Japan and Korean Unification: Ambivalence and Pragmatism - Finding the Least Bad Option

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explore the question of the possible role of Japan in Korean unification. What do the Japanese think about Korea and Korean unification, why do they think that way, and how might it affect their security decision-making in the future? I have examined the question from a historical and cultural viewpoint, as well as a political one. We will see that the Japanese experience with Korea has certain recurring themes throughout history, and that the themes build upon one another to produce a unique Japanese view of Korea. Taking this into account, the salient characteristic of Japan's policy toward Korean unification is pragmatism. Japan prizes stability on the peninsula and fears the possibility of a potentially hostile, possibly nuclear-armed, united country across the Korea Strait. At the same time, the inflammatory behavior of North Korea and the prospect of a united, democratic Korean state make a change in the status quo seem attractive. However, such change would be unattractively unpredictable and ruinously expensive. Faced with these conflicting feelings, Japan hedges. The least bad policy option for Japan to pursue is maintenance of the status quo while endeavoring to rein in North Korea's nuclear and missile programs as best it can. A divided Korea breaks the Korean "dagger aimed at the heart of Japan" at the hilt.

Keywords: Japan, Korea, Korean Peninsula, Occupation, Tokugawa, Meiji, Kwantung Army, Abduction, Khanwa, Shimonoseki, Portsmouth, Yoshida, MacArthur, Perry, Genro, Kim, Toyotomi, Noncombatant Evacuation Operations, Park, Abe, Lee, Ansei, Bakufu, Shogunate, Empire, Rachi Mondai, Reunification

The Korean Dagger: the Peninsula in Japanese Historical Thought

Early Invasions: the Mongols and Koreans

Japan has a long and rich history of trade in goods and ideas with the Asian continent, particularly the Korean peninsula, along with military

raids and piracy, too. One justification for the People's Republic of China's (PRC) current claim on the Senkaku islands is based on the idea that Chinese naval forces used those islands as both anti-piracy outposts and navigation waypoints for Imperial envoys traveling to visit their tributary state, the Kingdom of the Ryukyus.[1]

The Mongol Emperor Khublai Khan, ruler of China, conducted amphibious invasions of the Japanese islands in 1274 and 1281 with the assistance of his vassals, the Koreans. Khublai Khan had demanded that Japan become his tributary state, like the Korean Goryeo kingdom, but his overtures were rebuffed by the independent-minded Japanese. After some initial military successes onshore, the Mongol and Korean invasions were thwarted in both cases by violent storms which wrecked their invasion fleets. The second storm in particular, a two-day long typhoon, was called the Divine Wind, or *Kamikaze* (神風), by the Japanese. They saw this as direct intervention by their gods on their behalf and the episode holds enormous psychological significance for Japanese. Its nearest Western equivalent is the destruction of the Spanish Armada on its way to invade England by a storm (and the efforts of the English fleet) in 1588, thus preserving protestant England from foreign, Roman Catholic domination. No foreign army was to successfully invade Japan again for another millennium and a half.

Turning the Tables: Korea and Ming Dynasty China

Eventually, the Japanese would return the favor to the Chinese and Koreans. From 1592 to 1598, Japanese overlord Toyotomi Hideoshi, who now ruled a Japan united after a century of civil war during the *Sengoku* era (戦国時代), launched two invasions of the Korean peninsula in order to subjugate the Joseon kingdom in Korea and, ultimately, the China of the Ming Dynasty. Toyotomi's objectives were thought to be to increase his power by directly challenging China and its vassal Korea and to usefully distract Japanese lords and samurai that were rendered idle by the outbreak of peace in Japan. The Koreans fought back fiercely against the Japanese invaders—most notably, Admiral Yi Sun Sin and his fleet of semi-ironclad "turtle ships."[2]

Although the Japanese invasions resulted in the capture of Seoul and Pyongyang, and the occupation of some of Korea, the war was a stalemate. After the death of Toyotomi, the Japanese ended the expedition with an orderly withdrawal of troops from Korea and a

negotiated peace. Although Japan would be more successful at conquering Korea in the future, a pattern of Japanese intervention on the peninsula, followed by Chinese intervention to protect its interests, there was set. This was the first major manifestation of the Japanese historical tendency to seek adventure and riches abroad to avoid disharmony at home.

The Other Hermit Kingdom: Sakoku and Rejection of the Sinic System

In 1600, Tokugawa Ieyasu won the Battle of Sekigahara, secured control of Japan and became Shogun. His dynasty, the Tokugawa *Bakufu* (幕府, literally "tent government," the Shogunate), would keep this control until 1868. Like Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideoshi before him, Ieyasu liked the money and firearms that trade with foreigners brought him, but feared and distrusted their influences as a threat to his state. Accordingly, Ieyasu banned the Japanese from traveling overseas in 1633. Non-Japanese ships were restricted to Nagasaki and Japanese ships needed official permission to travel abroad. Shortly afterwards, all Japanese vessels and mariners were banned from leaving the country on punishment of death. The era of *Sakoku* (鎖国) or the closed (literally "chained") country, had arrived and would remain for the next two centuries.

It is important to remember at this point Japan's emerging rivalry with China. Although the expeditions of Toyotomi Hideoshi to Korea in the 1590s had not ultimately succeeded, they put China and Korea on notice that Japan did not see itself as a Confucian "little brother" to China. The *Sakoku* policy neatly side-stepped the Chinese tributary state system; by simply not actively trading with anyone and deliberately remaining aloof from the Sinic tributary system altogether, Japan did not have to kowtow to the Chinese. Similarly, because Japan had effectively disappeared, both sides saved face and China did not feel it necessary to bring the Japanese to heel. It allowed Japan over two and a half centuries of cultural development separate from China, and it allowed Korea freedom from Japan.

Black Ships

Japan's self-imposed isolation was ended involuntarily. At the behest of President Millard Fillmore, Commodore Matthew Perry led an expedition to forcibly open trade and diplomatic relations between Japan and the United States in the summer of 1853 with four warships and

again in 1854 with eight ships. In the end, under pressure from Perry and his "Black Ships," the Shogunate agreed to the Kanagawa Treaty of March 31, 1854. It was a modest document providing assistance for shipwrecked American sailors and opening two ports to American ships for obtaining coal and provisions.[3] This was followed by the 1858 Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Japan and the U.S., which followed a pattern used by Western countries in dealing with China: treaty ports, foreign "concessions" or settlements, and extraterritoriality for foreigners in Japan.

