

Reducing the American Burden? U.S. Mediation between South Korea and Japan, 1961–1965

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Some of our efforts should go toward trying to get our allies to pick up more of the burden. . . . [The] U.S. must watch very carefully U.S. interests—balance of payments—continual hemorrhage here.¹

—President John F. Kennedy, January 22, 1963

[T]he U.S. planned to extend all possible aid to Korea. It planned to keep its troops there, and no reduction of troop strength was contemplated. . . . [C]onclusion of the Korea-Japan treaty would also assist our mutual efforts [with Korea] in Vietnam.²

—President Lyndon B. Johnson, May 17, 1965

I. INTRODUCTION

Scholars have debated about the extent and degree of changes and continuity between the Kennedy (JFK) and Johnson (LBJ) administrations, particularly regarding U.S. policy toward Vietnam. Some scholars, mainly the former advisers for the Democratic Party during the 1960s, argue that Kennedy had a plan to withdraw from Vietnam. Other historians believe that Kennedy, had he lived, would have escalated the war just as Johnson did. This debate seems endless since there are no new sources revealing Kennedy's Vietnam

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policy. As intriguing and important as the debate over Vietnam policy is, considering how many lives were affected by the decisions of the U.S. presidents, extending the question to other areas of their foreign policies may shed new light on the similarities and differences of the two presidents' guiding principles. With that in mind, I examine the two administrations' efforts to mediate relations between South Korea and Japan, in order to reassess the continuity and changes in their policies.

The Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan concluded the Treaty of Basic Relations on June 22, 1965. In it, Japan recognized Seoul as the only legitimate regime in the Korean Peninsula; all the previous treaties between them were nullified, and Korea was slated to receive \$800 million in grants and loans as *de facto* war reparations in the following ten years. Although the U. S. government attempted to mend the troubled relations of its two allies in Cold War East Asia under President Eisenhower, the fall of the Syngman Rhee government by the student revolution in 1960 gave Washington added incentive to mediate ROK-Japanese relations. With Rhee's anti-Japanese policy seemingly out of the picture, the Kennedy administration could begin to press the two governments to normalize their relations, and the treaty was finally signed during the Johnson years.

Despite U.S. mediation efforts, neither the Korean nor the Japanese foreign ministers who signed the treaty wrote about U.S. encouragement and pressures in their memoirs, perhaps avoiding the image that they were advised by the Americans. U.S. ambassador to Japan Edwin O. Reischauer also wrote in his memoirs very little about his involvement in the negotiations, in order to save the image of the "equal partnership" between the United States and Japan that he worked hard to establish during his tenure in Tokyo. The Reischauer papers housed at Harvard University, however, reveal that his work for mediation between Seoul and Tokyo was an important reason why he accepted the position at the Tokyo embassy. Concerned about Korea's future after visiting Seoul in 1960, Reischauer wrote in his diary, "[As Ambassador to Japan] I may have an influence on American relations with some other countries in East Asia—I have Korea particularly in mind."³

The first scholarly work that illuminated the U.S. role in negotiations was the 1994 article by Lee Jong Won (published in Japanese), who argued that the Vietnam situation made LBJ's staff more overtly and officially involved in the bilateral talks. Kil J. Yi's 2002 article, also focusing on the Vietnam influence on U.S. Korea policy, gave a more detailed description of Johnson's policy.⁴ No one as yet, though, has compared the mediation policies of JFK and LBJ. Based on my research, I argue that Johnson, under pressure to send

troops to Vietnam, reversed the Kennedy administration's original goal of reducing the U.S. Cold War economic burden in Korea.

II. ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE KOREA POLICY UNDER KENNEDY, 1961

In March 1961, National Security Council (NSC) advisers Robert H. Johnson and Walt Rostow reassessed the existing policy toward Korea and recommended a change in U.S. aid efforts to give greater emphasis to economic development, social reform, and agriculture, and less to military programs. They suggested Kennedy take a "fresh look" at America's Korea policy.⁵ Just when the NSC had decided to form a task force,⁶ the military coup d'état led by Gen. Park Chung-hee erupted in Seoul in May, demonstrating the political and social instability of South Korea. The U.S. government, lacking adequate information to evaluate the military regime, initially took a cautious approach. On May 25, Kennedy approved a draft to convey his recognition of the junta only verbally through Chargé d'Affaires Marshall Green. After the U.S. verbal recognition, Park announced that the junta would agree to restore UN command over Korean forces. In the meantime, NSC staff member Johnson sent a memorandum to Rostow to propose possible U.S. priorities in Korea. Johnson listed 1) "civilianization" of the regime, 2) making it clear that U.S. aid in the future was conditional on Korean performance, and 3) urging action on economic and political reforms.⁷ In addition, Kennedy appointed Samuel D. Berger, a twenty-year veteran of the foreign service and specialist on labor, to the ambassadorial position in Seoul. The appointment of an economics specialist like Berger indicated the Kennedy administration's focus on Korean economic development.⁸

In the June 13 NSC meeting with Kennedy presiding, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter McConaughy, who had just returned from his ambassadorial position in Seoul, argued that the failure to reestablish relations between Japan and South Korea was "the greatest hindrance to Korean development," and that the principal mission of U.S. ambassadors Berger and Reischauer should be to "attempt to establish a reconciliation between the two countries." In regard to reducing U.S. military aid to Korea, both Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara and Gen. Lyman L. Lemnitzer of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) opposed any decrease in the force level, arguing that Korea had great vulnerability for subversion and infiltration from Communists "like Vietnam and Laos."⁹ At the end of the meeting, Kennedy concluded that the best policy for Korean problems was the improve-

ment of Korean-Japanese relations. He announced he would take up the subject in his scheduled meeting with Japan's prime minister, Hayato Ikeda, the following week, and the State Department directed the U.S. ambassadors in both Korea and Japan to try to influence their governments to come to the negotiation table.

