Can Japan Break Free of the Base-State?
Review of *The Birth of the Base State: Japan's Korean War**

by NAM Gi-jeong
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I. Is Japan Truly a "Pacifist" State?

With a victorious vote in the upper house of the Japanese Diet in July 2016, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) fulfilled the conditions for revising the constitution. Already having a two-thirds majority in the lower house, the matter of coordinating the timing of the amendment but remained. While persistent resistance by the opposition party and civil society ensured the amendment could not be passed by force, as had been the case in Korea in 1969 when President Park sought a third term, the Abe government's drive toward the amendment was a *fait accompli*.

Why did the Abe regime advocate such an amendment? Had Japan forgotten its culpability in the tragedies of World War II? Was Japan abandoning its status as a pacifist state? Gi-jeong Nam traces the historical roots of these questions to the Korean War. Compared with the efforts of other scholars, such as Weon-deok Lee, associating Japan's struggle to become a normal state with US Asia Pacific policy or US

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* *Gijigukgaui tansaeng: ilboni chireun hangukjeonjaeng* (Seouldaehakgyo chulpanmun-hwaweon).

demands regarding the right to collective self-defense originating in the San Francisco Treaty,[1] this is certainly a novel approach.

Adopting this more fundamental approach, the author asks, 'Can a state sustained by military bases be a pacifist one?' He thus seeks to discover why, despite the fact that the term "base-state" is much more useful for understanding post-war and contemporary Japan, there is such a preoccupation with the term "pacifist state." This view signifies Japan's pursuit of national security conforming to American foreign policy as well as the reality that the pacifist state has been made possible by the base-state. In fact, considering Japan's debates over constitutional revision, the complex unfolding dynamics of China-Japan relations, and the significance of the implementation of THAAD in East Asia not only for Korea but also for Japan, the author's critical perspective is all the more meaningful.[2]

Of course in this respect one might also rationalize the Abe government's dream of a normal state in terms of the true realization of the pacifist state via the dissolution of the base-state. Just as the author

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[1] Bruce Cumings, "The Origins and Development of the Northeast Asian Political Economy: Industrial Sectors, Product Cycles, and Political Consequences," *International Organization* 38, no. 1 (Winter 1984); Weon-deok Lee, *Hanilgwageosa cheoriui weonjeom* [The First Step in Resolving Korea-Japan Historical Issues] (Korea: Seouldae chulpanbu, 1996); Hyeong-seok Yu, "Jipdanjeok jawigweonui seongnip baegyeonge gwanhan sogo [Tracing the Origins of the Establishment of the Right to Collective Self-Defense]," *Beophakyeongu* 22 (2006); Yeong-jun Park, "Ilbon abe jeongbuui botonggunsagukgahwa pyeongga: gukgaanbojeollyakseo, jipdanjeok jawigweon, miilgaideurain, anbobeopjee daehan jonghapjeok ihae [Evaluating the Abe Government's Efforts to Become a Normal Military State: Comprehensive Understanding of the State Security Strategy Paper, Right to Collective Self-Defense, US-Japanese Guidelines, and Security Legislation]," *Aseayeongu* 58, no. 4 (2015).

[2] The LDP's Hatoyama Cabinet established in 2009 was an important political experiment for Japan, bringing an end to fifty-four years of the 1955 system. However, Kan soon ascended to the prime ministership over the Futenma Base relocation issue. This is the latest case revealing the importance of the base-state for the US-Japan alliance. Jin-pil Su, "Hatoyama naegage isseo hutenma giji banhwan munjewa miiranbochejeui jaeinsik [The Hatoyama Cabinet, Futenma Base Relocation Issue, and Redefinition of the US-Japan Security Regime]," *Sahoewa yeoksa* 92 (2011). Perhaps the Hatoyama Cabinet was the first in the postwar period to approach US-Japan relations from the position of a pacifist state, not a base-state.

points out, skepticism regarding the "pacifist state" even within the pacifist camp, a staunch supporter of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, can be understood in the same context. Although Japan has never directly dispatched any of its own military troops under the pacifist constitution, has not Okinawa served as the base for dispatching countless American troops to Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq for the last seventy years? As Morris-Suzuki argues, Japan has done more than enough to fulfill its role as a base-state of the United States.

