

# U.S.-China Rapprochement and Japan-South Korea Security Relations: Was the Reconciliation of Deterrence and Diplomacy Possible?

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## Introduction

The easing of tensions following U.S.-China rapprochement, which changed power politics among the major powers in the early 1970s, did not directly lead to the building of a regional peace structure. This is because U.S.-China rapprochement took place while tensions between the divided states of North and South Korea, conflict between Japan and China, and conflict between China and South Korea, and Japan and North Korea remained unchanged. Security issues remained a critical challenge for East Asia. On the other hand, policies for easing tensions across the region began to be promoted by way of inter-Korean dialogue, the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China, and Japan-North Korea exchange. Japan and South Korea therefore faced the challenge of reconciling security considerations (deterrence) with demands to ease tensions (diplomacy). This was a much more complex and difficult challenge than the deterrence approach emphasized during the 1960s.

This paper will discuss the following three points with a focus on the transformation period of the Cold War between the 1971–72 U.S.-China rapprochement and the fall of Saigon in 1975.<sup>1</sup> (1) The Taiwan Clause and Korea Clause stipulated in the Nixon-Sato Joint Communiqué (1969). While previous studies have analyzed the Korea Clause in the same context as the Taiwan Clause losing its effect following the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China,<sup>2</sup> this paper will focus on the ways in which the two clauses were differentiated. (2) That Japan promoted security and economic cooperation with South Korea while at the same time promoting economic exchange with North Korea. This is because it is thought to have been a response for satisfying both security considerations and demands for a détente at the same time. (3) An exploration of the stabilization of the Korean Peninsula. The paper will focus on the difficulties that were revealed in institutionalizing changes in the form of a détente while also ensuring the security of South Korea.

## Japan's Pursuit of Autonomy and Differentiating the Korea Clause

President Nixon's plans for visiting China were announced on July 15, 1971, leading to

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on, with added amendments, Choi Kyungwon, *The Formation of the Japan-South Korea Security Relationship during the Cold War*, Keio University Press, 2014, pp. 133-244.

<sup>2</sup> Victor D. Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle*, Stanford University Press, 1999 (translated into Japanese by Kurata Hideya as *Nichi-bei-kan hanmoku wo koeta teikei*, Yuhikaku Publishing, 2003, pp. 118-122).

criticism in Japan that the country had fallen behind in its policy toward China.<sup>3</sup> Japan began to explore the possibility of balancing relations with both the United States and China in its aim to normalize diplomatic relations with China. The central challenge raised was the exclusion of Taiwan from the “scope of the Far East” in the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, and the issue of modifying the Taiwan Clause stipulated in the Nixon-Sato Joint Communique (1969). This exploration was due to concerns that these security arrangements could impede the autonomy of Japanese diplomacy and become an obstacle to improving Sino-Japanese relations.

Those on the Japan side therefore began to request to the U.S. side that the clause be modified. After stating that the situation had changed, Wakaizumi Kei requested a “re-study” of clauses related to the defense of Taiwan and South Korea in December 1971. In response, U.S. Ambassador to Japan Armin H. Meyer checked this request by comparing the re-study to Pandora’s box, claiming that “a re-study would lead to a revision of the Security Treaty.”<sup>4</sup> These developments in Japan led U.S. diplomatic and defense officials to begin the process of confirming arrangements regarding the use of U.S. military bases in Japan in the event of a contingency on the Korean Peninsula. Concerned about the possibility of Japan refusing use of the bases, the U.S. had Japan reaffirm that the unrestricted use of bases would be ensured without prior consultation in the event of a contingency on the Korean Peninsula, unless UN forces should withdraw from the Korean Peninsula or from Japan.<sup>5</sup>

