure understandable. Japan, as a neighbor, understands ROK problems although it knows that the Park government has probably gone too far. The Prime Minister said that he thought that it might be opportune for the new administrations in both Japan and the U.S. to advise Park confidentially that his anti-democratic attitude should be reconsidered. The Prime Minister said that he fully agreed that the allied military posture in the South was a totally separate problem and should not be linked with human rights.

The Vice President repeated that we kept the two problems separate but that human rights was a real issue. Public attitudes toward Korea had also been further affected by the recent disclosures of KCIA activity in the U.S. The Vice President said that he hoped that the discussion regarding Korea could be kept confidential. He said he would tell the press that it had been discussed briefly. He would repeat what President Carter had said publicly about withdrawal of ground forces and would challenge the Prime Minister's characterization of the matter as a bilateral U.S.-ROK issue.

The Prime Minister said that the GOJ would continue to speak along the lines they had been following in the Diet.⁴⁸

In short, while the United States wanted Japan to become more involved in the U.S.-ROK security issue, Japan again tried to keep its distance. The Japanese government was not yet ready to take any actual measures beyond expressing its security interest in Korea.

Of course, Washington did not expect Japan to assume any direct responsibility for the security of Korea. As a U.S. briefing paper to Mondale noted, the U.S. government was not "pressing Japan to undertake regional security responsibilities, recognizing that such a role would be politically impossible for Japan and extremely disquieting to most of its neighbors, including the Chinese and the Soviets." Therefore, the U.S. government realistically expected "some possibilities for cost sharing" such as "joint use of logistical, communications, and other facilities, increased complementary missions and equipment and sharing the costs for the US military's Japanese labor force, which accounts for about \$400 million out of total US annual base operating costs of \$1 billion."⁴⁹

In 1978, in fact, the Japanese government agreed for the first time to share expenses for U.S. Forces in Japan (USFJ), including sharing welfare costs and social insurance premiums. Such allocations were referred to as the “sympathy budget.” Faced with the U.S. withdrawal plan from South Korea, Tokyo became insecure about maintaining a U.S. credible defense commitment to Japan. It was not “sympathy” but insurance.

Another U.S. briefing paper to Mondale correctly analyzed Tokyo’s difficult position over the concept of “consultations”:

The concept of “consultations” on force reduction in Korea, however, presents the GOJ with unique and serious political problems. The GOJ considers it essential from the standpoint of its relations with the U.S. that it have an opportunity to exchange views fully well before any final U.S. decision. At the same time, it does not want a codeterminant role in any American withdrawal decision. U.S.-Japan consultations focused on the specific subject of Korean force levels would give opposition parties a tempting opportunity for political attack. Were the GOJ to “resist” U.S. withdrawal from Korea, in its consultations with us, the opposition would charge that the government was contributing to military tension in the area. If the GOJ seemed to accede willingly to U.S.-proposed withdrawals, the opposition could charge that the U.S. was in fact seeking to draw Japan into a more active military role. Either way, and even taking into account recent changes in Japanese public attitudes toward security issues, the GOJ believes that “consultations” on Korean troop levels would mean that the U.S.-Japan security relationship would once again become a political issue. We should indicate our willingness to keep in close touch with both the ROKG and GOJ on this important issue.⁵⁰

It was clear that the Japanese government was still caught between the public and the opposition parties, on the one hand, and the U.S. government on the other. Soon after Mondale’s return to Washington, the Japan–South Korea Parliamentarian’s Union, which included 243 Japanese Dietmen, expressed its concern that any reductions of U.S. ground forces in the ROK would produce instability not only on the Korean peninsula but also throughout Northeast Asia. The LDP’s Security Affairs Council, chaired by former defense minister Sakata, asked Fukuda to inform Carter of Japan’s opposition to the military withdrawal from the ROK.⁵¹

Encouraged by this political pressure, the JDA, in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, drafted its position paper on the U.S. troop pullout plan. It stated:

- (1) If South Korea should be occupied by North Korea, and if Japan is faced with threats from the Korean peninsula as well as the North, Japan cannot help but increasing its defense capabilities drastically;
- (2) If South Korea should cease to exist, the so-called “defense in depth” of Japan’s air defense would be lost, and the effectiveness of its defensive posture would be lost;
- (3) If North Korea should advance to the southern end of the Korean peninsula, the Soviet Pacific Fleet could easily gain direct access to the deep waters of the Pacific.⁵²

