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The Two Abe Administrations and the Abduction Issue: In the View of “Dialogue and Pressure” Policy and Concession of the Stockholm Agreement

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Abstract:

The issue of the DPRK’s abductions of Japanese nationals has been an outstanding diplomatic agenda of the two states for more than a decade. “Dialogue and pressure” approach has been the primary policy that the Japanese successive cabinets have practiced toward the DPRK since the Koizumi administration but the issue yet to meet resolution until present. This thesis particularly focuses on the two Abe administrations since Shinzo Abe is the most pronominal politician in regards to the abductions issue. It is to compare and analyze how dialogue and pressure have been performed during each administration and attempts to find why the second Abe administration could reach the Stockholm Agreement in May 2014. This paper argues that dialogue-focused approach in the second Abe administration led the two states to reach the agreement.

Keywords: dialogue and pressure, the abduction issue, Shinzo Abe, the Six Party Talks (SPT), sanctions, Kim Jung-il, Kim Jung-un, Stockholm Agreement

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Acronym

BDA: Banco Delta Asia

DPJ: The Democratic Party of Japan

DPRK: The Democratic People's Republic of Korea

EU: The European Union

IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency

JCP: The Japanese Communist Party

JSP: The Japan Socialist Party

KCNA: Korean Central News Agency

LDP: The Liberal Democratic Party of Japan

MOFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

NARKN or Sukuu-kai: National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea

NPT: Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

ROK: The Republic of Korea

SCR: Security Council Resolution

SDP: The Social Democratic Party

SPT: The Six-Party Talks

UN: The United Nations

US: The United States of America

WMD: Weapons of Mass Destruction

Note: Korean and Chinese names are written last name/first name order. Other names are rendered first name/last name order.

I. Introduction

Diplomatic normalization between Japan and the DPRK is one of essential tasks to truly bring peace and stability in Northeast Asia. The first summit between Prime Minister Koizumi and the Chairman of the DPRK National Defense Commission Kim Jung-il became a significant milestone in the bilateral history. Simultaneously, the alleged abduction suspicion turned to be a diplomatic agenda that entangles the two states in long-lasting confrontation. Kim Jung-il's acknowledgement of the Japanese kidnapping programs gave a great shock to Japan and became extremely outstanding to the Japanese society followed by the security issue, and the compensation issue for the Japan's past colonial rule has almost been kept away from the list of diplomatic agenda. The Koizumi administration successfully brought the five living abductees and their families back to Japan, but the successors of Junichiro Koizumi have achieved little progress as of today.

The Japanese government has been taking "dialogue and pressure" policy for diplomacy to North Korea and this basic principle has been inherited regardless the changes of prime ministers and cabinets. This study will focus on the two Abe administrations and analyze why the second Abe regime could draw concession of the Stockholm Agreement in 2014 from the DPRK and have agreement for reinvestigating the Japanese cabinet-acknowledged abductees and the disappeared nationals who had potentially been taken to the DPRK. Abe, as the most promising and pronominal politician for the abduction issue, had gathered support from the LDP and Japanese citizens, particularly the members of the victim families group (Kazokukai) and the supporter group (Sukuu-kai). In addition, Abe is the only prime minister at present who has experience of negotiation with the DPRK twice under the dialogue and pressure policy. Considering these points, the author recognizes that it is reasonable to make comparison of these two regimes for the purpose of highlighting difference(s) in tactics between them.

The hypothesis for answering the above mentioned research question is that there possibly is difference in balance of "dialogue" and "pressure" between the two Abe administrations. This study will explore the actual negotiations and outcomes that the two administrations had gone through and analyze whether there is balance gap between "dialogue" and "pressure." Although the abduction agenda is a bilateral issue between Japan and the DPRK, it has been widely recognized in the international community, therefore, this study will position the abduction issue under the two pillars: Japan's domestic environment and international environment. The target research period of this thesis will be a full period of the first Abe administration from September 2006 to September 2007,

and a partial period of the second Abe administration from December 2012 to up until July 2014, when a bilateral meeting was held.

The main body of this paper consists of two chapters. Firstly, the author will explore actual paths that the first Abe administration took by classifying them dialogue and pressure, and by domestic and international dimension. The same approach will be taken in the third body part that focuses on the second Abe administration. An agreement is normally achieved when the other side also accepts certain conditions or clauses; therefore, the DPRK's perspective will also be examined by dividing the two regimes: Kim Jung-il and Kim Jung-un.

II. “Dialogue and pressure” policy in the first Abe administration

1. The abduction issue as a diplomatic agenda

On September 17, 2002, a great momentum embraced the two countries to have a summit for the first time post the Second World War. Tokyo's largest focus was the abduction issue followed by the security and the colonial compensation issues. Surprisingly, Kim Jun-il admitted and apologized for the abduction crimes in the summit and informed that five victims are alive and eight died. From this moment, the abduction suspicion became a diplomatic agenda that entangles the two states' relation for years. North Korea's admission of the issue gave a huge shock to Japanese public and drew strong attention. People were greatly sympathetic to the living victims as they were innocent citizens.¹

The five living abduction victims repatriated to Japan in October 2002 and they reunited in Japan with their families in 2004. On the other hand, both the Japanese government's and citizens' skepticism toward the North became larger and deepened during these two years due to Pyongyang's faithless attitudes on the issue. For instance, Pyongyang agreed in the second summit to conduct reinvestigation for the abduction victims and provided death certificates for the eight victims in their reinvestigation, but this later turned out to be manufactured with untruths. The DNA test result of the alleged Yokota Megumi's cremains particularly heightened the public hostility against the North as her disappearance had been a symbolic icon in a series of North Korea's kidnappings. Several bilateral talks including unofficial ones were held before Abe take the office in 2006, but the government made almost no developments through these talks.

¹ Keiji Nakatsuji, “Prime Minister in Command: Koizumi and Abduction Question Revisited,” *Ritsumeikan Kokusai Kenkyu* 21, no.3 (March 2009): 206.

Thus, although the Koizumi administration made great achievements of bringing back some abduction victims and their families, and signing the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, the abduction issue became an extremely severe, delicate and difficult diplomatic agenda to resolve between the two states.

2. The rise of Abe

Abe is known as one of Japan's hardliner politicians and has been committed to resolving the abduction issue. He supported the Koizumi regime for the whole period as a Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary during the Koizumi's first cabinet, the LDP's Secretary-General in the second cabinet, and a Chief Cabinet Secretary in the third cabinet. He accompanied Koizumi to Pyongyang in the first Japan-DPRK summit and has involved deeply in the abduction agenda. After the first summit, the Koizumi government faced to strong backlash from public. The government decided to send an investigation team prior to the victim families' visit to North Korea and Abe took over the initiative of the Tokyo-Pyongyang diplomacy from Hitoshi Tanaka at MOFA and Yasuo Fukuda who was the then-current Chief Cabinet Secretary.²

Abe had gathered supports from various people and groups during Koizumi's primacy. Kazokukai and Sukuukai are the representative bodies that have trusted Abe in the abduction issue. For example, Takasaki introduces an episode that Kazokukai directly sent a request to Prime Minister Koizumi for having Abe as their contact point instead of Hitoshi Tanaka and Yasuo Fukuda.³ In addition, Abe devoted himself as the leader of the LDP's task force for the abduction issue during his duty of a Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary, and announced a report about five-stage sanction program that regulates five different levels of sanctions against North Korea to prepare for the North's potential faithless attitudes for diplomatic agendas.⁴

Making the ground firm, Abe became an emerging politician of the LDP who potentially become a successor of Koizumi. Koizumi fulfilled his duty as a prime minister and a president of the LDP. Defeating strong opposing candidates, Abe was elected as a successor of Koizumi and his cabinet was formed on September 26, 2006. As an initial step, Abe established a headquarters in the Cabinet that specifically deals with the abduction issue. This was a new attempt of the Japanese government since the abduction issue became an official diplomatic agenda.

² Takasaki, *Kensho*, 182.

³ *ibid.*, 182.

⁴ Yomiuri Shimbun, dd. November 6, 2004.