The following year, having concluded talks with President Nixon, Prime Minister Sato mentioned the Nixon-Sato Joint Communique (1969) at a press conference on January 7, stating that it was “not a treaty but simply showed an awareness of the situation at that time,”<sup>6</sup> and claiming that the Taiwan Clause had effectively been dissolved. However, when asked about the Korea Clause, he corrected himself by saying that it was an overstatement to take this as a change in Japanese policy and that it would be inappropriate to regard Taiwan as having been removed from security arrangements. The next day, Foreign Minister Fukuda Takeo also gave a corrective statement. Looking back on this “confusion,” Ushiba Nobuhiko, then Japanese Ambassador to the U.S., saw it as nothing more than a desperate measure to secure a free hand in diplomacy.<sup>7</sup> It was an indication of “agitation” and “impatience” at Japan’s having fallen behind the U.S. in its policy toward China.

Coordination with the U.S. over the handling of the Far East Clause and the Taiwan

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<sup>3</sup> Inoue Masaya, *Nichi-chū kokko seijōka no seiji-shi* [A Political History of the Sino-Japanese Normalization], The University of Nagoya Press, 2010, pp. 440-442.

<sup>4</sup> Telegram, President/Sato Talk: Wakaizumi’s view, American Embassy Tokyo sent to Department of State Secretary, POL 7 Japan-US, Tokyo 12155, December 9, 1971 (*Documents on United States Policy Toward Japan*, No. 16, Vol. 5, Kashiwa Shobo, 2005, pp. 98-101. (Abbreviated below as *United States Policy Toward Japan*).

<sup>5</sup> Telegram, The UN Korea and US bases in Japan, American Embassy Seoul sent to Department of State Secretary, American Embassy Tokyo, CINCPAC DEF 15 Japan-US, Seoul 7104, November 23, 1971; Telegram, The UN Korea and US bases in Japan, American Embassy, Tokyo sent to Department of State, Secretary, American Embassy, Seoul, CINCPAC, CINCUNC KOREA, COMUSFJ, JCS DEF 15 Japan-US, Tokyo 12409, December 17, 1971 (*United States Policy Toward Japan (1971)*, Vol. 10, p. 193).

<sup>6</sup> *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, January 9, 1972.

<sup>7</sup> Ushiba Nobuhiko, *Gaikō no shunkan – watashi no ririkisho* [Diplomatic Moments: My Resume], Nikkei, 1984, pp. 143-144.

Clause in the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty began in full effect after the Tanaka administration came into office. Those on the U.S. side continued to curb any policy shift in Japan, claiming that any change in the Far East Clause and Taiwan Clause would be detrimental to U.S.-Japan relations. In response, Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Yasukawa Takeshi stated that this was “the minimum defensive measure that the Japanese government could take to prevent domestic debate on this issue from escalating into a debate on the dissolution of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty.”<sup>8</sup> The Tanaka administration had been reconsidering the Taiwan Clause while at the same time assuring that the alliance treaty between Japan and the U.S. would be maintained.

However, at a meeting with Komeito Chair Takeiri Yoshikatsu on July 27, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai declared that neither the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty nor the Nixon-Sato Joint Communiqué (1969) would be mentioned.<sup>9</sup> China’s acceptance of the Japan-U.S. alliance was based on the logic that the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and the Taiwan Clause would no longer be effective with respect to China once the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China was realized, thereby removing one of the obstacles to normalization.

Meanwhile, South Korea was concerned that, just as the Taiwan Clause had lost its effect in the process of normalizing Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations, the Korea Clause might follow the same path during the development of Japan-North Korea exchange. South Korea emphasized that the issue of the Korean Peninsula and the China issue were different in its attempts to encourage Japan to differentiate the Korea Clause. For example, rather than taking issue with the fact that the Korea Clause was not mentioned directly in the Joint Statement made by the leaders of the U.S. and Japan in January 1972, South Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs determined that “the maintenance of cooperative relations between Japan and the United States is an indispensable factor for peace and stability in Asia,” and “[the leaders] highly valued the important role played by the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States” in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Joint Statement were a clear indication of the U.S.’ obligation to maintain security in the Far East and Japan’s cooperative attitude in respect of that. This was a flexible response based on an awareness of the current situation; namely, that it was an inevitability that the Taiwan Clause would lose its effect in the context of Japan’s policy, which aimed to restore diplomatic relations with China. The “confusion” arising during the press conference with Prime Minister Sato was also perceived as a “response to domestic politics” in Japan, which sought to break away from conventional diplomacy.<sup>10</sup>