Article 9 nonetheless maintains an important symbolic meaning. The author's argument is that, in order to understand its limitations, it is necessary to view post-war Japan as a "base-state." Unlike past treaties with the United Kingdom or the Philippines, which loaned out land for American bases, the US opted to 'render the entire sovereign territory of Japan an outpost for potential military operations.' This configuration differs little from that outlined in the US-Korea Mutual Defense Treaty, except that Korea possesses its own military forces while Japan does not.

II. A Base-State Shaped by Shared Internal and External Interests

The focus of the author with respect to the Korean War is not Korea but Japan. As scholars commonly describe, even before the Chinese communist victory in 1949, America had initiated the "reverse course" rendering Japan the most important territory in the Cold War in East Asia. Both the United States and Soviet Union expressed an interest in Japan following its defeat in the Pacific War, but the Soviet Union lacked any pretext to begin a war in Japan, and thus war ultimately came to the Korean Peninsula instead.

Although the war was located in Korea, it was Japan most transformed by it. With the outbreak of the war, Japan was transformed into a base-state as US troops stationed therein were dispatched to the Korean peninsula. On the evening of June twenty-sixth, 1950, President

Truman ordered General MacArthur to dispatch the American Air Force and Navy to Korea. Out of the eight armies stationed in Japan, MacArthur mobilized the 24th Infantry Division in Kokura. By June twenty-eighth, bombing by the Far Eastern Air Force had begun on the peninsula. Over the course of the war, the fifteen airports in Japan were converted into bases for these operations. Task Force Smith, which would fall into disarray after a series of defeats by North Korean troops, was dispatched to the front line on July first from Kyushu.

By January thirty-first, 1953, as the war wound down to its final stages, the number of American bases in Japan had reached 733. In spatial terms, these bases occupied about 0.378 percent of Japanese territory, amounting to roughly half of the space formerly occupied by Japanese troops. The size of naval training areas at sea, furthermore, rivaled the size of Kyushu. Therein, it was Okinawa that was undoubtedly the greatest subject of transformation.[3] Over the course of the war, Japanese territory provided the launching point for over 720,000 US Air Force and 160,000 US Navy sorties. Deployment of Napalm and other incendiaries amounted to 476,000 tons by the air force and 22,000 tons by the Marine Corps and Naval aircraft. If such statistics alone are not convincing, one may observe the fact that the United States refrained from deploying nuclear weapons in Japan based on the fear of Soviet

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[3] Since Okinawa was not returned to Japan it until 1971, there is in fact room for doubt as to its direct relationship with the formation of the base-state. At the Cairo Conference in late 1943, the United States went as far as to sound out whether the Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek had any intentions of directly controlling Okinawa. See Byeong-jun Jeong, "Kairohoedamui hanguk munje nonuiwa kairoseoneon hangukjohangui jakseong gwajeong [Discussion of the Korean Problem at the Cairo Conference and the Drawing Up of Clauses Pertaining to the Korean Problem in the Cairo Declaration]," *Yeoksabipyeong* 107 (2014). Had the United States not experienced a financial and economic crisis in the late 1960s, it is possible it would have continued to exercise authority over Okinawa long past 1971. This conjecture suggests the utmost importance of Okinawa to American military strategy. Even while it was closely connected with bases within sovereign Japanese territory, then, there is room for doubt with respect to the direct relationship between Okinawa and the formation of the base-state.

retaliation against Japan.[4]

It is here the book's most important contribution is brought into relief. The formation of the base-state in Japan cannot be understood in relation to American policy alone. Japanese politicians and intellectuals were not complacent with respect to the Korean War, but endeavored to harness it for the achievement of their own interests. In other words, Japanese society was not an idle observer of the Korean War; it sought ways to use it to its advantage. Broadly speaking, this process dovetailed with US policy toward Asia. Narrowly speaking, it was in tune with US policy toward Japan. Overall, it was the most important impetus in the formation of the Japanese base-state.