3. Growing public voice

The traditional diplomatic agendas on the table are mainly three.⁵ First is Japan's compensation to North Korea for its colonization. The second issue is the abduction issue that the Japanese government reserves the highest priority. The third and the last is the security issue of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, which is the highest concern in the international society. Obviously, the first two agenda are bilateral issues and Kang describes that the abduction agenda has been outstanding and the compensation matter has been put on the shelf with little prospect of resolution.⁶ The poll conducted by the Japanese Cabinet Office in October 2006 shows that more than 85 percent of nationals selected the abduction issue as their highest concern among the DPRK-related matters, and the nuclear issue comes the second with marking 79.5 percent.⁷ Thus, the abduction agenda had been the most critical issue to Japanese and its government. Particularly, a call for moving on to economic sanctions became bigger than before within Japan soon after Yokota's cremains turned out to be fake.⁸ Hagstrom and Hanssen summarize that Japanese public expressed strong sympathy to those abduction victims and their families, and this sympathetic emotion turned to be anger toward North Korea.⁹

In the policy speech on September 29, 2006, Prime Minister Abe officially announced that; 1) no diplomatic normalization talk would be processed without resolving the abduction issue; 2) his cabinet would stick to the dialogue and pressure policy; 3) pursue the victims' return assuming they are all alive; and 4) newly form a Headquarters on the Abduction Issue.¹⁰ Remarkably, it was the first time to the government to establish a team that particularly deals with the abduction issue. Considering this, Yokotas expressed their high expectancy on the new administration and commented that the Japanese government should have certain level of development in the

⁵ Kang, *Zouhoban*, 116.

⁶ *ibid*, 117.

⁷ "Gaikou-ni kansuru yoronchousa (opinion poll about diplomacy)," Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, accessed July 5, 2017, http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h18/h18-gaiko/3_chosahyo.html.

⁸ Yohji G. Kimura, Hidenori Itamura, and Keiko Ikenobu, "A 'Semio-graphic' analysis of headlines reporting the story of the abduction ('rachi') (3): concerning the 3rd negotiation between Japan and DPRK and the making up of the ash remains of Megumi Yokota," *Bulletin of Faculty of Sociology, Kansai University* 37, no.1 (2005): 1.

⁹ Linus Hagstrom and Ulv Hanssen, "The North-Korean abduction issue: emotions, securitization and the reconstruction of Japanese identity from 'aggressor' to 'victim' and from 'pacifist' to 'normal'," *The Pacific Review* 28, no.1 (2015): 76.

¹⁰ "Speeches and Statements by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe," Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, , accessed July 5, 2017, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/abespeech/2006/09/29speech_e.html.

negotiation by establishing the new organization.¹¹ Thus, pressure over North Korea was highly expected not only from Diet members but also from citizens.

4. Penetration of the abduction issue into the Six-Party Talks

Unlike the Japanese domestic perspective, the DPRK's nuclear issue has been the most critical agenda to the international society. The SPT is a traditional approach to end North Korea's nuclear programs that had been started from August 2003. The member states are China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Russia and the US. Each state has different objectives to participate in the talks. Buszynski explains the positions of each state; the US as the dominant player, who desires multilateral support for dismantling the North's nuclear program rather than through direct talks; Japan as the peripheral state wishing to avoid the security tension in the region and to resolve the abduction issue; South Korea as the swing state tied by the alliance with the US, but simultaneously, longing for closer ties with North Korea and reunification; Russia as the supporting player who aims to get its status back with strong influence over North Korea from being marginalized itself post-the Cold War; and China as the pivotal player who concerns the collapse of security balance in the region and desires to maintain its influence over the Korean Peninsula, as well as over the US: and lastly, North Korea as the target state aiming to gain supports on energy, foods and diplomatic normalization, in return of freezing its nuclear programs.¹² The ultimate goal of denuclearizing the DPRK is consistent; however, standing positions of each nation in the talks differ.

The initial SPT was held from August 27 to August 29 in 2003. Mitoji Yabunaka, Director of Asian and Oceanian Bureau of MOFA at the time, stated that the missiles, biochemical weapons and abduction issues must be comprehensively resolved as well as the nuclear issue in the basis of the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration.¹³ From this fact, it can be referred that the Japanese government had aimed to obtain occasions for discussing the abduction issue in the SPT, which is multilateral framework. There were talks for six times before Abe took primacy. In these meetings, Tokyo continuously mentioned about the abduction issue. For example, in the second SPT, Yabunaka emphasized Japan's position that no normalization talk shall be discussed unless the abduction issue gets resolved.¹⁴ In the first session of the fourth round, Kenichiro Sasae, a chief of

¹¹ Mainichi Shimbun, dd. September 21, 2006.

¹² Leszek Buszynski, *Negotiating with North Korea: the six party talks and the nuclear issue* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 18-46.

¹³ Mainichi Shimbun, dd. August 28, 2003.

¹⁴ Mainichi Shimbun, dd. February 25, 2004.

the Japanese delegates, emphasized the importance of the abduction issue, whilst other countries, particularly ROK, requested Japan to focus on nuclear discussion.¹⁵

On October 10, 2006, the DPRK conducted the first nuclear test neglecting warns from overseas. The member states resumed the talks on December 18, 2006. By the time of reopening the SPT sessions, Japan had Abe as its new national leader. In the meeting, the Japanese delegate Sasae made remarks in a keynote speech that the abduction cases is the Abe administration's top priority agenda and no normalization talk would be arranged unless the issue gets resolved.¹⁶ In addition, Sasae sent a request of support and apprehension from other member states in individual bilateral talks.¹⁷ Thus, Tokyo gained an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of the abduction issue among the member states and obtain support; however, no significant progress was achieved in this session. Channlet-Avery points that Japan had devoted its effort in the SPT framework for making progress in the abduction issue.¹⁸ In despite of such Japanese government's continuous effort, there was a limitation to have understanding about the incidents as the nuclear issue is more urgent and heavier matter to the international society.

5. Proactive actions and original sanctions

Ever since Pyongyang's admission of the abductive crimes, Tokyo had prepared for legislating frameworks that allow Japan to impose sanctions over North Korea in events of security threats. There are two major pillars. On February 9, 2004, the Diet approved a bill that enables Japan to execute economic sanctions unilaterally over North Korea.¹⁹ Another framework is a bill that bans entries of vessels with a designated nationality into Japanese ports, and this passed the House of Councilors with majority votes on June 14, 2004.²⁰ The objective of these approaches can be estimated to express Tokyo's readiness of imposing sanctions at a necessary timing when Pyongyang does not sincerely respond to the bilateral agenda. In other words, the Koizumi administration had

¹⁵ Mainichi Shimbun, dd. July 26, 2005.

¹⁶ "Gaimushou: dai gokai rokushakaigou dai niji kaigou (gaiyou-to tenbou) (MOFA: The fifth Six Party Talks, the second meeting (summary and prospect))," MOFA, accessed July 12, 2017, http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/n_korea/6kaigo/6kaigo5_2gt.html.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Emma Channlet-Avery, "North Korea's abduction of Japanese citizens and the Six Party Talks," *Congressional Research Service* (March 2008): 1.

¹⁹ Yomiuri Shimbun, dd. February 10, 2004.

²⁰ Hirochika Inagi, "Tokutei senpaku nyuukoukinshihou-no seiritsukeii-to nyuukou kinshisochi-no jissshi (Legislation background of prohibition of specified ships' entry and execution of the entry prohibition act)," *Rippou-to Chousa (Legislation and Research)* no.272 (September 2007): 55.

enhanced “pressure” side although the government had been careful for activating sanctions and kept the door for dialogue opened.

Two years later, the first timing had come to execute the Act on Special Measures Concerning Prohibition of Entry of Specified Ships. North Korea fired Taepodong 2 on July 5, 2006 and amplified tension and threat throughout the region. On July 15, the UNSCR 1695 was adopted to respond to the Pyongyang’s provocative act.²¹ Along with the international sanction, Tokyo responded to the threat by executing economic sanctions for nine items, including banning entries of Mangyongbong 92 to ports of Japan as well as entries of North Korean officials to Japan; suspending government officials’ travels to the North; and restricting reentries – limiting to when travel destination is North Korea – to Japan for North Korean officials living in Japan.²² Until this event, the Koizumi administration had been cautious about imposing unilateral sanctions over North Korea, therefore, it was an important path to demonstrate Japan’s severe stance against the North.