Just prior to the Japan-U.S. summit meeting, President Park Chung-hee sent a personal

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<sup>8</sup> Telegram, China Policy, Ingersoll, American Embassy Tokyo sent to Department of State Secretary POL Japan-US Tokyo 8036, July 27, 1972 (*United States Policy Toward Japan (1972)*, Vol. 8, pp. 72-74).

<sup>9</sup> “Meeting of Komeito Chair Takeiri Yoshikatsu and Premier Zhou Enlai,” Ishii Akira et. al, eds., *Kiroku to kōshō: nichi-chū kokko seijōka - nichi-chū heiwa yūkō jōyaku teiketsu koshō [Records and Reviews: Negotiations for the Normalization of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and China and the Conclusion of a Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and China]*, Iwanami Shoten, 2003, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> “In respect of the U.S.-Japan summit meeting in January ’72,” Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Japanese Prime Minister Sato Eisaku’s Visit to the U.S., 1972*, (classification number 722.12JA1US, registration number 4895), pp. 73-82.

letter to Prime Minister Sato through Japanese Ambassador to South Korea Kanayama Masahide, and on January 3, he sent former Prime Minister Chung Il Kwon to Japan to request that Japan explain South Korea's position on its behalf at the summit meeting. In his diary entry for that day, Prime Minister Sato wrote that Chung explained the current situation of South Korea's setting up an independent military industry and asked for financial assistance.<sup>11</sup> At the Japan-U.S. summit meeting, Sato discussed the security concerns faced by South Korea with Nixon in an attempt to halt the further reduction of U.S. armed forces stationed in South Korea. Sato explained the current situation of North Korea remaining dependent on the Soviet Union for military aid and brought up the issue of supporting the development of South Korea's defense industry.

Following the Japan-U.S. summit meeting, Foreign Minister Fukuda declared in a meeting with South Korean Ambassador to Japan Lee Ho that the Taiwan Clause was the issue and that there would be no change to the Korea Clause. In addition, on May 18, Fukuda stated in his answer at a House of Councillors Cabinet Committee meeting that nothing had yet been discussed by the Diet in respect of the Korea Clause. He clearly showed differentiation between the Taiwan Clause and the Korea Clause by stating, "While Nixon's visit to China has resulted in a mood of eased tensions across the entire Far East, the situation in South Korea, unlike the one in Taiwan, should be assessed."<sup>12</sup>

Prime Minister Tanaka and President Nixon reaffirmed the validity of the Korea Clause at a Japan-U.S. summit meeting in August 1972. Recognizing that improvements to relations between the U.S. and North Korea were still premature, President Nixon checked the Japanese side by stating that "if the use of bases in Japan were restricted, the withdrawal of U.S. armed forces in South Korea would be inevitable." Prime Minister Tanaka then gave his assurance that "U.S. military bases in Japan can be used without any restriction under the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty."<sup>13</sup> This was a reaffirmation of the Korea Clause.

The Korea Clause is the successor to the Acheson–Yoshida exchange of notes (1951), a product of the mobilization of U.S. armed forces in Japan during the Korean War, and the Korean Minute (1960), a secret agreement at the time of revising the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. It acts as a central agreement of Japan-U.S. security arrangements to ensure the security of Japan and the Far East. While there have definitely been "differences in temperature" between each country regarding perceptions of the situation on the Korean Peninsula, Japan, the U.S., and South Korea all shared a firm recognition that the trilateral security arrangement between the three countries formed the foundation of security in Japan and South Korea. In this context, the Korea Clause, which relates to the use of U.S. military bases in Japan, was a common good that should be shared by Japan, the U.S., and South Korea from the perspective of security considerations.