Given these domestic pressures, when he visited Washington in May 1977 Fukuda asked Carter to use the term “reduction” instead of “withdrawal” in their joint communiqué. Carter refused. The communiqué said:

In connection with the intended withdrawal of United States ground forces in the Republic of Korea, the President states that the United States, after consultation with the Republic of Korea and also with Japan, would proceed in ways which would not endanger the peace on the peninsula. He affirmed that the United States remains committed to the defense of the Republic of Korea.⁵³

After Fukuda's visit, the Japanese government abandoned efforts to change Washington's Korea withdrawal policy. The opposition parties in Japan, as expected, criticized this joint communiqué as an extension of the "Korea Clause." In July, Fukuda said that "noisy opposition to the withdrawal would be unwise."⁵⁴ When Secretary of Defense Harold Brown visited Tokyo in order to inform the Japanese government of the results of U.S.-ROK consultations on this issue, Foreign Minister Hatoyama also told Brown that "this issue is so far not related to Japan and we do not have any disagreement at all."⁵⁵

Tokyo was not prepared for consultations, but Washington had no intention of engaging in consultations with Seoul and Tokyo. It only notified them of its decision. Inoki Masamichi, then superintendent of the Japan National Defense Academy, was furious about the U.S. attitude. He sent a personal letter to his old friend Brzezinski:

First of all, I'd like to tell you how much we were insulted by the statement of Mr. Habib [under secretary of state for political affairs] at the airport of Seoul. "We" means Japanese and Koreans. In that statement, Mr. Habib pointed out the U.S. had decided to pull out ground forces from Korea. In this case, Mr. Habib visited Seoul, not to consult or negotiate with Korea, but to *dictate*.

Secondly, Mr. Habib asked Mr. Mihara, our Minister of State for Defense, to agree with him, without answering three most important questions raised by Mr. Mihara. Mr. Habib's behavior was impolite and arrogant. Unfortunately, I was not attending this conference at the Defense Agency in Tokyo. Mr. Habib was lucky. If I had been there, I could have knocked him down. After such impolite and arrogant "consultation," Mr. Habib presented at the U.S. Congress that both governments (Korea and Japan) had agreed with him. I don't think he is a liar. I think he is a fool. You know, I have been and I'm stressing that Japan can't survive as a free society unless the political-military ties with the U.S. are maintained and strengthened. At the same time I've been and am insisting that Japan should pay a full-membership fee (defense expenditures) in the free world. For me, it's terribly sorrowful the friendly relationship between the U.S. and Japan could be damaged by a stupid diplomat like Mr. Habib.⁵⁶

Of course, it was not Habib's problem. It was a presidential decision. Brzezinski was probably the only advocate of this withdrawal policy among Carter's cabinet members. Peter Hayes speculates that "for Brzezinski, withdrawal from Korea was consistent with militarizing the relationship with China. Indeed, they reportedly even considered it possible to persuade North Korea to abandon its alliance with the Soviet Union and to join an anti-Soviet bloc in East Asia."⁵⁷ But this is only an inference. Probably, Brzezinski, student of realpolitik, supported the withdrawal policy to save the president's face and to strengthen the president's confidence in him.

The Japanese public was divided over the U.S. troop withdrawal policy, and, as Washington tried to implement troop withdrawal hastily, it became concerned about a U.S.

withdrawal from Asia at large. A *Mainichi Shimbun* editorial on January 16, 1978, noted that Carter's withdrawal policy was part of a long-term U.S. policy of "separation from Asia."⁵⁸ *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* cited a JDA official's comment that "the U.S. Marines in Okinawa will be soon withdrawn ... today Korea, tomorrow Japan ... the United States' separation from Asia is real."⁵⁹ *Asahi Shimbun* in February 1978 stated that "the U.S., while showing concern over the Soviet naval buildup in the Far East, is still moving to diminish its presence in Asia. ... As a result, the Japanese commitment ... is apparently becoming less important to America."⁶⁰ In a public opinion survey conducted by *Yomiuri Shimbun* in October 1978, only 21 percent of respondents expected that the United States would act on the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in the event of an emergency, and 38 percent said it would not.⁶¹

