

# Prime Minister Kishi's Diplomacy of Reconciliation

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Japan's relations with China and South Korea have grown progressively worse since Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō began making annual visits to Yasukuni Shrine and now seem to be at a total impasse. That the top leaders of Japan and China have not held a summit or visited each other's countries in five years will surely have a negative impact on both nations' interests for many years to come. Koizumi has made no attempt to patch up the relationship, though, insisting that paying one's respects at Yasukuni is a private matter of the heart for any Japanese citizen and is "none of other countries' business." He also claimed that a stronger relationship with Washington would naturally lead to friendlier ties with Beijing and Seoul.

When the inaugural East Asia Summit was held in Malaysia in December 2005, though, the host, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, expressed his anxiety over the worsening Japan-China relationship, which he called a major pillar of East Asian cooperation. And on top of the effect on the region, the estrangement could also have an impact on the United States, where administration officials are voicing concern that any further erosion of the relationship could damage American interests. President George W. Bush is reported to have asked at length about Japan's ties with China in his November 2005 meeting with Koizumi in Kyoto.

*Gaikō o kenka ni shita otoko* (The Man Who Turned Diplomacy into Fighting), a book analyzing Koizumi's first 2,000 days in office by *Yomiuri Shimbun* political reporters, identified two characteristics of the prime minister's foreign policy: boldness undaunted by risks and independence. Among Japan's post-World War II prime ministers, the one whose image these two traits most clearly evokes is Kishi Nobusuke. Kishi was a mentor to Fukuda Takeo, the prime minister (1976–78) under whom Koizumi served his political apprenticeship. He is also the maternal grandfather of Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe Shinzō, whom many view as the leading candidate to succeed Koizumi. But when it comes to their handling of relations with other countries in the region, Kishi and Koizumi are virtual opposites. In contrast to "fighting" Koizumi, Kishi focused on improving regional ties, visiting 15 Asian and Pacific countries to achieve reconciliations with them, and he thereby made it possible to secure a revision of Japan's security treaty with the United States on more equal terms.

Kishi's notable postwar predecessors were Yoshida

Shigeru (1946–47, 1948–54), who steered a pacifist path toward postwar reconstruction by signing the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951, and Hatoyama Ichirō (1954–56), who normalized relations with the Soviet Union in 1956. Kishi's tasks were to fully wean Japan from the legacy of postwar Allied control, settle the issue of war indemnities, achieve reconciliation with Southeast Asia, revise the security pact with Washington, and develop a survival strategy for the Cold War. These three men largely determined the direction Japan would take following World War II, and they shared the vision expressed by Yoshida that Japan, though defeated in war, could still win in the field of diplomacy.

Political journalist and commentator Iwami Takao recalls in his *Shōwa no yōkai: Kishi Nobusuke* (Kishi Nobusuke: The Shōwa Apparition) that he was initially dubious of the politician but through extensive contact was gradually won over by Kishi's towering capacity as a state administrator. Kishi espoused a clear and almost revolutionary vision of how Japan should win a place in the world, Iwami wrote, and he never wavered in his convictions. Many of the 15 countries he visited as prime minister have since experienced major upheavals, such as civil wars, coups, or even annihilation. This is all the more reason Kishi deserves fuller recognition for firmly establishing Japan's foothold in the global community half a century ago. In fact the conciliatory tenor of his Asian policy and his struggle to gain a more equal footing with Washington contain important lessons on how to deal with the regional conflicts and terrorist attacks that have plagued the world since September 11, 2001, and also on how Japan can mend the damage from Koizumi's "fighting diplomacy."

## JAPAN AS ASIA'S VOICE

Kishi was rushed into office in February 1957 to replace ailing Prime Minister Ishibashi Tanzan. In addition to visiting the United States that June, he toured a total of 15 nations in Asia and Oceania, becoming the first Japanese prime minister to visit most of them (with the exception only of Malaya, which Tōjō Hideki visited during World War II).

The day after the ordinary session of the National Diet came to a close in May, he set off on his first journey, a 15-day tour during which he met with Burma's Prime Minister U Nu, India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Pakistan's



Graduated from Keiō University, where he majored in philosophy. Served as a member of the House of Representatives for two terms. Is now vice director-general of the International Department of the Democratic Party of Japan and a lecturer at Seigakuin University. Author of *Seijika ni naritaku nakatta seijika: NGO ga seiji o kaeru* (An Involuntary Politician: NGO-Driven Political Change).