Despite of immediate sanctions from both the international community and Japan, North Korea conducted a nuclear test for the first time on October 9, 2006. Importantly, Abe took the office by the time of this event. Sakie Yokota commented in an interview that it is not enough just to put North Korea on the corner, but needs strong sanction, and other family members of abducted victims also requested to the government to add heavier pressure to the North.²³ Calls for additional sanctions came up also from opposition parties, such as the DPJ, the JCP, and the SDP.²⁴ Two days later, the Cabinet held a security meeting and decided to widen and strengthen the range of sanction. This time, the government adopted a resolution of banning entries of *all* North Korean vessels into ports of Japan, and prohibiting imports of *all* types of goods from North Korea.²⁵ Furthermore, reentry prohibition of North Korean officials in Japan was extended to regardless travel destinations.²⁶ This decision-making was three days earlier than that of the Security Council and it can be said that Tokyo attempted to express its deep regret for Pyongyang’s violate act.

²¹ MOFA. *Diplomatic Bluebook* (2007): 12-3.

²² "Kitachousen-ni yoru dandou misairu-no hasshajian-ni kakaru wagakuni-no toumen-no taiou-ni tsuite (Japan’s immediate response to the DPRK’s ballistic missile launch)," Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, accessed July 11, 2017, http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/tyoukanpress/rireki/2006/07/05_a.html.

²³ Yomiuri Shimbun, dd. October 10, 2006.

²⁴ Yomiuri Shimbun, dd. October 11, 2006

²⁵ "Kitchousen-ni yoru kakuzikken-ni kakaru wagakuni-no toumen-no taiou-ni tsuite (Japan’s immediate response to the DPRK’s nuclear test)," Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet., accessed July 11, 2017, http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/tyoukanpress/rireki/2006/10/11_p.html.

²⁶ Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, “*Kitchousen-ni yoru kakuzikken-ni.*”

Not only had the original sanctions, the Japanese government also actively cooperated with the international community. As the chair of the Security Council, Japan closely coordinated with the permanent members and adopted the UNSCR 1718.²⁷ The UNSCR 1718 is designed to cut the flow of manpower, goods and money linked to North Korea's WMD development, and is the first phase of pressure produced by the international community.²⁸ Thus, North Korea became to suffer for such external pressures from both the international community and Japan.

Japan's original pressure can also be confirmed in the SPT framework. The member states gathered to the discussion table from February 8 to 13 of 2007. This session achieved another significant milestone in the SPT, agreeing to "action plan" of initial steps to implement the September 2005 Joint Statement. The plan stipulates for halting operations of nuclear facilities in Nyongbyon and in return, North Korea is to receive 50,000 tons of heavy oil as an initial step; and as the next phase, North Korea would submit complete reports on all its nuclear programs and in return, the five other member states would provide energy and economic assistance up to equivalent to 950,000 tons of heavy oil.²⁹ However, the Abe administration rejected to provide the assistance without firm progresses in the abduction issue.³⁰ The Japanese government aimed to make progress in the abduction issue by adding it into the SPT agenda and also expected to generate favorable development in the SPT by having progress in the Japan-DPRK relation.³¹ In contrast to Tokyo's motivation, this invited Japan to face relative isolation in the SPT scheme. Some LDP members also expressed their concern that such isolation would lead Japan to keeping itself out of steps from the multilateral framework.³²

Apart from the action plan, the member states all agreed to establish five working-group sessions as a subordinate SPT framework where includes the Japan-DPRK bilateral talks.³³ The bilateral sessions were held in March and September 2007, but none of the talks had produced satisfactory progresses. In the March session, MOFA demanded for sending all the living abductees back to Japan, a full accounting of all the kidnapping cases, and extradition of the criminals, but

²⁷ MOFA. *Diplomatic Bluebook* (2007): 15.

²⁸ Asahi Shimbun, dd. October 16, 2006.

²⁹ MOFA. *Diplomatic Bluebook* (2007): 16.

³⁰ *ibid*: 16.

³¹ Asahi Shimbun, dd. February 14, 2007.

³² Asahi Shimbun, dd. February 16, 2007.

³³ MOFA. *Diplomatic Bluebook* (2007): 17. This framework is consisted by; 1) denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula; 2) the US-DPRK normalization talks; 3) Japan-DPRK normalization talks; 4) economic and energy assistance; and 5) developing peace in Northeast Asia and mechanism of security.

Pyongyang repeatedly explained about their perspective that the issue had already been resolved.³⁴ The Japanese delegates urged the similar contents in the second meeting and Pyongyang counter-commented that they had provided the best effort for sincerely responding to Tokyo's requests.³⁵ The situation did not change as Tokyo expected even though the Japan-DPRK bilateral talks and related diplomatic agenda were added to the multilateral framework.

By analyzing the events during Abe's first premiership, we can confirm that more pressure was performed than dialogue although his office concentrated on dialogue and pressure policy. In accordance with the international community, Japan proactively coordinated meetings at the UN and contributed to the immediate issuance of the UNSCR. Moreover, the office implemented Japan's original sanction to express its deep regret. Tokyo's effort of penetrating the issue into the SPT scheme is also remarkable as well as singular rejection of providing economic and energy assistance to the North. These actions can be recognized as a part of pressure. In contrast, official bilateral meetings counted only for twice, generating almost no significant development. As shown in the September 2005 Joint statement and the February 2007 action plan, the international environment was focusing more on producing progresses through active dialogues for the North's security issue. In addition, the Bush administration shifted from hardline to soft line in the second presidential term. In contrast, the Japan's domestic environment of both politicians and general public was keener on negotiating the abduction issue rather than security agenda and concentrated on performing pressure over North Korea.

6. Traditional counterpart: Kim Jung-il

Kim Jung-il has been Japan's ultimate counterpart in the relevant diplomatic agendas. Although the actual negotiators from Pyongyang are different, the decision maker has always been the Chairman of the DPRK National Defense Commission Kim Jung-il. Facing the US' sudden shift from engagement to hardline stance due to the regime change, Kim Jung-il sent a signal to the Koizumi administration for improving the bilateral relation, keeping another goal in his mind to invite positive influence to the US-DPRK relation.³⁶

³⁴ "Gaimushou: dai ikkai "nicchou kokkou seijouka-no tame-no sagyou bukai" no gaiyou (MOFA: summary of the first "working level talk for the Japan-DPRK diplomatic normalization")," MOFA, accessed July 11, 2017, http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/n_korea/seijyoka.html.

³⁵ "Gaimushou: dai nikai "nicchou kokkou seijouka-no tame-no sagyou bukai" no gaiyou (MOFA: summary of the second "working level talk for the Japan-DPRK diplomatic normalization")." MOFA. Accessed July 11, 2017. http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/n_korea/seijyoka2.html.

³⁶ Naoki Saito, *Kitachousen owari-no hajimari 2001-2015 (North Korea, beginning of the end, 2001-2015)* (Tokyo: Continued to page5

After facing the strong backlash from Japanese public for Kim's acknowledgement and apology for the series of the kidnapping programs, the abduction agenda became extremely outstanding in the bilateral negotiations. After the first summit, North Korea performed flexible responses to Japan's request. It accepted a visit of Japanese investigation team to its country and agreed to repatriation (it was originally agreed as tentative return) of the living kidnap victims. Investigation about the missing Japanese nationals whom the Japanese government informed about was also conducted. Taking these actions into consideration, it seems that North Korea's motivation to normalize the bilateral relation and receive economic assistance was not deteriorated.

During the logjam period between the first and the second summit, Pyongyang sent message to Katsuei Hirasawa for having "honest" talks about the abduction issue.³⁷ Hirasawa met Ambassador Cheung Tae-hwa and Vice Foreign Affairs Minister Song Il-ho in Beijing in December 2003. Song Il-ho is a key person who has long been in charge of diplomacy toward Japan. According to Hirasawa, the North Korean delegates fully understood that the abduction issue is the most crucial agenda to Japan and it is the Japanese public who have power about this matter.³⁸ The abduction issue has been a bottleneck to have negotiation for diplomatic normalization. In the second summit, North Korea agreed to send remaining families of the repatriated victims. However, the negotiations could make only limited progress post the second summit. From Pyongyang's perspective, it can be said that their efforts produced few significance and this situation led them deepen skepticism toward the Japanese government.

Start of the SPT can be recognized as a turning point to harden the North's attitude toward Japan. Although the SPT is the multilateral framework, North Korea obtained opportunities for direct negotiations with the US. On the other hand, Japan had attempted to have understanding of the North's abduction crimes from other member states and also aimed to include this into the SPT agenda. The Japanese delegates clearly remarked the Abe administration's position that the abduction issue is the top priority agenda and no normalization talk should be on the table as long as the problem remains.³⁹

This situation irritated Pyongyang. In the meeting between Taku Yamazaki and Song Il-ho in January 2007, Song repeated the same stance of "the issue was resolved."⁴⁰ He also stated that the

Ronsosha, 2016), 155.

