

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**JAPAN'S ROLE AND POLICY TOWARD**  
**THE NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR CRISIS IN 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

**A. Introduction**

In the Twenty-First Century, the new security challenges in terms of nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and international conflicts increasingly discredited the belief of global peace and stability. Specifically, the terrorist attacks at the business center of the United States of America on September 11, 2001 demolished international relations and, at the same time, stirred up the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). According to the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, the Japanese policy makers necessarily conducted the security policy in compliance with the U.S. policy to fight against terrorist attacks and the use of weapons of mass destruction. In regards, Japan actively strengthened its bilateral security relationship, particularly the cooperation on security arrangement. Tokyo dispatched its Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to participate in the mission, for instance, in Iraq and Afghanistan, together with Washington's armed forces for purpose of peace-building operations.

Due to the long-running critics over Japan's role in the world arena and the decline of its power in the region, the Government of Japan realized that the country should play a more active role in international affairs. In particular, North Korea's nuclear issue remained on the top of Japan's security concerns on which the government paid more attention to than in the past. Owing to a frequency of Pyongyang's missile tests along with its hostile policy, the security tension on the Korean Peninsula increased by degrees. Based on national security interest, Japan promoted hard-line policies toward the North in compliance with the situation.

There were some significant controversies over Japan's shifted posture toward the North Korean nuclear issue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One of the influential factors over the policy changes was possibly the realistic attitude of the two new leaders from the historical Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) including Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and the following Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. After the rise to power of Koizumi and Abe, Japanese security policy strongly persisted on a tough measure of the alignment with the United States to encounter both terrorists and sponsor of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) such as North Korea.

This chapter analyzes Japan's foreign and security policies toward North Korea's nuclear crisis in the 2000s under the realist perspective of Japanese leaders. In addition, the study of Tokyo's role on nuclear-free resolution in terms of bilateral and multilateral frameworks and the influential factors over Japan's policy-decision making process is also the main topic.

## **B. An Overview of The North Korean Nuclear Crisis in 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The North Korean nuclear standoff continuously posed numerous security threats to regional peace and stability in the 2000s. The starting point was a public announcement in February 2002 by North Korea affirming its nuclear power status. Pyongyang, moreover, declared its unilateral suspension of the Six-Party Talks without the fixed dates. Under this stance, Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura told the reporters that this matter must be certainly submitted to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) if North Korea denied the participation in the six-country negotiations on the nuclear issue.<sup>1</sup> Since then, according to the Pyongyang's visit by the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly in early October 2002, it was suspicious that the North was conducting a uranium enrichment program. The key players including Japan, U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> "Japan Threatens N. Korea with UN," BBC News, 12 February 2002. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4521219.stm>.

and South Korea demanded that North Korea should end the enrichment program. They also asserted that Pyongyang's nuclear activities violated the Framework Agreement and considered to suspend the December Shipment of heavy fuel oil to North Korea.<sup>2</sup> This movement challenged North Korea's decision upon the abandonment of its nuclear weapons program. The North argued that the U.S. itself abused the Agreement and insisted its intention to reprocess nuclear development.<sup>3</sup>

In December 2002, North Korea increasingly agitated the regional concerns by re-starting its nuclear facilities and expelling the IAEA inspectors out of the country.<sup>4</sup> Further, the North Korean Ambassador to China Choe Jin-su implied that Pyongyang possibly lifted the freezing of missile launching within 2003.<sup>5</sup> In response, the Board of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) strongly criticized Pyongyang's nuclear reactivation on January 6, 2003.<sup>6</sup> The IAEA Board requested that North Korea should authorize the return of the inspectors into its nuclear plants and give up its secret nuclear weapons program rapidly, or otherwise, envisage such measures by the UN Security Council.<sup>7</sup> Afterward, North Korea declared again on January 10 about its intention to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as well as the IAEA Safeguards Agreement. By mid-February, the IAEA Board condemned again the North's action on breaking the Safeguards Agreement and reported this matter to the UN General Assembly with the encouragement of Tokyo, Washington and Seoul.<sup>8</sup> What Ambassador Choe Jin-su meant in December 2002 actually happened in the next year. North Korea fired the surface-to-ship missiles with a shorter range of 100 km. twice in February and

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, "The International Situation and Japanese Diplomacy in 2003," [www.mofa.go.jp](http://www.mofa.go.jp).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Jon Wolfsthal, "The Intelligence 'Black Hole' over N. Korea," BBC News, 17 July 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/3073677.stm>.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan's Disarmament Policy," [www.mofa.go.jp](http://www.mofa.go.jp).

