

Boei Chuzai-kan to iu Ninmu: 38-dosen no Gunji Interijensu [Duties of a Defense Attaché: Military Intelligence of the 38th Parallel]

Fukuyama Takashi, (Wanibooks Plus, 2012), 252 pp., illustrations, photographs.

Reviewed by Stephen C. Mercado

Japanese journalists writing about intelligence can catch one's attention, but truly worth a read is a Japanese general who draws back the curtain on his duties as defense attaché in Seoul and calls for ending Tokyo's postwar "semi-independent" status by developing Japanese intelligence capabilities.¹² In this book, perhaps intended for publication during the 60th anniversary of the Korean War, a retired general contributes to the literature of Japanese intelligence by recalling his tour of duty in Seoul and explaining what a Japanese defense attaché does, which turns out not to be too different from the work of US military attachés. In advocating greater Japanese independence from the United States through intelligence and military power, the book is the latest in a growing number of works on intelligence in recent years by retired Japanese professionals who show unease over what they present to Japanese readers as Tokyo's disadvantage in intelligence compared to other major powers, especially in light of the security risks they perceive Tokyo faces in the region.

Apart from the importance of its message about Japanese security policy, this book is valuable for the details the former military attaché offers concerning a career largely spent in military intelligence. Written in straightforward Japanese and unburdened by complex endnotes and academic jargon, the book should be readily accessible to those with a good command of

the language. For those without the language skill, the summary offered below may be worthwhile.

An officer of the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) and a graduate of Japan's National Defense Academy (NDA), Fukuyama served as defense attaché in Seoul from 1990 to 1993. He also directed the Ground Staff Office (GSO) 2nd Intelligence Division (Foreign Intelligence) and became the first chief of the Directorate for Imagery in the Defense Intelligence Headquarters (DIH). Outside intelligence, he commanded the 32nd GSDF Infantry Regiment in decontaminating the Tokyo subway system after terrorists killed a dozen people and injured thousands with sarin gas on 20 March 1995.³ He ended his career in 2005 as the chief of staff of the GSDF Western Army, with the rank of lieutenant general. He then spent two years at the Harvard University Asia Center as a visiting researcher before parachuting into Japan's private sector as a corporate executive.

The Security Concerns. Fukuyama prefaces his book by analyzing current events of key importance to Japanese security—those pertaining to the Korean peninsula and Japan's southern islands. Of concern in the first case is Pyongyang under the leadership of the inexperienced Kim Jong-un. The author sees a threat that the People's Republic of China (PRC) in time will take over the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) like a "second Tibet." Fukuyama turns to Jap-

¹ Names of Japanese and Koreans are written in this review in conventional order (given name following family name). Apart from Seoul, Korean names in this review are rendered in the conventional McCune-Reischauer system, minus the diacritic marks.

² For example, former Kyodo News Agency Washington Bureau Chief Haruna Mikio has written extensively on the CIA, NSA, and other US intelligence organs, including a two-volume history of alleged CIA activities against Japan, *Himitsu no Fairu* (2003). See my review, "A Japanese View of the CIA," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 182–85.

³ Fukuyama wrote of that in "*Chikatetsu Sarin Jiken*" *Senki* ["Subway Sarin Incident" Battle Record] (Kojinsha, 2009).

anese history in likening the young Korean leader and the “regents” around him, including his uncle Jang Song-thaek, to the doomed child warlord Hideyori and the regents put in place at the end of the 16th century by his dying father to guarantee his succession as Japan’s ruler.⁴ The author also worries about the security threat to Japan’s many small islands that extend south from Kyushu to the disputed Senkaku islets. With shrinking Japanese resident populations and a rising China challenging Japanese territorial claims, the author proposes securing the area by promoting tourism, settling the islands with soldiers and militia, and hiring mercenaries. Turning to foreign security corporations, he suggests with sarcasm, would not be too different from Tokyo’s general reliance on Washington for defense.

