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**Masters Research Report**

**Title: *Japan-North Korea Relations: Major Issues, Future Prospects and the Impact on East Asian Security***

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**Abstract:**

This research report attempts to analyse the current relationship between Japan and North Korea by looking at the major issues that persist between the two countries and the future prospects for the normalisation of relations. This is done within the larger context of the North Korean nuclear issue and regional security as a whole. The analysis of this topic is done using the theory of Balance-of-Threat within Neo-Realist International Relations theory. This report focuses on the key features that currently define the Japanese-North Korean relationship, namely Japan's fixation on the issue of the kidnapping of Japanese citizens by North Korea in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as the perceived threat of North Korean missiles - a fear justified by the missile tests of 1998, 2006 and 2009. These issues form the basis for analysing their relationship within the Six Party Talks and how the negotiating style of each country has worked to undermine progress on the nuclear issue. This report also aims to give insight into the administrations and policies of the current leadership in Japan and North Korea. It looks at North Korea's transition to the leadership of Kim Jong-un and examines his policies and possible future directions. It then looks at the recent election of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the possible directions that his policies will take in the future with regards to North Korea. Finally this report looks at the areas of possible cooperation between Japan and North Korea and how overlooked elements may hold the key to improving their troubled relationship.