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, Diplomatic Bluebook, Ch.1.

<sup>7</sup> "North Korea Nuclear Crisis," BBC News, 28 June 2004 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/2604437.stm>.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, Diplomatic Bluebook, Ch.1.

once in March 2003.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the North declared on April 18, 2003, that the spent fuel rods were reprocessing.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the prolonged Six-Party Talks comprising Japan, the U.S., South Korea, China, Russia and North Korea, the permanent peace of the Korean Peninsula has not been guaranteed yet. The reason was that the demands of North Korea and the other five delegations did not get together. In addition, the North always exploited nuclear card as a strategic bargaining power in order that other parties fulfilled its requirements. For instance, Pyongyang issued a statement on October 2, 2003 after the first round of the Six-Party Talks that since the negotiations did not conform to its interests, North Korea considered continuing the nuclear deterrence. At the same time, the North revealed that it successfully reprocessed the approximately 8,000 spent fuel rods and plutonium.<sup>11</sup> According to Hanyang University nuclear expert Professor Kim Sae Hun, North Korea made an alarm before the negotiation among the six countries for the purpose of bargaining power.<sup>12</sup> Besides, the U.S.'s hostile policy was another main factor for which North Korea denied to participate in the negotiations. At this point, the North had accused that it was forced to develop nuclear weapons due to the U.S.'s hostile policy.<sup>13</sup> During the Asia trip by the U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in 2005, Washington named Pyongyang "an outpost of tyranny" that angered the North Korean government. In this context, North Korean Deputy UN Ambassador Han Song-ryol preconditioned the U.S. apology for the insult and that Washington struck it out or North Korea refused to return to the Six-Party Talks.<sup>14</sup>

Besides that the six-party negotiations appeared to make no progress, the Korean Peninsula faced again serious concerns by North Korea's nuclear acts frequently during 2005 and 2006. On February 10, 2005, Pyongyang announced that it had nuclear

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<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan's Disarmament Policy."

<sup>10</sup> Yang Sung-Chul, "The Six-Party Talks and a New Beginning on the Korean Peninsula," Korea Policy Review 3, no.4 (April 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, Diplomatic Bluebook.

<sup>12</sup> Lee Tee Jong, "US and China Try To Lure N. Korea Back To Talks," The Straits Times, 4 March 2005, [http://www.asianewsnet.net/level3\\_template1.php?13sec=4&news\\_id=36825](http://www.asianewsnet.net/level3_template1.php?13sec=4&news_id=36825).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> "North Calls For Apology Before Joinging Talks," Bangkok Post, 2 April 2005, 6.

weapons in its hands as a response to the U.S.'s hostile policy.<sup>15</sup> Next, Japanese media networks reported on May 2, 2005, that North Korea tested a short-range missile of 100 km. into the Sea of Japan. However, it did not frighten Japan due to its very short range and its ineffectiveness.<sup>16</sup> There was evidence from satellite photographs that the North was arranging a launch of a long-range ballistic missile expecting to be a Taepo-dong 2 missile with a range of 3,500-6,000 km. at a military base in northern part of the country.<sup>17</sup> In July 2006, North Korea launched seven missiles which included the Taepo-dong 2 Missile with a range of 3,500-6,000 km.<sup>18</sup> This incident abruptly worsened the procedure of nuclear negotiations among the six power states and the bilateral relations between North Korea and Japan, U.S., South Korea, China and Russia. More important, the UN Security Council adopted the resolution 1695 co-sponsored by Japan, U.S., U.K., France, Greece, Denmark, Peru and Slovakia responding to the North's ballistic missile launching on July 5.<sup>19</sup> There were several meetings among the six nations to resume North Korea's nuclear issue up to present. Lastly, North Korean leader Kim Il Sung returned to the six-nation talks in 2007 and agreed to abandon its nuclear weapons program in exchange for international contributions including the supply of heavy-fuel oil, food assistance, humanitarian aid and financial contributions.