The Route to Becoming a Defense Attaché. In the first chapter, the author defines what a defense attaché is and recalls how he became one. He touches on the problems of postwar Japanese defense attachés operating overseas with meager resources and under the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)—military attachés of Imperial Japan acted independently of the diplomats and enjoyed far greater resources. Fukuyama writes of how his path to Seoul passed through Columbus, Georgia. After graduating from the NDA, he studied English at the GSDF Intelligence School⁵ before entering the US Army’s Infantry Officer Basic Course at Ft. Benning. Sent later to the Security Division of the MFA North American Bureau, he came to a professional fork in the road when given the choice of serving as defense attaché in Cairo or Seoul. With his wife preferring to stay nearer to their children, whom they would leave in Tokyo for their education, Fukuyama chose Korea over Egypt.

In the Attaché Corps. In the second chapter, Fukuyama recalls how he prepared for Seoul and what he did

once there. In 1988, he returned to the GSDF Intelligence School to study Korean for a year, followed by further training specific to his assignment. His readings included materials on military attachés of Imperial Japan. He found of particular interest the memoir of Onodera Yurie, wife and code clerk of the famous military attaché Maj. Gen. Onodera Makoto, in which she described their service at Baltic posts from the latter half of the 1930s until the end of the Second World War.⁶

Fukuyama also studied current materials, compiled by the GSDF Central Intelligence Service Unit and other sources, regarding the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) and the DPRK’s Korean People’s Army (KPA). Once in Seoul, he gathered intelligence and reported to Tokyo, acting on oral and written taskings from the Defense Agency’s Internal Bureau, the staff offices of the three military services, and elsewhere. He watched for signs of collapse from Pyongyang and indications of Seoul and Washington’s responses, and he planned for the evacuation from Korea of Japanese residents.⁷ He spent much of his time shepherding visiting Japanese VIPs, drinking heavily with his Korean hosts, and seeking intelligence from them on local golf courses.

The author devotes his third chapter to a defense attaché’s military duties in general and his in particular. In his last year in Seoul, he led the defense attaché corps at the request of his Korean hosts. He writes of an ROK military official urging him to take the position rather than leave it to the US defense attaché, whom the Korean described as uncooperative. Fukuyama recalls speaking at military events in Korean, with a Korean-American assistant defense attaché interpreting his remarks into English. Responding to critics in the corps who thought he should have spoken in English, Fukuyama writes that his aim was to please his hosts, not foreign military officers.

⁴ The warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi brought Japan’s warring states under his rule but died when his son Hideyori was still a child. Before his death he had his most dangerous rivals swear loyalty and agree to serve as a council of regents to protect his son, but the warlord Tokugawa Ieyasu outmaneuvered the others and destroyed the Toyotomi clan to rule Japan as shogun.

⁵ Fukuyama describes the GSDF Intelligence School as the postwar version of the Imperial Japanese Army’s Nakano School for intelligence officers and commandos. For more on the Nakano School, see my book, *The Shadow Warriors of Nakano* (Brassey’s, 2002).

⁶ Her memoir, *Baruto-kai no Hotori ni te: Bukan no Tsuma no Daitoa Senso* [By the Baltic Sea: A Military Attaché’s Wife and the Greater East Asian War], first appeared in print in 1985, with publisher Kyodo Tsushinsha releasing an updated version in 2005. A Stockholm publisher produced a Swedish translation in 1993, and a German academic society in Tokyo put out a German translation in 1999. See also a review of her book in the *Journal of Intelligence History* 2, no. 2 (Winter 2002), at <http://www.intelligence-history.org/reviews2-2.htm#Yuriko>.

⁷ At the end of the Cold War, analysts and policymakers in Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo had doubts that the Pyongyang regime would survive the Soviet Union’s end and the PRC’s opening to the West.

Assessments of Relationships. In his third chapter, Fukuyama offers the reader several candid assessments. Writing that the GSDF and the ROKA share “common DNA,” i.e., both trace their roots to the Imperial Japanese Army, he opines that Japan’s military is a better model than the US Army for the ROKA. He recalls a colonel from United States Forces Korea (USFK) telling him, “We are watching Korea every minute,” as well as a British colonel remarking to him that the US Army sends officers to the ROK Military Academy to develop intelligence sources. Both comments are part of a section on US monitoring of ROK internal developments, including the oft-told tales of Washington detecting and halting Seoul’s secret nuclear weapon program and of the CIA saving the life of dissident (and later president) Kim Tae-jung after the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) abducted him in Tokyo.