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<sup>11</sup> Sato Eisaku, *Satō Eisaku Nikki [Sato Eisaku's Diary]*, Vol. 5, The Asahi Shimbun Company, 1997, p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> "68th National Diet House of Councillors Cabinet Committee meeting minutes," no. 12, May 18, 1972.

<sup>13</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, "Prime Minister Tanaka's call on President Nixon," September 1, 1972, *Japan and the United States: Diplomatic, Security, and Economic Relations, Part I, 1960-1976*, National Security Archive, Alexandria, Va., Chadwyck-Healey, 2001 (abbreviated below as *Japan and the United States*), no. 1637.

### **Concurrent Promotion of Japan-South Korea Security and Economic Cooperation and Japan-North Korea Economic Exchange**

During this period, Japan's policy on the Korean Peninsula had unique features that differentiated it from its China policy. For Japan, its China policy was a question of whether it would accept "one China"; the country had justified normalizing relations with China even at the expense of Taiwan due to China's improved international status following its accession to the UN Security Council and U.S.-China rapprochement. On the other hand, there were intrinsic differences with Japan's contact with North Korea. It was not about choosing between South Korea and North Korea, but rather, promoting security and economic cooperation with South Korea from the perspective of security while expanding exchanges with North Korea from the perspective of easing tensions. In March 1972, Japanese Ambassador to South Korea Ushiroku Torao's Findings on Handling the North Korean Problem<sup>14</sup> addressed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs included the proposal that Japan should aim for two Koreas.

- (1) Due to the United Nations resolution on the establishment of the Republic of Korea, the Treaty on Basic Relations Between Japan and the Republic of Korea, and the attitude taken by various countries in recognizing South Korea, the state is recognized by international law as the lower part of the peninsula only. Even if North Korea's status rises in the future, it will not replace the international status of South Korea such as in the case of Taiwan; rather, it will result in North and South Korea being recognized as existing side by side as two states within one nation, as in the case of Germany.
- (2) Taking population, area, the region within the international community, and similar matters into account, barring unification through military force or a violent revolution, it is inconceivable that North Korea could overwhelm South Korea and take its position.

The promotion of peaceful coexistence between North and South Korea was being established as the basic policy of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the Korean Peninsula.<sup>15</sup> Toward South Korea, Japan's policy aimed to promote friendly relations centered on economic cooperation in order to strengthen the foundation of the country as a democratic nation, on the basis of stabilizing people's livelihoods. Meanwhile, in respect of exchanges with North Korea, Japan solidified its policy toward promoting a *détente*, which involved responding flexibly while keeping an eye on inter-Korean dialogue and international developments.

Having noticed South Korea's concerns before and after the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations, the Tanaka administration sent former Director General of the Economic Planning Agency Kimura Toshio to South Korea as a special envoy in an attempt

<sup>14</sup> Embassy of Japan in Korea, "Views on Handling the North Korean Issue (I)," March 30, 1972 (no. 455, sent from the Embassy of Japan in Korea to the Minister for Foreign Affairs), *The North Korea Issue* (administrative no. 2012-1786).

<sup>15</sup> Northeast Asia Division, "Handling of the North Korea Issue in the United Nations (draft)," May 10, 1972, *The North Korea Issue* (administrative no. 2012-1787).

to dispel the country's apprehension following the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations. In a meeting with President Park, Special Envoy Kimura stated that the relationship of friendship and cooperation between Japan and South Korea would remain unchanged, along with declaring that Japan would play its role in the aspect of security based on the Japan-U.S. alliance.<sup>16</sup> Further, Kimura also stated that China had never mentioned the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty or the U.S. military presence in the region in fear that the withdrawal of U.S. armed forces from Japan and South Korea would change the status quo in Northeast Asia and lead to Soviet intervention, thereby clarifying that in terms of security, the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations was achieved under the current status quo.

