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Review paper

## **HOW COULD JAPAN-CHINA RELATIONS BE STABILIZED?**

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*Abstract:* Japan-China relations enter a new “Two Giants” era, unprecedented in the history of East Asia. Multi-dimensional interdependence between Japan and China has been proceeding rapidly as one of the most positive factors in terms of pushing forward the bilateral relationship for the long run. However, emotions among the public from the two sides are problematic and uncertain, and it is crucial to investigate how to “normalize” people-to-people emotions. Contingency events, which tend to lead to inward-looking, and to narrow nationalism, always undermine Japan-China relations. The “Nationalization” crisis in 2012 is one of the typical cases from which the two nations should absorb the lessons deliberately. A lack of facts and truthful information, failure of diplomatic communication, simultaneously rising nationalism and declining governance capability and transforming power balance in the Asia-Pacific region created the crisis over the uninhabited islands. How Japan and China can overcome these dilemmas and manage the complicated bilateral relationship more effectively? Beyond continuously promoting multi-dimensional interdependence, the two sides have to establish channels and mechanisms of crisis management in order to avoid the bilateral relationship being constantly threatened by the occurrence of contingency events and rampant, irresponsible nationalism.

*Key words:* Japan-China relations, Diplomacy, Interdependence, Emotions, Contingency Events, Nationalization, New era.

### **JAPAN-CHINA RELATIONS ENTER A NEW ERA**

In the course of human history, East Asia has never faced a situation in which two strong, economically powerful nations have coexisted simultaneously. In the

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ancient era, China was one of the strongest powers in the world; during that extended time, Japan as the weaker side implemented tributary diplomacy toward China. China was strong, Japan was weak.

After the end of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Japan began to exceed China in the balance of power. The Meiji Restoration had prompted Japan to push forward with modernization, and eventually, China was defeated by Japan and subsequently failed in its Hundred Days Reform of 1898.

With Japan's rise and fall before and after World War II, both domestically and internationally, and especially after the collapse of the Cold War and the bubble economy in Japan, and China's acceleration of its Reform and Opening policy instituted by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, East Asia seems to have gradually but explicitly entered what might be called a "Two Giants Era." The dynamic, uncertain rise of China and the relative, actual decline of Japan at the early stage of the 21st century have reshaped the general power structure of East Asia.

At the same time, this new structure has undermined the Japan-China bilateral relationship and also destabilized the entire East Asia region in recent years. Narrow, emotional and inward-looking nationalism on the part of both China and Japan is rising. Particularly when contingency events happen in some sensitive areas between Japan and China, politicians and even conservative intellectuals in the two nations have dangerously tended to "compromise" with hyper-populist opinion among the public, especially on the Internet.

Now Japan-China relations have entered a new stage. How the governments and citizens of each nation communicate and perceive each other in the Two Giants Era, maximize their own national interests, and contribute to regional peace and prosperity is an essential issue. This is the challenge of the 21st century for Japan and China.

2018 marked the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of peace and friendship between Japan and China. The governments of both sides would have been wise to try as much as possible to make a point of the mutual importance of this year. For Japan, 2019 is an imperial transition year. With the ending of the Heisei era, Japan is entering a new era in terms of its domestic politics.<sup>2</sup> For China, this is the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Under these circumstances, the two sides must inevitably concentrate on coping with

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<sup>2</sup> On April 1, the Japanese government announced the name of the new imperial era - "Reiwa" which represents a break with centuries of tradition as the first era name to have been inspired by a Japanese, rather than a Chinese work of classical literature. The characters are taken from *Man'yōshū*, the oldest existing collection of Japanese poetry, compiled sometime after 759. It also means the Abe administration tends to make a point of Japan's own tradition, culture and history which might be somehow controversial in the international community.

domestic affairs. It would thus be beneficial for the countries to try to have deliberate stances on management of the bilateral relationship, to avoid any confrontations in sensitive areas such as the territorial problem over the Senkaku Islands, the historical problem, as well as a couple of geopolitical issues concerning the South China Sea, the Taiwan Strait and the Korean peninsula.