Prime Minister Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Ceylon's Prime Minister Solomon Bandaranaike, Thailand's Prime Minister Phibul Songkhram, and Taiwan's President Chiang Kai-shek. His second tour in November was a 20-day whirlwind of meetings with President Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam, Prime Minister Sim Var of Cambodia, Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma of Laos, Prime Minister Abdul Rahman of Malaya, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, President Sukarno of Indonesia, Prime Minister Keith Holyoake of New Zealand, Prime Minister Robert Menzies of Australia, and President Carlos Garcia of the Philippines. (Stronger demands for the prime minister to participate in Diet proceedings have severely curtailed this sort of overseas travel in recent years. Both ruling-party and opposition legislators should join in approving absences by the prime minister for summitry aimed not at extending the life of an administration but at advancing Japan's national interests.)

Kishi made his visits out of a conviction, as cited in his memoirs, that Japan must not remain isolated in Asia but speak as its voice when meeting with American negotiators. Therefore, he visited Southeast Asia before the United

States. Such a view is in stark contrast to Koizumi's insistence that a stronger relationship with Washington will lead to better ties with China and South Korea.

In each country he visited, Kishi apologized for Japan's wartime deeds and invited Asian leaders to join hands and set forth on a peaceful road to prosperity. The apologies he offered eased the anti-Japanese sentiments that were particularly strong in the Philippines and Australia and contributed to the building of trust.

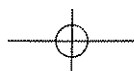
In the addresses he delivered, it is said that Kishi often added his own private comments to the texts prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In Burma, at a reception hosted by the mayor of Rangoon, he said: "We view with deep regret the vexation we caused to the people of Burma in the war just passed. In a desire to atone, if only partially, for the pain suffered, Japan is prepared to meet fully and with goodwill its obligations for wartime reparations. The Japan of today is not the Japan of the past but, as its Constitution indicates, is a peace-loving nation." And at a luncheon meeting at the Australian Parliament, he said: "Notwithstanding the passage of time, it is my official duty and my personal desire to express to you our heartfelt sorrow for what occurred in the war." The texts prepared by the Foreign Ministry contained almost no mention of apology, and the press briefings conducted by ministry spokespersons largely glossed over the prime minister's actual remarks. Back home, Kishi himself revealed little about his references to the war, so the Japanese public was not fully informed of the impact his visit had in each country.

The apologies were widely reported by other countries' media, however, and received extensive worldwide coverage. The *New York Times* noted that one of the trip's main aims was to offer apologies and that Kishi repeatedly expressed Japan's remorse, adding that no senior Japanese official had ever conveyed such a message in so many different countries. The *Economist*, meanwhile, identified the objectives of Kishi's diplomatic initiative as being to allay Washington's fears that Japan would be wooed away by the group of nonaligned countries and, at the same time, to convince the nonaligned states in Asia that Japan's prime minister was not a pawn of the West.

The diplomatic corps also had a part in communicating the significance of Kishi's visit to the international community; for example, the German ambassador to Australia reported back to Bonn that Kishi had laid the foundation for turning Japanese-Australian relations around



Prime Minister Nehru greets Kishi upon his arrival in India, one of the stops on his first tour of Asian countries, in May 1957.



180 degrees. The disparity in what was communicated to domestic and foreign audiences produced a perception gap in how Japan regards historical issues, a point that still needs to be addressed by today's Japan.

#### CANDID SUMMITS

Kishi's timely diplomatic initiatives also contributed to resolving the issue of war reparations, particularly in those difficult cases involving normalization of diplomatic ties. While reparation treaties had already been concluded with Burma (1955) and the Philippines (1956), agreements were also signed with Indonesia (1958) and South Vietnam (1959) following Kishi's visits there. For Cambodia and Laos, which had relinquished their claims to indemnities, moreover, development assistance was offered.

Kishi personally and politely also addressed claims regarding Japanese assistance. When Burmese officials pointed out that the commodities offered as reparations were often valued higher than the prices they normally fetched on the international market, Kishi promptly issued instructions to provide the commodities at internationally competitive prices. To a complaint from Deputy Prime Minister U Kyaw Nyein that the Japanese companies contracted to implement assistance projects were overly profit-oriented, Kishi expressed his dismay and promised to talk to the companies concerned.

In a meeting with South Vietnam's President Ngo Dinh Diem, Kishi spiritedly conveyed his view that hand-outs of consumer goods in short supply were not the best forms of assistance. Such "gifts" were likely to fade from the recipients' memory sooner or later, he said, thus reducing their effectiveness as reparations; the best approaches were those that would make a lasting contribution to the reconstruction of South Vietnamese industry.