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<sup>15</sup> Robert S. Norris and Hans M. Kristensen, "North Korea's Nuclear Program, 2005," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists 61, no.3 (May/June 2005): 64-67.

<sup>16</sup> Ravi Prasad, "North Korea Fires Short-Range Missile," ISN Security Watch, 2 May 2005, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?ID=11208>.

<sup>17</sup> Reiji Yoshida, "North Moving Long-Range Missile to Pad but Launch Not in Offing," The Japan Times, 20 May 2006, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20060520a1.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Linus Hagstrom and Marie Soderberg, "Taking Japan-North Korea Relations Seriously: Rationale and Background," Pacific Affairs 79, no.3 (Fall 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Statement by H.E. Mr. Shintaro Ito, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, 15 July 2006.

### C. Japan's Role and Nuclear Non-Proliferation Policy over Security Issues

In the context of nuclear-free ideology, Tokyo has long adhered to the Three Non-Nuclear Principles<sup>20</sup> as a basic policy to maintain national peace and security. Under the principles, Japan intentionally refrained from the possession, production, and permission of nuclear weapons entering into the country. Tokyo could arrange the nuclear activities only in peaceful means and without the purpose of becoming a nuclear state.<sup>21</sup> This regime inspired Japan to perform an active role in international affairs by seeking measures to reinforce the treaties relevant to disarmament and non-proliferation and to denuclearize the whole world.<sup>22</sup>

Owing to the tension of nuclear brinkmanship of the nuclear states especially North Korea, Libya and Iran in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Japan exerted all efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) including missiles, nuclear arms, biological and chemical weapons and also conventional weapons such as small arms and military equipments. The Government of Japan continued promoting the Disarmament and Nuclear Non-Proliferation Policies, in particular the ratification and enactment of the Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) system and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in cooperation mainly with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Tokyo, for instance, held the Asian Senior-level Talks on Non-Proliferation (ASTOP), submitted a draft resolution on nuclear disarmament "A Path To The Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons" to the United Nations, and provided diplomacy for purpose of establishing the CTBT.<sup>23</sup>

According to North Korea's nuclear aggression since 2002, the Government of Japan perceived that the North's nuclear act was a serious trouble that challenged to the

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<sup>20</sup> Japan officially made a ratification in 1976.

<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, "On The Three Non-Nuclear Principles," <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/disarmament/nnp/index.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, Diplomatic Bluebook.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

nuclear non-proliferation.<sup>24</sup> Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi had announced that the missile issue was significant to the Japanese security and that Tokyo considered making discussions for the settlement.<sup>25</sup> The Government led by Prime Minister Koizumi and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe conducted firmly an active role and policy toward the non-proliferation and disarmament under both bilateral and multilateral frameworks. Under the bilateral approach, the Japanese government also regarded the nuclear issue in the Japan-DPRK normalized negotiation next to the topics of normalization of diplomatic relations and the abduction issue. During the bilateral summit between Prime Minister Koizumi and leader Kim in September 2002, Koizumi succeeded in generating the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration<sup>26</sup>, in which both of them willingly abided by the international agreements relating to the resolution of nuclear issues on the Korean Peninsula. More important, North Korea declared that it agreed to freeze the missile immediately.<sup>27</sup> At the Normalization Talks in Malaysia in October 2002, Japan called upon specific and active measures regarding the abolishment of the Nodong missile.<sup>28</sup> However, their bilateral negotiation on denuclearization and nuclear disarmament had no progress on the Japanese abduction issue.

In the context of multilateral framework, the Government of Japan leant on the international cooperation, in which Japan played an active role in striving for the enactment of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Tokyo convinced other states parties to mainly preserve and reinforce the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. In addition, Japan proactively proposed the disarmament and non-proliferation at the ASEM Regional Forum (ARF) and the Political Declaration on Prevention of Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and Their Means of Delivery, that later

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<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, “Japan’s Disarmament Policy.”

<sup>25</sup> Statement by the Press Secretary/ Director-General for Press and Public Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 24 February 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Approved by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Chairman Kim Jong-Il on 17 September 2002.

<sup>27</sup> See “Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration.”