Given the ups and downs of the bilateral relationship in the past, strategic stability can be realized on the basis of political stability and positive interactions among the high-ranking leaders. In 2018, Li Keqiang conducted the first state visit to Japan by a Chinese premier in seven years; in return, Shinzo Abe reciprocated with the first state visit to China by a Japanese prime minister in seven years as well. The reciprocal state visits could be described as a milestone in such a historically important year for the bilateral relationship. And in 2019, a highly anticipated political event will see Chinese President Xi Jinping conducting a state visit to Japan – the first such visit by a Chinese president in eleven years. These interactions between top leaders will absolutely influence the overall relationship between China and Japan, enabling them to play constructive roles in terms of maintaining regional stability and prosperity.

### **THREE PILLARS OF FUTURE JAPAN-CHINA RELATIONS**

What are the driving forces which could promote Japan-China relations in the long run even though the bilateral relationship would still inevitably encounter a series of critical problems or even crises, in terms of territory, history, as well as the competition as rivals under the “Two Giants” era? Three pillars could be pointed out and discussed to interpret the future discourse of Japan-China relations.

First, China and Japan have basically pushed forward their mutual relationship in a positive direction since normalizing their diplomatic relationship in 1972. Multi-dimensional interdependence could be shaped as a symbolic context for bilateral relations. According to the working report launched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2018), in 2017, the total amount of trade between Japan and China amounted to 297 billion U.S. dollars (+9.8%)<sup>3</sup>; Japan’s foreign direct investment (FDI) toward China amounted to 3.3 billion U.S. dollars (+5.1%)<sup>4</sup>; in total, 32,349 Japanese companies have registered and launched business initiatives in mainland China<sup>5</sup>; in addition, 7,360,000 tourists

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<sup>3</sup> For Japan, China has been the largest trade partner and for China, Japan has been the second largest trade partner since the largest one has been the United States.

<sup>4</sup> For China, Japan has been the third largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI), No.1, No.2 and No.4 have been Singapore, South Korea and the United States respectively.

<sup>5</sup> The number of Japanese companies registered in China mainland has been the largest over the years, No. 2 and No. 3 have been the United States and India according to the statistical data in October 2017.

from mainland China visited Japan.<sup>6</sup> Obviously, China and Japan have been deepening economic interdependence over the last two decades, while, as this article discusses and argues, China has recently shown territorial ambitions and initiated disputes with Japan. This runs contrary to the commercial liberal literature that argues that trade promotes peace. On the other hand, the realist theory also does not fully explain Sino-Japanese relations because Sino-Japanese relations are not always in conflict. (Takeuchi, 2013)

In spite of this complexity, ‘Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests’, the initiative launched by the two governments in 2006, should become a principle for the two countries. The initiative was elevated to a Joint Statement, which was defined as ‘the 4<sup>th</sup> political document’<sup>7</sup> between Japan and China during former Chinese President Hu Jintao’s state visit to Japan in May 2008 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2008). In this historic document, the two sides recognized that the Japan-China relationship was one of the most important bilateral relationships for both countries and that Japan and China now have great influence on and bear a solemn responsibility for peace, stability and development of the Asia-Pacific region and the world. More importantly, the two sides recognized that they are partners who cooperate together and are not a threat to each other. It also stated that they would support each other’s peaceful development, and they shared the conviction that Japan and China that uphold the course of peaceful development, would bring great opportunities and benefits to Asia and the world (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2008).

It has been undoubtedly difficult for Japan and China not to recognize each other as a threat. On the one hand, the Chinese government and citizens always see Japan, which invaded China during World War II, as a sort of threat as well as being cautious on any potential resurgence of Japanese “militarism”. On the other

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<sup>6</sup> The number of Chinese tourists to Japan rose up to 8 million and thirty-five thousand in 2018. Regarding the number of tourists between Japan and mainland China, the number of the Chinese who visits Japan exceeded the number of the Japanese who visits China for the first time in 2014. For examples, in 2012, more than three million Japanese visited China while about one million Chinese visited China. Arguably, the reasons why the number of Chinese tourists who visit Japan has rapidly increased are related to (1) the Japanese government has loosened the VISA policy toward Chinese tourists under the Abe Administration which was established in December 2012; (2) the Abe administration has made a point of tourism in order to boost its economy; (3) the Chinese citizens have strengthened purchasing powers over the years.