Japan Adapts to the Barbarian Challenge

Thus, Japan was subjected to the same quasi-colonial system of extraterritoriality as China—without the bloodshed and defeat China had suffered in the Opium Wars with the British and French. It smashed Japan's *Sakoku* system of isolation from the world. Tellingly, the five treaties made by the Tokugawa Shogunate (with the United States, United Kingdom, Holland, Russia, and France) were known as the *Ansei* (安政) treaties, meaning "peaceful or quiet" and "system or politics." The Tokugawa *Bakufu* saw it as a face-saving measure to keep the foreigners at arm's length and withhold granting them complete access.

However, by avoiding conflict and seeking a modus vivendi with the foreign barbarians, the Shogunate unintentionally ignited a revolution. It led to a crackdown on anti-government extremists enraged by the *Ansei* treaties with mixed success. This, along with ineffectual political reforms attempting to restyle the Tokugawa *Bakufu* rule under an Imperial veneer, led to a brief civil war, known as the Boshin War. In April 1868, after agreement was reached among the victorious anti-*Bakufu* coalition, court officials, and coopted former *Bakufu* officials, the young Emperor Mutsuhito proclaimed the "Charter Oath," also known as the "Imperial Oath of the Five Articles." With this revolutionary document, the "Meiji Restoration" began, and with it a new era in Japanese history.

Earlier clashes between anti-foreign factions and foreign navies, culminating in the devastating bombardment of Shimonoseki by a multinational naval task force, had powerfully illustrated Japan's weakness. Sakuma Shozan, a military expert who studied the West, reached a firm conviction: "Western countries, he said, had been able to achieve overwhelming material strength 'because Western learning is rational and Chinese learning is not.' "[4] The Meiji reformers realized a

need to arm their anti-Western, often mystical philosophy with the trappings of modernity. Shozan encapsulated this approach with yet another slogan: "Eastern ethics, Western science."[5]

These Meiji era leaders, known as the *Genro*, or "elder statesmen" (元老), set about their work with single-minded zeal. Ruth Benedict described the Meiji leaders and their work in her classic book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*:

> *They did not take their task to be an ideological revolution. They treated it as a job. Their goal as they conceived it was to make Japan a country to be reckoned with. They were not iconoclasts…*[6]

However, on the surface, the Meiji *Genro* approach to the West and modernity was a wholehearted case of "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em." In everything from the adopting the Gregorian calendar, Western hair styles, dress and music, and even eating beef, the Japanese consciously imitated the West.

Envoys were sent out throughout the world to study and cherry-pick the best practices in every major field of endeavor. From Great Britain they gathered financial, commercial and naval expertise. From France they learned legal practices. From the U.S. they learned about agriculture and universal education. From the Germans they learned military science, imported universal military service and, unfortunately, adopted their system of government.[7] As an example of Japanese pragmatism, the *Bakufu* and then the Meiji leadership initially sought out the French to train the fledgling Japanese army; after France's humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, the Japanese dropped the French and sought the help of the victorious Germans, who gladly gave it.

German Influence

Although the German training mission to Japan only lasted three years (1885-1888) it had immense influence. Led by Major Jakob Meckel, the Germans concentrated on creating a general staff system within the Japanese Army modeled along Teutonic lines. Meckel taught at the newly formed staff college in Ichigaya, Tokyo. He is the one thought to have described Korea as a dagger pointed at Japan's heart.[8] Even after the German trainers returned home, many of the brightest and most promising Imperial Japanese Army officers studied and trained in

Germany. In addition to learning German military tactics, techniques and procedures, these officers became steeped in German civil-military culture and German militarism. To be fair to the Germans, this culture was highly appealing to these Japanese officers and they hardly needed much convincing. It sat more comfortably with them than French republicanism or the Anglo-American forms of democracy.

Japan's Reach Extends

Meckel's "dagger" statement gave voice to an old line of Japanese strategic reasoning and needed little encouragement to take root. Indeed, in 1873 while members of the Genro were away from Japan on a foreign fact-finding mission, a faction of samurai hotheads had made a move to invade Korea over a supposed insult to the Meiji Emperor by the Korean monarch. [9]

The intervention was squashed by the timely return and intervention of the Genro, who were prone to Bismarck-like restraint. Nevertheless, freed from the bonds of *Sakoku,* Japan and its military looked at its neighbors with a mixture of apprehension and covetousness.

Japan Opens Korea

This attitude could not be suppressed for long. At this time, the Choson Dynasty in Korea was still in a self-imposed isolation seeking to fend off foreign interlopers, much as Tokugawa Japan had been in the 1850s. This was a response from the Koreans to the Japanese invasions of the peninsula in the late 1500s, followed by an invasion by the Manchus in the 1600s.

Korean shore batteries fired upon a U.S. expedition up the Han River in 1871 and the Americans promptly landed a punitive force which seized and destroyed the offending Korean fortifications. Yet the U.S. expedition failed in its diplomatic mission to "open" Korea to trade.

Not to be deterred, a Japanese naval expedition succeeded where the Americans had failed and forcibly opened Korea in 1876. The Treaty of Kanghwa covered trade between Japan and Korea and also gave the Japanese extraterritorial rights in Korea on a par with those enjoyed by Westerners Japan and China. The Japanese were swiftly learning the colonial game.

The Nature of the Meiji State

All the while, the Meiji government worked to educate and mold the

Emperor's subjects into a unified body to serve the needs of the State. The media, political discussion and thought were all strictly controlled by the State. Left-wing Japanese historian Saburo Ienaga gives a description of this:

> *The Meiji political system gagged and blindfolded the populace. Denied the basic facts and a free exchange of opinion on the major issues of state and society, the public could hardly participate in charting Japan's future…Under the lese majeste provision and the Peace Preservation Law, individuals with beliefs repugnant to the government, even if those beliefs were not expressed overtly, could end up in prison.*[10]

(It would be useful to bear in mind that many Europeans in this era lived under similarly repressive political systems.)

However authoritarian the Japanese State was, the Meiji reforms materially worked. By 1910, Japan's silk exports surpassed China's. The value of Japan's foreign trade went from negligible in the 1850s to approximately $200 million by 1900. In less than thirty years, Japan had built modern textile, shipbuilding and munitions industries and was connected by rail networks, telegraph and steamship lines.[11] This is a pattern of development that would be followed in the last third of the twentieth century by South Korea, Taiwan and the People's Republic of China.