Richard Thornton, a George Washington University historian, notes:

The Carter administration...sought to carry American strategy forward yet another step. That strategy called for withdrawal of American forces from the remaining military position held on the Asian mainland—South Korea. The main objective of American action was to prod Japan into playing a more prominent security role in the region as the United States shifted to a supporting position offshore.⁶²

This conclusion may be reading too much into Carter's ill-prepared withdrawal policy or it may be a typical conspiracy theory. As cited before, the U.S. briefing paper to Mondale regarded Japan's undertaking regional security responsibilities as "politically impossible." Tae-Hwan Ok also says:

As a result of Carter's withdrawal policy, the Japanese realized that they could not rely on the United States for their national security. It led the Japanese to understand the importance of their Self-Defense Force, which had been ignored by the Japanese public. As a result, Tokyo could build up the Self Defense Force without any public opposition.⁶³

His argument is not precise on two points, however. First, efforts to win wide public support for the SDF had been already undertaken by Sakata and Kubo before Carter's Korea withdrawal policy. In fact, it was one of the reasons the Miki cabinet adopted the NDPO.

Second, because Japan became more concerned about the U.S. defense commitment, it tried to promote U.S.-Japan defense cooperation. The pursuit of autonomous defense had already been abandoned when Nakasone had failed at promoting it. Tokyo authorized the "Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation" in November 1978. General Takashina Takehiko, then chairman of the SDF's Joint Staff Council (JSC), said "the spirit has been restored in the body of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty for the first time since 1960."⁶⁴

Under the Guidelines, joint U.S.-Japan studies were initiated on matters relating to cases of armed attack against Japan and to situations in the Far East. These correspond, respectively, to Articles 5 and 6 of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty.

The Guidelines assumed, however, that no legislative, budgetary, or administrative measures would be forced upon either government, and that matters concerning prior consultations, Japanese constitutional limitations, and the Three Non-Nuclear Principles would not be the subject of the studies and consultations. And although Tokyo was eager to promote U.S.-Japan bilateral cooperation for the defense of Japan, it was very reluctant to

discuss cooperation for the security of the Far East. Admiral Sakonjo Naotoshi, then secretary-general of the JSC, noted that cooperation for the security of the Far East, in which the United States was very interested, was an item “unrelated” to the original Japanese purpose: the defense of Japan.⁶⁵ This paralleled Fukuda’s reserved attitude toward involvement in U.S.-ROK security issues.

The failure of Mitsuya Kenkyu still lingered in the minds of senior JDA officials such as Kubo. More importantly, Tokyo could not overcome the bureaucratic disputes over the implementation of the Guidelines. The late Nishihiro Seiki, then director of Defense Policy for the JDA, noted:

In the Guidelines, we poorly separated the matters on Article 5 from those on Article 6. The latter is within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. ... It is difficult for me to imagine the contingencies on Korea which will not lead to orders for defense preparations in Japan.⁶⁶

Maruyama also recalled that “although we should have promoted the matters on Article 6 at that time, the JDA had to respect the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.”⁶⁷ Asao Shinichiro, then director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ North American Bureau, explained:

On the transfer of the SDF or the U.S. military, for example, the Ministry of Transportation should be involved. We could not call a meeting with all relevant Ministries and Agencies from the beginning.⁶⁸

As Tokyo was reluctant to discuss matters concerning the security of the Far East, its influence upon the U.S. troop withdrawal policy was naturally limited. On the U.S. side, by understanding the reality of the SDF through the lens of the Guidelines, the Pentagon became less concerned about the possibility of revival of Japanese militarism and began to seek Japan’s defense buildup in more assertive ways, as Hirose Katsuya points out.⁶⁹

Retreat from Withdrawal

Let us briefly trace the process by which Carter retreated from his withdrawal policy.