<sup>7</sup> The other three political documents between Japan and China are: (1) the Joint Communique of the Government of Japan and the Government of China issued on September 29, 1972, (2) the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and China signed on August 12, 1978, and (3) the Japan-China Joint Declaration issued on November 26, 1998. These documents have been the political foundation for advancing the Japan-China relationship in a stable fashion and forging the future of the relationship.

hand, the Japanese government and citizens have been continuously cautious on whether China under the one-party politics of the Communist Party of China would rise up and manage relations with neighbours peacefully. The joint statement in this sense represents a milestone in the history of Japan-China relations, and the bilateral relationship has reached a relatively mature level.

Second, emotions between the people in both China and Japan have been one of the biggest uncertainties in the bilateral relationship, due to their complex, tenacious and fragile nature. Emotions running high among the citizens of the two countries are the most serious problem requiring our attention and concern. As argued above, mutual distrust and skepticism between the people from both sides have never been resolved. Although it has been almost fifty years since Japan and China normalized diplomatic relations, people-to-people emotions have never been normalized. A long time and process would be required for the two societies to establish mutually trustful foundations on the perceptions of each other.

According to *the Japan-China Joint Opinion Survey 2018* launched by the Genron NPO, an independent, neutral, non-profit network-based Japanese think tank founded in 2001, and China International Publishing Group, 66.8% of Chinese respondents have bad or relatively bad impressions of Japan, while 42.2% have good or relatively good impressions of Japan; 86.3% of Japanese respondents have bad or relatively bad impressions of China, while only 13.1% have good or relatively good impressions of China. On the question of “whether Japan-China relations are good (or relatively good) or bad (or relatively bad)”, 30.3% of Chinese respondents answered good or relatively good while 45.1% answered bad or relatively bad; 39.0% of Japanese respondents answered bad or relatively bad while only 7.2% answered good or relatively good (Genron, 2018a).

The Genron NPO, in an analysis based on the result of the joint survey, pointed out several findings; (1) the most significant finding of this year’s survey is that sentiment among the Chinese citizens toward Japan is improving dramatically, but in sharp contrast, the impression the Japanese people have of China shows no such improvement; (2) the number of Chinese respondents who feel Japan-China relations are “bad” dropped substantially to 45.1 percent, almost 20 points down from 64.2 percent in the previous year’s survey. The corresponding figure by Japanese respondents is 39 percent, an improvement from the previous year’s 44.9 percent. However, these findings do not mean the Japanese and Chinese people consider the current state of Japan-China relations to be “good.”; (3) although the Chinese people’s impressions of Japan are visibly improving, the number of Chinese respondents who feel Japan is a military threat increased from 67.6 percent in the previous year’s survey to 79.4 percent. This means that according to the perception of the Chinese people, Japan poses the world’s greatest military threat to their country. The same holds true for the Japanese people’s perception of China’s military threat with 57.5 percent of the respondents feeling that way, up from 45.3

percent in the previous year's survey. Indeed, tensions continue between the Japanese and Chinese people in the area of security (Genron, 2018b).

These data and analysis are relevant in order to understand there is still a long way to go for Japan and China to improve mutual perceptions and establish positive feelings among the people in the two countries. Given the recent survey, it would be more critical to understand whether and how the Japanese people could improve their emotions and perceptions toward “the peaceful rise of China”.

Thirdly, relating to the second pillar, contingency events could stir up nationalism and bring about crises of trust between the two nations. For example, the poisoned dumplings crisis at the end of 2007 and the beginning of 2008 became a serious emergency that worsened Japanese feelings toward China and destabilized bilateral relations. About ten Japanese consumers ate frozen dumplings which were produced and exported by Tianyang food company located in Hebei province, China, and then they collectively claimed to have food poisoning. As the incident was directly related to the lives of ordinary citizens in Japan, it was widely and continuously reported in mass media. As a result, emotions among the public in Japan toward China sharply worsened, leading to the undermining of diplomatic relations between Japan and China.

