

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In terms of threat perception, the nuclear problem was one of Japan's security concerns, particularly the North Korean nuclear crises since 1990s. Japan perceived North Korea's nuclear activities as national and regional security threat. It was unavoidable that the country took part in the nuclear dismantlement mission. As one of the key contributors of the peaceful settlement programs, Japan supported the establishment of the two light-water reactors (LWRs) to replace North Korea's moderated grade-plutonium reactors. The financial assistance as well as food aid was transferred through the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO). In addition, Tokyo always induced Pyongyang to join the six-party negotiations for a peaceful resolution. Japan actively promoted the anti-nuclear policy and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to comply with the three non-nuclear principles of the Constitution.

To ensure national and regional stability, Japan was engaged in the Asia-Pacific security arrangement with the U.S. According to the statement in Japan's diplomatic Blue Books, in post-Cold War, every government of Japan maintained and relied on the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty even though it influenced Japan's foreign and security policies. For instance, Japan cooperated with the U.S. on the study of the Theatre Missiles Defence (TMD) system and the strengthening of the Japan-U.S. security relationship. In this context, the joint security arrangement automatically drove Japan to wage war with other countries in the region, which broke the NPT and Japan's Peace Constitution.¹

In the first crisis, Japan neither reacted against North Korea's missile tests nor successfully convinced North Korea to abide by the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and

¹ Akahata (ed.), "Japan-U.S. Security Treaty Will Be Turned into Global Military Alliance," *Japan Press Weekly* 2420 (26 February 2005): 4-5.

the Agreed Framework. Tokyo just looked at the problem and carefully implemented North Korea policy. In contrast, Japan immediately reacted towards the North's missile launching in 1998, it condemned the threatened activities and cutting all the contributions to North Korea as a response. Although Japan finally reconsidered assisting the North in accordance with the U.S.'s demand, Japan's attitude and manner towards North Korea definitely changed from the wait and see to the sudden response. With regards, Japan seriously dealt with the North in the 21st Century. Japanese policy makers learned that by using soft and hard measures to influence their policy, it could effectively solve their problems. In the 2000s, Japan thus mixed two approaches together and implemented carefully in the multilateral negotiation framework.

The study proved that the role and policy of Japan towards North Korea's nuclear crises continuously shifted in line with the maintenance of Japanese national interests. In the domestic terms, the influential factors included the weakness of some Japanese leaders, the political change of the leading party, and the legal limitations. According to the external factors, key players comprised the Japan-U.S. security alliance, the global system, international relations, and Chinese power.

It was a wonder why Kim Jong Il agreed to throw away the nuclear card despite the state's key mechanism of regime survival. Possibly, North Korea exploited the contributions of Japan and the others to strengthen its secret nuclear project. The missiles and nuclear threat would be raised again when North Korea wanted to make new demand of the incentives and the assistance from Japan, the U.S., and South Korea. Japan's role and policy under the leading of Prime Minister Yachiro Fukuda would also be interesting to study further.