On May 19, 1977, Major General John Singlaub, chief of staff of the U.S. forces in Korea, was quoted in the *Washington Post*: “if U.S. ground troops are withdrawn on the schedule suggested, it will lead to war.” Carter promptly removed him from his position. The Singlaub incident, however, brought public and congressional attention to the withdrawal policy.⁷⁰ Inside the administration, Richard Holbrooke, assistant secretary of state for East Asian affairs, Morton Abramowitz, deputy assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, and Michael Armacost, NSC’s senior staff for Asian affairs, among others, tried to modify this policy while saving the president’s face. They were once called into Brzezinski’s office and told: “You are my three Cassandras. You’re trying to make the president flip-flop.”⁷¹

In January 1978, faced with negative reactions in Congress, Carter first used the term “reductions” instead of “withdrawal.” Robert Rich, Jr., then director of Korean affairs for the State Department, recalls: “In the autumn of 1976 it would have taken a very savvy seer

to have forecast that two years later the new Democratic President would have serious trouble with the Congress over his policy to withdraw U.S. ground troops from Korea.”⁷²

Furthermore, in April Carter announced that the immediate withdrawal should be limited to only one battalion of troops, about 800 men, plus 2,600 non-combat personnel, instead of the originally planned 6,000 combat troops.

Soon after this setback, Fukuda visited Washington in May, and asked Carter not to withdraw even one battalion without offsetting military assistance to South Korea. According to Sato Hideo, Fukuda became more assertive on this issue because he became more certain of domestic opinions in Japan, especially that within the LDP, which had become more critical of the withdrawal policy.⁷³ The JDA’s decision to introduce the “sympathy budget” for the USFJ may have strengthened Fukuda’s assertive attitude. It can also be said that Fukuda jumped on the bandwagon as American opposition to Carter’s policy increased.

In January 1979, a new intelligence estimate on North Korea’s military strength was leaked by the *Army Times* and other newspapers. For the first time, the North was estimated to have more soldiers than the South, whose population was twice as large. Also, the North was much superior to the South in terms of numbers of tanks and artillery. Congress became more negative about Carter’s plan. In July, the Carter administration finally announced that the troop withdrawal policy from the ROK would be suspended until the next presidential election in 1980.

Congressional and bureaucratic opposition in the United States led Carter finally to abandon the troop withdrawal policy. According to General William Odom, Brzezinski’s military aide, in his last NSC meeting Carter said that he still believed that his withdrawal policy was right but that even the president could not do anything without bureaucratic support.⁷⁴ Carter harbored doubts: “I have always suspected that the facts were doctored by DIA [the Defense Intelligence Agency] and others, but it was beyond the capacity even of a president to prove this.”⁷⁵

Those in Washington who were opposed to the withdrawal policy emphasized the policy’s negative impact on Japan. Nonetheless, neither Tokyo nor Seoul, whose bargaining capacity was very limited because of the Koreagate scandal, had much influence on Carter’s decision. In those days, Tokyo was still reluctant to engage in any joint studies on matters relating to situations in the Far East under the newly adopted Guidelines.

Summary

Let us sum up Japanese reactions to Carter’s troop withdrawal policy from Korea.

First, Japan had confirmed its security interest in Korea in the context of U.S.-Japan relations (e.g., the revision of the Security Treaty and the reversion of Okinawa). In general, it did so in order to maintain a credible U.S. defense commitment to Japan. Miki’s reaffirmation of the “Korea Clause” was not an exception.

Second, while the Japanese government understood the importance of the security of Korea for Japan, Japanese public opinion was divided on or indifferent to the U.S. Korea withdrawal policy, at least in its early stage.

Third, given fears of U.S. withdrawal from Asia, the Japanese government wanted to promote U.S.-Japan defense cooperation for the defense of Japan, but was reluctant to discuss matters relating to situations of the Far East including Korea. Tokyo could not free itself from bureaucratic bickering between the central government agencies over this issue.

Fourth, Tokyo therefore did not have much influence on Carter's troop pullout plan. Fukuda tried in vain to modify it at the summit meeting with Carter. Later, Fukuda jumped on the bandwagon as the voices of opposition to this plan in the United States increased. In this sense, the Japan factor in U.S.-ROK security relations should not be overemphasized. The Japan factor was important during the 1950s and the early 1960s. In those days, Japan's political and economic condition was unstable. A weak and vulnerable Japan was a central factor in the U.S. defense commitment to South Korea. The United States had to prevent Japan from falling into the communist camp or choosing neutrality. In the 1970s, however, Japan became an economic superpower, and Washington was no longer concerned about the possibility of a communist takeover or a neutral Japan. Rather, Japan was asked to play a more positive role for the security of Korea. In other words, when Carter initiated the troop withdrawal policy from South Korea, Japan was not weak enough to make Washington seriously concerned about future U.S.-Japan security relations, and not strong enough to influence the policy directly.