In his meeting with Ikeda, Kennedy emphasized that an economically weak Korea might be taken over by a Communist regime, which would have an adverse effect on Japan. Even though he was moved by Kennedy's comments,¹⁰ Ikeda appeared reluctant to commit to Korean issues.¹¹ He was much more interested in having Kennedy understand Japan's need to take advantage of trade opportunities with Communist China. It would take much persuasion by Ambassador Reischauer and a hint of possible German commercial interest in Korea before Tokyo resumed normalization talks with Seoul.

On July 19, 1961, Park announced to the public his hope of concluding a settlement with Japan within that year.¹² This signaled a significant change in Korean foreign policy. Anti-Japanese sentiment among the people of Korea, stemming from anger and humiliation over past colonization, was very strong. Park must have expected lack of popularity for his policy, and indeed a large majority opposed normalization.¹³ Park's announcement, however, came as a pleasant surprise to East Asian specialists in Washington, who had viewed the new Korean leaders as being even more anti-Japanese than their predecessors. Ambassador Berger wrote, "I have come to view that mil[itary] gov[ernment] offers [the] first real hope since 1945 for resolution [of] this vexing problem. This is a pragmatic gov[ernment]. . . . It is not seriously worried by public opinion or press criticism; and most of the decisions it has taken are clearly in the national interest by any objective standard."¹⁴ Following Park's announcement, and because of Park's willingness to abide by other U.S. demands such as holding democratic elections, Secretary of State Dean Rusk publicly announced U.S. recognition of the military regime, and President Kennedy prepared to receive Park in Washington in November.

Prior to Park's Washington visit, the State Department prepared a paper defining U.S. positions regarding 1) Korea-Japan relations and 2) security policy in the Far East. The viewpoints in the paper represented Kennedy's overall East Asian policy.¹⁵ On the first point, the U.S. viewed the principal issues between Japan and Korea as 1) Korean reparation claims, 2) the "Rhee Line" (or "Peace Line"), 3) Korean vessel claims, 4) normalization of diplomatic relations, 5) North Korea repatriation, 6) Korean claims for return of art objects, and 7) legal status of Korean residents in Japan.

Earlier that year, in August, the Korean government had come up with its

first war-time reparation figure of \$800 million. This figure was based on “bank deposits, pensions and wages of Korean workers, gold and silver bullion taken from Korea, and property in Japan of firms with head offices in Korea.” The counteroffer by Tokyo was \$50 million in claims plus an unspecified amount of economic assistance. In 1957 the United States had taken the position that the transfer of Japanese-owned property in Korea to the ROK after World War II fulfilled Korean claims against Japan.¹⁶ The estimation by the U.S. Occupation authorities in 1957 was “\$2.3 *billion* in south Korea and \$2.9 *billion* in north Korea [emphasis in original].”¹⁷

The issues concerning the so-called Rhee Line were, as expected, the most difficult problems between the two nations. In 1952 Korean President Syngman Rhee had declared the establishment of a “Peace Line” excluding Japanese fishing boats from the water area fifty to three hundred miles from the Korean Peninsula. In the 1950s the Korean Coast Guard captured over one thousand Japanese fishing boats and their crews; most of the fishermen were returned without their vessels. In 1958 the Japanese government proposed a tentative fisheries agreement that included designating a twelve-mile fishing area off the coast of Korea exclusive to the Koreans, and shared control and regulation of fisheries in the disputed waters to replace the Rhee Line. No one in the Korean government responded to this Japanese proposal, but Park’s military regime had hinted that it would make some concessions if the Japanese made a satisfactory offer in response to Korean claims. Washington had informed the Korean government secretly that the United States could not support the Rhee Line because it violated the principle of freedom of the high seas.

Another difficult problem was the timing of establishing a Japanese diplomatic mission in Seoul. The Korean government had established its mission in Tokyo in 1948, but it had been refusing a Japanese diplomatic establishment until normalization was achieved. Tokyo continued to demand a diplomatic mission before they would resume talks. Washington believed that such establishment would improve relations, but it had “not pressed the point in view of Korean sensitivities.”¹⁸

Regarding North Korean repatriation, a 1959 agreement between the Japanese Red Cross and the North Korean Red Cross on voluntary repatriation had returned approximately 73,000 Korean residents in Japan to North Korea by the fall of 1961. There were still approximately 12,000 Koreans who were waiting to leave. The previous ROK governments had strongly opposed this repatriation program, but the United States assessed that the new military government would consider this program a *fait accompli* and not press the

issue in negotiations with the Japanese.

Another matter was the legal status of the over six hundred thousand remaining Korean residents in Japan, especially the status of Koreans oriented toward North Korea and of children born after the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951. The governments of the ROK and Japan had held negotiations regarding the question of citizenship for various categories of Korean residents and almost reached an agreement in 1960. The U.S. estimated that the issue would be resolved once the reparations and fisheries issues were settled.

The State Department believed that the issues surrounding the ROK's claim for returning Korean ships taken to Japan after the end of World War II and returning of art objects from Japanese national museums would not be difficult to resolve. The U.S. anticipated that the Japanese government would increase the tonnage in their offer and would return most of the art objects.