Prime Minister Yoshida dispatched a special envoy to the United States recommending the establishment of American bases in Japan even before the outbreak of the Korean War. Regardless of the intention of the United States to use Japan as a base for military operations, then, without voices in Japan advocating a "Meiji without military" through the establishment of American military bases, the formation of the base-state would have been impossible. Furthermore, civilian politicians believed that the dissolution of the military would serve to 'cut out the political cancer that was the military.' Shall we say perhaps that American military presence was the answer to a "daring, unutterable prayer"?

Recalling this period, US ambassador to Japan Robert D. Murphy recorded in his memoirs, 'The Japanese have turned four of their islands into a single, great supply depot with a startling speed,' and, 'America would not have been able to conduct the war in Korea if not for Japan.' 'The Japanese,' he further noted, 'received neither demand nor approval to assist the war effort. But Japanese shipbuilding and railroad experts went to Korea along with their entourages and worked under the command of the Americans and the United Nations.'

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[4] http://www.pressian.com/news/article.html?no=63337, accessed August 14th, 2016.

The Korean War was also an important turning point for Japanese companies responsible for war crimes during the Pacific War. The "Big Five" and "Big Nine," including companies like Nippon Tire, Fuji Motors, and Nippon Steel Tubing, were important contributors of supplies to the American war effort, and following the war, played a major role in the revival of the Japanese economy. Of particular note was the resurrection of the Japanese military industry with resumption of weapons production. Ishii Mitsujirō, who was banned from public office from 1947 to 1950, recorded the following in his diary:

> This is divine redemption. Stock prices have risen. Shipments of coal to Joseon have been set at ten thousand tons per month. Remaining stockpiles have been put in order. The United States anticipates it will spend the greater part of its personnel budget, 300 million US dollars, in Japan. The unemployment issue has been solved. And the crackdown on the communist party and reinforcement of police strength was carried out without us even having to ask.

Meanwhile, special procurement generated other benefits for businessman on the frontline, acting as the "fair wind" subduing worker unrest and ensuring their fidelity to business activities. It is said that the enterprise unions celebrated for several days upon receiving their year-end bonuses.

III. The Origin of the Drive to Become a Normal State

Alignment around the idea of becoming a normal state in Japan following the outbreak of the Korean War played a decisive role in reviving right-wing and military forces involved in past war crimes, who advocated for militarization as a reaction against the formation of a base-state in Japan. Playing an important role for the United States, which required Japan as a base of operations in the war against communism, the

opportunity for the rightists/militarists previously barred from politics to reemerge throughout Japanese society came to fruition under American occupation and amid democratization.

The United States required the counsel of those who had operated behind the scenes in Korea during the colonial period. Meanwhile, these forces also had a useful role to play in stemming the mounting cries of left-wing communists in post-war Japan. Also in terms of American interests, the assistance of the old rightists/militarists was required to suppress Korean residents in Japan (*zainichi*), who were identified as a specific latent threat to Japanese society. Relatedly, the rightists played a core role in implementing the so-called "red purge." They particularly lent a hand in manipulating the discovery that the Soviet Union was directing the Japanese communist party through documents pertaining to the establishment of revolutionary organs and the operation of a revolutionary movement. This incident provided an important pretext for the suppression of the communists.

Less than four months into the war, more than ten thousand deportees were repatriated to Japan. By 1951, among more than 210,000 deportees from the public sector, 201,508 were repatriated. As a result, organizations revolving around the old rightist/militarist forces became ubiquitous around this time, justified by the "urgent demand for true patriots in political leadership in the name of defending against the communist plot." This logic was no different from the one that saw collaborators restored to positions of power in Korea following liberation from Japan.

Among these forces were also extremist, anti-American nationalists as well as advocates of pan-Asianism. Meanwhile, there were those appealing for rearmament among the socialists as well. While such groups were prevented from moving into the mainstream by realists on the right portraying cooperation with the United States as inevitable and opponents of rearmament on the left, they have nonetheless been able to consistently voice their own particular brands of reasoning during times

of crisis. More recently, with the rise of China becoming a pressing issue, they have asserted their views once again. Thus, these perceptions constitute one of the axes around which the current debates over normalization pivot.

The movements and arguments of left-wing communists around the time of the Korean War are also worthy of note. While this group was largely suppressed by the red purge, they were able to gather support in Japan after the war as the mood in Japanese society became partial to peace. Therein, the author's historical analysis of the role of Korean residents in Japan as a vanguard in the left-wing movement is also particularly striking. The author describes how cooperation between the Japanese communist party and Korean residents in opposing the Korean War led to the founding of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan as well as the attempted communist resistance movement.