Kishi's discussions with Asian leaders were surprisingly candid. "It is said that only a narrow strip of water separates Japan and China," he wrote in his memoirs, "yet never in our countries' long histories have the chief executives of our countries had an occasion to meet in an amicable setting. I took this opportunity to express gratitude to Chiang Kai-shek for his magnanimous policy of 'repaying malice with virtue' after the war. I also conveyed my sincerest appreciation for his opposition to the idea of dividing Japan into separate zones of occupied administration and efforts to preserve the imperial institution." At the same time, he "took the liberty" of boldly advising President Chiang to "show the people of Taiwan greater affection."

He repeated this message three years later, at which time Chiang retorted, "This is the third time you've brought this up. But Taiwan is so small, and the mainland is so vast. Millions of people have come here from there. When the happy day comes that we can return to the mainland, I intend to repay the people of Taiwan in multiple tenfolds. Please understand this."

Face-to-face meetings between national leaders are opportunities to engage in such frank exchanges of views.

This goes to show how damaging the absence of such exchange over a span of five years can be. Personal rapport allowing leaders to frankly discuss sensitive issues, such as the territorial disputes with South Korea and China, is a prerequisite for Japan's national security. Instead of expounding on the so-called Chinese threat in third countries, moreover, Japan's political leaders should bring up such issues in direct, private meetings with their Chinese counterparts.

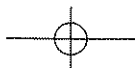
Kishi reportedly told Iwami that the decision to sidestep the territorial dispute over the Senkaku Islands when the Japan-China Treaty of Peace and Friendship was concluded in 1978 was "inappropriate." Such foresight is precisely what is lacking in political leaders today.

#### TEAM PLAYER

When faced with crucial foreign policy decisions, Kishi often adopted a suprapartisan approach, coordinating his efforts with the opposition parties, the business community, and even civic groups.

On the question of rectifying the defects of the 1952 Japan-US Security Treaty, for instance, the thrust of Tokyo's position was based on the demands initially made by the Japan Socialist Party. During a plenary session of the House of Representatives on February 4, 1957, JSP Chairman Suzuki Mosaburō pointed to the Sunagawa incident—a bloody clash between police and demonstrators over the planned expansion of a US military base in Tachikawa, Tokyo—and the desperate resistance of Okinawan residents under US military rule, demanding that the government negotiate with Washington and appeal to the United Nations to have the "unequal treaty" revised. On November 11, moreover, JSP Diet member Ishibashi Masashi reminded a lower house Cabinet Committee meeting that Prime Minister Kishi had worked on the basis of the Japanese people's fervent desire to replace the unequal treaty with an equal one, and as an interim measure he reached an agreement with US President Dwight Eisenhower to create a Security Consultative Committee comprising the two countries' foreign and defense ministers. That being the case, he continued, it was inexcusable that the treaty allowed US forces carte blanche in the movement of troops in Japan on the grounds that this was necessary to safeguard Japan's security. This push from the JSP led to the subsequent course of action: Japan aimed for a complete overhaul of the treaty, replacing the one-sided pact under which the United States was not obliged to come to Japan's defense with one based on mutual obligations. The new treaty also included a prior-consultation clause that opposition legislators and others had demanded.

Kishi had visited the United States in 1955 as secretary general of the ruling Japan Democratic Party. He was accompanying Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru on the trip and was present when the foreign minister's suggestion that the security treaty be amended was rejected contemptuously by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. This



made Kishi prepare carefully for his negotiations with formidable officials like Dulles by visiting Asia twice within a year of becoming prime minister. He then conveyed his intention of seeking a sweeping revision of the security pact to US Ambassador Douglas MacArthur II in early 1958. By this time, the American attitude toward the treaty had changed considerably, as an agreement had been reached during Kishi's visit to Washington the previous year to consider a revision by establishing the Security Consultative Committee. Nakamura Nagayoshi, Kishi's special assistant, later told Iwami that Kishi met secretly with Ambassador MacArthur on dozens of occasions. During the same time, Foreign Minister Fujiyama Aiichirō and other Foreign Ministry officials also met with the US ambassador to negotiate the details of the revision.