During this period, Japan and South Korea began to deepen their relationship of political and economic cooperation. This was based on the shared recognition that all-out war by North Korea would become difficult as tensions in East Asia continued to ease, and therefore, that political and economic aspects; that is, "regime competition," between North and South Korea, would become more important. The content and scale of economic cooperation between Japan and South Korea began to expand from the perspective of undertaking cooperation that would allow South Korea to prevail in such "regime competition." In particular, cooperation between the two countries in projects to develop heavy industry would be expanded in the form of the Four Projects. The request for cooperation in these projects from South Korea to Japan, which was unable to provide direct military assistance, was made in response to the reduction of U.S. armed forces in South Korea between 1970 and 1971. South Korea requested such cooperation in the Four Projects instead of military assistance. Specific discussions on cooperation took place during a regular Japan-South Korea ministerial meeting, with the actual provision of funding by the Export-Import Bank of Japan (JEXIM) beginning on January 25, 1973. Through this, the Four Projects were implemented as part of the development of the heavy chemical industry. This was the "security and economic cooperation" devised between South Korea and Japan; the former by requesting cooperation in the construction of heavy industry plants created for weapons production due to Japan being unable to provide military cooperation, and the latter by agreeing to cooperation due to concerns about the impact of reducing U.S. armed forces in South Korea.

At a Japan-U.S. summit meeting attended by Foreign Minister Ohira Masayoshi in August 1973, Ohira said of Japan's policy on South Korea that "Before the war, Japan stationed two divisions on the Korean Peninsula for security purposes. After the war, when Japan no longer provided direct military assistance, it has been allocating funds for economic assistance equivalent to the cost of maintaining the two divisions before the war."<sup>17</sup> Ohira's words indicate that while the importance of South Korea for Japan's security remained unchanged, a shift had come about in its policy instruments. This recognition is believed to have served as the basis for Japan's security and economic cooperation with South Korea. At the same time, it was also

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<sup>16</sup> "Meeting minutes (10.11.1972)," Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Special Envoy of Japanese Prime Minister Kimura Toshio's Visit to South Korea, 10.11.1972* (classification number 724.42JA, registration number 4991), p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, "Second Meeting between the President and Prime Minister," August 1, 1973, *Japan and the United States*, no. 1792.

the answer Japan came up with in response to a request for the division of roles by the U.S.

Meanwhile, Japan was also gradually expanding economic exchange with North Korea. On the significance of trade between Japan and North Korea, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs offered the following two points.<sup>18</sup> (1) Japan's gradual expansion of relations with North Korea would make it easier to maintain and expand economic assistance to South Korea. Although South Korea had sought to block trade between Japan and North Korea, Japan took the position that maintaining a certain degree of relations with North Korea would be advantageous in cooperating with South Korea in the buildup of its military and further intensifying Japan-South Korea relations. (2) Relations with North Korea would be useful in exerting an international influence on North Korean society. Unlike the "containment" policy toward North Korea opted for by the U.S., Japan saw the expansion of economic exchange with North Korea as a way of promoting change within the country, thereby contributing to a détente on the Korean Peninsula.

Foreign Minister Ohira persuaded the U.S. and South Korea using the following two significant points. In particular to South Korea, he stressed the need for a change in policy to Prime Minister Kim Jong Pil, who had visited Japan in June of that year. Ohira made it clear that in view of the domestic situation in Japan, the existing balance in relations with North and South Korea could not remain at 0% to the former and 100% to the latter, and told Kim of Japan's policy to permit a JEXIM loan for the export of plant facilities for North Korea.<sup>19</sup> In addition, Nakae Yosuke, Deputy Director-General of the Asian Affairs Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told the South Korean side that, along with expanded exchanges between Japan and North Korea, there was increasing pressure within Japan for a change to its policy on North Korea, stating that there was a view "from some in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it would be advantageous to demonstrate a certain degree of flexibility with North Korea as a way of further intensifying Japan-South Korean relations." Further, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Hogen Shinsaku told Ambassador Lee Ho that "we cannot prevent the civil sector from doing business with North Korea, even in order to cooperate with the buildup of South Korea's military."<sup>20</sup> After this briefing, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry revealed to South Korea on October 29 its policy to permit the first JEXIM loan to North Korea.<sup>21</sup>