³⁷ Hirasawa, *Rachimondai*, 43.

³⁸ *ibid*, 37, 44.

³⁹ Refer to the footnote No.16.

⁴⁰ Mainichi Shimbun, dd. January 13, 2007.

North Korean government does not have a will to resume intergovernmental talks. Although this meeting was unofficial, one can confirm Pyongyang's hardline stance toward Tokyo. In the SPT Working-level talks held in March 2007, Japan brought up the abduction issue and North Korea responded that the issue had already been resolved.⁴¹ The discussion went similar tone in the September Working-level talk and developed no significant progress on both sides.

Another important feature is the change in the Bush administration's tactic from imposing pressure to having dialogues. During Bush's first presidential term, he and his office took hardline measures in the SPT. Including North Korea into the terrorist sponsor list and freezing the North Korean fund at BDA are the good examples. These actions invited Pyongyang's strong opposition and resulted allowing the North to conduct a nuclear test for the first time. After this security threat, the Bush administration gradually shifted to engagement and dialogue-centered strategy, which falls under Bush's second presidential term and overlaps with the first Abe administration. Starting from the return of the BDA fund to the North, Pyongyang responded by shutting down the Nyongbyon nuclear facilities and also accepted IAEA inspectors. Report submission about the Nyongbyon complex and a partial facility destroy bore food assistance from the US. "Action for action" principle functioned to a certain extent in the second half of the SPT.

It is obvious that North Korea focused more on negotiations in the SPT, in other words, negotiations with the US rather than that with Japan. Moreover, the Kim Jung-il regime succeeded to acquire actual concessions of food assistance and removal from the terrorist list from the Bush administration. The North Korean government definitely welcomes aids from overseas (Lankov, 2015, p.270).⁴² The potential economic assistance from Japan after normalizing diplomatic relation should be remaining attractive to the North. However, from Pyongyang's perspective, it is natural to seek other sources for having aids if negotiations with Tokyo get tangled and become time taking for developing positive progresses.

Both sides had the door for dialogue; however, Japan prioritized giving pressure by imposing sanctions and having cooperation from other SPT members for the abduction agenda. North Korea, on the other hand, criticized Japan's attitude and concentrated on making progresses in nuclear negotiations with the US through the SPT.

⁴¹ Refer to the footnote No. 34.

⁴² Andrei Lankov, *Kitachousen-no kakushin: sono logic-to kokusaishakai-no kadai (The real North Korea: life and politics in the failed Stalinist utopia)*, trans. Yumi Yamaoka (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 2015), 270.

III. “Dialogue and pressure” policy in the second Abe administration

1. Successors post the first Abe primacy and the return of Abe

The first Abe administration lasted only for a year. Without substantial achievement, the abduction negotiation was handed over to his successor, Yasuo Fukuda. Fukuda claimed that his office would devote the utmost effort on the abduction issue and pursue the remaining victims’ earliest repatriation to Japan.⁴³ Tokyo and Pyongyang had working-level talks twice in June and August 2008 during the Fukuda administration. In the June meeting, Pyongyang changed its traditional standpoint that the abduction issue had already been resolved, and agreed to conducting reinvestigation in order to settle the issue.⁴⁴ Dialogue continued in August and Tokyo explained its will to lift the ongoing sanctions partially to respond to Pyongyang’s effort.⁴⁵ It seemed that Tokyo successfully drew Pyongyang’s compromise through continuous demand of reinvestigation; however, Pyongyang postponed their duty due to Fukuda’s sudden resignation and also because of the necessity to assess how Prime Minister Taro Aso – Fukuda’s successor – would treat the agreement.⁴⁶ Although this agreement generated no concrete result, it is an important path in the history of abduction negotiation weighing dialogue and bringing change in Pyongyang’s attitude.

Aso’s primacy started from September 2008 and Japanese officials kept sending a request of proceeding the both sides’ obligations that had been agreed during the Fukuda administration.⁴⁷ Having no response from Pyongyang, the Aso administration met security threat for twice by North Korea that are missile fire in April and the second nuclear test in May of 2009. Tokyo reacted to strengthen its original sanction⁴⁸ and the abduction negotiation fell in deadlock due to the tension escalation. Aso could achieve no progress in the abduction agenda and the cabinet was dramatically taken over by the DPJ in September 2009 due to continuous domestic political scandals and loss of trust on the LDP-led governments.

⁴³ "Policy Speech by Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda to the 168th Session of the Diet (Speeches and Statements by Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda)," Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, October 1, 2007, accessed July 12, 2017, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/hukudaspeech/2007/10/01syosin_e.html.

⁴⁴ MOFA. *Diplomatic Bluebook* (2009): 22.

⁴⁵ *ibid*: 23.

⁴⁶ *ibid*: 23.

⁴⁷ *ibid*: 23.

⁴⁸ MOFA. *Diplomatic Bluebook* (2010): 26. The Aso administration continued the Japan’s unilateral sanctions that were commenced from October 11, 2006. After the second nuclear test, the Japanese Cabinet determined to add financial sanctions.

Yukio Hatoyama became the first prime minister from the DPJ. Hatoyama aimed to resolve the abduction issue “at the earliest possible date using all conceivable means”⁴⁹, but on other hand, he also claimed that the cabinet would value not only pressure but also dialogue.⁵⁰ The Hatoyama government inherited the traditional LDP’s North Korea tactic but simultaneously left a space for having more dialogues. However, the administration could not make remarkable progress since internally, the ruling coalition SDP opposed to including the abduction issue into the cabinet’s policy agenda and externally, the cabinet was facing to reviewing the Japan-US relation and the relocation issue of the US military bases in Okinawa.⁵¹ The administration lasted only for nine months and Hatoyama resigned the prime minister position in early June 2010.

Naoto Kan took the office after Hatoyama. The Kan administration also focused on doing their utmost for having all the abductees back to Japan at the earliest date.⁵² Remarkably, Prime Minister Kan set a strategy toward the abduction issue for the first time among the DPJ-leading cabinets. The strategy included strong requests to North Korea to conduct investigation into missing Japanese nationals as well as the government-acknowledged victims, and having thorough care to the victims’ families.⁵³ Although the cabinet performed certain effort, the situation surrounding the Korean Peninsula was extremely bad during 2010 due to the North’s attack to *Cheonan* – a navy corvette of the ROK – in March and to Yeonpyeondo in November. Moreover, the Kan government needed to prioritize domestic affair of the 3.11 earthquakes in the following year, therefore, the cabinet had few ability to continue negotiation of the abduction issue with Pyongyang. More importantly, the death of Kim Jung-il in December 2011 gave certain impact to pause the Japan-DPRK bilateral negotiation for the relevant diplomatic agendas.

Yoshihiko Noda took the office from September 2011. The Noda administration announced to strengthen bilateral relation with its neighboring countries including North Korea, and to perform

⁴⁹ "Policy Speech by Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama at the 173rd Session of the Diet (Speeches and Statements by Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama)," Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, October 26, 2009, accessed July 12, 2017, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/hatoyama/statement/200910/26syosin_e.html.

⁵⁰ Yasufumi Okadome, Yasuo Nakauchi, and Naoko Takafuji, “Seiken koutaigo-no Hatoyama gaikou-wo meguru kokkai rongi: towareta gaikou-no henka (Diet discussion about Hatoyama diplomacy post the regime change: questioned continuity and change in diplomacy),” *Rippou-to Chousa* (Legislation and Research) no.307 (August 2010): 6.

⁵¹ Ki-wan Lee, “The political change of Japan and Japan-North Korea relations,” *Journal International Politics* 18, no.2 (October 2013): 87.

⁵² "Policy Speech by Prime Minister Naoto Kan at the 174th Session of the Diet (Speeches and Statements by Prime Minister Naoto Kan)," Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, June 11, 2010, accessed July 12, 2017, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/kan/statement/201006/11syosin_e.html.