Kishi also actively tapped top business leaders to advance his foreign policy agenda. Following up on his visits, the prime minister dispatched former Development Bank of Japan President Kobayashi Ataru to Indonesia and later Keidanren (Japan Federation of Economic Organizations) Chairman Uemura Kōgorō to South Vietnam to negotiate agreements on war reparations. This stands in stark contrast to the recent divergence of political and economic relations under Koizumi, which compelled Nippon Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) Chairman Okuda Hiroshi to meet twice with Chinese President Hu Jintao last year under the veil of secrecy. Most governments around the world increasingly coordinate their diplomatic efforts with the activities of scholars, nongovernmental organizations, and business executives; Japan, by contrast, continues to adhere narrowly to the paths of diplomacy conducted by the Foreign Ministry.

#### WINNING ASIA'S TRUST

Talks on normalizing relations with South Korea hit a snag in 1957, when Japan's chief negotiator, Ambassador Kubota Kan'ichirō, asserted that the Koreans should show more appreciation for the benefits they gained during Japan's colonial rule. This was compounded by the repayment claims made by Japanese firms for the assets they held in Korea before the end of World War II. In an attempt to salvage the talks, Kishi took the advice of Hoshijima Nirō and Katō Shizue, Diet members belonging to the Liberal Democratic Party and Japan Socialist Party, respectively, who had just met with South Korean legislators at a Moral Re-Armament conference in the Philippines. In response to a question posed by Katō at a Diet session on April 30, Kishi withdrew Kubota's remarks and announced that the government would not persist in its former legal interpretation, noting that he intended to resolve the issue by striving impartially to build a lasting and amicable relationship. This announcement helped push the talks forward and was another example of Kishi's ability to draw from a broad array of forces in reaching key political decisions.

After World War II, opposition to conclusion of a peace treaty with Japan remained strong in many quarters.

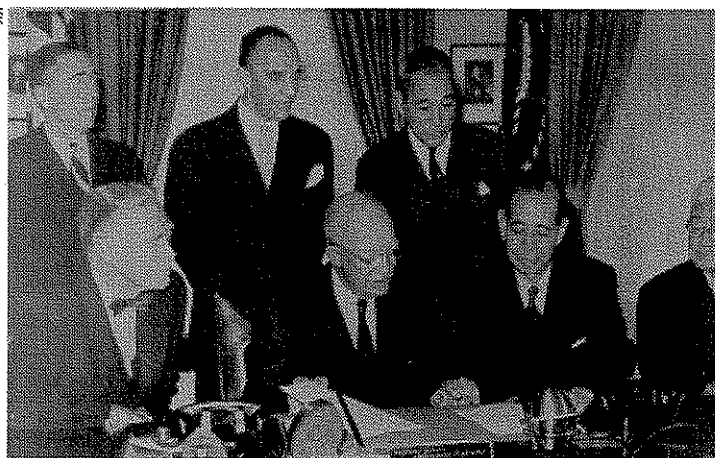
But at the 1951 San Francisco Peace Conference, Ceylonese representative (and later president) Junius Jayewardene helped broaden support for a settlement by calling on other nations to accept Japan in the spirit of Buddhism. Later, Cambodia, Laos, and Taiwan waived their demands for war indemnities from Japan (as did the People's Republic of China upon the normalization of diplomatic ties in 1972). Japan was admitted to the United Nations in 1956 thanks to Asian support, and the following year it was elected as a nonpermanent member of the Security Council. Surely this sort of trust and support from Asian countries at key junctures is something that will continue to be essential for Japan in pursuing its foreign policy agenda in the years to come as well.

#### SPIRIT OF RECONCILIATION

Tensions were riding high in 1960 on the question of ratifying a new security pact with Washington. The JSP had switched to opposing the treaty on the grounds that it still gave the United States too many concessions, and the Japanese Communist Party, labor unions, and student groups organized mass protest rallies. The US Senate had already ratified it, however, and President Eisenhower was scheduled to visit Japan in June. The only remaining hurdle was ratification by the Diet.

Kishi rammed the treaty through a plenary session in the early morning hours of May 20. This infuriated the opponents of the bill, and hundreds of thousands of protesters rallied outside the Diet. The demonstrations eventually became more violent, and on June 15 a female University of Tokyo student died in a clash between riot police and demonstrators, sparking an angry outcry.

The JSP's Katō Shizue appeared on national television 15 times following the incident, and she contributed articles to the major dailies. Apologizing to the nation for having been too cowardly to say what she believed was right over the previous several weeks, she argued that what was more problematic than the forced ratification of the



Kishi and President Eisenhower sign a revised Japan-US Security Treaty in 1960. Many Japanese opposed the new pact.