This confirms that a new policy concerning the Korean Peninsula was being formed by Japan in response to the changing order in East Asia. Japan was creating multilayered diplomacy through its efforts to reconcile security considerations, which necessitated Japan's placing importance on relations with South Korea from the perspective of security, with

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<sup>18</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, "U.S.-Japan Talks, May 9," May 9, 1973, *Japan and the United States*, no. 1731.

<sup>19</sup> *Nikkei*, July 20, 1973, "JAW 10448, from: Ambassador to Japan, from: Minister of Foreign Affairs, Permission to use JEXIM funding for North Korea Towel Plant (10.29.1973)," South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Issue Concerning Japan's Export of Plant Facility to North Korea and Approval of Use of JEXIM Funding*, (classification number 725.6JA, registration number 6048), pp. 170-171.

<sup>20</sup> "JAW 08196 (8.9.1973), from: Ambassador to Japan, to: Minister of Foreign Affairs," Forward document binding, p. 117, "North Korea-Japan 700-752 Presidential Matters to be Reported, Japan's Export of Plant Facility to North Korea," Forward document binding, pp. 124-126.

<sup>21</sup> "JAW-10445 (10.28.1973), from: Ambassador to Japan, to: Minister of Foreign Affairs," Forward document binding, p. 168.

demands for a *détente*.

### **Policy Offense and Defense over Institutionalizing a *Détente***

With President Kim Il Sung on a visit to China in April 1975, the same month as the fall of Saigon, South Korea was concerned about the possibility that under China's tacit approval, North Korea would take independent military action to occupy the central region of South Korea, after which China would call for a ceasefire. Japan, meanwhile, took the position that China was working to curb any military action by North Korea, and therefore, there was no danger of invasion by North Korea. Despite the expansion of Japan-North Korea economic exchange remaining a point of contention between Japan and South Korea, Japan did not take any measures to restrict economic exchanges with North Korea.

While the fall of Saigon led to a strengthening of relations between Japan and South Korea, this was not simply a return to the past. As part of its response to the crisis, South Korea requested that Japan reaffirm the Korea Clause, insisting on the necessity of security cooperation while emphasizing that neither Japan nor South Korea possess nuclear arms, and on top of that, neither country's security can be ensured without an alliance with the U.S. However, Foreign Minister Miyazawa Kiichi opposed any shift to policy, indicating an awareness that while the fall of Saigon had shocked the U.S. and South Korea, the trend of easing tensions up to present would not change. Therefore, the joint communique at a regular Japan-South Korea ministerial meeting did not mention the security of South Korea,<sup>22</sup> with its wording remaining unchanged from the previous joint communique on promoting a *détente*. Rather than confirming the Korea Clause and strengthening security relations with South Korea, Japan's policy was heavily weighted toward paving the way for the peaceful coexistence between North and South Korea that would contribute to the stability of the Korean Peninsula over the long term.

On the other hand, the fall of Saigon did have an impact on the issue of terminating the UN Command (UNC), which had been a topic under discussion between the U.S. and China up to that point. Like the challenges of maintaining the armistice agreement and concluding a peace agreement, along with the issue of U.S. armed forces in South Korea, terminating the UNC was an issue deeply tied up in the security of the Korean Peninsula, and it had the implication of modifying the framework of security arrangements on the Korean Peninsula formed under a conflict between the U.S. and China following the Korean War. However, the sudden change in the situation in Indochina left the U.S. with no choice but to focus on maintaining the status quo rather than making fundamental changes to security arrangements.