The State Department's position paper thus recommended the following U.S. policy stances:

- that the United States view the negotiations as a good opportunity to encourage Korea's economic development before it became "exploited by the communists";
- that Japan's economic assistance would accelerate Korean development;
- that Korean claims against Japan to some degree were met by the transfer to the ROK of Japanese-owned property in Korea (as recognized in the Potsdam Declaration and by the 1948 U.S.-Korean agreement on transfer of assets). The United States, however, would not be involved in negotiations;
- that the United States would oppose the Rhee Line even though the fisheries problem was recognized as the key to a settlement; and
- that the United States would remain an informal mediator in these negotiations.¹⁹

On U.S. security policy in East Asia, the position paper reiterated its firm stance against Communism in East Asia and its support for South Korea and Taiwan. However, it rejected the idea, proposed by the Korean government, of forming a NATO-like collective security organization in East Asia. Instead, it called for maintaining the existing bilateral security treaties with Taiwan, Korea, and Japan. Washington officials were concerned that this might give Korean leaders the impression that the United States paid too much attention to Europe and not enough to Asia. In order to reassure Korean leaders that the United States remained a strong ally, the State Department recommended the president emphasize that U.S. nuclear capabilities could

protect South Korea from a Communist threat.

The Kennedy administration's most obvious departure from Eisenhower's policy was found in its emphasis on assistance for economic development. This was based on Walt Rostow's strategy that economic and social strength and stability within the country were essential for success in competition with the Communist countries. In order to achieve this goal, the United States counted on Japan's assistance in Korea's development. The position paper further stated that the U.S. considered "Japan's contribution to Free World strength to be vital" and believed that the risk of the Japanese dominating the East Asian economy was slight. The United States would welcome continued association with Japan to help U.S. efforts "in accelerating economic development in the Far East."²⁰ The principles of the U.S. policy toward South Korea were thus defined prior to Park's visit.

Kennedy received Park in November 1961 and discussed the issues of Korean-Japanese relations as well as his great concern over how to prevent the collapse of Vietnam. Park acknowledged that normalizing relations with Japan would decrease the heavy Cold War security burden on the United States, but he was more interested in talking about the main purpose of the visit—how he might obtain as much American economic aid as possible for his Five-Year Development Plan. The U.S. military aid to Korea averaged \$232 million per fiscal year from 1956 to 1961, but the amount would drop to \$154 million for each fiscal year from 1962 to 1965.²¹ Park wished to prevent this reduction, and his quid pro quo was an offer to send Korean troops to Vietnam. He claimed Korea's army, composed of one million men trained in guerilla warfare, could match North Vietnam's well-trained guerrilla forces, and said that "[w]ith U.S. approval and support, Korea could send to Vietnam its own troops or could recruit volunteers if regular troops were not desired." Kennedy expressed his deep appreciation for this offer and speculated that it would be a good idea to talk with the Filipinos, commenting that the French had found out that there was a limit "on what an occidental could do."²² This statement that Asian soldiers would be more suited to conditions in Vietnam seems to hint at Kennedy's belief in reducing "the White Man's burden" in Southeast Asia. To Park's aid request, Kennedy reiterated the congressional pressure he was under to limit overseas aid. When Park asked for a waiver, Kennedy rejected his request by stressing that the United States was spending much more money in Laos and Vietnam than originally planned.²³ Kennedy's refusal contrasts starkly with the decision President Johnson would make regarding a similar offer three years later.

The scaling back of U.S. Cold War efforts in Northeast Asia seemed all the

more important when troubles were mounting in Southeast Asia. In 1962–63, after the president’s meeting with Park, the Kennedy administration began debating what the adequate aid level to South Korea should be. The military, meanwhile, continued to reject any aid cut.

III. BALANCING PRIORITY BETWEEN ECONOMY AND SECURITY IN KOREA, 1962–63

Kennedy’s staff held a vigorous discussion about the military aid cut to Korea. They planned to remove one U.S. division from the peninsula and were wondering what the effects might be. While the NSC staff wished to cut both economic and military aid to Korea, various military circles opposed the idea, countering that the only alternative to force reduction would be relying on nuclear weapons. The JCS chairman, Gen. Lemnitzer, stated in a memorandum to Defense Secretary McNamara in April 1962:

The net result of any significant reduction of ROK forces below their present levels would be increased military risk in Northeast Asia; lowering of U.S. influence in Asia; decreasing the capability of keeping a limited war at a nonnuclear level; increasing the requirement for the augmentation of U.S. forces and shortening the time by which these forces must be available; and encouragement of the communists to undertake further aggression.²⁴

Roswell Gilpatric, the deputy secretary of defense, informed Rusk of the JCS’s belief that the removal of a division from Korea to Okinawa would dilute the existing deterrent and could lead to an undesirable change in the U.S./ROK command relationship. He also pointed out that acquiring land and improving facilities in Okinawa would cost money and lead to political difficulties.²⁵ The Pentagon was also aware that the U.S. military occupation of Okinawa would alter its course in the future, as Kennedy, on March 19, announced that the reversion of the entire Ryukyu Islands to Japan would take place once the security of the “Free World” was established.²⁶ This matter was further discussed at the White House staff meeting in September 1962. The new assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern Affairs, Averell W. Harriman, supported the withdrawal of one division from Korea in the next year.²⁷ With strong opposition from the military, however, the State Department, by the end of September, backed away from the issue of a cut in forces in Korea. Rusk sent a letter to Gilpatric, agreeing that it was “inadvisable to withdraw a U.S. division at this time.” Rusk, however, still left open the pos-

sibility of a force reduction from Korea, suggesting that the Department of Defense improve its sea and airlift capabilities in the Far East and “examine alternative possibilities such as the Philippines” instead of Okinawa as the destination of force deployment.²⁸