⁵³ Asahi Shimbun, dd. November 29, 2010.

the best effort to resolve the abduction issue.⁵⁴ Through a step of the preliminary consultation in August 2012, the two states met in the intergovernmental talk in November 2012 after four years since the last bilateral meeting. The two parties had in-depth consultation on the abduction issue and agreed to continue the discussion.⁵⁵ The next meeting was originally scheduled from December 5 to 6; however, Prime Minister Noda had no option but suspend the talk since Pyongyang announced that it will conduct satellite-launch using a long-range missile and provided another threat in the region.⁵⁶ During this timing, Tokyo had the House of Representatives election and the DPJ lost the majority of its seats whilst the Shinzo Abe-leading LDP won a triumph obtaining 294 seats.⁵⁷ Overall, the DPJ-led cabinets generated almost no outstanding achievement in the abduction agenda.

Abe returned to the office winning powerful support from public. Opinion poll marked 71 percent of support from Yomiuri Shimbun and 54 percent from Asahi Shimbun.⁵⁸ Isozaki argues that “reopening negotiations to normalize Japan-North Korea relations requires a firm and stable regime that can convince the Japanese public.”⁵⁹ The LDP leadership had lasted for decades and it is quite natural for Japanese public to return to supporting the LDP after experiencing the DPJ-led cabinets that produced few achievements in both domestic and overseas politics during the three-year ruling.

Abe had firmly maintained his will concerning to the abduction issue. In the first policy speech on January 28, 2013, Abe remarked that his mission “will not be finished until the day arrives that the families of all the abductees are able to hold their relatives in their arms,” and his cabinet will pursue immediate return of all the kidnap victims, Pyongyang’s full accounting on the abduction acts, and extradition of abduction criminals.⁶⁰ Dialogue and pressure policy also remained as the core strategy of North Korea diplomacy. Sakie Yokota welcomed the return of Abe to the office and

⁵⁴ "Policy Speech by Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda to the 178th Session of the Diet (Speeches and Statements by Prime Minister)," Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, September 13, 2011, accessed July 12, 2017, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/noda/statement/201109/13syosin_e.html.

⁵⁵ "Talks between Japan and North Korea on the Abduction Issue: 9. Japan-North Korea Intergovernmental Consultations (November 2012: Ulan Bator)," MOFA, accessed June 29, 2017, http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/kp/page1we_000069.html.

⁵⁶ Mainichi Shimbun, dd. December 2, 2012.

⁵⁷ Mainichi Shimbun, dd. December 17, 2012.

⁵⁸ Yomiuri Shimbun, dd. February 11, 2013; Asahi Shimbun, dd. January 22, 2013.

⁵⁹ Atsuhito Isozaki, “Japan-North Korea relations: the Abe administration and the abduction issue,” *SERI Quarterly* 6, no.3 (July 2013): 68.

⁶⁰ "Policy Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the 183rd Session of the Diet (Speeches and Statements by Prime Minister)," Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, January 28, 2013, accessed July 13, 2017, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201301/28syosin_e.html.

commented her high expectation on having development in the abduction negotiation.⁶¹ The second Abe administration fulfilled two important domestic factors for handling the abduction issue with North Korea: a firm and stable government, and support and trust from public as well as the victims' families.

2. Deterioration of the Six-Party Talks' function

After the SPT in February 2007 and having agreed for the action plan, the member states continued discussion during the year. Positive moves appeared particularly after the US' return of the North's fund at BDA. On June 25, Pyongyang confirmed the receipt of the fund and stated that it would begin shut down of the nuclear facility in Nyongbyon, and would spend the fund "for improving the standard of people's living and humanitarian purposes."⁶² On October 3, 2007, the member states reached an agreement of "the Second-Phase Agreement for the Implementation of the Joint Statement."⁶³ The statement regulates that North Korea to provide a complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear facilities, and disable existing nuclear facilities by the end of December 2007.⁶³ In return, the other member states would provide economic, energy and food assistance.⁶⁴ This new statement failed due to detection of traces of uranium enrichment⁶⁵; however, active events in the basis of "action for action" principle continuously happened during 2008 even though SPT had failed to achieve the year-end goals of 2007. On May 8, North Korea submitted the US experts in Pyongyang 18,000 pages of documents about its nuclear programs at Nyongbyon.⁶⁶ North Korea also delivered a declaration of nuclear programs to China⁶⁷, the chair of the SPT, and destroyed a cooling tower which is a part of Nyongbyon nuclear facilities.⁶⁸ Along with these Pyongyang's actions, the Bush administration announced to dispatch 500,000 metric tons of food

⁶¹ Yomiuri Shimibun, dd. December 27, 2012.

⁶² The New York Times, dd. June 26, 2007.

⁶³ "Six Parties October 3, 2007 Agreement on "Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement"" , " U.S. Department of State, accessed June 25, 2017, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2007/oct/93223.htm>.

⁶⁴ U.S. Department of State, "Six Parties October 3, 2007."

⁶⁵ The Washington Post, dd. December 21, 2007.

⁶⁶ The New York Times, dd. May 9, 2008.

⁶⁷ The New York Times, dd. June 27, 2008.

⁶⁸ The Washington Post, dd. June 28, 2008.

assistance⁶⁹ and Bush sent his intension to the Congress for removing North Korea from a list of state sponsors of terrorism together with partial lifting of the US' trading sanctions over the North.⁷⁰

Later in the December session in 2008, the six parties all acknowledged the positive progress in processing the second-phase actions and confirmed to step forward in parallel for disablement of nuclear facilities at Nyongbyon complex and provision of economic and energy assistance⁷¹; however, the session ended without achieving agreement on a verification protocol.⁷² Thus, the multilateral approach failed to make the Korean Peninsula a nuclear-free region.

Dialogues within the SPT framework have not been held under the Obama administration. Quinones points that President Obama opted "strategic patience" rather than pursuing denuclearization through proactively using the SPT.⁷³ In other words, the administration sent a message to Pyongyang that Washington is ready to normalize the bilateral relation but subject to Pyongyang's compromise in advance for the nuclear programs. In remarks on February 13, 2009, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton spoke that the Obama administration also has a will to replace the armistice agreement with a permanent peace treaty, and to grant economic and food assistance in condition of such compromise.⁷⁴ Another important point of the US' North Korean strategy is containment approach. The Obama administration formed international cooperation including the UN sanctions for pressuring North Korea; simultaneously leaving an option of having dialogue in events North Korea satisfies international expectations.⁷⁵

The situation however did not show positive changes and tensions keep being escalated by the North's continuous nuclear tests and missile launches. The US-DPRK bilateral talks were held twice in 2011 but ended without concrete agreement. Even if the five SPT members (excluding North Korea) face a series of Pyongyang's provocations, no multilateral talks has been organized. Instead, these states performed cooperation through the UN framework and tightened sanctions step by step.

⁶⁹ Mark E. Manyin and Mary Beth Nitkin, "U.S. Assistance to North Korea," *Congressional Research Service* (July 2008): 2-3.

⁷⁰ The Washington Post, dd. June 27, 2008.

⁷¹ "Chairman's Statement of the Six-Party Talks (December 11, 2008)," MOFA, accessed June 16, 2017, http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/6party/state0812.html.

⁷² Tae-hwan Kwak, "The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through the Six-Party Talks" in *North Korea and security cooperation in Northeast Asia*, ed. Tae-hwan Kwak and Seung-ho Joo (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014): 9.

⁷³ Kenneth C. Quinones, "US domestic politics' impact on policy toward North Korea" in *North Korea and security cooperation in Northeast Asia*, ed. Tae-hwan Kwak and Seung-ho Joo (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014): 106.

⁷⁴ Hillary Rodham Clinton, "U.S.-Asia Relations: Indispensable to Our Future," U.S. Department of State, February 13, 2009, accessed June 16, 2017, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/02/117333.htm>.

⁷⁵ Quinones, "US domestic politics'," 106.

3. Change in the domestic public voice and Tokyo's various approaches

A decade had passed since the first Japan-DPRK summit and having the five abduction victims back to Japan by the time Abe returned to the cabinet. After the Koizumi administration, the successors had maintained the similar tone of requesting Pyongyang for thorough investigations, Pyongyang's full accounting, and repatriation of all the abductees to Japan. Looking through this decade from distance, however, no substantial progress that would satisfy Tokyo and Japanese public was made after the reunion of the five victims' families in 2004. The issue yet has high level of interest from public. The opinion poll conducted by the Japanese Cabinet Office in 2012 marked 87.6 percent of interest which is the highest rate among other alternatives.⁷⁶ The second highest concern is the nuclear issue, which is the highest concern to the international community. The priority is completely opposite between Japan and overseas.