Joining the Club: Japan Embraces Imperialism

By 1894, Japan had bargained with her Western role models to revoke their extraterritorial rights, and the treaty went into effect in 1899, peacefully overturning the most egregious terms of the *Ansei* Treaties of 1858. The driving factor was Japan's defeat of China in its stunning victory in the Sino-Japanese War in 1894. The Treaty of Shimonoseki, marking the end of that war in 1895, gave Japan the following territory: Taiwan, the Pescadores Islands, and the Liaotung (south Manchurian) Peninsula, as well as an indemnity. Japan also gained treaty port rights on par with the Western powers in Shashi, Chungking, Soochow, and Hangchow. Crucially for the Japanese, they got the old, old prize: recognition by China that Korea was independent, and with recognition of Japan's superior position on the Korean peninsula. The dream of Toyotomi Hideyoshi was exhumed, and Japan joined the club of Imperial Great Powers.

However, to the Japanese mind, the Western powers had been at best patronizing and at worst had cynically conspired to keep Japan down. In 1895, Russia, France, and Germany undertook the "Triple Intervention" and diplomatically forced Japan to return the Liaotung peninsula to China. Those Powers, particularly Russia, then worked with China to gain their own territorial concessions from the Chinese as payment for thwarting Japan. Japanese public opinion was incensed.

In 1902, Britain joined with Japan in a naval alliance to secure her colonial position in China. This enabled the Japanese Empire to move against the Russians and secure her "rightful" colonial position in Korea and Manchuria that had been usurped in the Triple Intervention. By 1905, Japan had triumphed over Russia. The Russo-Japanese war was short, expensive and extraordinarily bloody – presaging the First World War with its extensive use of barbed wire, machine guns, modern artillery and railway logistics.

The war's climax was the Imperial Japanese Navy's annihilation of the Russian fleet in the Battle of Tsushima Strait in the waters between Japan and Korea. The Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905 settled the issue, and Japan, now unopposed on the Korean peninsula and justified in its claim of a sphere of influence according to the rules of the time, took Korea as a protectorate. This removed the perceived threat of the Korean dagger at Japan's heart and gave Japan a firm foothold in the Asian continent, along with her concessions in Manchuria and China. In 1910, Japan annexed Korea outright. Given the nature of the Meiji regime, described earlier, and its successors, this started an often harsh and always exploitative colonial occupation of Korea by the Japanese that would last until 1945.

The Russo-Japanese war was the first time in the modern era that a non-white nation had militarily defeated a white one. This phenomenon occurred in a world that thought in terms of Social Darwinism and geopolitics. Japan's victory thrilled colonized people throughout Asia, including some in Korea. However, Japan at this time was officially uninterested in supporting such sentiments. After the Russo-Japanese war, Japan's international reputation was at its zenith.

American President Theodore Roosevelt, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for mediating the peace negotiations between the Japanese and Russians in the Treaty of Portsmouth, was enthusiastic. From his 1906 Annual Message: "The Japanese have won in a single generation the right to stand abreast of the foremost and most enlightened peoples of

Europe and America," proclaimed Roosevelt; "they have won on their own merits and by their own exertions the right to treatment on a basis of full and frank equality."[12] Japan had arrived as a great power and the seat of an empire—the pinnacle of economic, political and military development of the gilded age—just as that age was about to end.

World War I and the Fourteen Points: Japan Becomes an Anachronism

Japan did very well out of the First World War. In some ways, it could be argued that it did even better than the Johnny-come-lately United States. Joining on the side of Entente powers Britain and France from the very outset of the war, Japan played a very small but honorable part in the fighting.

The Imperial Japanese Army and Navy seized German possessions in China and the Pacific Islands. Most notable was the city of Tsingtao, which surrendered to the Japanese and a tiny British and Indian contingent after a siege. Japan thereafter secured her allies' Chinese possessions so that their troops could concentrate on fighting in Europe and the Middle East rather than having to defend their East Asian possessions against attacks from opportunists. The Japanese Navy also send a squadron of destroyers to the Mediterranean to assist in escort duty, where it performed gallantly. Moreover, it must be pointed out that German prisoners of war were treated very humanely by the Japanese, as Russian POW's had been in the Russo-Japanese War before it; the horrifying abuses of Allied prisoners by the Japanese in World War II were a product of ideology and policy – not a brutality innate in, or unique to, the Japanese.[13]

By the standards of the First World War or the Russo-Japanese War, Japanese casualties and material losses were negligible, and most of Japan's wartime actions took place in 1914 and 1915. Although Japanese military attaches and observers watched events in Europe with interest and filed copious reports, the Japanese were simply not involved in the experience of that conflict in a meaningful sense. The social and political changes that swept Europe in the course of the war also passed Japan by.

President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, despite their imperfections and the cynical maneuverings of the Powers in armistice negotiations, changed the diplomatic landscape profoundly. The old system of shifting, often secret alliances and imperial spheres of influence was changing. To be sure, the imperial trappings still existed

but greater democracy, swelling anti-imperial public opinion in Europe and America, and more vociferous and organized nationalist and socialist groups within colonized populations, meant that the page was turning on the age of empires.

Japan stood aloof and largely unaffected by these factors, although fear of bolshevism prompted a prolonged intervention in Siberia and crackdowns on sedition at home. The Japanese polity was, in its essence, still a creature of the late 19th Century and thought and acted accordingly. This would be problematic in a 20th Century characterized by emerging multilateralism and talk of international laws and conventions, enforced by supranational institutions such as the League of Nations.

Japan's Continental Excursion: Driven by Ambition, Fueled by Fear

While Japanese leaders had sought conquest in Korea and China in the 1590s, this appetite had been curbed by the closed country policy of *Sakoku*. Once *Sakoku* was abolished and Japan was once again opened to the world, it did not take long for the ambition for conquest to reassert itself.

By the beginning of the 20th Century, Japan had well-developed policies for imperial expansion. In 1910 Korea was annexed, cementing Japan's de facto control of the peninsula. By 1920, the Japanese Empire spanned the Western Pacific, swathes of Manchuria, Korea, Taiwan, various treaty concessions in China such as Shanghai, and half of Sakhalin. By 1931, Japan's Kwantung Army guarding her railway on the Liaotung peninsula was intent upon bringing Manchuria fully into the Japanese orbit. The Japanese Navy looked greedily to Southeast Asia for its natural resources. Japan's ambition, self-regard and feeling of a unique sense of destiny were at their height.