The Sino-Indian border war that occurred during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 further caused the Kennedy team to consider an aid cut to Korea. As a result of the border war with mainland China, India became the largest recipient of U.S. aid during the Kennedy administration. The president spoke of his concern over U.S. spending in overseas assistance in January 1963, stressing the importance of U.S. allies picking up more of the burden and a careful monitoring of U.S. balance of payments. Otherwise, he said, they would face a “continual hemorrhage” of money (see the quote at the beginning of this article).²⁹

In May 1963 NSC staff member McGeorge Bundy advised Kennedy to further reduce military and economic assistance to Korea.³⁰ Another NSC adviser, Bob Komer, a strong advocate of a military spending cut in Korea, told Kennedy that U.S. investment in Korea “far exceeded” U.S. strategic interest there. Considering the slow pace of Korean economic development, Komer suggested that more money be spent on development and less on the military. Once again, there was a staff meeting to discuss the force reduction in Korea.³¹ The debate continued in Washington, and as of early June 1963, the State Department took the position that the United States should reduce but not eliminate U.S. ground forces in Korea. Secretary of Defense McNamara, for economic reasons, held out for the actual withdrawal of such forces and their replacement by a small nuclear unit.³² Kennedy took the position that the United States should apply the same principle in East Asia as in Europe, which was to use nuclear weapons only if it was impossible to avoid defeat by relying on conventional weapons alone.³³ Despite lengthy discussions on the matter, no decision was made on the reduction of U.S. troops in South Korea during Kennedy’s tenure.

After Kennedy made a strong recommendation to Prime Minister Ikeda in June for a settlement, and after Park’s July 19 announcement of Korea’s desire for normalization, formal negotiations between the two nations resumed on October 20, 1961. Korea and Japan recognized the following points as principal normalization issues between them: 1) Korean claims for war reparations, 2) Korean claims of exclusive fishing rights within the Rhee Line, and 3) the territorial dispute over Tokto (Takeshima) Island.³⁴ All of these points posed difficult political problems in both countries so that the negotia-

tions did not go beyond identifying the problems themselves. Kennedy continued to encourage the Korean-Japanese negotiations as he pressed the Japanese side through an unofficial channel when former Japanese prime minister Shigeru Yoshida visited Washington in May 1962. The president emphasized the importance of a settlement to Yoshida, saying, “[W]e have protected the security of Korea largely because of its importance to the security of Japan. Korea could not achieve healthy economic growth without close economic relations with Japan.” Kennedy stressed, “[N]ow [is] the time for Japan to do her share.”³⁵

The first breakthrough in the ROK-Japan talks came about in October 1962 in the reparation issue when the Korean CIA director Kim Chong-pil visited Tokyo on his way to Washington to meet with the new foreign minister, Masahiro Ohira, of the Ikeda cabinet. Kim stated that, considering the anti-Japanese feeling among Koreans fostered by Rhee’s regime, the government of Korea could not accept any amount under \$600 million. Ohira agreed with the number, but thought it should be distributed as loans with a very low interest rate. The two failed, however, to make any progress on the Rhee Line and fisheries issues. Kim also told Ohira that they could leave the dispute over Tokto Island until other issues were resolved. Kim suggested to Ohira that the island could be blown up, but according to Kim, Ohira was not amused by this remark. Later in Washington, when Rusk asked what the island was used for, Kim replied that it was “a place for seagull droppings.”³⁶

Negotiations stalled in 1963 due to Park’s presidential election and the Japanese general election as well as the difficulty in finding a compromise on fisheries issues. Both nations were facing criticism from constituents representing the fishing industry. Also connected to the Rhee Line issue was deep resentment from the colonial period. The Rhee Line symbolized Korea’s emotional line of defense against its former colonial suzerain, Japan. In February 1963, Assistant Secretary of State Averell Harriman met with Korean Ambassador Il Kwon Chung and expressed his concern about the delay in the Korean-Japanese talks. Harriman indicated that the Rhee Line had no basis in international law and suggested that Korea should adopt a different and reasonable position in order to conclude an agreement.³⁷ Despite such pressure from the United States, a telegram from Ambassador Berger in Seoul reported that “the short-term prospects for normalization of ROK-Japan relations were becoming dimmer by the day” due to increasing political turmoil within the Korean government as the presidential election approached. NSC staff member Michael V. Forrestal feared that Korea’s opportunity for effectively utilizing “almost half a billion dollars of Japanese capital coming into

Korea” was at stake. Forrestal and Harriman discussed the possibility of the president’s placing pressure on Korea. However, Forrestal doubted the president would be able to pressure Park, who was facing his first presidential election. Therefore, they temporarily dropped the idea of utilizing presidential authority for mediation.³⁸ Park won the election just one week before Kennedy’s assassination. The very thin margin he won by, however, did not bode well for the hope of bringing political stability to Korea.

IV. CHANGES IN U.S. MEDIATION EFFORTS UNDER JOHNSON

The task of reducing the U.S. Cold War burden through ROK-Japan normalization was passed to the Johnson administration after Kennedy’s death, although initially NSC adviser Bob Komer was concerned that Johnson and Rusk’s indifference to Northeast Asian affairs might slow the momentum of the negotiations.³⁹ In early 1964 the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo was making efforts to gain concessions in fisheries for Korea. Tokyo agreed to issue additional financing for Korea’s relatively weak fishing industry in return for a Korean compromise on the Rhee Line issue. However, Park found it hard to compromise and asked the United States to pressure Tokyo to accept the Rhee Line. Trapped in the middle, the United States informed Seoul that Washington could not support Korean demands. U.S. officials recognized that Park understood the absurdity of the Rhee Line that set a fishing area fifty to three hundred miles off the Korean coast, but they also knew he faced strong domestic opposition to retreating from the Rhee line.⁴⁰ In Seoul, violent student demonstrations against the government erupted in March 1964, and Park instituted martial law until the summer. Once again, normalization talks were put on hold. In addition to their demand for more democratic government, the Korean students feared that the normalization treaty would allow former colonial master Japan to replace the United States as an important player in Korea’s nation-building process.⁴¹ The students also resented the involvement of the corrupt and authoritarian Korean CIA director Kim Chong-pil in the negotiations with Japan. To palliate their indignation, the U.S. government arranged funding for Kim to leave the country to study with Henry Kissinger at Harvard in June 1964.⁴²