Carter's U.S. troop withdrawal policy from Korea provides an important lesson about the security of Korea for both Japan and the United States. Given this experience, for example, Walter Mondale, then the U.S. ambassador to Japan, would be very cautious about hastily reducing the U.S. Marines on Okinawa. Also, Japan began to promote, albeit cautiously, bilateral defense cooperation with the United States under the Guidelines. As Tanaka Akihiko points out, although the Guidelines did not anticipate a new cold war, they provided a framework for fighting it.⁷⁶ Once the new cold war intensified, even in East Asia, and political leadership changed in Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul, the window of opportunity for promoting trilateral security cooperation opened.

Aftermath

The 1980s

In the 1980s, Japan became more actively involved in the strengthened U.S.-ROK alliance.

In February 1981, newly elected president Ronald Reagan invited South Korean president Chun Doo Hwan, who had come to power in the coup d'état in December 1979, to Washington as his first state guest. It was also the first time a South Korean president visited the United States since President Park had met President Nixon in San Francisco in 1969. In this summit meeting, Reagan assured Chun that "the United States has no plans to withdraw U.S. ground combat forces from the Korean peninsula."⁷⁷

Based on the revitalized U.S.-Korea security relations, the Chun administration asked Tokyo to provide a total of \$6 billion in economic aid to South Korea. This caused a problem in Japan because South Korea asked for economic aid in the context of Japanese-Korean security cooperation. According to Sonoda Sunao, the foreign minister under the Suzuki Zenko cabinet, it was "not difficult but impossible" for Japan to provide the economic aid to South Korea for the purpose of security cooperation with it.

The Suzuki cabinet was also faced with the history textbook problem with China and Korea. It was reported that the Japanese Ministry of Education asked that the word "aggression" be changed to "advance" to Asia in high school history textbooks. Even the

pro-South Korean conservative LDP members reacted to the Chinese and Korean criticism as intervention in Japan's domestic affairs, and criticized Suzuki and his chief cabinet secretary Miyazawa Kiichi as too weak in their dealings with their Asian neighbors. Both Suzuki and Miyazawa belonged to the liberal Kochikai, formerly Yoshida, faction.

In November 1982, Nakasone Yasuhiro came to power in Tokyo. Sejima Ryuichi, Nakasone's secret envoy, commuted between Tokyo and Seoul. In January 1983, Prime Minister Nakasone chose Seoul as his first visit abroad. Surprisingly enough, it was the first time a Japanese prime minister had paid an official visit to South Korea. Nakasone and Chun declared that a new era for Japanese-South Korean relations had begun. The two leaders reached a compromise under which Japan would provide about \$4 billion, not \$6 billion, in aid and that Seoul would withdraw its claim for security cooperation.

Two months later, Nakasone visited Washington and confirmed that the U.S.-Japan alliance relationship was sound. Even his performance in Seoul should be understood in the context of U.S.-Japan relations. It was a kind of *temiyage* or gift to the White House. The joint U.S.-Japan study on the defense of sea lanes under the Guidelines had been already initiated at the end of 1982. The Nakasone cabinet had decided not to apply the Non Weapons Export Principles to the United States. Nonetheless, given the large U.S. trade deficit with Japan, the U.S. Congress asked Japan to share more of the burden for the common defense. Nakasone tried to avoid such a criticism to some extent by granting new economic aid to South Korea, the front line of the Cold War in East Asia. During his visit to Washington, Nakasone also called the Japanese islands an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" against the Soviet Union. America expected Japan to play a more assertive role in regional security. When asked about the possibility for the United States, Japan, and South Korea to defend the Tsushima Strait jointly in case of a contingency on the Korean peninsula, for example, Lawrence Eagleburger, the Reagan administration's under secretary of state, did not deny it.⁷⁸

Although Nakasone's assertive attitude was welcomed in Washington, his rate of support in the Japanese cabinet decreased from 38.6 percent in January 1983 to 34.5 percent in February 1983. The Japanese government was still caught between strengthening the U.S.-Japan security ties and maintaining domestic public support.⁷⁹

On September 1, 1983, Korean Airlines (KAL) flight 007 from New York to Seoul was shot down by the Soviet air force for violating Soviet airspace.⁸⁰ While Moscow kept silent about the incident, Japan's SDF monitored the communications records of the Soviet air force. Although the SDF wished to avoid making its monitoring capability public, Nakasone and his chief cabinet secretary, Gotoda Masahara, decide to provide this evidence to the United States. As a result, Moscow could not help but admit to the brutal incident. In response, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution of appreciation for Japan.