If ambition was driving Japan's outward expansion, then fear was the fuel. The fears were two-fold. First, Japan's population was rapidly expanding, and habitable, arable land in Japan was scarce. Second, Japan had very little in the way of natural resources—a fact that mattered little prior to 1854 but was crucial now that she had entered the industrial age. If Japan did not get access to arable land and natural resources, then she would face a drastic drop in the Japanese standard of living and suffer social unrest and disharmony. Mass immigration to North America and Australia had been blocked. (This fact rankled with the proud Japanese). The wide open, resource rich, spaces of Manchuria seemed to provide the solution.

Korea's Buildup

Since before its annexation by Japan, Korea had been Japan's launching pad for military operations in Manchuria and northern China. After the initial phase of the Mukden Incident, the staged terrorist attack that gave the Japanese Kwantung Army a pretext to start the annexation of all of Manchuria, the bulk of Japanese forces for the intervention came from Korea. Since the 1910s, the Imperial Japanese Army had strongly garrisoned the peninsula, and Japan had invested heavily in railways and other infrastructure in Korea to enable the efficient dispatch of troops in times of emergency. Korea was also a source of manpower and war materiel.

The Japanese had built up Korea with close regard to its terrain and local characteristics with the intention of the peninsula functioning as one entity. (Why would they not?) Hydroelectric power facilities and manufacturing plants were concentrated in the northern half of the colony. Rice cultivation and other forms of agriculture were concentrated in the southern half where the land was more suitable. Both halves of the peninsula were interdependent. This pattern of development by the Japanese would return to haunt Korea when the peninsula was partitioned in 1945.[14]

The course and outcome of Japanese actions from 1931-1945 are well-known. The Japanese are reminded of them daily by the presence of American troops on their soil and hectoring from the Chinese and Koreans about Japan's misdeeds from the late 19th Century to the mid-20th.

Enduring the Unendurable: Japan's Loss of its Empire and Reinvention

Occupation: Preserving the Kokutai

When Saipan fell to U.S. forces in the summer of 1944, it became evident to Japanese strategists that the war would be lost. Tojo Hideki resigned his prime ministership over it.[15] Yet for Emperor Hirohito's inner circle, and Hirohito himself, the overriding concern was preserving the *Kokutai*—Japan's "National Polity." The idea is best expressed in Kanji (国体), meaniing "nation" and "body." This was the national hierarchy refined by the *Genro* leaders of the Meiji era, but that had been the religious and political basis of Japan's society for centuries.

It was feared that a victorious United States would want to, at

minimum, depose the emperor and perhaps hang him. Vigorous behind the scenes assurances to the Japanese from the United States that the Emperor would remain, coupled with two atomic bombs and the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, persuaded Emperor Hirohito and his closest advisors to surrender. Without such assurances, Japan's surrender would have been an open question.

Even so, there was an attempted coup by young Japanese army officers, a Japanese tradition going back to the pre-Meiji era of "men of spirit," *Shishi*, violently rebelling against authority for the supposed good of the nation. These young officers tried to stop the Emperor's surrender broadcast on NHK radio.[16] Preserving the *Kokutai* was not simply "regime survival"—it was, in the Japanese mind, the survival of the nation itself.

From Deity to Symbol

Emperor Hirohito, of course, remained in his position until his death in 1989. Under the post-World War II Japanese constitution imposed by the United States, he served out the remainder of his reign as a constitutional monarch akin to Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom. While the American Occupation of Japan substantially changed Japanese society by decentralizing power, introducing universal suffrage, and enacting land reforms, it left the essence of the *Kokutai* concept alone.

Indeed, the Occupation authorities used the *Kokutai* in a pragmatic fashion. The U.S. Departments of State, War and Navy issued a directive, which General Douglas MacArthur concurred with:

> *The Supreme Commander will exercise his authority through Japanese governmental machinery and agencies, including the Emperor, to the extent that this satisfactorily furthers United States objectives. The Japanese government will be permitted, under his instructions (General MacArthur's), to exercise the normal powers of government in matters of domestic administration.*[17]

Japan had suffered a catastrophic defeat. Millions of Japanese were dead or missing. Japan's empire was lost. Her cities were razed to the ground. Foreign troops would occupy her soil and some of her sovereignty would be lost, even seventy years after her surrender. Yet, with that 1945 directive from State, War and Navy, Japan's essence, the

Kokutai based on the emperor, was preserved.

Mending Fences: Japan and Korea since 1945

During the late 1940s, Japan's foreign relations were entirely controlled by the U.S. Occupation authorities. Of course, her former colony, Korea, had been partitioned into Soviet and American zones. Another former colony Taiwan had been handed over to the corrupt, inept government of Chiang Kai-Shek's Kuomintang. The Soviets occupied, and their Russian successors still occupy, Japan's Northern Territories. By 1949, Mao's Chinese Communists, a regime even less friendly to Japan than Chiang's Nationalists, had seized power on the Chinese mainland. Japan's top priority at this time was to appease the American occupiers through cooperating on reforms just enough for them to end the Occupation, but not so much as to change the fundamentals of Japan. Reconstruction came in a close second. Diplomacy with any nation besides the United States was not a high priority.

Diaspora

There was, however, the practical matter of repatriating the millions of displaced persons—Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese and others—both to and from Japan and its erstwhile empire. These amounted to an estimated 6.5 million Japanese, both military and civilian, of whom 900,000 were on the Korean peninsula. Many, especially those Japanese prisoners of war held by the Soviets, were not repatriated until after 1949, if ever. At the same time, most of the 1.35 million Korean residents in Japan were repatriated to Korea in 1945 and 1946. These people faced a particularly difficult situation, returning to a divided Korea. Some Koreans remained in Japan because the situation there seemed marginally better than the uncertain one back home.[18] This last group formed the bulk of what became today's Korean minority in Japan.

Handling the Occupation

Like the *Ansei* Treaties before, the Occupation and the subsequent U.S.-Japan Alliance were things to be borne with pragmatism. Yoshida Shigeru had been a wartime diplomat and then Prime Minister in 1946-47 and 1948-54. He was a conservative and tried, with varying degrees of success, to stall or repeal many of the reforms of the Occupation.