In the summer of 1964, Undersecretary of State George Ball and Bob Komer considered the settlement between Seoul and Tokyo a “top priority” for U.S. economic policy and recommended to the new assistant secretary of state for East Asian Affairs William Bundy that the United States “depart from its backstage role to make strong direct approaches” to Seoul.⁴³ This

method was not applied to Japan, since the officials were heeding Ambassador Reischauer's insistence that overt pressure would ruin the image of "equal partnership" between the United States and Japan.⁴⁴ To execute this new U.S. stance of "strong direct approaches" toward Korea, a career diplomat, Winthrop Brown, was appointed ambassador to Seoul in July 1964.⁴⁵ Four months later, Rusk instructed Brown to pressure Seoul for early normalization with Japan by threatening to reduce future Military Assistance Program (MAP) appropriations.⁴⁶

However, with the deepening U.S. involvement in Vietnam, Seoul's importance to America's Cold War strategy increased. As a result, the U.S. Korea policy began to shift. After Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf resolution, and as Vietcong attacks on U.S. military bases escalated in 1964, Johnson began considering sending U.S. ground troops to South Vietnam and seeking military assistance from other countries. In the fall of 1964, the president's advisers considered asking the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines, Nationalist China, and South Korea to send noncombat troops to Vietnam. On December 1, at the White House meeting, Johnson reiterated his desire to obtain such support.⁴⁷ When Washington approached these governments with the idea, the Korean government expressed willingness to support the United States in Vietnam. Earlier in 1964, South Korea had sent a hospital unit and taekwondo instructors as military advisers to Saigon to assist the United States.⁴⁸ But under this new agreement, and although it was an unpopular policy in Korea, Seoul would send additional noncombat troops to Vietnam. Furthermore, when Brown met with Park in the Blue House to discuss a possible MAP reduction and Korean troop support, Park said he could send two combat divisions to Vietnam if the United States so wished. Brown responded that President Johnson was not asking for combat troops.⁴⁹ On January 8, 1965, two thousand Korean noncombat troops arrived in South Vietnam as a result of this arrangement.⁵⁰ In return, Seoul sought a continuation of U.S. economic and military assistance. In addition, the Korean ambassador requested that the U.S. order war equipment from Korea for use in Southeast Asia. ROK officials also argued that the United States had been responsible for Japan's colonization of Korea because of the 1905 Portsmouth Treaty, and, based on this interpretation of history, they asked for additional U.S. aid.⁵¹ Although the U.S. government did not immediately address such claims, it agreed to pay for the expenses and allowances of the Korean troops in Vietnam in January 1965 and funneled the money through the Korean government so that the Korean soldiers would not discover the source of their salaries.⁵²

Seoul gained an even better bargaining position after Johnson decided to send U.S. ground troops to Vietnam in February and considered requesting combat support from other countries including South Korea. On March 30, Ambassador Brown sent his assessment of Seoul's position regarding the U.S. request for combat troops. In it Brown estimated that "[e]xtensive inducements will be required and the cost will be great" but that the Korean government would agree to the U.S. proposal "if approached after ROK-Japan ratification and with assurances of generous support from U.S." The "generous support," Brown explained, consisted of U.S. assurance not to reduce U.S. forces in Korea; an additional U.S. division replacing the Korean forces; all expenses of Korean operations paid in Vietnam, including "transportation, logistical requirements, special overseas allowances, and any other cost factors involved"; increased MAP and economic aid levels; and U.S. procurement orders to Vietnam and maintenance and repair services in Korea.⁵³ Clearly, this telegram from Brown demonstrates a major shift in U.S. policy toward Korea. By late March 1965, Johnson's administration was ready to significantly increase the aid that Kennedy had hoped to reduce.

Meanwhile, Japan's foreign minister, Etsusaburo Shiina, and Korea's foreign minister, Lee Tong Won, met in Seoul in February 1965 to further discuss the normalization treaty. Lee later revealed in his visit to Washington that Shiina showed reluctance to conclude the treaty due to the fisheries issues, but Lee's persuasion, including a joke that Lee would shoot himself, facilitated ending the deadlock. Lee and the U.S. officials also thought that Shiina's apology to Korea, which Ambassador Reischauer had been pressing for, also helped reduce Korean public resentment.⁵⁴ However, domestic opposition in Korea was still strong, and the two countries continued to negotiate on the Rhee Line and the disputed island during the spring of 1965.

In order to suppress domestic opposition, the Korean government asked Washington for assistance. An overt U.S. political intervention, Park thought, would give clout to his plan to conclude the unpopular treaty with Japan and would ward off student attacks on the government. Ambassador Kim Chong-yul told Undersecretary of State Thomas Mann that the U.S. military should pledge to stay in Korea because Korean student demonstrators on the streets believed the United States was letting Japan control Korea.⁵⁵ Following these discussions, Washington in late March issued a statement of long-term commitment to assisting Korea's economic development and security. This policy, outlined in the National Policy Paper on Korea, was recognized as "highly needed in [the] context of Korea-Japan settlement."⁵⁶ Around the same time, Seoul agreed to replace the Rhee Line with a twelve-mile exclu-

sive fishery zone with additional funds from Japan. The only remaining issues before the official signing was the territorial dispute and Korean domestic opposition to the treaty.⁵⁷ Park hoped that his visit to the United States, scheduled for May, would demonstrate continued U.S. support.