A more important attempt, however, is the one by the author to elucidate the origins of the pacifist discourse in Japanese civil society currently opposed to normalization. If those supporting normalization are on one side, then pacifist discourse can be said to be on the other. Proponents of this discourse were an instrumental force behind the three principles of peace—comprehensive peace, non-aligned neutrality, and opposition to the base-state—delineated during the Korean War. This line of argument has formed an important basis for social discourse since the advent of the 1955 regime, compelling even the conservative government to uphold Article 9 of the Constitution as a national ideology and adhere to such principles behind the prohibition weapons exports, anti-nuclearism, maintaining levels of military spending at below one percent of GNP, and maintaining an exclusively defensive security policy.

Naturally, this argument also contained decisive limitations. Japan had begun to engage in war in Korea. It had resumed weapons production in provisioning the US military. Finally, the American base-state had already taken root. In this reality, positions such as 'US-alliance neutrality' and 'opposition to the formation of a military base-state'

amounted to little more than idealistic slogans. Indeed, perhaps they even served to veil the eyes of the Japanese people. To borrow the words of the author, proponents of the pacifist discourse 'turned a blind eye to one aspect of a complicated reality.'

With the old rightists/militarists revived on the one hand and proponents of pacifist discourse idealistically masking reality on the other, perhaps the citizens of Japan fulfilled the conditions favorable to the establishment of the "base-state," a topic discussed in the book's eighth chapter. In reality, while a sense of crisis due to the outbreak of the Korean War might have compelled a nationwide consensus with respect to the formation of a base-state, the social solidarity underlying this consensus rested on the basis of the opposing political factions that would become the two most important social and political forces in Japan. As a result, the movements of the extreme right and extreme left endeavoring to dismantle the base-state were unable to attain societal support. Even while public discourse regarding constitutional reform has gathered momentum in post-Cold War Japan, the fact that public support for maintaining US-Japan security and the Self-Defense Force remains as strong as ever aptly demonstrates this point.

IV. Whither Japan?

As the discussion thus far has shown, in *The Birth of the Base-State*, by elucidating the "uniqueness" of the Japanese state emerging in and around the time of the Korean War, Gi-jeong Nam demonstrates how to understand not only the past but also the future of Japan. Thus, the last sub-sections of the book are entitled "From Base-State to Normal State" and "Japanese Normalization as an East Asian Problem." In these sections, the author evaluates the armistice system formed in the wake of the Korean War. Not limited to the Korean peninsula, he argues, this is more an "East Asian ceasefire system," which Japan is also subject to as a base-state.[5]

The author also proposes a way to resolve this system, stating, "Normalization under the current ceasefire agreement system cannot resolve the contradictions of the base-state. It can only make them more pronounced." In fact, by opting to become a base-state rather than reemerge as a military power, Japan ensured the 'institutionalization of the ceasefire agreement system,' which, according to Nam, constituted a 'veiled check against the relapse into war.' Here, the author also provides discerning historical insight into the 'long Sino-Japanese War.' He warns that, 'coinciding with the clamorous cries of proactive pacifism,' the Abe government's drive toward becoming a normal military state 'may ultimately exacerbate the possibility of war.'

In this respect, the book is decidedly unique compared with existing studies of Japan since the San Francisco Treaty, which neglect to consider the greater East Asian context. The author explores Japan's postwar past, it's present, and future not only in terms of US-Japan relations but also in terms of China-Japan and Korea-Japan relations. Accordingly, the author notes in the introduction that the drive for normalization within Japan began with the 'resurrection of the conflictive structure of China-Japan relations,' but progressed in earnest with the emergence of the North Korean nuclear issue.[6]

Additionally, while the author does not seriously deal with this subject in the body of the text, there were internal elements constituting the basic drive behind drastic changes in Japanese society. In order to

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[5] Rather than "ceasefire," the reviewer considers "armistice" to be the more accurate term. Tae Gyun Park, "Jeongjeonhyeopjeonginga, hyujeonjeopjeonginga [Armistice or Ceasefire?]," *Yeoksabipyeong* 73 (2005); Bo-yeong Kim, "Jeongjeonhyeopjeonggwa pyeonghwahyeopjeong, yeoksajeok maengnakgwa uimi [The Historical Context and Meaning of the Armistice and the Peace Treaty]," *Naeireul yeoneun yeoksa* 61 (2015).