Yoshida and many of his compatriots felt that Japan's militarism in

the 1930s and 1940s had been an aberration that should never be repeated. It was not a moral question; Japan had simply made a bad choice in confronting the West militarily. Allying with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy had similarly been a poor policy choice.[19]

Korea Gives Japan a Boost

Since the situation on the Korean peninsula was at first uncertain and then chaotic during the 1940s and early 1950s due to partition, and elections took place in 1948 and then war in 1950, it is unsurprising that Japan's relationship with either North or South Korea was minimal during this era. However, while it was a calamity for Korea, the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 was an economic windfall for Japan.

Immediately prior to the outbreak of war on the peninsula, Japan's economy was still stalled despite the best efforts of U.S. and Japanese bureaucrats and politicians. During the Korean War, however, Japan's gross domestic product grew 10% per year, her industrial production grew by 50%, the value of exports grew by 53% from 1950 to 1952, and the value of foreign trade grew by 84%. This came from an estimated $3 billion in military-related expenditures by the U.S. in Japan from 1950 to 1954.[20] Japan could be described as the only real winner of the Korean War.

The Yoshida Doctrine

Shackled by a pacifist constitution foisted upon Japan by the United States and needing to make a virtue out of necessity, Prime Minister Yoshida crafted what became known as the "Yoshida Doctrine." Japan would henceforth concentrate on its own economic development and maintain a low diplomatic profile. It would hold to a military alliance with the U.S. and allow America to handle the defense of Japan. This was a reworking of the old Meiji policy of a "rich country" (*Fukoku*), while discarding the "strong army" (*Kyouhei*) aspects. With this old wine in the new Yoshida Doctrine bottle and under the protection of the United States, the foundation for "Japan, Inc." was established.[21]

San Francisco

The Korean War gave a second political windfall to Japan. As American occupation forces hurriedly departed from Japan to face North Korea's invasion of neighboring South Korea, Japan was faced with a security vacuum at home. In July 1950, General McArthur, Supreme

Commander Allied Powers (SCAP), authorized the creation of a 75,000-strong, paramilitary National Police Reserve by Japan, and later a small Maritime Safety Agency—essentially a coast guard.[22]

As part of a concerted American effort in 1950 and 1951 to rally like-minded nations against the communist bloc (thought to be monolithic at the time), the U.S. State Department concluded multiple treaties to form a global network of alliances. Japan was part of that larger treaty network, which also included the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS). The Peace Treaty of San Francisco was signed in September 1951 by 49 nations, effectively drawing a line under the Second World War in the Pacific. (However, it must be noted that the U.S. did not return control of the island of Okinawa to Japan until 1972). At the same time as the San Francisco Treaty, the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan was concluded. (Both treaties went into effect in 1952.) This security treaty had an initial shelf life of ten years.

Pacifist Rearmament

During the 1950s, under the umbrella of the security treaty, Japan's new defense structure took shape. A National Safety Agency and National Safety Force were created in 1952, and these became the Japan Defense Agency and the Japan Self-Defense Forces (encompassing ground, maritime and air forces) in 1954. Also, the Japanese Cabinet approved the *Basic Policy for Defense* in 1957. This brief yet fundamental policy document lays out four purposes for Japan's defense policy:

> *(1) Supporting the activities of the United Nations, promoting international collaboration, and thereby, making a commitment to the realization of world peace.*
>
> *(2) Stabilizing the livelihood of the people, fostering patriotism, and thereby, establishing the necessary basis for national security.*
>
> *(3) Building up rational defense capabilities by steps within the limit necessary for self-defense in accordance with national strength and situation.*

(4) Dealing with external aggression based on the security arrangements with the U.S. until the United Nations will be able to fulfill its function in stopping such aggression effectively in the future.[23]

Meanwhile, the United States garrisoned large numbers of troops, ships and aircraft in Japan and the former SCAP headquarters of the Occupation became the Headquarters of U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ). The American military mentored the fledging Japanese forces, and this influence is still noticeable today.

Korean Connection

From its inception, the U.S.-Japan Alliance has had strong ties to the situation on the Korean peninsula. Under the banner of the United Nations (UN) Command, several U.S. bases in Japan are designated as UN rear-area facilities. From these facilities, both strike sorties and logistical flights would be flown in support of UN operations in the event of a Korean contingency. These bases are a vital and integral part of the defense of South Korea—a fact that both Japanese and South Korean politicians often prefer to downplay.

Renewal

As the ten-year expiration of the 1951 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security loomed, the Japanese and U.S. governments worked to assure a renewal of the agreement. It faced a great deal of vociferous, and sometimes violent, public opposition within Japan. This was especially true among students, trades unionists, and left-wing political parties. The Japanese government even asked President Eisenhower to cancel his planned state visit to Japan due to the furor over a renewal of the treaty. Nevertheless, after a stormy passage in the Diet, the new treaty was ratified and is the basis of today's U.S.-Japan Alliance. However, Prime Minister Nobosuke Kishi, current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's grandfather, resigned as a result of the political turmoil over the treaty renewal.

The 1960 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America was not an exact copy of its 1951 predecessor. It had an initial ten-year obligation for both parties, yet no expiration date, obviating the need for further renewals. Since 1970, both the U.S. and Japan have had the right to back away from the treaty after giving the other party one-year's notice. Additionally, Article VI of

the 1960 agreement contains provisions for a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) governing the rights and responsibilities of U.S. Forces Japan. This article was, and still is, controversial in Japan, yet it is a U.S. precondition for stationing troops in another country. The U.S. has SOFA arrangements with such allies as South Korea and Australia, for example, although the exact details vary by country and local circumstances. (The U.S.-Republic of Korea Mutual Defense Treaty was signed in 1953 and is still in effect).

Prime Minister Kishi's political sacrifice was vindicated. Support for the U.S.-Japan Alliance soon became orthodoxy in Japan and the tumultuous anti-Alliance protests of 1960 prompted the Americans not to push the Japanese any further on security arrangements.[24] However, the constitution and the Yoshida Doctrine, coupled with the protection of the United States, enabled Japan to enter into a new type of diplomatic and military, *Sakoku*. From 1945 until quite recently, Japan could avoid foreign entanglements by quoting Article 9 of the constitution.