Referring to the above survey on Japan-China relations, from 2007 to 2008, the number of Japanese respondents who had bad or relatively bad impressions toward China increased from 66.3% to 75.6%, while the respondents who had good or relatively good impressions toward China dropped from 33.1% to 24.1% (Genron, 2018b). In order to understand why and how contingency events always lead to a rise in unhealthy nationalism, inevitably undermining diplomatic relations or even political stability between Japan and China, the so-called “territorial dispute” over the Senkaku Islands (“Diaoyu Islands” in Chinese) around the East China Sea, one of the most politically sensitive and structurally complicated areas in Japan-China relations, must be examined. Harvard academic and expert on Japan and China, Ezra Vogel argues that the difficulties between China and Japan also focus on the conflicting territorial claims over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. The dangers of accident and conflict are real and have the potential to set back reconciliation for decades. (Vogel, 2014)

### **CASE STUDY: “NATIONALIZATION” OF THE UNINHABITED ISLANDS**

When the Japanese central government “nationalized” the Senkaku Islands on 11 September 2012, Chinese officials immediately and fiercely criticized the decision. “This move taken by the Japanese government constitutes a serious violation of Chinese territorial sovereignty. The Chinese government and people firmly oppose

it and have strongly protested against the move,' the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China said in its statement (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2012). The statement also condemned the Japanese government with relatively strong rhetoric such as 'Diaoyu Islands have been China's inherent territory since ancient times', 'Japan's occupation of Diaoyu Islands is illegal and invalid', 'China has taken a strong stance to safeguard its sovereignty over Diaoyu Islands' and 'any Japanese attempt to covet Diaoyu Islands is doomed to failure' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2012). What was seen in the Chinese media was much more aggressive: 'Japan stole Chinese territory' (People's Daily, 2012); 'the action of nationalization means risk on a revival of Japanese militarism'. (Xinkuaobao, 2012)

*Sanctions* were imposed against Japan economically, culturally, diplomatically and even politically. After the nationalization, for example, the Chinese government tightened up customs inspections for Japanese products at its ports (*Japanese firms complain*, 2012). A number of meetings, forums, cultural and commercial events between Japan and China were postponed or cancelled by the Chinese side unilaterally. Books and articles related to Japan or written by Japanese authors were prohibited from publishing under the 'serious circumstances'.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps contrary to those criticisms and sanctions, the Chinese government actually seemed to see the crisis as a sort of 'strategic opportunity' to turn around the existing situation over the islands. In the past, the islands were administered by the Japanese government which was working closely with the United States as part of their security alliance, whereby the United States returned the rights of administration of Okinawa to Japan according to the Agreement between Japan and the United States of America. And China is currently making efforts to challenge directly Japan's longstanding administrative authority over the islands through a fairly regular pattern of incursions into nearby spaces by a variety of mainly civilian government aircraft and ships. (Swaine, 2013)<sup>9</sup>

'We got a historical benefit from the nationalization policy toward Diaoyu Islands by the Japanese government. We have to thank the Japanese prime minister,

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<sup>8</sup> The author has personally experienced these situations. It got much harder to meet with Chinese officials, intellectuals, publish articles and books in mainland China since the nationalization incident took place.

<sup>9</sup> This is one of the elements of which Michael Swaine, China security expert, argues this dispute is particularly significant among Beijing's altercations with its maritime neighbors because of the uniquely volatile combination of elements involved. Other elements include a) the relatively high numbers and in some cases, level of capability of the government vessels participating on both sides; and b) the intensity of elite and public emotions involved, especially in China. Swaine also argues these and other factors significantly increase the likelihood of a serious crisis occurring, and perhaps escalating out of control as a result of either a miscalculation and subsequent escalatory reaction by either side or a deliberate attempt by one or both sides to gain a lasting advantage during the ongoing crisis.