Policy coordination between China and North Korea, which attempted to change the armistice agreement into a peace agreement through the termination of the UNC, and the U.S. and South Korea, which had set maintaining the armistice agreement as a priority issue and planned to create the ROK/US Combined Forces Command to replace the UNC, failed to

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<sup>22</sup> "WJA-07195, from: Ambassador to Japan, to: Minister of Foreign Affairs, Communique of the Eighth Regular Japan-Korea Ministerial Meeting, Japan's Comments on South Korea's Proposal (Notes)," Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Eighth Regular Japan-Korea Ministerial Meeting, Seoul, 9.14-9.15.1975 (V.3 Meeting Results)*, pp. 33-35.



make any progress. Henry A. Kissinger reconsidered “terminating” the UNC, instead pivoting toward a “restructuring.”<sup>23</sup> This was due to military issues with managing and administering the armistice agreement after the fall of Saigon. This was a policy shift toward maintaining the existing security arrangements with the UNC at the center.

With talks between the U.S. and China at a standstill, North Korea proposed U.S.-North Korea negotiations for building a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. China, backing the proposal, encouraged the U.S. to make contact with North Korea. In response, the U.S. proposed the so-called “Kissinger concept” involving the participation of North and South Korea, the U.S., and China. However, talks between the countries involved failed to make any progress.

Based on the idea of “one Korea,” North Korea blocked the simultaneous accession of North and South Korea to the UN, stepping up its diplomatic offensive to demand the conclusion of a U.S.-North Korea peace agreement. Meanwhile, South Korea launched a policy of stabilization based on the de facto “two Koreas” argument, which included the conclusion of a South-North nonaggression treaty and the simultaneous accession of North and South Korea to the UN. In response to the change in South Korea’s policy, Japan also drafted a policy on the Korean Peninsula based on an awareness of the importance of having North Korea recognize two Koreas.

Japan had envisioned the following two policy alternatives for the coexistence of North and South Korea; that is, for the stabilization of the divided regimes.<sup>24</sup> The first was to have President Kim Il Sung recognize two Koreas. Japan saw that the stability of the Korean Peninsula depended on the peaceful coexistence of North and South Korea, and that the “(simultaneous) accession of North and South Korea to the United Nations” was preferable to “cross-recognition” for this purpose. Japan attempted to persuade Kim Il Sung by encouraging the U.S. in supporting the accession of North and South Vietnam to the UN, using the accession of a similar “divided state” to the UN as a bargaining chip. If the U.S. supported the accession of North and South Vietnam to the UN, and this were to actually occur, South Korea’s application for membership might have a better chance of being accepted. Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs anticipated that this would put pressure on Kim Il Sung, who was opposed to UN membership, and consequently bring about changes in North Korean policy.

The second was to promote direct negotiations between the U.S. and North Korea. This was presented as a way to break the impasse over UN measures, including the issue of terminating the UNC. Japan proposed exploring solutions through direct negotiations between the U.S. and North Korea prior to conflicting proposals supported by the North and South being given at the UN. This was an attempt to encourage coexistence with North Korea, rather

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<sup>23</sup> Telegram from SecState to Embassy Seoul, Tokyo, CINCPAC, CINCUNC, USUN NY State 97867, April 27, 1975, Access to Archival Databases (<http://aad.archives.gov>).

<sup>24</sup> European and Oceanic Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Outline of Remarks at the Meeting of Prime Minister Miki and President Ford (sections on politics, culture, and science)*, July 25, 1975 (Documents Disclosed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, call no. 2006-135). Memorandum of Conversation, Secretary’s Luncheon for Prime Minister Miki, August 5, 1975, Prime Minister Miki of Japan, August 6-7, 1975(5), NSC EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS STAFF: Files (1969) 1973-1976, Box 22, Gerald R. Ford Library.

than to contain and isolate the country. Moreover, it was anticipated that such a shift in policy toward the North would moderate reactions from within Japan, along with backlash from South Korea against Japan's rapprochement with North Korea. This was seen as desirable for both avoiding unnecessary confrontation on the Korean Peninsula, as well as for making a breakthrough with relations between Japan and North Korea. It was believed that, just as the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China was achieved following rapprochement between the U.S. and China, Japan's options for diplomacy would be expanded if the U.S. moved first. This demonstrates Japan's stance of maintaining a balance between North and South Korea. The proposal of two Koreas had been rejected by North Korea, while South Korea had rejected direct negotiations between the U.S. and North Korea. Japan attempted to break the impasse by incorporating the two proposals into a single initiative.