The long-term psychological and strategic consequences of this state of affairs for the Japanese have been profound. Even the architect of the Yoshida doctrine had second thoughts, writing in 1963:

> *For an independent Japan which is among the first rank countries in economics, technology, and learning to continue to be dependent on another country is a deformity of the State…I myself cannot escape responsibility for the use of the constitution as a pretext for this way of conducting national policy.*[25]

Maturation of Policy

Despite its rarified circumstances, Japan's defense policy has continued to mature along with the Alliance. It is useful to bear the nature of this policy in mind when considering the rhetoric often directed at Japan by its neighbors. The Basic Policy for Defense, described above, was amended and clarified over time. These points have been passed in Cabinet as policy, but they are not necessarily laws in themselves:

- Exclusively Defense-Oriented Policy ("…defensive force is used only in the event of an attack, that the extent of use of defensive force is kept to the minimum necessary for self-defense, and that the defense capabilities to be possessed and maintained by Japan are limited to the minimum necessary for self-defense");

- Not Becoming a Military Power (**"…**Japan will not possess and maintain a military capability strong enough to pose a threat to other countries, beyond the minimum necessary for self-defense");
- Three Non-Nuclear Principles ("**…**not possessing nuclear weapons, not producing them and not allowing them to be brought into Japan. Japan firmly maintains the principles as the fixed line of national policy…");
- Securing Civilian Control ("…refers to the priority of politics to the military or democratically political control of military strength in a democratic state…").[26]

The Japanese government announced its "Three Non-nuclear Principles" (above) in 1967 in response to public anxiety. They state Japan will not manufacture or possess nuclear weapons, nor allow them to be introduced into its territory. This was really a bit of political theater, although the principles are a "sacred cow" in Japanese politics to this day. The United States would not have allowed Japan to produce nuclear weapons any more than it would have allowed South Korea or Taiwan to. Nevertheless, the Three Non-nuclear Principles allowed Japan to take a moralistic stance diplomatically, all the while sheltering under the United States' "nuclear umbrella."

Japan Faces its Former Colonies

Japan and South Korea

As a result of a compromise between the United Kingdom, which supported diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China as the representative of "China," and the United States, which favored the Republic of China (ROC), or Taiwan, neither of the Koreas or Chinas had been present in San Francisco. Japan swiftly concluded a treaty with Taiwan in 1952, under pressure from the United States.

Talks between Syngman Rhee's government of the Republic of Korea and Japan started soon after the ratification of the San Francisco Treaty in 1952, initially brokered by the U.S. Occupation authority, SCAP. However, faced with positions both sides considered unacceptable—essentially South Korea's demands for apologies and its "pound of flesh" in reparations from its former masters and Japan's assertion that it had been a benevolent ruler over its former colonial

subjects—the talks went nowhere.[27]

Japan's attention soon turned to more pressing, and less contentious, diplomatic matters. A security assistance agreement was signed with the U.S. in 1954 and Japan gained membership into the United Nations. Normalization treaties were also signed in this era with countries such as Indonesia and South Vietnam. Normalization talks with South Korea continued inconclusively and intermittently throughout the 1950s. During this time, it seems the Japanese government had no fixed opinion or policy toward the Korean peninsula but rather adopted a "hope for the best" attitude.[28] However, given that the United States had a formidable military presence in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, essentially freezing the status quo, Japan could afford to be agnostic on the Korean reunification issue.

A former lieutenant in the Imperial Japanese Army, President Park Chung Hee, installed himself as a dictator in South Korea in a coup d'état in 1961. While his hardline, authoritarian rule was distasteful to many in newly democratic Japan, Park Chung Hee was a pragmatic man the conservatives in Japan's dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) could deal with. He also had a plan for South Korean economic development along Japanese lines. To do this, he needed Japanese cooperation, expertise and, above all, money.

Accordingly in 1965, Japan and the Republic of Korea signed two agreements: one normalizing relations and another for payment of Japanese reparations to South Korea. The Japanese government does not use the word "reparations" (although left-wing Japanese use it), but prefer the phrase "economic cooperation." (The Japanese' point is that since Japan and Korea were not at war, there logically cannot be any "war reparations.") The South Koreans, unsurprisingly, use "reparations" but the language of the agreement was left deliberately ambiguous to save face and allow both sides to choose the term most appropriate to their respective domestic audiences. Even so, there were protests in both countries against normalizing relations.[29]

The payout to South Korea by Japan was a $300 million grant (adjusting for inflation that is $2.25 billion in 2015 dollars), $200 million in government loans ($1.5 billion in 2015 dollars) and another $300 million in commercial loans, totaling $800 million ($6 billion 2015 terms).[30] In signing the two agreements and paying the money, the Japanese and South Korean governments began a new era and drew a line under the old one.

At a stroke, Japan had officially paid her historical debt and no other claims against her by the South Korean government or Korean citizens could have legal standing.[31] (This is also true of all the signatories of the San Francisco Treaty, to include the United States). The text of the Japan-Korea Basic Treaty is unambiguous as to the finality of the agreement:

> *Article II*
>
> *1 The High Contracting Parties confirm that the problems concerning property, rights, and interests of the two High Contracting Parties and their peoples (including juridical persons) and* ***the claims between the High Contracting Parties and between their peoples****, including those stipulated in Article IV(a) of the Peace Treaty with Japan signed at the city of San Francisco on September 8, 1951,* ***have been settled completely and finally.***[32] [My emphasis added.]

The Japanese $300 million grant was intended for making compensation payments to Korean victims of forced labor and other mistreatment by the Japanese. However, the South Korean government did not use the $300 million just to pay compensation but put some towards economic development projects instead.[33] This was to cause further turmoil for both governments later. Notwithstanding, the money from Japan, along with technical advice and another massive infusion of cash from America, helped fundamentally remake the South Korean economy.

Chilly Relations

This point that bedevils Japan-South Korean relations. After several decades of prickly yet productive relations with Japan, South Korea became a democracy. The former dictatorial regimes in the Republic of Korea (ROK) were deliberately opaque about their dealings with Japan. Anti-Japanese sentiment and demonstrations had been suppressed, often harshly.