On April 20, 1965, the so-called Honolulu Conference took place. Those attending, Ambassador to Saigon Maxwell Taylor, Defense Secretary McNamara, Assistant Secretary of State Bundy, Gen. Westmoreland, and other U.S. officials, discussed a further increase of combat troops (nine battalions) to Vietnam including troops from Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea.⁵⁸ Soon after the conference, Johnson sent Ambassador-at-Large Henry Cabot Lodge to Seoul as his personal envoy to officially request a Korean dispatch of four thousand combat troops to Vietnam.⁵⁹ Four days after the Honolulu Conference, the National Security Council Action (NSCA) 1550 was issued, authorizing commitment to assistance for the ROK during Johnson's term.⁶⁰ On May 1, Ambassador Brown again advised Rusk that if the United States expected both Korean troop support in South Vietnam and a settlement with Japan, they would need to be generous in assuring continued military support. Seoul was sending a strong plea for an increased MAP and also promises that the United States would not withdraw either of its two divisions.⁶¹ On May 10, Brown guaranteed to Park that the United States would not reduce its forces in Korea "before ratification of ROK/Japan settlement if this [would] cause Park [a] serious political problem."⁶²

In preparation for Park's visit to Washington, Undersecretary of State Ball recommended that the president approve \$150 million in development loan funds.⁶³ The NSC also sent a memorandum to Johnson to brief him about the U.S. principal policy toward Korea. The memorandum highlighted the paramount reason of Park's visit as "[seeking] the strongest possible indication from us . . . that *we have no intention of abandoning Korea to Japanese control* [emphasis in original] in the wake of a Japan-Korea settlement."⁶⁴ And when Park finally visited Washington on May 17, Johnson crystallized these recommendations into a policy by stating:

[T]he U.S. planned to extend all possible aid to Korea. It planned to keep its troops there, and no reduction of troop strength was contemplated. . . . [C]onclusion of the Korea-Japan treaty would also assist our mutual efforts in Viet-Nam. . . . [T]he U.S. would finance essential imports and development loans, technical assistance, and food for peace.⁶⁵

In a separate meeting with Korea's national defense minister, Secretary Mc-

Namara also stated that the U.S. would increase the 1966 MAP program for Korea.⁶⁶ Johnson was so eager to secure support in Vietnam that he seemed unaware that he was changing Kennedy's policy.

In return for this aid, Johnson received Korean combat troop support in Vietnam. When he asked Park in the meeting if Korea could send one combat division to Vietnam, the Korean president answered that he thought they could send more. Later in August, after a long debate and without participation from the opposition party, the Korean National Assembly "unanimously" voted for sending ROK troops to Vietnam.⁶⁷ In October over eighteen thousand Korean troops, including an infantry division and a marine regiment, arrived in South Vietnam. From 1965 until the 1973 withdrawal, over 320,000 Korean troops served in the conflict.⁶⁸

In the same meeting, Johnson also received assurance that Korea would come to an agreement with Tokyo in June.⁶⁹ However, as late as June 15, Seoul and Tokyo were still discussing the territorial dispute over Tokto (Takeshima) Island. Ambassador Brown was instructed to convey Johnson's concern that the negotiations were taking too long. While the Japanese government wanted to include the issue, Seoul wished it left out. In his meeting with Park, Rusk suggested erecting a jointly operated lighthouse and sharing the island, but Park rejected the idea. Park asked the United States to press Japan in Johnson's name, but the United States did not grant this request.⁷⁰

On June 22, 1965, the Treaty of Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea was finally signed. In the end, the territorial issue was left to be solved in the future. The fisheries issue was settled with a twelve-mile limit, thus abolishing the Rhee Line. Seeing this result as a defeat, students demonstrated en masse in Korea once again, and universities were closed until August 20. The demonstrations continued after the schools reopened, and this time the police and the army were brought in with tear gas. In Japan, the response to the treaty was milder: the Socialist Party opposed only the tactics of the Liberal Democratic Party's ratification but not the treaty itself. The general public in Japan remained indifferent to Korean affairs.

Despite the unpopularity of the treaty in Korea, not only did it bring Seoul additional capital from Japan, but, as a twisted result of the urgent U.S. military needs in Vietnam, it also provided a bargaining position for Seoul to secure continuation of U.S. economic and military aid as well as procurement for Vietnam. In his visit to Seoul in November 1966, Johnson once again confirmed the U.S. intention to continue supporting Korean economic growth, and it lasted until the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam.⁷¹ This, along with the Korean people's determination and work ethic, helped Korea be-

come the world economic power it is today.

V. CONCLUSION

In light of the downward trend in U.S. balance of payments, the Kennedy administration hoped to reduce U.S. economic and military aid to Korea by encouraging normalization between South Korea and Japan. The policy's main goal was to have Seoul use the Japanese de facto reparation money for its economic development. The Pentagon, however, resisted reduction of the U.S. force level in Korea and argued that the only way they would accept such a reduction was if the United States adjusted its defense strategy to a heavier reliance on nuclear weapons as a cheaper option. The nuclear option did not appeal to Kennedy, and he failed to come up with an agreeable solution for all parties involved before his death. Although Johnson continued encouraging the normalization process between Japan and South Korea, his aid guarantee to Korea in order to secure troop support in Vietnam undermined Kennedy's intent. Had he lived, it is questionable whether Kennedy would have made the same decisions to increase U.S. financial commitment to Korea.