Abe met Kazokukai members as soon as he returned to a prime minister. Shigeo Iizuka – the leader of Kazokukai – remarked that they are no longer patient and want to see any result in the coming year.⁷⁷ Kazokukai members' aging is another critical point that pushes the government speeding up negotiations. After the North's third nuclear test, Iizuka commented that although Pyongyang's nuclear threat is critical, he wishes the government to seek opportunities of dialogue even at underwater level.⁷⁸ On February 13, 2013, in the Budget Committee of the House of Representatives, Prime Minister Abe addressed that the abduction issue will not meet resolution unless Japan take initiative and sanctions only also will not lead the issue resolved, therefore, the government will leave the door for dialogue open.⁷⁹ Both public and the government acknowledged limitation of sanction effectiveness and necessity of dialogue. Moreover, having dialogue within the SPT framework was also limited and bilateral approach was essential.

From May 14 to 17, 2013, Isao Iijima visited Pyongyang to meet the DPRK's high-level officials and discussed the abduction issue. Iijima was a former Parliamentary Private Secretary during the Koizumi administration, who accompanied Koizumi with the past two summits and is considered to possess own connections with Pyongyang. The visit was highly confidential even

⁷⁶ "Gaikou-ni Kansuru Yoronchousa (Opinion poll in relate to diplomacy) Chart 29 - Cabinet Office, Government of Japan.," Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, , accessed January 7, 2017,

<http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h24/h24-gaiko/zh/z29.html>.

⁷⁷ Yomiuri Shimbun, dd. December 29, 2012.

⁷⁸ Yomiuri Shimbun, dd. February 15, 2013.

⁷⁹ "Dai 183 kai kokkai yosan iinkai dai go gou (Heisei 25 nen, 2 gatsu 13 nichi, suiyoubi) (The 183th National diet House of Representatives budget committee Vol.5 (2013, February 13, Wednesday)," House of Representative, Japan, accessed June 13, 2017,

http://www.shugiin.go.jp/internet/itdb_kaigiroku.nsf/html/kaigiroku/001818320130213005.htm#p_honbun.

within the cabinet. Moreover, Tokyo's strong allies Washington and Seoul came to know Iijima's visit only in the following day of Iijima's arrival at Pyongyang.⁸⁰ South Korea reportedly remarked that in the global atmosphere of imposing sanctions over Pyongyang, the visit would not help the trilateral cooperation of Washington-Tokyo-Seoul, as well as cooperation in the international community.⁸¹ Abe commented that Iijima's visit was one of approaches to seek clues of dialogue and emphasized legitimacy by mentioning the importance of taking initiatives in the abduction agenda.⁸²

Iijima's visit was made amid the heightened tension surrounding the Korean Peninsula for the Pyongyang's third nuclear test. Japan itself extended its unilateral sanction that had been effective from October 2006 for another two years, which had traditionally been extended annual basis. The contents got more severe; for example, Tokyo is to freeze capitals of designated associations and individuals who have relation with North Korea, and to take financial measures that shut financial flows between Japan and North Korea.⁸³ In short, Abe did not ease sanctions. Under the delicate circumstance, however, Abe sent Iijima and his decision represented his strong will to resolve the issue as he remarked in the January 2013 policy speech.

Dialogues were continued in the following year. On March 3, Red-Cross meeting was held and taking this opportunity, a division chief-level talk was also organized. The agenda of the Red-Cross meeting was about return of Japanese cremains in the North Korean territory. Apart from this topic, in the division chief-level talk, both parties exchanged opinions in regards to the abduction issue.⁸⁴ The Abe administration attempted to develop a path through Red-Cross meetings to reopen intergovernmental talks. As agreed, Japan and North Korea had another Red-Cross meeting from March 19 to 20 and another division chief-level talk was held along the schedule agreeing mutually to resume intergovernmental talks.⁸⁵

Between these two meetings, Pyongyang showed flexible attitude in the abduction agenda. The North Korean government agreed to let Yokotas meet Kim Hye-gyung, a granddaughter of Yokotas, in Ulan Bator, Mongolia. Although their daughter Megumi was not there and no

⁸⁰ Mainichi Shimbun, dd. May 15, 2013.

⁸¹ "(2nd LD) S. Korea slams Japan official for 'unhelpful' visit to N. Korea," May 16, 2013, *Yonhap News Agency*, accessed January 9, 2017, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/search1/2603000000.html?cid=AEN20130516006951315>.

⁸² Mainichi Shimbun, dd. May 21, 2013.

⁸³ Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, *Measures to take against North Korea (Announcement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary)* [PDF]. (2013, April 5).

⁸⁴ Mainichi Shimbun, dd. March 4, 2014.

⁸⁵ Mainichi Shimbun, dd. March 20, 2014.

information about Megumi provided, Yokotas expressed their delight meeting their grandchild for the first time.⁸⁶ On the other hand, North Korea test-fired short-range rockets on March 21 and so it did medium-range No Dong on March 26. The tension in the region rapidly escalated; however, despite of these provocative acts, the Abe administration did not change its stance of having dialogue.

Expectation for making positive progress on the abduction agenda became higher and higher. In this mood, Japan and the DPRK finally held an intergovernmental talk in Beijing from March 30 to 31 after 16 months absence since the last session in November 2012. It was also the first official bilateral dialogue to the second Abe regime. The two parties discussed mutual concerns comprehensively, including the abduction issue, the security issue, the Japanese cremains' issue, and the compensation issue. To Japan, the abduction issue is the most critical agenda and requested to conduct reinvestigation about the kidnap victims.⁸⁷ Junichi Ihara, Director of Asian and Oceanian Bureau, emphasized the importance of continuous effort of having dialogue and that it is the right time to grab a chance for resolving the abduction issue as Pyongyang takes conciliatory stance.⁸⁸ Yokotas also evaluated the talk positively and commented that the negotiation moved one step forward.⁸⁹

4. The Stockholm Agreement and a partial lifting of the original sanctions

The atmosphere of continuing dialogue remained high and another intergovernmental talk was organized from May 26 to 28. Whether Tokyo would make progress in the reinvestigation request was the biggest focal point. After the three-day negotiation, the Japanese government successfully drew the North's concession of agreeing reinvestigation. The Stockholm Agreement was issued clearly stating the both sides' obligations. North Korea's key tasks are; 1) reinvestigation of all Japanese in North Korea including the abduction victims and missing nationals potentially taken to the North; 2) establishment of a special investigation committee with special authority; and 3) reporting investigation status as needed and taking necessary measures for repatriation in case Pyongyang find living Japanese. On the other hand, Japan is to; 1) partially lift its original sanctions;

⁸⁶ Mainichi Shimbun, dd. March 17, 2014.

⁸⁷ Yomiuri Shimbun, dd. March 31, 2014.

⁸⁸ Yomiuri Shimbun, dd. March 31, 2014.

⁸⁹ Yomiuri Shimbun, dd. April 1, 2014.

2) consider provisions of humanitarian assistance to North Korea at an appropriate timing; and 3) confirm Japan's will of resolving the compensation issue and normalizing the diplomatic relation.⁹⁰

Reactions varied between the Japanese domestic and overseas. In Japan, the cabinet emphasized the significance of having agreement for reinvestigation. Yokotas consider that this will be the last chance as they are getting old and show high expectation of having some achievements in the reinvestigation, and Hasuikes also sent a comment saying it is a hopeful step.⁹¹ Positive evaluation for the agreement itself was dominant from scholars, but simultaneously, they emphasize careful assessment to Pyongyang's actual behavior. In the interview from Yomiuri Shimbun, Toshimitsu Shigemura, a North Korea study professor, answered that Pyongyang compromised by commencing reinvestigation prior to Japan's lift of sanctions; however, how much information Japan can obtain will be the next focal point and the Japanese government must negotiate taking a strong position.⁹² Experiencing the difficulty and weariness of negotiation with North Korea over the past decade, both the Japanese government and public keep a worry for potential dismissal by Pyongyang. However, the Stockholm Agreement was still a breakthrough that possibly brings resolution of the abduction agenda.