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treaty was the danger of becoming isolated from the United States, and she appealed to the protesters not to resort to violence. Katō was a popular legislator, having been elected to the House of Councillors with the highest vote tally in the nationwide constituency, and her remarks had an immense impact on of the media, which subsequently began changing its tone.

In addition, Chairman Yanagisawa Renzō of the All Japan Shipbuilding Workers Union persuaded the leadership of Sōhyō (General Council of Trade Unions of Japan) and Chūritsu Rōren (Federation of Independent Unions) to call off their demonstrations planned to coincide with Eisenhower's visit.

This was a period when Japan faced the possibility of becoming a divided nation. The crisis was averted by people working at various levels who rose above narrow interests and acted from a broad perspective. Japan was fortunate to have had such figures. Now, however, the nation finds itself in rough diplomatic seas that are increasingly hard to navigate.

The prior-consultation clause Kishi worked tenaciously to win has, sadly, never been used by Tokyo. One wonders how he would feel about a situation in which Japan finds itself in a progressively subordinate position vis-à-vis the United States.

Japan's relations with its immediate neighbors today have deteriorated considerably by comparison with the 1950s; summit-level dialogue has dissipated, anti-Japanese demonstrations occur frequently, and these countries have openly opposed Japan's bid to join the Security Council as a permanent member.

Neither China nor the two Koreas were among the 15 countries Kishi visited. These countries did not attend the San Francisco Peace Conference, and Japan did not have diplomatic ties with them. He gave priority to the countries of Southeast and South Asia in seeking to restore Japan's standing in Asia. It was later that Japan established diplomatic ties with China and South Korea. Today China explicitly accepts Japan's security framework with the United States. Russia is no longer the threat it was during the Cold War. And grass-roots exchange is blossoming with

South Korea thanks to the cohosting of the World Cup soccer championship in 2002 and the recent Korean pop culture boom in Japan. It is intolerable that our political leadership is failing to take advantage of this people-level friendship and allowing friction to prevail.

Even as Koizumi engages in "fighting diplomacy"—refuting charges that the Self-Defense Forces are engaging in military activities in Iraq by defiantly insisting that wherever the SDF happened to be deployed is a noncombat zone and brushing aside foreign criticism of his Yasukuni visits as being "none of other countries' business"—he has also had to barter; with the dispatch of the SDF to Iraq he seems to have been seeking to win more favorable resolution of various other issues, such as the realignment of US forces in Japan, North Korea's abductions of Japanese nationals and nuclear ambitions, and Japan's bid for a permanent Security Council seat.

Today's Japanese leadership should follow in Kishi's footsteps and build relationships of unwavering trust with China and South Korea. This is the way to secure a position for Japan as representative of the region rather than as a country isolated from its neighbors. It is also the way to win America's respect and confidence. Japan should devote its utmost efforts to promoting reconciliation in East Asia, where Cold War divisions still remain, and building a regional security framework on the strength of a truly healthy and equal alliance with Washington. There is much Japan can contribute to the world with a magnanimous foreign policy and a grand design for international security, addressing concerns about terrorism and regional violence in the aftermath of 9/11 and helping alleviate poverty and environmental degradation.

Kishi's overtures toward Asia may have been motivated in part by expectations of an Asian market for Japanese exports and by domestic political factors. But he nonetheless shared with Yoshida Shigeru and Hatoyama Ichirō a deep-felt desire to protect Japan through diplomatic initiatives and build a peaceful state. Frank Buchman, founder of the Moral Re-Armament movement, who had personal ties with all three of these prime ministers and received a decoration for helping Japan return to the international community, declared, "A nation's surest defense is the gratitude and respect of her neighbors." Koizumi belongs to the political faction once led by Kishi, as do his potential successors Abe Shinzō and Fukuda Yasuo. Foreign Minister Asō Tarō, another prospective prime minister, is the grandson of Yoshida Shigeru, and Hatoyama Yukio, secretary general of the Democratic Party of Japan, is Hatoyama Ichirō's grandson. It is to be hoped that the political heirs of Japan's leading postwar prime ministers will restore the spirit of reconciliation in Japan's East Asian foreign policy.

*Translated from "Kishi Nobusuke: Aja wakai gaikō no kenshō," Chūō Kōron, June 2006, pp. 166–73. (Courtesy of Chūō Kōron Shinsha)*