In November of the same year, President Reagan visited Seoul. He extended his trip to include the DMZ, and sounded the message: "Let every aggressor hear our words, because Americans and Koreans speak with one voice."⁸¹ When President Chun visited Tokyo for the first time as the ROK head of state in September 1984, the security triangle among Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul seemed clear at the level of top political leadership.

There was sufficient reason for this change in trilateral security relations. The Soviet Union drastically expanded its military presence in Northeast Asia and the Western Pacific from the late 1970s to the late 1980s. For a long time Tokyo had not taken the Soviet military threat seriously. It was in February 1979 that the Japanese government first officially admitted that the Soviet Union was a potential threat to Japan. It was in July of the

same year that the Japanese defense minister first officially visited South Korea. Seoul had long perceived Pyongyang as the sole source of military threat to South Korea. Due to the Soviet military expansion in the region, however, Tokyo, Seoul, and Washington came to share the perception of a threat from Moscow.

Nonetheless, Japan could not overcome its history with Korea. When President Chun visited Japan, the Japanese emperor stated that he deeply regretted that there had been an unfortunate period between the two countries in this century. While President Chun accepted this statement positively, many Koreans were frustrated by its vagueness. More seriously, when the textbook problem emerged again in September 1986 Education Minister Fujio Masayuki publicly justified Japan's colonization of Korea. Because Fujio did not withdraw his remarks, Prime Minister Nakasone had to fire him. Fujio belonged to the former Kishi faction.

In the late 1980s, three more reasons for promoting the trilateral security cooperation were added. First, the South Korean economy was rapidly growing. Thanks to this growth, South Korea successfully pursued its military modernization and Nordpolitik under President Roh Tae Woo. As a consequence, the difference between the United States' essential and situational interests in Asia became less clear; South Korea itself became of great importance for the United States and Japan. Edward Olsen states:

The notion that the United States was in Korea largely to cope with North Korea's threat became less persuasive as the years passed, as the Soviet offshore threat increased in the 1980s, and as South Korea became (like Japan) more capable of being a strategic partner with whom the U.S. burden should be shared.⁸²

South Korea steadily democratized in the late 1980s. The South Korean government no longer violated international standards of human rights. The public image of South Korea became more positive both in Japan and the United States. In contrast, the image of North Korea grew worse as a totalitarian terrorist state.

Japanese domestic politics also became more stable. In July 1986, the LDP won 304 seats and 142 seats, respectively, in the Lower and the Upper houses. As a consequence, Prime Minister Nakasone's term of office was extended for one more year.

With the end of the Cold War, however, the Soviet military threat disappeared. While Japanese and American security interests in Korea intersected during the 1980s, an important condition for this convergence was lost.

Economic success and democratization also produced a new nationalism in South Korea, making it more difficult to sustain the tight alliance structure with the United States. A young Korean soldier said in the late 1980s, for example, that "most of us Katusa are better educated than the GIs. It isn't the 1950s anymore. It's time for a change in our relations. It's time we had a Korean, not an American, in charge."⁸³ According to Izumi Hajime, a Japanese authority on Korean affairs, there were four contentious issues in U.S.-Korea security relations in those days: the transfer of operational control over the Korean armed forces to the ROK; the transfer of the headquarters of the U.S. forces in Korea; the revision of the Status-of-Forces Agreement; and the "media imperialism" caused by the American Armed Forces Korea Network.⁸⁴

The transfer of commanding authority to the Korean side was to some extent an attempt to defuse this antagonism. And for the first time a South Korean general was appointed to the post of ground commander of Combined Forces Command (CFC) in 1992. Operational

control also was finally returned to the ROK in November 1994 (the United States still reserves this right over the South Korean military during wartime circumstances, however).