The US also showed support on the agreement. Jen Psaki, the US spokeswoman, commented that Washington will continue supporting Tokyo's effort to resolve the abduction issue in transparent manner.⁹³ Simultaneously, however, the US stressed the importance of unity in cooperation among the US, Japan and South Korea over the North's nuclear programs. Editorial of Mainichi Shimbun mentions that Washington strongly demands Tokyo to share information about the Japan-DPRK bilateral talks and has been sensitive not to weaken the trilateral pressure over Pyongyang.⁹⁴ President Obama recognizes the crucial position of the abduction agenda; however, his administration was cautious about having disorder in the trilateral cooperation. South Korea remarked the similar tone. A government official of ROK announced support of the new deal between Japan and North Korea, but also emphasized the cruciality of cooperation with the five SPT members (excluding North Korea).⁹⁵ The Abe administration was required to take ultimate balance

⁹⁰ MOFA. May 30, 2014, accessed January 9, 2017, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000040352.pdf>.

⁹¹ Yomiuri Shimbun, dd. May 30, 2014.

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ Yomiuri Shimbun, dd. May 30, 2014.

⁹⁴ Mainichi Shimbun, dd. May 30, 2014.

⁹⁵ Chi-dong Lee, "S. Korea, U.S. cautiously back NK-Japan agreement," May 30, 2014, *Yonhap News Agency*, accessed January 10, 2017, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/search1/2603000000.html?cid=AEN20140530000300315>.

in diplomacy; making progress for the crucial abduction issue to satisfy the domestic public on one hand and preventing damaging the harmony with its allies on the other hand.

Song Il-ho, the North Korean counterpart, spoke that Pyongyang would develop the Special Committee as soon as possible⁹⁶ and expressed the North's motivation to execute what had been agreed with Japan. On July 1, the two states reunited in Beijing for having update about the Special Investigation Committee. Ambassador of the DPRK-Japan Negotiation Song Il-ho explained about the committee including its organization, composition, and responsible officials. Junichi Ihara, Director of Asian and Oceanian Bureau, gave an account of procedures and contents of lifting sanctions. Confirming a concrete preparation from Pyongyang for commencing reinvestigation, the Japanese cabinet determined to remove some of its original sanctions. The following three items were taken from the ongoing sanctions; 1) travel ban between Japan and North Korea; 2) restoration of the minimum outbound money amounts to the original that require a submission of report; and 3) approval of North Korean vessels' entries to Japanese ports limiting to humanitarian purposes.⁹⁷

During the May meeting and the announcement from Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga on July 4, Pyongyang produced another tension in the region by launching short-range missiles and rockets on June 29 and July 2 respectively. The Abe regime, however, did not postpone or suspend the scheduled talk on July 1. This attitude showed the government's strong will of making positive development in the abduction agenda and represented that the cabinet shifted more to dialogue than to pressure. Prime Minister Abe took action of lifting sanctions by taking risks of possible apprehension from its allies and potential undermining of the containment framework of the trilateral cooperation.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga indicated his view that the investigation period would be within one year, and Pyongyang showed understanding of Tokyo's position not to spend too much time on it.⁹⁸ There were two consecutive meetings during the year after the July talk. In the session of September 29, instead of a certain result, the Japanese delegates received updates about the current status of the investigation and explained to the North Korean delegates that research about the abducted and disappeared should be prioritized.⁹⁹ Another talk was held a month later. The North

⁹⁶ Refer to the footnote No.93.

⁹⁷ "Press Conference by the Chief Cabinet Secretary Friday, July 4, 2014 (AM)|Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet," Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, July 4, 2014, , accessed January 10, 2017, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/tyoukanpress/201407/4_a.html.

⁹⁸ Mainichi Shimbun, dd. May 30, 2014.

⁹⁹ "Nitchō gaiko tokyōku-kan kaigo (kekka) (Japan-DPRK diplomats meeting (result))," MOFA, September 29, 2014, accessed January 12, 2017, http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/a_o/na/kp/page3_001296.html.

Korea's committee members and directors of individual investigation team participated in the talk giving updates. Importantly, Seo Tae-ha, the chairman of the committee, explained that the research is under operation thoroughly in an objective and scientific manner and also from new angles.¹⁰⁰ In this second meeting, however, the North Korea provided no substantial findings but only explained about research circumstance and approach.

After this meeting, the dialogue had been suspended and no concrete investigation result was provided by Pyongyang for more than a year. Moreover, the Kim Jung-un regime conducted the fourth nuclear test on January 6, 2016 and extremely increased the tension surrounding the Korean Peninsula. The Abe administration announced to strengthen the Japan's unilateral sanction. This decision backfired by leading North Korea to cease the agreed reinvestigation. The UNSCR 2270 was issued and North Korea was exposed to stronger pressures from the international community. During 2016 and 2017, North Korea conducted numerous missile tests and nuclear tests, making the situation more difficult to resume Japan-DPRK bilateral talks.

5. North Korea's new leader: Kim Jung-un

Kim Jung-un has been in the position of the DPRK national leader after the death of his father Kim Jung-il in December 2011. The Kim Jung-un regime implemented two pillars into the national politics. One is economic development and the other is expansion of military force, namely Byungjin Policy. Until Kim Jung-un takes control of inside Korea, the country was under spotlight about the young leader's personality and capability. Continuous turnover of the DPRK's high-officials also collected attention from overseas, including the purge of Chang Sung-taek, an uncle-in-law of Kim Jung-un and the No.2 authority during the Kim Jung-il regime. Procedures for making Kim Jung-un as the DPRK's new national leader and granting corresponding authority were carried out soon after the state funeral of Kim Jung-il. First of all, on December 30, 2011, Kim assumed the supreme commandership of the Korean People's Army.¹⁰¹ In April, Kim was elected as the first secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea¹⁰² and the first chairman of the National Defense Commission.¹⁰³ Kim Jung-un covered the required authorities that allow him to lead the nation.

¹⁰⁰ "Tokubetsu chousa iinkai-tono kyougi (meeting with the special investigation team)," MOFA, October 29, 2014, accessed January 12, 2017, http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/a_o/na/kp/page3_001297.html.

¹⁰¹ "Kim Jong Un Assumes Supreme Commander.," *Korean Central News Agency*, December 31, 2011, accessed January 17, 2017, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2011/201112/news31/20111231-01ee.html>.

¹⁰² "WPK Conference Elects Kim Jong Un as First Secretary of WPK," *Korean Central News Agency*, April 11, 2012, accessed January 17, 2017, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2012/201204/news11/20120411-29ee.html>.

¹⁰³ "Kim Jong Un Elected First Chairman of NDC of DPRK," *Korean Central News Agency*, April 13, 2012, Continued to page5

Japan's highest concern has yet been the abduction agenda regardless the regime change in the North. The Noda administration was in power in the initial year of Kim Jung-un regime and Abe returned to power a year later.

Before the bilateral preliminary talk in August, Japan and the DPRK had few contacts and moreover, Pyongyang tended to focus on and prioritize talks with Washington. For example, in the beginning of 2010, the KCNA Joint New Year Editorial clearly emphasized the necessity of terminating the hostile relation between the US and North Korea for building peace and making the region nuclear-free.¹⁰⁴ In contrast, the Obama administration had performed "strategic patience" and attempted containment policy against North Korea to have the North give up its nuclear programs. However, this approach backfired and resulted having attacks to corvette *Cheonan* and Yeonpyeondo – an island in South Korean territory – by North Korea. Facing this situation, the Obama administration started shifting to engaging with Pyongyang. As actual actions, the US and North Korea had high-level meetings in July and October 2011, and in the third meeting in February 2012. North Korea succeeded in having the US' compromise of food assistance provision in exchange of halting its nuclear programs and accepting international inspectors. Quinone argues that to the US, it was to evaluate Kim Jung-un for his flexibility compared to his father Kim Jung-il; however, this series of denuclearization negotiations failed due to the North's rocket launch in April 2012.¹⁰⁵ North Korea led the US to take firmer attitude.

Facing the North's continuous security threat, the trilateral cooperation became essential among the US, Japan and South Korea. The three states conducted a joint military drill from June 21 to 22, 2012. Joint drills of the US – Japan or the US – South Korea had constantly been taken place, and it was extremely unusual to carry out a drill having Japan and South Korea together. Naturally, the DPRK reacted negatively. The state-run media KCNA strongly criticized that the joint drill is damaging "the regional peace and stability," and expressed its readiness of opposing to such joint exercises.¹⁰⁶ Obviously North Korea was vigilant about potential attacks from the US and its allies. It can be said that the trilateral cooperation partially supplemented the containment policy that the Obama administration had been implementing.

accessed January 17, 2017, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2012/201204/news13/20120413-44ee.html>.