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, “Japan’s Disarmament Policy.”

adopted at the ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July 2003.<sup>29</sup> In dealing with North Korea's nuclear crises, Japan demanded that the international community must forcefully ask the North for the abandonment of its nuclear weapons program with prompt, verifiable and irreversible action.<sup>30</sup> On the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference during April and May 2003, Japan emphasized the unity of international community in coping with North Korea's decision on the NPT withdrawal.<sup>31</sup> On the third round of the Six-Party Talks, Tokyo asserted that Pyongyang must express a proactive action in resolving the nuclear and missile issue, the normalization of diplomatic relations and the abduction issue before gaining Japanese economic assistance.<sup>32</sup> Besides those international institution forums, the Government of Japan paid attention to the nuclear discussion in the six-nation negotiations, or-so called the Six-Party Talks (SPT) despite its small role in the negotiations. However, Japan realized that the Six-Party Talks fulfilled Japanese interests in terms of participation in the nuclear direct talks with North Korea.<sup>33</sup> Significantly, Japan kept a balance of power with China, for the existence of Japanese regional power. Apart from the Six-Party Talks, Tokyo exerted its efforts in seeking resolution of Pyongyang's nuclear problem in close cooperation with Washington and Seoul.

#### **D. Japan's Role and Policies toward North Korean Nuclear Crisis**

North Korean nuclear ambition in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century directly posed a grave threat to peace, security and stability of East Asia including Japan. As a counteraction toward

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<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, Diplomatic Bluebook.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., Ch.3.

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, "Third Round of Six-Party Talks Concerning North Korean Nuclear Issues," [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n\\_korea/6party/talk0406.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/6party/talk0406.html).

<sup>33</sup> Kuniko Ashizawa, "Tokyo's Quandary, Beijing's Moment in the Six-Party Talks: A Regional Multilateral Approach to Resolve the DPRK's Nuclear Problem," Pacific Affairs 79, no.3 (Fall 2006).

the declaration of North Korea's intention to withdraw from the NPT, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan expressed Japan's deep concern and considered to call on North Korea to reconsider about the NPT removal and on the abandonment of its nuclear weapons program all at once.<sup>34</sup> Japan persistently requested that North Korea must return to the Six-Party Talks to seek for a peaceful resolution immediately without any conditions.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, another strategy that Tokyo applied, in cooperation with Washington, was to detect and contain the remittance from a group of pro-North Korean residents in Japan back to their homeland. Importantly, the Japanese government continued the hard-line policy until the North return to the Six-Party Talks (SPT). In response to the launch of missiles on July 5, 2006 by North Korea, Japan declared that the missile launching directly threatened the security of Japan and also broke the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration. In this case, Japan strongly protested the North's acts.<sup>36</sup>

In the process of Japanese policy decision-making of the Koizumi Government, there were hard-line policy makers that preferred the containment and sanction measures against North Korea to the conciliatory means. These people included the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the coalition and opposition parties, the authorities in the Prime Minister's Office (Kantei) and even his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). They requested that North Korea must resume the negotiations regarding the abduction issue and the normalization of diplomatic relations or absolutely face the sanction measures. On the contrary, Prime Minister Koizumi confidentially conducted diplomacy through the dialogue. For instance, Prime Minister Koizumi visited North Korea twice in 2002 and 2004 to negotiate for the resumption of Japanese abduction issue. Moreover, he required that Japan's foreign policy became independent from the U.S. influence. To support this idea, it appeared that he was indifferent to some of his

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<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, "Japan's Disarmament Policy."

<sup>35</sup> Statement by the Press Secretary/ Director-General for Press and Public Relations, 24 February 2005.

<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, "Japan Protests Against Launch of Missiles by North Korea," <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/2006/7/0705.html>.

opponents in his government as mentioned above. China, South Korea and even the Bush Administration opposed the Pyongyang's visits and the Yasukuni Shrine's visits.<sup>37</sup>