[6] The author illustrates the interplay between North Korean representative Yeong-su's Park's "sea of fire remark" at the North-South working level talks in March 1994, American plans to attack the Yeongbyeon nuclear facilities during the first North Korean nuclear crisis, and the proposal and advancement of the argument that Japan become a normal state aroused by the publication of Ozawa Ichiro's report, "Ilbongaejogyehoek [Plan for Remodeling Japan]" in 1993.

understand current and future conditions in Japan, the author writes in the book's opening pages, one must examine changes and threat perception within Japanese society:

> The year 1995, marking fifty years since the end of the war, began with the shock of the Great Hanshin Earthquake. Soon after, the Tokyo subway sarin gas attack perpetrated by members of Aum Shinrikyo in March engendered harsh criticism of the Japanese state and leadership vis-à-vis its ability to prevent disasters and maintain public order. Those critical of this perspective found fault with the limitations of a pacifist state. This was but the first half of 1995. In September, the rape of a young girl by American soldiers in Okinawa sent the entire island into a furor. American bases concentrated in Okinawa exposed the reality of Japan's continued peace, and the residents of Okinawa began to proclaim the hypocrisy of the 'pacifist state.' Thus, the limitations and hypocrisy of the pacifist state were simultaneously revealed in 1995. Confronting this reality, on the one hand, some referred to the failure of the pacifist state, and on the other, some demanded its true realization.[7]

This understanding of Japanese society suggests that the base-state was not merely imposed upon Japan from without but was the product of the links between external policy and internal interests. Moreover, it discloses two distinct discourses taking form as a result, which have continued to function as the basis of social discourse in Japan ever since. Thus, the author demonstrates why a comprehensive approach, rather than a specialized disciplinary one, is more effective for analyzing the

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[7] This sense of crisis seems only to have sharpened as of late. Any attempt by the reviewer, admittedly not a Japan specialist, will likely be inadequate, but it appears that recent economic stagnation, or the "lost twenty years," and the surging sense of crisis caused by the Tōhoku earthquake in Tsunami occurring in 2011 also need to be taken into account in order to analyze the current state of Japanese society. Only in this manner might one understand both the ruptures and continuities of the past seventy years.

formation of the Japanese base-state. Even though the book appears a study of international politics, it also encompasses elements of conceptual and intellectual history, while applying an empirical methodology.

This book is useful insofar as it allows a more thorough understanding of Japan. It seems somewhat regrettable, however, that analysis of Korean issues is not more fully developed. Attention is given to threat perceptions in China and North Korea regarding Korea-Japan relations and the role of Korean residents in Japan in the formation of postwar social discourse, but there is a need for more concrete analysis of the relationship between the armistice system on the Korean peninsula and Japan than that presented in the conclusion. Considering in particular that the author puts forward this issue in the conclusion, explaining the entanglement between Japan, Korea—another a base state—and the armistice system operative on the Korean peninsula for the past sixty-three years would help to clarify his argument.

Furthermore, an investigation of how Japanese perceptions of China-Japan relations have changed in the post-war era might also provide a meaningful avenue for understanding its social discourse and consensus. After all, while threat perception regarding China has admittedly existed in Japan since the medieval era, there have been a considerable number of other perceptions as well. Knowledge of these differing perceptions and how they vary by era can also be useful for understanding the dynamics of the East Asian international order, long characterized by the conflictive structure of the Sino-Japanese War.

This book is necessary to understand contemporary Japanese society. This is especially true with regard to Korea, where civil society often fails to see beyond its own parochial point of view. From a Korean perspective, there are times when it is difficult to understand the pacifists as much as there are times when it is difficult to understand the old right/militarists. Occasionally, the position of the rightists actually accords well with Korean interests. Meanwhile, the so-called progressive pacifist

position sometimes feels little different from that of the old right/militarists. Nam's book sets the stage for understanding exactly why this is the case. That is the book's virtue.