Japan's initiative was communicated to the U.S. side via a U.N. ambassador.<sup>25</sup> The initiative comprised the following two steps. The first step involved the U.S. making informal contact with North Korea directly to make a decision on terminating the UNC and maintaining the armistice agreement. After that, the second step involved holding an official trilateral meeting between the U.S., North Korea, and South Korea.

The U.S. pointed out its concerns that Japan's proposal would not only lead to ambiguity concerning the U.S.'s policy to reconfigure the UNC, but could also provide North Korea grounds for asserting itself as the sole legitimate government on the Korean peninsula, since South Korea had been excluded from the initial contact. The U.S. was concerned about the impact of Japan's policy on maintaining the status quo.

South Korea also criticized such a move by Japan. This was because they perceived such a move as equivalent to North Korea's proposal demanding a U.S.-North Korea peace agreement, thus undermining the principle of the parties involved; a matter of importance to South Korea. A divergence in policy emerged between the U.S. and South Korea, which were focused on maintaining the status quo, and Japan. It was not an easy matter to institutionalize movements toward a détente while ensuring the security of South Korea.

## Conclusion

As tensions across East Asia eased due to U.S.-China rapprochement, Japan and South Korea were faced with the challenge of reconciling security considerations (deterrence) with demands for easing tensions (diplomacy). The first characteristic of security relations between Japan and South Korea during this period was the differentiation of the Korea Clause, even as the Taiwan Clause lost its effect following the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China. Japan's move toward reevaluating the Korea Clause was checked by the U.S. while security issues remained a core challenge. The importance of the Korea Clause was thus confirmed among Japan, South Korea, and the U.S. from the aspect of security considerations

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<sup>25</sup> Telegram from US mission USUN to SecState, USUN N5752, Japanese proposal on Korean issue, November 7, 1975, Policy planning staff, Director's files, 1969-77 (Winston Lord files), Box 360, National Archives.

(deterrence). The second characteristic was the promotion of security and economic cooperation between Japan and South Korea at the same time as economic exchange was being promoted between Japan and North Korea. While Japan had continued economic cooperation for South Korea from the aspect of security considerations, the need for economic exchange with North Korea was also brought up within the Japanese government in response to demands for a *détente*. A multilayered policy was being created amid this compromise between deterrence and diplomacy. The third was that movements toward a *détente* were not institutionalized due to security considerations. Neither the simultaneous accession of North and South Korea to the UN, nor the normalization of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and South Korea, China and South Korea, the U.S. and North Korea, or Japan and North Korea, or cross-recognition, could be realized. Efforts to terminate the UNC, which had been a topic under discussion between the U.S. and China, also came to a standstill. Following the fall of Saigon, resistance intensified against modifying the framework of security on the Korean Peninsula, including converting the armistice agreement into a peace agreement and relations with U.S. armed forces in South Korea. No points of political agreement could be found between the U.S. and South Korea, which were focused on maintaining the status quo, and China and North Korea, which sought to change the status quo by converting the armistice agreement into a peace agreement. In addition, Japan's proposal for direct negotiations between the U.S. and North Korea was also rejected by the U.S. and South Korea, as they saw it as being too similar to North Korea's insistence on U.S.-North Korea talks.

Following rapprochement between the U.S. and China, it was not an easy matter to make progress in institutionalizing a *détente* while ensuring the security of South Korea. With North-South relations breaking down and neither side accepting the other as an involved party, neither the U.S. nor Japan could proceed forward in improving relations with North Korea. The security relationship between Japan and South Korea in the early 1970s can be said to illustrate the difficulty in achieving stability on the Korean Peninsula through a combination of deterrence and diplomacy.