Mr. Noda,' a senior official who was in charge of foreign relations in the Communist Party of China insisted.<sup>10</sup> This viewpoint or stance at that time seemed to be a sort of 'strategic consensus' beyond sectors within the Communist Party of China, including among scholars who are close to policymakers. 'We now could have a reasonable excuse to send more vessels, even aircraft, to the disputed area so as to oppose the Japanese step-forward policy over the islands. Through this dispute, they will no longer be administered by Japan', added the official.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, Chinese officials accelerated to send a number of public vessels, even aircraft, to the Senkaku area in order to pressure the Japanese government (Asahi Shimbun, 2017).<sup>12</sup> They repeatedly made propaganda both domestically and internationally that 'Diaoyu Island and its affiliated islands have been an integral part of Chinese territory since ancient times' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2012; *Japanese firms complain*, 2012).

The Japanese government, which tried to 'stabilize' the Senkaku area through nationalization, has never acknowledged the existence of "territorial disputes" with China. Instead, it criticized Chinese aggressive actions toward Japan's sovereignty. Anti-Japanese protests that exploded in more than one hundred Chinese cities in September 2012 stirred anger among Japanese citizens. Emotions among Japanese citizens toward China worsened dramatically. At the same time, the interests of Japanese companies in China were affected. Confidence in the Chinese market among Japanese investors and entrepreneurs was shaken.

The perception gaps between the two governments and societies of Japan and China were obvious, which made the circumstances over the uninhabited islands more uncertain. Chinese officials opposed the "nationalization" and forced the Japanese government to recognize 'the continual existence of the territorial disputes'. On the other hand, Japanese officials continuously opposed the Chinese intrusion into the territory and asked the Chinese government to stop the provocations. Both sides sought to portray themselves as victims while describing

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with a high official in the Central Foreign Affairs Commission under the Communist Party of China. The interview was conducted in August 2012, Beijing. The official asked for anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the situation.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with a high official in the Central Foreign Affairs Commission under the Communist Party of China, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> On reasons of the assertive actions taken by the Chinese government, an expert on China and Japan-China relations, Professor at the University of Tokyo, Akio Takahara raised up six reasons: (1) in order to crack down criticisms toward China in Japan (2) The Chinese government expects assertive actions toward Japan could make the third countries being scared to China and co-opt for them (3) in order to unite the domestic opinions (the Communist Party of China is most afraid of being criticized by the public in domestic) (4) the rise of nationalism (5) organizational interests of the Navy and maritime police (6) characteristics of Xi Jinping (Takahara, 2016)

the other as the *invader*. Interestingly, in terms of perception gaps at that time, the Japanese government believed that it was China whose national image was injured internationally thanks to such provocative and assertive actions toward the islands, while the Chinese government, as argued above, tended to estimate that it was China whose national interests had been maximized. On the contrary, the Japanese government did not perceive nationalizing the islands positively, rather, it seriously worried about deteriorating Japan-China relations in the areas of economic ties, business interests and emotion among the public.

Looking back on the crisis that the world's second and third largest economies encountered, the causes of the occurrence were structural. Why did the emergency event happen and undermine the diplomatic relationship between Japan and China? In terms of lessons learned from history, four implications should be examined.

First, an information asymmetry with a lack of mutually-agreed facts and truths should not be ignored. Chinese citizens were not aware of the fact that 'Diaoyu Islands have been administered by Japan since 1972'. Meanwhile, Japanese citizens have never tried to acknowledge the truth that "China has claimed sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands". Both parties have been too stubborn, seriously lack flexibility and a manner of mutual understanding and respect which diplomacy always requires.

Second, both Japan and China have to recognize that some miscommunications and misperceptions in diplomacy were taking place. The Japanese government "nationalized" the islands on September 11 just after Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda met with Chinese President Hu Jintao in Vladivostok. Was this decision rationally made? Chinese citizens were sensitive to or even felt humiliated by the word "nationalization"<sup>13</sup>, and President Hu seemed to lose face because of the sensitive timing and wording. According to a couple of officials both from Japan and China, the Chinese government once accepted the idea that the "nationalization" approach would be more appropriate, rather than the islands being purchased by nationalistic Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara, in terms of maintaining stability around the islands. However, it eventually and suddenly turned to oppose the decision and implementation of nationalization at the beginning of September. Why and how did this policy shift happen? It casts doubt on whether