In spite of the big support from the public and the families of Japanese abductees, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi could not stand against the domestic political pressure that had more power in making North Korea's policy than he had. As a result, he decisively imposed sanctions against North Korea during his terms. Unfortunately, he lost his public support respectively because of the deployment of Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in Iraq in cooperation with the United States and the internal affairs, specifically the failure of reforming a postal system. Amid his last term, Koizumi appointed Shinzo Abe a Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary in order to lead the procedure of the abduction issue in October 2005. Koizumi was under pressure from members of his government to use proper sanction measures against North Korea and therefore he decidedly used them to negotiate with the North.<sup>38</sup> During a one-year term of Shinzo Abe as Prime Minister, he strongly pursued the policy on abduction issue. According to North Korean nuclear tension, Prime Minister Abe cooperated with U.S. and South Korea in committing both discussion and pressures toward the North. He expressed a realistic attitude in promoting the revision of Article 9 under the present Constitution in pursuit of Koizumi's view in order to potentially tackle the modern threats including North Korean long-range missiles, biological and chemical weapons and terrorism.<sup>39</sup> Inevitably, his term was short due to the scandal of corruption of his authority and small a support on his bill regarding the deployment of SDF to enhancing the U.S. troop in Afghanistan.

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<sup>37</sup> Christopher W. Hughes, "The Political Economy of Japanese Sanctions Towards North Korea: Domestic Coalition and International Systemic Pressures," *Pacific Affairs* 79, no.3 (Fall 2006).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Haruko Satoh, "Japan Seeks Its Constitutional Soul," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 168, no.7 (Jul/Aug 2005).

### E. Summary

From the study, it proved that Japan's foreign and security policies toward the North Korean nuclear crisis in the Twenty-first Century drastically changed from conciliatory to aggressive posture. In this context, the Government of Koizumi and Abe conducted tough policies against North Korea such as the stoppage of food aid, the containment of money transfers and the import-export controls at Japanese ports. The predominant issue of the Japanese government engaging in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century rather than in 1990s was the abduction issue. Prime Minister Koizumi seriously took into account the resolution of this concern by leading the official visits to Pyongyang twice in 2002 and 2004 to seek the progress of Japanese abductees missing. Moreover, Prime Minister Abe pursued this policy so strong that the Japanese people, especially the abductees' families, gave him an encouragement.

Actually, it appeared that Japan's policies towards North Korea's policy were driven under the influence of the hard-liners in the LDP and major governance organs such as MOFA and the Prime Minister's office.<sup>40</sup> It meant that the domestic political pressure influenced the Japanese policy-decision making process. However, it was effective on the conditions that the policy users became powerless and weak. Accordingly, the internal pressure could indefinitely force Koizumi to implement an aggressive policy toward the North because he did not agree with some approaches such as the direct financial sanctions. In order to avoid the contradiction and domestic political pressures, Koizumi decidedly consulted a small group of advisors, instead.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the powerful leader could enforce the policy smoothly if he gained a lot of support from most of the politicians, governmental officials and especially the public. Therefore, Koizumi had enough influence to convince others to support his decision.

According to peace-keeping ideology, Japan faced complicated problems of security policy implementation. On one hand, the principle of Article 9 under the present

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<sup>40</sup> Hughes, "The Political Economy of Japanese."

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

Constitution became an impediment of the security arrangement in reality, particularly against the modern threats such as terrorism and biological and chemical weapons. On the other hand, it was questionable that the conservatives and regional powers including China, Russia, and South Korea strongly opposed the idea of the Article 9 revision. However, the public and the families of Japanese abductees supported the constitution revision due to the security challenges of regional threats, especially the long-range missile tests, nuclear development and exports by North Korea.

Besides the realist view of Junichiro Koizumi and Shinzo Abe, the rise of Chinese power was another key factor that forced Japan to perform the hard-line stance in dealing with North Korea's nuclear issue. Additionally, Japan gave priorities to the Japan-U.S. security relationship and both the bilateral and multilateral cooperation, in particular the Japan-DPRK normalization of diplomatic relations and the Six-Party negotiations, for the power balancing. In the multilateral framework, Japan was an important actor in bargaining with North Korea since it was the main financial contributor of the light-water reactors construction and food aid for North Korea.

Significantly, Tokyo kept playing a proactive role in the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The Japanese government still induced the nuclear states and non-nuclear nations to ratify and enact the disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation policies. In the context of a bilateral approach, Japan exerted strong efforts on engagement with North Korea and sought the progress of the abduction issue. Apart from the Japan-DPRK bilateral relations, the Government of Japan also maintained the Japan-U.S. security relationship and the relations between Japan and China, South Korea, and Russia bilaterally for the purpose of permanent peace and stability in East Asia.