¹⁰⁴ "Joint New Year Editorial," *Korean Central News Agency*, January 1, 2010, accessed January 15, 2017, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2010/201001/news01/20100101-08ee.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Quinones, "US domestic politics," 107.

¹⁰⁶ "U.S.-Japan-S. Korea Triangular Military Alliance Censured: Rodong Sinmun," *Korean Central News Agency*, June 21, 2012, accessed January 16, 2017, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2012/201206/news21/20120621-09ee.html>.

On the other hand, amid escalation of security tension, North Korea started seeking a clue of dialogue with Japan, the closest US ally in the Northeast Asia. What the North Korean government focused on was an approach using humanitarian issues. Yomiuri Shimbun writes that according to the Japan-DPRK related officials, Pyongyang had been proactive to have talks over the issue of returning Japanese remains in North Korea.¹⁰⁷ The article also mentions the situation the Kim Jung-un regime faces that having foreign aid is urgent need for improving its citizens' living and stabilizing the regime foundation. As an initial step, the Red-Cross meeting was held from August 8 to 9 in Beijing after 10 years since the last session in August 2002. To Japan, the abduction issue has always been the top priority and the Red-Cross meeting was a reasonable start to find a clue for reopening official bilateral negotiation of the matter. After the Red-Cross meeting, a preliminary talk and an intergovernmental talk followed during 2012.

After Abe took over the office in the end of 2012, the frequency of dialogues and negotiations were accelerated. Although there was a quiet period after the Isao Iijima's surprise visit, Japan and North Korea started to have contacts actively in the following year. Soon after the intergovernmental talk in the end of May 2014, the Stockholm Agreement was opened to public. The agreed reinvestigation was designed to consist of four investigation teams. Importantly, teams for researching the Japanese abducted and disappeared, the North Korean government appointed Kang Seong-nam, a chief of State Security Department, and Park Yeong-shik, a minister of Ministry of People's Security respectively. Moreover, a chair of the committee is Seo Tae-ha who is a counselor of National Defense Committee. These members are the high-ranked officials in the National Defense Committee. From this selection, one can measure sincerity of Pyongyang about the abduction issue.

The biggest reason why North Korea changed its position about the abduction issue from "already resolved" to conducting a new research from scratch was to obtain concession from Japan as a form of assistance and undermine unity of the trilateral cooperation. Traditionally, North Korea had tended to direct itself to active dialogues with Japan when it faces to a deadlock in the bilateral relation with the US. During the first nuclear crisis in 1993, the DPRK focused on having negotiations with the US and reached to the Agreed Framework in 1994, while the Japan-DPRK normalization talks had been absent after the eighth round in 1992. During the early 2000, North Korea valued dialogues with Japan by being exposed to the Bush administration's enmity.

¹⁰⁷ Yomiuri Shimbun, dd. August 9, 2012.

Normalization talks were restarted in 2000 and continuous underwater negotiations were undertaken leading to the first Japan-DPRK summit in 2002. Komaki argues that North Korea had decided to promote normalizing the bilateral relation with the second target Japan prior to its primary target the US.¹⁰⁸

Economic reconstruction has been the critical issue to North Korea for many years. It is widely recognized that Kim Jung-il acknowledged and apologized for abducting Japanese nationals to accelerate diplomatic normalization and obtain huge economic assistance from Japan. Lankov claims that the collapse of the Soviet Union and other communist regimes in East Europe attributes to inefficient economic system that central governments exercised.¹⁰⁹ Economic improvement has been crucial political issue to Pyongyang and having assistance from overseas using nuclear cards has been the primary tactic to the North Korean government. Taking this view into Pyongyang's diplomacy with Japan, the abduction agenda is the major card that the North Korean government has utilized for having economic assistance and it has been consistent since the Kim Jung-il regime.

The backlash of acknowledging the abducting Japanese citizens and sending back the living abductees was unexpectedly severe and the targeted economic assistance had been kept away. However, North Korea learnt the importance and the seriousness of the abduction issue to both the Japanese government and citizens. By the time the second Abe administration started, the SPT framework did not properly function and the Obama administration provided less engagement to North Korea compared to what were rendered during the Bush administration in regards to the Pyongyang's nuclear programs. Kim Jung-un and his government must have already known that they are able to acquire certain compromise from Tokyo through negotiations of the abduction agenda. Abe's change in favoring dialogue and Kim Jung-un's shift to negotiation with Japan produced favorable balance that enabled the two states to reach to the Stockholm Agreement.

IV. Conclusion

Comparing the two administrations, we can confirm that the first Abe administration focused more on imposing pressure than having dialogue. The Japanese society had been covered by the anger against North Korea's state crime and the atmosphere of taking hardline stance toward North Korea. The situation was the same in the cabinet and the diet. With firm support from public, Abe

¹⁰⁸ Teruo Komaki, "Nicchoukoushou-ni kakeru kitachousen-no ito (North Korea's contemplation on the Japan-DPRK negotiations)," in *Nicchoukoushou: kadai-to tenbou* (The Japan-DPRK negotiations: agenda and prospects) ed. Sang-jung Kang, Naoki Mizuno, and Jong-won Lee (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003): 48.

¹⁰⁹ Lankov, "Kitachousen-no kakushin", 274-275.

continuously requested for cooperation and understanding of the abduction issue in the SPT and attempted to make it internationally recognized. Moreover, Abe and his cabinet executed unilateral sanctions over North Korea in much earlier timing than issuance of the UNSCR 1718 to response to the North's first nuclear test.

Abe's hardline stance was unchanged even if the Bush administration switched to dialogue and engagement direction in the SPT. The Abe administration even rejected the SPT agreement of providing assistance to North Korea, unless it confirms firm progresses in the abduction issue. These actions invited Japan's relative isolation in the SPT; however, such situation did not give influence to change Abe's tactic. North Korea was initially active for having dialogues with Japan aiming for diplomatic normalization and obtaining economic assistance; however, facing Japan's strong backlash from public and Abe's pressures from domestic and international levels, North Korea gradually concentrated more on discussions in the SPT. These situations created distance between the two states and therefore, the first Abe regime could produce no significant development in the abduction negotiations.

Abe came back to the office in the end of 2012 keeping his strong will to conclude the issue during his primacy. By the time of his return, both the domestic and the international environment surrounding the abduction issue were formed differently from what they used to be. A few bilateral approaches between Washington and Pyongyang were taken place for the North's nuclear issue but no SPT had been organized. On the contrary, Japanese citizens gradually recognized the necessity of dialogue rather than pressure-only strategy. The Abe administration also had the same perception. Despite of the Pyongyang's third nuclear test, dialogue was continued and the Stockholm Agreement was achieved through the efforts particularly during 2014. Abe's counterpart Kim Jung-un was also flexible for having dialogues. Abe opted to have more dialogues than to impose pressures and attempted to move the deadlock situation forward, although his dialogue-focused strategy invited the Japan's close allies' relative concern of undermining the trilateral cooperation of Washington – Tokyo – Seoul.

By exploring the paths of the two Abe administrations, one can confirm formations of larger pressure and smaller dialogue during the first Abe regime, and smaller pressure and larger dialogue during the second one. North Korea's stance of improving the diplomatic relation and obtaining economic assistance using the abduction card has been coherent regardless the regime changes inside the North or changes in relations with other key states like the US and South Korea. Therefore,

achieving the Stockholm Agreement can be recognized rather from the two Abe administrations' balance shift within dialogue and pressure than the changes in Pyongyang side.

From the examination of this study, it can be said that having more dialogues has larger possibility of generating better outcomes than concentrating too heavily on giving pressure and taking hardline stance. If there is no dialogue, there is no negotiation nor progress, but status quo. Cumings (2015, p.74) emphasizes that "the only path toward opening up the North is through diplomacy and people-to-people contact."¹¹⁰ Currently, the reinvestigation project has been full stopped due to Pyongyang's countermeasure against Tokyo's unilateral sanctions that attribute to the North's fourth missile test. North Korea has consistently been producing security threat particularly during these two years and the abduction issue fell in logjam again. As confirmed, the door for dialogue must be opened not to miss an important opportunity for making progresses.

¹¹⁰ Bruce Comings, "Getting North Korea wrong," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 71, no.4 (July 2015): 74.

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