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<sup>13</sup> It is not difficult to understand deep dissatisfactions of the Chinese government from the below official statement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China on 14 September 2012: "Since the beginning of this year, the Japanese government has taken actions one after another over the issue of Diaoyu Islands. Even this year, it staged a farce of naming Diaoyu Island and its affiliated islands. Then it encouraged the right-wingers to instigate a political storm around the issue of "purchasing" the islands. Finally, the Japanese government pulled off its mask and revealed its own intention to "purchase" and "nationalize" Diaoyu Island, Nanxiao Island and Beixiao Island. By "nationalizing" the islands, the Japanese government aims to reinforce its "actual control" over the Diaoyu Islands and eventually occupy the islands."

the leadership of the Communist Party of China possessed coherent and integrated policies toward working with Japan as well as its external strategy in the Asia Pacific region (Kato, 2013).

Third, the rise of nationalism and the decline of governance capability in both countries undermined the rational policy implementation on diplomacy. The economic downturn, social disparity, complicated international relations made the power foundation of the two administrations vulnerable. Simultaneously declining governance capabilities in the two nations also arouse rampant populism. This is a vicious cycle and a significant lesson for the two governments and societies in terms of assuring the long-term development of Japan-China relations.

Fourth, as an important background, which would have affected the discourse of Japan-China relations, the balance of power in East Asia has shifted dramatically. Nowadays, East Asia is entering *the Two Giants era*. China overtook Japan as the world's second-largest economy in 2010 and was eager to surpass the United States economically even diplomatically under the Xi Jinping administration in these years. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, “the strong Japan” and “the strong China” have to find some ways to coexist, which have never happened in the history in East Asia. This has also led to the U.S. rebalancing policy in the Asia-Pacific region, which inevitably makes Japan-China relations more complicated.

In short, a lack of facts and truthful information, failure of diplomatic communication, simultaneously rising nationalism and declining governance capability and the transforming power balance in the Asia-Pacific region created the crisis over the uninhabited islands between Japan and China. The question is how the two nations can overcome these dilemmas and manage the complicated bilateral relationship more effectively. Again, there are four things Japan and China should tackle respectively as well as work together on.

First, Japan and China have to prevent any accidental military clashes through a strong political commitment by top leaders from the two sides. In order to do that, as an effective measure of crisis management, a “military hotline” should be established. A consistent and stable communication mechanism would be inevitable to constrain an escalation of confrontations. In this sense, it is remarkable progress for the two sides to successfully launch the implementation of “Maritime and Aerial Communication Mechanism” between the Japanese and Chinese defence authorities.<sup>14</sup>

Second, Japan and China need to strengthen communication channels, not only at governmental levels but also along all social sectors, including scholars, journalists, entrepreneurs, youths, etc. At the same time, in order to prevent further diplomatic and intelligence failure, the ministries dealing with diplomacy should institutionalize

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<sup>14</sup> These issues were discussed in the 10<sup>th</sup> Japan-China high-level initiative on maritime policy in Jiaying city, Zhejiang province, China on 17-18 December 2018.

communication channels between the two governments and improve verdict coordination within the administrations. The two governments had a discussion toward improving Japan-China relations before the meeting between President Xi and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in November 2014 in Beijing. The two sides agreed to share the view that, by utilizing various multilateral and bilateral channels, they would gradually resume dialogue in political, diplomatic and security fields and make an effort to build a political relationship of mutual trust (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2014).

Third, what Japanese and Chinese officials have to promote is to tell the “facts” to their own public. For China’s part, Mr. Xi Jinping has to tell his own people that ‘Diaoyu Islands, in fact, has been administered by the Japanese government since 1972’ even though China has claimed its own sovereignty over the islands. For Japan’s part, Mr Shinzo Abe has to tell his own people that ‘Japan acknowledges that the Chinese side has, in fact, claimed sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands over the years, so the territorial disputes are existing’ even though the islands remain administered by Japan as well as under the effective and actual control by the U.S.-Japan security treaty and alliance.<sup>15</sup> The issue on how should Japan position diplomatically in front of the territorial dispute with China has been controversial in Japan, given this circumstance, different institutions beyond sectors such as the Diet should deepen the constructive discussion. (Nakauchi, 2012)

Fourth, top priorities for the two nations in terms of preventing any escalations over the islands would solve innumerable domestic problems. As argued above, the simultaneous decline of domestic governance capabilities in both countries is a crucial reason why national interests are often threatened by nationalism and why rational policy implementations are always undermined by populism. Inward-looking, narrow nationalism and populism should be “common enemies” for Japan and China. Stable and healthy interaction among top leadership should be a key foundation to building a good relationship between Japan and China. Given the fundamental differences on political and value systems between Japan and China, there is a long way to go in order to realize a real mutual understanding and trust as well as building a truly stable bilateral relationship.