Fukuyama also worries that Washington’s planned transfer of wartime operational command from USFK to the ROKA in 2015 could raise doubts about the US security commitment and, consequently, encourage Seoul to hedge its bets by forging an alliance with Beijing. He follows this with a section on Korean anti-American sentiment. Fukuyama concludes that, given its proximity to China, and its long history of subordination to the Middle Kingdom, the ROK “over time is certainly going to fall under Chinese influence.”

Intelligence Gathering. Fukuyama’s fourth chapter covers the spy scandal that erupted in Seoul on the heels of his departure in June 1993. Korean authorities arrested, tried, and sentenced to prison an ROK military intelligence officer, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Ko Yong-chol, and Fuji Television Seoul Bureau Chief Shinohara Masato after Shinohara published (in Japan) classified information given him by Ko. The Korean press depicted Fukuyama as the controller of the arrested men. He admits that he received information from Shinohara during his customary trading of information

with Japanese reporters in Seoul,⁸ whom he calls his “comrades in arms” in gathering information on the Korean “front line.”⁹ Denying any active role and claiming to have met Ko only once before his arrest, Fukuyama describes the incident as part of an effort by then President Kim Yong-sam—newly in office as the first civilian to hold that post after decades of military dictatorships—to use the civilian Agency for National Security Planning (NSP) to purge the military of threats to his administration.¹⁰ Fukuyama concludes his case by noting that he later received in Tokyo the ROK Order of National Security Merit in recognition of his work as defense attaché and that the Japanese MFA and Defense Agency’s Internal Bureau judged that he had acted within the bounds of his position.

In this chapter, the author also writes on how to gather intelligence in Seoul. For starters, Korean and English are useful tools. Eliciting information from ROK officials and fellow defense attachés by provoking debates and listening carefully to their responses is a sound method. The “power of alcohol” in loosening tongues has been known for years; hard drinking is the norm among Korean officials, and not a day passed without Fukuyama drinking as part of his work as defense attaché. He considers meeting officials by scheduled appointments as the best way to gather intelligence without raising the suspicions of counter-intelligence (CI) officers. Assuming his telephone conversations monitored, he would speak at length in ways to put ROK CI at ease.

The Intelligence Deficit. Near the end of the fourth chapter and in his afterword, Fukuyama complains of an intelligence deficit with the United States and calls for developing Japanese intelligence capabilities to make Japan less dependent on the United States. He recalls a meeting with a USFK J-2 in which he felt a “sixth sense” that USFK had been watching him—he suspected the United States had decrypted his cables to Tokyo as part of what he assumes is a general

⁸ Fukuyama describes Shinohara as well-read in history and military affairs, an accurate description for a journalist who has written several military histories of Imperial Japan and has served for some years as a director on the board of the Clausewitz Society of Japan (www.clausewitz-jp.com).

⁹ Japanese reporters, either “loyal to their embassy comrade” or simply acting in line with guidance from above, merely repeated Korean accounts of the incident, conducting no investigations of their own and obscuring Fukuyama’s identity by reporting him only as “F.”

¹⁰ Fukuyama’s description of Ko’s arrest as part of President Kim’s campaign of using the civilian NSP (first known as the KCIA, now the National Intelligence Service) against the military follows Ko’s own account in a book published in Japan: *Kitachosen Tokushu Butai: Paektusan 3-go Sakusen* [North Korea’s Special Forces: Operation Paektusan No. 3] (Kodansha, 2007). Ko in recent years has built a new career as an expert in intelligence and Korean affairs. In another work, he joined popular former Japanese MFA analyst Sato Masaru in penning *Kokka Joho Senryaku* [National Intelligence Strategy] (Kodansha, 2007).

practice of intercepting Japanese communications. He likens the situation to Washington examining Tokyo with an electron microscope while Tokyo squints through a telescope at its ally. For Fukuyama, the intelligence imbalance makes Japan a US “poodle” rather than a partner. In his afterword, he argues that Japan remains today in a “semi-independent” state due

to the postwar constitution and bilateral security alliance with the United States. Fukuyama calls for revising the constitution to make clear the military’s role in defending the nation and for “establishing powerful intelligence organs” as “minimum conditions” to make Japan more independent.