Because national security affairs are at the core of national identity, an overly tight alliance structure can harm a sound alliance relationship. Interestingly, anti-American nationalism in both Japan and Korea surfaced in the years of the Tokyo and Seoul Olympic Games in 1964 and 1988.

The North Korean Crisis

In spite of the opportunities in the 1980s, the trilateral security relationship was not well institutionalized. When the three nations were first faced with a serious post-Cold War challenge—North Korea's nuclear development issue—Washington and Tokyo lacked concrete joint plans for contingencies in Korea.

In February 1993, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) demanded the right to inspect nuclear facilities in North Korea. In the following month, North Korea announced its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In the spring of 1994, the United States dispatched five aircraft carriers to the sea around North Korea. In those days, a slim majority of the American public thought that it was “worth risking war” to prevent North Korea from manufacturing nuclear weapons. Also, Secretary of Defense William Perry received a detailed contingency plan for bombing North Korean nuclear facilities. Based on the experiences in Vietnam and the Persian Gulf, General Gary Luck, the U.S. commander in Korea, estimated that as many as 1 million people would be killed in a full-scale war on the Korean peninsula, including 80,000 to 100,000 Americans.⁸⁵

The United States prepared for Operation Plan 5052. In this plan, Japan was expected to exercise its right of individual defense in case of a Korean contingency. Washington wanted to discuss the plan with Tokyo because, according to General Robert RisCassi, former commander of U.S. forces in Korea, Japan was an “integral part” of the operation. Tokyo, however, refused to even discuss it.⁸⁶

The United States also unofficially asked Japan about the possibility of dispatching minesweepers to protect U.S. aircraft carriers. The JDA refused because it was unconstitutional; but the JDA realized that logistic support and intelligence exchanges with the United States were necessary. The Cabinet National Security Affairs Office organized a working group to examine Japan's possible contributions in the case of a conflict in Korea. As the U.S. demanded 1,059 items as Japanese contributions in spring 1994, the working group was expanded. When the Hata Tsutomu Cabinet was established in April 1994, the Japanese government was ready to submit several bills to the National Diet to respond to contingencies in Korea.⁸⁷

Fortunately, the crisis was averted after former president Carter's visit to Pyongyang. Nonetheless, this experience reminded the U.S.-Japan security policy community of the lack of readiness of the alliance. Ishihara Nobuo, then deputy chief cabinet secretary, recalls:

The United States believed that because the embargo aimed at preventing North Korea from developing nuclear weapons for the security of Japan...Japan should cooperate with the United States as much as possible. ... I thought at that time that if the situation became worse, it would be a big problem. I was concerned that the relations with the United States might fall into trouble, and that the operations of

the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty might malfunction. So, I pointed out the necessity of making a crisis manual immediately to the Ministries and Agencies concerned.⁸⁸

The discrepancy between American and Japanese attitudes toward the security of Korea again became clear. Japan had again tried to respond to the crisis in the context of U.S.-Japan relations.

The Revision of the Guidelines

When the tragic rape incident occurred in Okinawa in September 1995, the foundation of the U.S.-Japan alliance was again seriously shaken. Joseph Nye, then assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, recalls, “it was a shock like a typhoon.”⁸⁹ There was a possibility that the core of U.S.-Japan security relations, America’s use of its military facilities in Japan, might be seriously harmed.

The revisions of the NDPO and the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation were the answers to a series of crises. In the new NDPO, adopted in November 1995, the term “U.S.-Japan security arrangements” is mentioned thirteen times (in the old NDPO, the term was referred to only three times).

Based on the U.S.-Japan Declaration on Security between President William Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro in April 1996, the Guidelines also were revised in September 1997. As for “a situation in areas surrounding Japan” including the Korean peninsula, the Guidelines reads:

When a situation in areas surrounding Japan is anticipated, the two Governments will intensify information and intelligence sharing and policy consultations, including efforts to reach a common assessment of the situation.

The two Governments will take appropriate measures, to include preventing further deterioration of situations, in response to situations in areas surrounding Japan. ... They will support each other as necessary in accordance with appropriate arrangements.