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<sup>15</sup> In November 2014, both sides agreed to recognize that they had different views as to the emergence of tense situations in recent years in the waters of the East China Sea, including those around the Senkaku Islands. They shared the view that, through dialogue and consultation, they would prevent the deterioration of the situation, establish a crisis management mechanism and avert the rise of unforeseen circumstances. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2014)

### **INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION: CAN THE JAPANESE ACCEPT THE RISE OF CHINA?**

Whether one likes it or not, the rise of China is a reality in contemporary international relations. One question is fundamentally important in thinking about the future development of Japan-China relations: can the Japanese “accept” the rise of China?

In 2010, China exceeded Japan in the total amount of GDP, becoming the second-largest economic power in the world. In other words, Japan lost its 42-year hold on the position of the world’s second-largest economy.<sup>16</sup> It looked like it would have been shocking for Japan. However, most Japanese seemed to have awaited this historical event rationally, even believing that an open prosperous and dynamic Chinese economy could provide Japan with enormous benefits. Japan did not have to take countermeasures against the rise of China but instead needed to take advantage of it.

Many believed that restoring the Japanese economy without a free and open Chinese market would be impossible. This kind of perception, which is both reasonable and pragmatic, seemed to be universal, especially among policymakers and businessmen considering the huge and lucrative Chinese market. In the area of economics and finance, very few people seemed to believe that the rise of China was unacceptable. They not only accepted it but they enthusiastically expected the rapid and long-term growth of the Chinese economy.

The problem then is how Japan can take advantage of the rise of China based on its own grand strategy, and stimulate the “re-reform and re-opening-up” of the Japanese economy. That should be a core question for Japan’s government and citizens in the days to come. As discussed above, at the governmental level, Japan and China have already normalized mutual perceptions. Former Japanese Ambassador to China Yuji Miyamoto emphasizes the importance of the “4<sup>th</sup> political document” signed by China and Japan’s top leaders in May 2008, particularly in the fact that both China and Japan define the rise or development of each other as peaceful. ‘It was the first time that China had described Japanese development after World War II with the words “peaceful nation”,’ Ambassador Miyamoto argued (Miyamoto, 2011).

The biggest uncertainty is at the level of people-to-people relations. Misunderstandings or misperceptions will inevitably increase in accordance with rapidly developing, multi-dimensional communications. People in China and Japan need to communicate consistently with each other with tolerance. Mutual

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<sup>16</sup> Japan overtook Germany and became the second-largest economic power in 1968.

understanding and trust will take a long time, so strategic patience would be required for both Japanese and Chinese.

As discussed above, emotions among the Chinese and Japanese against each other's countries suffer a lack of balance. While Chinese emotions toward Japan are obviously influenced by political circumstances, Japanese emotions toward China have been much more changeable and unstable over the past couple of years. In fact, Chinese emotions toward Japan were greatly improved when President Hu Jintao visited Japan in May 2008. The Great Sichuan earthquake struck on 12 May that year and, desiring to help manage the crisis, the Japanese government dispatched professional rescue teams to the disaster area before any other country did. Unfortunately, however, the mutual emotions between the Chinese and Japanese during that term were not interactive. Because of the negative impact of the poisoned dumpling incident that occurred at the beginning of 2008, ordinary Japanese completely lost trust and confidence in China.

What we should learn from the incident is that the Japanese tend to recognize livelihood issues such as food, health, the environment, public order and so on as the most important criteria to judge the meaning of the rise of China. Comparatively, the Chinese people place more emphasis on political circumstances such as how often top leaders visit or whether the Japanese prime minister has a “sincere” attitude on historical matters, especially on how to deal with the Yasukuni Shrine issue.

