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KEY WORD: JAPAN/NORTH KOREA/DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

SURANUCH BOONBAICHAIIYAPURK : PROBLEMS OF AND OBSTACLES TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN JAPAN AND NORTH KOREA (1990-1994). THESIS ADVISOR : ASSIST. PROF. CHAIWAT KHAMCHOO, Ph.D. 125 pp. ISBN 974-635-625-9.

This research is aimed at studying problems of and obstacles to the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and North Korea in the post-cold war era (1990-1994). In this study, the author employed the system theory as an analytical framework.

The study found that the United States used its dominant role, as the only overwhelming leadership in the post-cold war world, and their close relationship with Japan to influence the negotiations process regarding the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and North Korea. The US pressured Japan to raise the North Korea's nuclear development issue as the main topic of the negotiations. And, the US pushed Japan to make conditions to North Korea to sign agreement with International Atomic Energy Agency or IAEA and to accept the IAEA's officers to inspect the suspected nuclear plant. Under the strong pressure from the US, Japan insisted that it would not engage in normalization talks unless North Korea fulfilled the said conditions. North Korea, however, did not accept the conditions. Therefore, negotiations have been pending and postponed until the nuclear issue would be resolved.

At the same time, South Korea also exploited its strategic and economic importance to Japan by influencing Japanese and North Korea negotiations over the establishment of these two countries's diplomatic relations. In cooperation with the US, South Korea also pushed North Korea to accept the conditions raised by Japan. It also demanded that North Korea stop the nuclear development project. Besides, South Korea displayed its strong stance that it did not want Japan to improve relations with North Korea while its dialogue with North Korea did not make any headway due to the nuclear issue. With the South Korea's stance, Japan had to postpone negotiations to wait and see the progress of dialogues between the two Koreas.

In addition, Japan's internal political problems which led to changes in the Japanese government many times affected its negotiations with North Korea. Moreover, disagreements between the Japanese and North Koreans themselves especially over the war compensation issue were also standing in the way of establishing diplomatic relations between these two East Asian states in the post-cold war era. These factors, however, had less influence than the roles and influence of the United States and South Korea in constraining the normalization of relations between Japan and North Korea.

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