As situations in areas surrounding Japan have an important influence on Japan’s peace and security, the Self-Defense Forces will conduct such activities as intelligence gathering, surveillance, and minesweeping to protect lives and property and to ensure navigational safety. U.S. forces will conduct operations to restore the peace and security affected by situations in areas surrounding Japan.⁹⁰

The new Guidelines try to promote bilateral defense planning and mutual cooperation planning. The latter aims to “be able to respond smoothly and effectively to situations in areas surrounding Japan.” Such efforts were insufficient under the old guidelines. U.S. and Japanese security interests in Korea are now going to intersect; and, for the first time, Japan’s declaratory and actual policies toward the security of Korea will match.

Tanaka Akihiko speculates that Japan’s defense policy in the 1970s was a sort of “rehearsal” for the post-Cold War era.⁹¹ If the public steadily supports the current policy trends, the Japanese fear of “involvement” will be overcome, and the confusion of Japan’s past attitudes toward the security of Korea will also be overcome.

According to a public opinion survey conducted in both Japan and the United States in November 1997, 53 percent of respondents in the United States answered that Japan was an ally for the United States, and 60 percent in Japan indicated that the United States was an ally for Japan. Overall relations between the two countries seem sound. The perception gap between the two allies still remains, however. As for the case of contingencies in Korea, while 39 percent in the United States expect a military response by Japan, only 2 percent in Japan do. Although 69 percent in Japan feel threats from North Korea, 26 percent in the United States do. Although this perception of threat exists, Japan is still very reluctant to take active and direct military actions for the security of Korea.⁹²

Of course, neither Seoul nor Washington wants Japan to take direct military actions for the security of Korea. Tokyo could contribute through other actions such as logistic support and intelligence exchange. The discrepancy between Japanese declaratory and actual policies is lessening. Nonetheless, the divided attitudes of the Japanese public and the perception gaps between the American and the Japanese public on the security of Korea still remain, and may cause confusion in Japan's defense and alliance policies in the future as they did in the past.

Further Tasks

Although the revision of the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation was successful, further tasks remain.

Since the failure of *Mitsuya Kenkyu* the Japanese government has not prepared an officially authorized contingency plan on Korea, even under the Guidelines. Japan needs to initiate concrete and realistic contingency plans with the United States. For this purpose, clear legislative measures should be taken in Japan.

Second, the Japanese government should educate the public on the importance of the security of Korea for Japan. Without strong public support, any detailed contingency plans will not work well. The high level of public attention to the Guidelines review was a good sign. In order to educate the public, however, the political leadership needs to be educated first.

Third, Tokyo and Washington should maintain transparency in implementing the Guidelines. When the old Guidelines were adopted in 1978, China welcomed them in order to restrain Soviet expansionism. China is not as friendly today to the U.S.-Japan alliance as it was, however. In this sense, Korea will be an easier case for implementation than Taiwan.

Fourth, Japan should be prepared for changes in the strategic environment on the Korean peninsula. Future reductions of the U.S. forces in Korea will affect the levels and functions of the U.S. forces in Japan. If the U.S. forces in Korea are drastically reduced, it will be difficult from a strategic perspective to reduce the U.S. forces in Japan drastically too. If both are drastically reduced, the U.S. military presence in the region will become shallow. A drastic reduction of the U.S. forces in Korea, on the other hand, will give rise to the sentiment that only Japan, especially Okinawa, is still "occupied."

The level of armed forces of a unified Korea will also affect Japan's defense posture. In 1998 the number of South Korean ground forces is about half a million and that of North Korean ground forces is more than a million. If they are combined without a significant reduction, it will be a source of uneasiness for Japan. While Japan's population is twice that

of a unified Korea, the total number of SDF troops is less than a quarter million. Even if a unified Korea reduces its ground forces drastically, its pursuit of a blue-water navy will cause trouble with Japan.

The LDP government in Tokyo is still fragile. The South Korean economy is now in crisis. In order to avoid any irrational and unexpected trouble, Japan, the United States, and South Korea should engage in further policy dialogues at both governmental and non-governmental levels. Tokyo and Seoul should also cooperate with each other to provide more effective host-nation support to the United States. Behind the overwhelming influence of the United States on the security of Korea, Japan has tried to avoid becoming deeply involved. But neither Japan nor Korea can escape from its geopolitical ties. This is an important lesson of the crises in the past, including Carter's troop withdrawal policy.

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