Although the Japanese seem basically to accept the rise of China, emotions among ordinary people toward the rise of China are still very complicated. According to research on public opinion regarding diplomacy annually conducted by the Japanese Cabinet Office, those who feel an affinity for China were 18.7% (2017) and 20.8% (2018), while those who do not feel an affinity for China were 78.5% (2017) and 76.4% (2018). In contrast, these numbers were pretty optimistic in 1980 – at that time, they were 78.6% (affinity) and 14.7% (no affinity) (The Japanese Cabinet Office, 2018).

For most of the Japanese public, their perception of the rapid rise of China surely reflects how they perceive the relative decline of Japan. In this sense, the rise of China has been like a “mirror” for a re-identification process for the Japanese. They are not only very cautious toward China, but they are also losing confidence in themselves. That is why, no matter how China and Japan promote or stabilize their bilateral relations at least in the short term, Japanese emotions toward China and the Chinese would not be pushed forward dramatically.

In order to keep these emotions from plunging to the bottom, three conditions must be ensured. First, the top leaders should visit each other often, to maintain a friendly atmosphere between China and Japan. Secondly, under consistent political stability, “multi-dimensional interdependences” should proceed sequentially. Thirdly,

the two governments have to establish and regularize a mechanism on crisis management against emergency events as soon as possible so as to tackle any uncertainties that occur in different areas – livelihood, business, territory, history, cultural exchange and so on – between Japan and China. A strategic mechanism that facilitates mutual and frank communication in different areas between the two nations would play a crucial role in a time of misperceptions and distrust.

It is a positive situation for Japan-China relations that a certain number of efforts to meet these three conditions have been made, as discussed in this article. During Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's latest visit to Beijing in November 2018, he emphasized that Japan-China relations are entering a new phase, and the two governments agreed to strengthen cooperation in third countries while Japanese official development assistance (ODA) toward China, which has lasted 40 years, "completed its historic mission". As the second and third-largest economy, China and Japan are playing vital roles not only in Asia but in the entire world's economic development. Interdependence has proceeded, problems that cannot be resolved unilaterally have increased. Under these circumstances, now is the time for Japan and China to contribute to world peace and prosperity together (Abe, 2018).

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### **KAKO SE ODNOSI JAPAN I KINE MOGU STABILIZOVATI?**

*Apstrakt:* Japansko-kineski odnosi ulaze u eru „Dva Džina”, koji su bez presedana u istoriji Istočne Azije. Višedimenzionalna međuzavisnost Japana i Kine se razvija ubrzano, kao jedan od pozitivnih faktora u smislu ubrzanja njihovih bilateralnih odnosa u dugom periodu. Sa druge strane, emocije u javnostima obeju strana su problematične i neizvesne, i od krucijalne je važnosti da se istraži kako da se one „normalizuju”. Autor tvrdi da nepredviđeni događaji, koji utiču na to da ljudi budu više okrenuti sebi, i okrenuti nacionalizmu, dovode do podrivanja japansko-kineskih odnosa. Kriza „nacionalizma” iz 2012. godine je tipičan slučaj u kome su dva naroda morala da promišljeno savladaju lekcije. Nedostatak podataka i istinitih informacija, neuspeh diplomatskih komunikacija, simultani rast nacionalizma i opadanje sposobnosti države i transformacija balansa snaga u Azijsko-pacifičkom regionu proizvela je krizu oko nenasiljenih ostrva. Kako Japan i Kina mogu da prevaziđu ove dileme i upravljaju efikasnije komplikovanim bilateralnim odnosima? Potrebno je da dve strane uspostave kanale i mehanizme upravljanja krizom. Pored kontinuirane promocije višedimenzionalne međuzavisnosti, nove metode omogućiće da se izbegnu stalne pretnje od povremenih kriza do nadirućeg i neodgovornog nacionalizma za bilateralne odnose Japana i Kine.

*Ključne reči:* Japansko-kineski odnosi, diplomatija, međuzavisnost, emocije, nepredviđeni događaji, nacionalizam, nova era.

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