With the advent of democracy, Koreans could give these feelings free rein. Issues such as that of the "comfort women" are a product of bottled-up anger against both the Japanese and the deal-making of the Park Chun Hee government. In 2005, the South Korean government declassified many of the documents pertaining to the negotiations for the

1965 agreement. Many Koreans feel their government at the time made a bad deal with Japan and demand more compensation for former forced laborers and sex slaves of the Japanese. However, the lead negotiator for Park Chun-Hee, Kim Jong-pil, declared in 2005 that, "At the time, the treaty was the best we could do."[34]

Another other unresolved problem was ownership of the small island of Dokdo/Takeshima, also known as the Liancourt Rocks, which is under the effective control of South Korea but claimed by Japan . In order to reach a deal in 1965, Japan and South Korea pragmatically agreed to disagree and not make an issue of it. Since democracy, South Korea has shelved this practice. In a display of blatant political grandstanding, President Lee Myung-Bak visited the island in 2012, just before South Korea played Japan in an Olympic soccer match, a deliberate provocation to the Japanese.[35]

Since President Park Geun-Hye took power in South Korea and Abe Shinzo did the same in Japan in late 2012, relations between the two countries have worsened. As part of a backlash in Japan, a small but vociferous, anti-Korean *Ken Kan*, meaning "hate Koreans" (嫌韓) movement, is flourishing. The daughter of President Park Chun-Hee and Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi are both ardent nationalists. Park feels Abe is a right-wing revisionist and Abe feels Park is trying to unjustly tarnish Japan's reputation. At the time of writing, the two leaders have yet to meet bilaterally during their term of office. here was a slight thaw after the two countries' foreign ministers met on the anniversary of the normalization of Japan-South Korea relations on June 22, 2015. More significantly, both Abe and Park delivered addresses at respective commemorative events in Tokyo and Seoul, despite both making noises that they might not attend. The relief among the political classes at this small, positive development it is indicative of how frosty the relationship has become.[36]

Further thawing in the Japan-South Korea relationship in the short term might be possible as a result of Prime Minister Abe's speech on the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II on August 14, 2015. His words were sifted and parsed by many, not just for their surface meaning, but for their implied meaning. Many in South Korea, to include President Park, felt the Japanese Prime Minister had not been contrite and sincere enough in his apologetic, official statement. Indeed, many in South Korea and China said Abe had not really apologized at all but merely reiterated the fact of his predecessors' earlier official statements.

Nevertheless, the Prime Minister had used the politically loaded phrases admitting to Japan's war guilt and reaffirmed the past apologetic statements of Prime Ministers Murayama and Koizumi. This was far more than the nationalistic Abe's detractors at home and abroad had expected of him. Reinforcing the message, the Emperor gave a stronger, unequivocally contrite, speech the following day at a somber memorial ceremony.

Despite President Park's reservations about Prime Minister Abe's statement, it was enough to gain swift acceptance from relieved allies and partners such as the United States, Australia and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. The door is now open for a correction in Japan-South Korea relations.

The Other Korea

Prior to the end of the Cold War, Japan's official contact with North Korea was heavily circumscribed. Pressure from both the United States and South Korea, coupled with the governing Liberal Democratic Party's conservative bend ensured this. However, there was trade and contact with the Kim regime in the North.

Trade relations between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) began in 1961. The trade balance was initially about even, with Japan importing $4 million and exporting $4.9 million, but by 1971 "…Japan's exports to the North increased almost 5.8 times and it enjoyed a trade surplus of $55 million with North Korea."[37] Friendly relations also existed between North Korea and the Japan Socialist Party and the *Chosen Soren* association that represented Korean residents in Japan who were sympathetic to Pyongyang.[38]

However, as Japan's government moved to normalize relations with South Korea in the 1960s, it realized that Korean reunification was unlikely in the foreseeable future. Therefore, Japan treated the ROK as the *de jure* Korean government and the DPRK as the *de facto* government in the northern half of the peninsula. In 1972, Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei said, "Japan cannot help but recognize that there are two Koreas on the Korean peninsula, and that the coexistence of the two is the diplomatic goal we desire." This two Korea policy was a natural outgrowth of the pragmatic and profitable two China policy it maintained between the PRC on the mainland and ROC in Taiwan.

As the Cold War wound down and North Korea's list of benefactors began to shrink precipitately, Japan-North Korea relations looked

promising. In 1990, the visit to Pyongyang of powerful, senior LDP member Kanemaru Shin produced some interesting proposals from Kim Il-sung. Among other things, North Korea suggested a normalization agreement with Japan similar to the 1965 Japan-ROK agreement. This would, of course, come with a large sum of money from Japan to North Korea in reparations. However, the negotiations ultimately broke down.[39]

In the quarter century since the Kanemaru delegation went to Pyongyang, relations between Japan and North Korea have settled in to a pattern of North Korean provocations to extort money and Japanese (and allied) alternating sanctions and concessions. Japan has three main concerns vis-à-vis North Korea: stability, nuclear weapons, and the fate of Japanese abductees.

Rachi Mondai

If there is stability on the peninsula, then the other two issues—nuclear weapons and the abductee problem, the *Rachi Mondai*—can be handled. If there is instability, the risk of a nuclear incident or proliferation increases and the possibility of resolving the abductee issue ebbs. Outsiders often overlook the abduction issue; it is an emotional one, the importance of which should not be underestimated. For the Japanese, is not unlike the "comfort women" issue is for Koreans or the Vietnam prisoner of war/missing in action (POW/MIA) issue is for Americans.

Additionally, Prime Minister Naoto Kan visited an excavation site at Iwo Jima in 2010 where the bodies of Japanese soldiers killed in World War II were being recovered.[40] Since then, mainstream Japanese attention has turned to recovering remains of Japanese soldiers and colonists and returning them to Japan. The Japanese government has negotiated, with varying degrees of success, entry into North Korea for this purpose. It has become somewhat conflated with the abductee issue.

What these two recovery issues have in common is the cynical exploitation of Japanese sentiment for material gain by the North Koreans. Although some access has been given to Japanese looking for their colonist ancestors' graves in North Korea, the North's "investigation" of the abductees' whereabouts has disclosed next to nothing. It is doubtful that the Japanese government expected much more from the Kim regime, but it is an indication of the emotional and political significance of the issue that they tried at all.

Japan's Policy Choices: Finding the Least Bad Option

Hard Landing, Soft Landing

To the casual observer, North Korea appears to defy gravity like some Las Vegas magic act. Pundits, once given to predicting the end of the communist regime in Pyongyang talking of "hard landing" and "soft landing" scenarios, have grown quieter as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to apparently defy reason and maintain its anachronistic presence. The focus of the international community is on the North Korean missile tests and nuclear program. While the probability of a conventional invasion of South Korea by the North has receded, along with much of the U.S. military's presence, Japan has privately accepted that the DPRK will continue as a force in the region indefinitely and that it will be armed with nuclear weapons. Three possible outcomes on the peninsula can be foreseen: Korean reunification by slow evolution, by sudden collapse of the DPRK, and by war.