The Treaty of Basic Relations, rushed to conclusion, also left many critical issues unresolved between Seoul and Tokyo. Even over sixty years after World War II and over forty years since the conclusion of the treaty, the territorial dispute still remains a delicate diplomatic issue. The policies of both Kennedy and Johnson were so heavily influenced by the Cold War that they were often blind to other more nuanced issues. They intended to create a stable Northeast Asia by bringing U.S. allies together, but neglected to address the pain stemming from the complex colonial past. The failure to achieve not only adequate political, but emotional, reconciliation has left its legacy in the problems these countries face today. However, in the long run, the treaty did contribute to its original U.S. goal of bringing political stability and economic prosperity to South Korea as it rose from the ashes of the Korean War to become a world economic power. Ironically, however, it was achieved largely at America's expense.

NOTES

¹ Roger Hilsman Papers, box 5, John F. Kennedy Library (JFKL).

² Conversation with Park Chung-hee, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1964–1968, XXIX, pt. 1, Korea, 97–98.

³ The quote is from the Edwin O. Reischauer Papers, Harvard University. Tong Won Lee,

Kan-nichi joyaku teiketsu hiwa: aru futari no gaikou kan no unmei teki deai, [Secret episodes behind the conclusion of the Korea-Japan Treaty: Fortunate encounter of two diplomats], trans. Woonsang Choi (Tokyo: PHP Kenkyujo, 1997); Shiina Etsusaburo kankei monjo [papers of Etsusaburo Shiina] Kokuritsu kokkai toshokan [National Diet Library], Tokyo; Edwin O. Reischauer, *Nihon eno jijo den* [Autobiography to Japan] (Tokyo: Nihon Hoso Shuppan Kyokai, 1982); Edwin O. Reischauer, *My Life between Japan and America* (New York: Harpers and Row, 1986).

⁴ Jong Won Lee, "The United States in the Korean-Japanese Normalization Process," *Journal of Modern Japanese Studies* 16 (1994): 272–305. Kil J. Yi, "In Search of a Panacea: Japan-Korea Rapprochement and America's 'Far Eastern Problems'" *Pacific Historical Review* 71.4 (2002): 633–62.

⁵ Memorandum from R. Johnson to Rostow, March 15, 1961, National Security File(NSF), box 127, JFKL; Rostow to JFK, March 15, 1961, *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 428.

⁶ *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 447–48.

⁷ *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 464–65.

⁸ The Samuel D. Berger Papers at Georgetown University; NSF, box 127, JFKL.

⁹ *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 479–80.

¹⁰ Masaya Ito, *Ikeda Hayato, sono sei to shi* [Hayato Ikeda, his life and death] (Tokyo: Shiseido, 1966), 172.

¹¹ *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 489–90.

¹² Lee, *Kan-nichi joyaku teiketsu hiwa*, 286.

¹³ Youngnok Koo, "Foreign Policy Decision-making," in *The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Korea*, ed. Youngnok Koo, et al. (New York: Columbia UP, 1985), 35.

¹⁴ Berger to Rusk, July 30, 1961, NSF, box 127, JFKL.

¹⁵ State Department officer Phillip W. Manhard drafted the position paper for Korea-Japan relations, and Donald S. Macdonald drafted the paper for U.S. Far Eastern policy. Manhard and Macdonald were both from the Office of Korean Affairs in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs.

¹⁶ Memorandum "Japanese Property in Korea Vested in the ROK," October 30, 1961, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Office of the Country Director for Japan, Records Related to Japan, 1955–1966, box 1, RG59, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

¹⁷ Position papers prepared for Chairman Park's visit to Washington, November 14–15, 1961, NSF, box 128, JFKL. Although sanitized in part and thus not revealing the entire picture, this paper reflects basic U.S. Cold War policy in East Asia. Comparing the content of the text available with the actual discussions that took place between Kennedy, Rusk, and other U.S. officials with Korea's Chairman Park, it would be most logical to assume that the sanitized text dealt with details of U.S. policy on nuclear weapons in the region.

¹⁸ NSF, box 128 (Park's visit to Washington), JFKL.

¹⁹ NSF, box 128, JFKL.

²⁰ NSF, box 128, JFKL.

²¹ Sung-Joo Han, "Policy toward the United States," in *The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Korea*, 150.

²² *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 536.

²³ Memorandum of Conversation, November 14, 1961, 611.95B/11–1461, central files RG59, NARA; NSF, box 128, JFKL; *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 535–39; Donald S. Macdonald, *U.S.-Korean Relations from Liberation to Self-Reliance: The Twenty-Year Record: An Interpretive Summary of the Archives of the U.S. Department of State for the Period 1945 to 1965* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 108–9.

²⁴ *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 554.

²⁵ *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 596–97.

²⁶ *Public Papers of the Presidents: John F. Kennedy, 1962* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), 247. Kennedy was much influenced by his brother Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, who had just returned from Japan where RFK listened to Ambassador Reischauer stress the importance of Okinawa reversion for U.S. relations with Japan (Edwin O. Reischauer Papers, Harvard University).

²⁷ Memorandum from Harriman to Rusk, September 13, 1962, Harriman Papers, box 499, Library of Congress (LC); *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 597n3.

²⁸ *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 600n3 and 4.

²⁹ Hilsman Papers, box 5, JFKL.

³⁰ Bundy to JFK, May 31, 1963, NSF, box 127, JFKL; *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 646.

³¹ Komer to JFK, NSF, box 127, JFKL, *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 647.

³² Rusk's office to Harriman, June 11, 1963, Harriman Papers, box 481, LC.

³³ *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 367.