How Does the DPRK Stay Up?

The popular image of life within North Korea is that of starved people picking through empty fields for food. How can any regime survive such conditions? There are three facts to consider: the North Korean economy is not as bad as it was (it has actually been growing) and the regions and people that the Kim Jong-il regime requires to survive are taken care of; neighboring countries (China, Russia, Japan and South Korea) have a strong interest in preventing the regime from collapsing, and are loath to push Pyongyang too hard; civilized people have difficulty understanding that brutal repression works very well. These three factors explain the North Korean magic act.

The governments of Japan, China, and Russia, along with realists in South Korea, realize that a sudden reunification of Korea, with its attendant wave of refugees, humanitarian crisis and the ensuing cost of reconstruction, would be a catastrophe. Despite platitudes in its official statements, Japan, also favors a divided yet stable peninsula rather than one that is united and in possession of nuclear weapons. These calculations have informed the policies of all these countries in dealing with Pyongyang. Even China, with its much touted influence over the North Korean regime, has been reluctant to assert itself. China has large investments in South Korea and this allows Kim Jong-un to virtually run a "protection racket" for China. North Korea can blackmail Beijing by

acting out towards South Korea, affecting Chinese investments and raising the prospect of a torrent of North Korean refugees entering Manchuria from a collapsed DPRK. This helps to ensure Chinese economic support for North Korea.

Reams have been written about the repressive nature of the North Korean regime. Suffice it to say that life in North Korea is probably more grimly authoritarian than even George Orwell envisioned in his book *1984*. No one should seriously expect a revolt from its enslaved, malnourished population wherein the loyal elite are rewarded, the disloyal are disappeared and all are kept in utter isolation from any contact with the outside world save through the lens of official media. Much as Saddam Hussein's (much less harsh) government survived beyond all pundits' expectations after the Gulf war in 1991, and would have continued without coalition intervention over a decade later, the Kim regime's position seems secure.

Japan's Options are Limited

The Six Party Talks have hopelessly broken down and the outreach to Pyongyang over the abductees came to naught. Preoccupied as it is with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in Syria and Iraq, Al Qaeda in in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen, difficult nuclear talks with Iran and equally difficult talks in Washington, DC, and China's assertiveness in the South and East China Seas, the United States has few realistic military options in dealing with North Korea.

North Korea has nuclear weapons and is striving to get efficient means to deliver them. South Korea would not support significant offensive action against the North, except in the event of a 9/11-style provocation, and American conventional forces on the peninsula have been significantly reduced. Despite talk by some Japanese politicians (including Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in the past) of preemptive strikes against North Korean missile sites, Japan has neither the military capability nor the political will to do so or to support the US in such an adventure. The outlook is one of stalemate, punctuated by provocations, and uneasy coexistence.

Slow Evolution?

If Pyongyang manages to successfully reform its economy, a peaceful reunification through slow evolution could occur—perhaps under a "one nation, two systems" framework. China would like to see

the DPRK enact market-based economic reforms of the type that it started under Deng Xiaoping. Kim Jong-il certainly initiated some reforms out of necessity in 2001-2002 and these had some (albeit limited) success.

The balancing act for the Kim Jong-un regime is to conduct economic reform, which entails some degree of openness, while maintaining its grip on the populace. Ultimately, the government wants the benefits of economic liberalization without any of the social liberalization that goes with it. This evolution would be a long process—decades long.

However, a peacefully reunified Korea, while desirable in the abstract, would present awkward challenges to Japan. A reunified, nuclear-armed Korea, with the eccentric North wedded to the mercurial South, both of whom have axes to grind with Japan and are naturally supportive of China, would drastically alter the geopolitical landscape.

Sudden collapse?

If Pyongyang gets it wrong, a collapse could happen. Because of the opaque nature of North Korea, this is impossible to predict. It could literally happen tomorrow, without warning. A case in point was when Kim Jong-un mysteriously disappeared from public view in the autumn of 2014. Speculation started about a possible palace coup in North Korea.

If the DPRK did collapse, it would trigger the biggest humanitarian crisis since the fall of Pol Pot in Cambodia. Refugees would flood overland into South Korea, Manchuria and the Russian Far East, and by sea to Japan. Depending on the nature of the collapse, the military, or parts of it, may or may not hold together. The need for massive amounts of virtually everything would necessitate UN, and ultimately foreign military, assistance. This would be extremely sensitive, as the xenophobic North Koreans will resent any foreign intrusion—some combat engagements may be possible.

After the initial response, the rehabilitation of North Korea would be a massive undertaking. The best course of action for Japan would be to actively and very visibly participate in civilian relief efforts. Koreans of both the North and the South would strenuously and probably violently oppose any Japan Self-Defense Forces operation on Korean soil. Plausible military missions for the Japan Self-Defense Forces include maritime interdiction, maritime search and rescue, Intelligence,

Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) using P-3C and P-1 patrol aircraft and Unmanned Aerial Systems such as the Global Hawk, as well as providing satellite imagery. The mission of most concern to Japan, however, is a Noncombatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) for Japanese nationals trying to flee the Korean peninsula in a crisis. Because it would involve landing Japanese soldiers and helicopters on Korean soil, this would be highly problematic. Much more discussion with South Korea and the U.S. is required for this to be a viable option.

Japanese "soft power" should then come to the fore in helping the Koreans chart their recovery. The ROK would certainly expect Japan to pay for a large share of the reconstruction costs of North Korea. This might entail Tokyo paying North Korea's "share" of reparations – adjusted for inflation, naturally. Indeed, Seoul realizes this and some experts are reminding the government of Japan's importance in financing reunification, however it might come about, and recommending that the ROK government not further alienate Japan through its rhetoric.[41]

Bottom Line

Faced with the prospects enumerated above, the least bad policy option for Japan to pursue is maintenance of the status quo while endeavoring to rein in North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. A divided Korea breaks the Korean "dagger aimed at the heart of Japan" at the hilt. This matches historical Japanese strategic concerns towards Korea and China with modern realities.

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