³⁴ The State Department wrote the Korean name, Tokto, first and put the Japanese name, Takeshima, in parenthesis.

³⁵ Call of former Prime Minister Yoshida on the President, May 3, 1962, Harriman Papers, box 479, LC.

³⁶ *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 610–12.

³⁷ Sanitized telegram from Ball to Berger, February 12, 1963, NSF, box 129, JFKL; *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 621n2.

³⁸ Forrester to Harriman, February 12, 1963, *FRUS*, 1961–1963, XXII, 620n1.

³⁹ Komer to LBJ, January 22, 1964, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 3–4.

⁴⁰ Reischauer to Rusk, February 11, 1964, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 751n2; Philip Habib to Rusk, February 13, 1964, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 13–15; Thomson to Bundy, January 11, 1965, NSF, box 254, Korea, Lyndon B. Johnson Library (LBJL).

⁴¹ Memorandum of conversation, Korean Ambassador Kim Chong-yul and Rusk, January 21, 1964, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 746–49; Berger to Rusk, April 9, 1964, NSF box 254, Korea, LBJL.

⁴² Rusk to Berger, June 11, 1964, NSF, box 254, Korea, LBJL.

⁴³ Komer to Bundy, July 22, 1964, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, 762; Komer to LBJ, April 9, 1964, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 757. Komer wrote that the Korean-Japanese settlement was “a matter of highest level U.S. Government interest (it could be worth a billion dollars of Jap[anese] support for Korea).” Komer to Bundy, May 19, 1964, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, 760. Komer wrote, “Top priority in NE Asia today is ROK/Jap settlement. This could mean so much more in the way of long-term US dollar saving than a troop cut that there's no comparison.”

⁴⁴ Reischauer to Bundy, August 21, 1964, NSF, box 254, Korea, LBJL; also in *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 768.

⁴⁵ Berger to Rusk, April 9, 1964, NSF, box 254, Korea, LBJL; Ball to Berger, May 12, 1964, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 758–59; Komer to Bundy, July 22, 1964, NSF, box 254, Korea, LBJL.

⁴⁶ Rusk to Brown, November 11, 1964, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 776; throughout 1964, the LBJ administration considered military reduction in ROK. See also President's National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) no. 298, “Study of Possible Redeployment of U.S. Division now Stationed in Korea,” May 5, 1964, LBJL; also available at <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/nsams/nsam298.asp>.

⁴⁷ Memo of a White House meeting, Dec. 1, 1964, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, I. Vietnam, 1964.

⁴⁸ *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, editorial note, 15–17.

⁴⁹ Park and Brown, Dec. 19, 1964, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 53–55.

⁵⁰ Brown to Rusk, December 30, 1964, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 57.

⁵¹ Korean Prime Minister and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Barnett, September 14, 1964, NSF, box 254, Korea, LBJL; Ambassador Kim and KCIA chief Kim and Chester Cooper, January 14, 1965, NSF, box 254, Korea, LBJL. The Korean official is obviously referring to article 2 of the Portsmouth Treaty, mediated by the U.S., that acknowledged Japan's paramount political, military, and economic interests in Korea.

⁵² *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, editorial note, 59–61.

⁵³ Brown to Rusk, March 30, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 68–72.

⁵⁴ Reischauer to Rusk, August 5, 1961, NSF, box 127, JFKL; Reischauer to Rusk, November 21, 1964, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 777–79; Thomson to Bundy, February 20, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 784; conversation between Rusk and Lee, March 15, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 785–87.

⁵⁵ Memo of conversation between Ambassador Kim and Under Secretary Mann, April 16, 1965, NSF, box 254, Korea, LBJL.

⁵⁶ Bundy to Brown, March 30, 1965, NSF, box 254, Korea, LBJL.

⁵⁷ Thomson to Bundy, February 20, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 784; Conversation between Lee and Rusk, March 15, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 785–787; Chong-Sik Lee, *Japan and Korea: The Political Dimension* (Stanford University Press, 1985), 54; “Japan, ROK agree on Fishing Zone” *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 26 Mar. 1965.

⁵⁸ For LBJ's decision to send U.S. troops to Vietnam with allied forces from Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea, see NSAM, no. 328, “President's Decisions with Respect to Vietnam” at LBJL, also available at <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/nsams/nsam328.asp>. For the Honolulu Conference, see Lt. Gen. Stanley R. Larsen and Brig. Gen. James L. Collins, Jr., *Allied Participation in Vietnam* (Dept. of the Army, 1985), at <http://www.history.army.mil/books/Vietnam/allied/ch01.htm#b1>.

⁵⁹ Brown to Rusk, April 27, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 79–80.

⁶⁰ Rusk to Brown, April 24, 1965, NSF, box 254, LBJL. National Security Council Actions are actions, decisions, and directives made by the National Security Council.

⁶¹ Brown to Rusk, May 1, 1965, NSF, box 254, LBJL.

⁶² Brown to Rusk, May 10, 1965, NSF, box 254, LBJL.

⁶³ Ball to LBJ, May 13, 1965, box 254, LBJL.

⁶⁴ Thomson to LBJ, May 17, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 94–6.

⁶⁵ Meeting between Park and LBJ on May 17, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 97–9.

⁶⁶ McNamara and Kim Song-un, May 18, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 110.

⁶⁷ *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, editorial note, 125.

⁶⁸ Larsen and Collins, *Allied Participation in Vietnam*, 128.

⁶⁹ Meeting between Park and LBJ on May 17, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 97–9.

⁷⁰ Meeting between Park and Rusk, May 18, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 101–5; Brown to Rusk, June 15, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, XXIX, Korea, 793–4.

⁷¹ *Public Papers of the Presidents: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), 1283–96.