

CHAPTER II

JAPAN'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS CHINA

Japan's Foreign Policy

In the years immediately after World War Two, Japan was still seen as the main threat to peace in Asia, but with the onset of the Cold War, the triumph of the Communists in China, and the outbreak of the Korean War, Japan has become a major and essential ally to the United States. Japan thus has returned to international politics in 1952 in a comprehensive political and economic alliance in which the United States was the dominant partner. In the post-World War Two era, Japan's foreign policy is claimed of depending on the United States. Even until these days, the alliance relationship with the United States, particularly in security and defense matters, has always been the greatest consideration of Japan's most basic foreign policy.

Under The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan that was signed on 19 January 1960, Japan receive the security cooperation from its great power ally, the United States, and in return Japan lends military bases in Japan to American forces to assist in defending Japan and neighboring countries, such as South Korea and Taiwan. The Nixon Doctrine, which calls for greater independence and self-defense by its allies, provides the challenge for Japan to emerge from its semi-isolationist policy and to play a greater role in the Asian region, perhaps teven to add a greater modicum of military influence to its foreign policies, which have been so commercially oriented.

Because all of Japan's neighbors fear the possibility of strong Japanese military forces, Japan has tried not to provoke nations in East Asia by avoiding any direct intervention

or threat of intervention outside its own territory. It has complemented this passive role with the more constructive one of promoting trade with those countries with which it does not have any formal diplomatic relations, as with China until 1972.

It is the goal of promoting its own prosperity in which Japan has displayed the greatest initiative in its foreign policy. Through reparations, credits, and loans it has gradually re-established diplomatic relations with its non-communist neighbors and built a prosperous trade with a large number of these countries.

However, although Japan had earlier secured a predominant position in East Asia with relative ease, it was never able to exercise the type of long-term, far-reaching stability in the region that the United States achieved over the Western hemisphere.

In addition to Japan's goals of prosperity and security, its ambition to acquire greater international status seems to be leading it in the direction of more active influence in world affairs. This is especially true in the East Asian area where it may have to take a more active and less aligned position in the struggles for influence in the region along with the major states, such as the United States, the Soviet Union and China.⁵

Since the end of postwar occupation, Japan's principal goals have been to promote its prosperity, insure its security and gain recognition as a leading world economic power. It has substantially achieved the first two of these goals, and Japan now has the potential for exercising much greater influence in the world and winning its place as a leading world power. It could utilize its technology and industry to acquire the military strength traditionally associated with major powers.

⁵ F.C. Langdon, "Japan's Foreign Policy", (Vancouver, 1973), pp.xii

As Japan realizes that it had to take positive action to restore its relationship with its Asian neighbors that was damaged after its invasion of East Asian region during World War Two, Japan has been chiefly utilizing reparations, economic aid and trade to gain gradual entry to the markets and access to the raw materials of its Asian neighbors, both of which it badly needed.

Japan, however, has been anxious to retain the markets for its manufacturers as well as its access to raw materials in Asia not only because they are valuable for Japan's own economic development but also because friendly trade relations reduce tensions and may contribute to a greater and more satisfying role in East Asia. It is in this region that it emphasized policies contributing to its three major goals of prosperity, security and recognition as a leading world power.

The important initial purpose of the war reparations is to effect a reconciliation with those non-Communist neighboring states most inimical to Japan. Japan's reparations and aid policies resemble somewhat the American Marshall Plan of economic aid to Western Europe or American economic assistance to West Germany. The relatively underdeveloped Asian neighbors, however, were not able to utilize this aid as quickly and effectively as Japan had been able to do through its highly trained population and effectively organized political and economic system. Still, the provision of grants, loans and investments greatly facilitate the trade which immediately benefited Japan's own economy and help the economic development of its neighbors.⁶ It also has the effect of making Japanese trade and investment more welcome and reducing hostility to it.

⁶ F.C. Langdon. *Return to Asia*, "Japan's Foreign Policy", (Vancouver, 1973), pp.76

Japan also cooperates with the United States in signing a peace treaty with Taiwan. Japan has established a large trade and made large industrial investments in Taiwan, but these steps have aroused the hostility of Peking and the antagonism is to constitute one of Japan's most serious foreign policy problems.

North Korea's nuclear programme is also one of Japan's foreign policy considerations. Throughout North Korean nuclear incident in 1993-4, the Japanese Government stated grave concern and repeated its intention to co-operate closely with the United States, South Korea and China to solve the issue. Japanese politicians like former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, former Foreign Minister Nakayama, or Foreign Minister Hata did state their objections against the North Korean announcement to withdraw from the NPT⁷, and declared that this constituted a major problem for Japan. However, Japan has insufficient status to take any active steps and North Korea demanded negotiations with the United States only.

As a result, the Japanese Government has to enter consultations with South Korea and the United States over North Korean issue. In fact, Japan's contacts with North Korea were only indirect via China. Japan has to rely on China as a mediator in its negotiations with North Korea over nuclear programme, abduction and hostage issues.

⁷ Isa Duce, *Status Power: Japanese Foreign Policy Making towards Korea*, "Japan's North Korea Policy", (London, 2002), pp.143

Japan's Foreign Policy towards China

The development of Japan-China relationship has vividly shown the priority that has commanded in Japanese foreign affairs towards China has varied over time.

Basically, Japan's foundation on its foreign policy towards China is to provide assistance to support China's own efforts for economic development and improve the living conditions of its citizens in accordance with Japan's policy of extending cooperation as far as possible to support China's efforts to reform and open up its economy. Firstly, this is because Japan feels that China has a close geographical proximity to Japan, and the two countries have strong political, historical and cultural ties.

Secondly, Japan believes that maintaining and advancing stable, amicable relations between Japan and China is conducive to the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region, and concomitantly to the entire world.

Indeed, economic relations between China and Japan are becoming broader and deeper, including government-to-government economic and technical cooperation, as well as private sector investment and trade, and assistance in the development of resources. Furthermore, China has placed the highest priority on modernizing its economy, and is pursuing a policy of opening up the country and economic reform. China has an enormous land area and a huge population. The country also has a continuing low per capita GNP (only US\$1035 in 2003, which was the 144th lowest in the world) and has a substantial need for assistance.

The history problem and the Japan's relationship with Taiwan are recurring sources of discord in the Japan-China relationship. China, and currently, the United States and Japan, position is that there is only one China and the leaders of Taiwan and mainland China have basically agreed on that premise. As the government of Taiwan changes from a transplanted Nationalist structure to a generation that has never had the close ties to the mainland of the old regime, a strong feeling of independence is growing in the island nation. The United States pledges to defend Taiwan against military aggression, as a means of settlement between the two Chinas, is one of the major sticking points with The Peoples Republic of China (P.R.C.). Pertaining to the Taiwan issue, Japan holds ambiguous attitude in maintaining its relationship with Taiwan while it claims that it supports 'One China Policy'.

During the period of United States-backed "containment" of China, there was a sharp divergence between official policy and popular attitudes in Japan. As a loyal ally of the United States, the Japanese Government was committed to non-recognition, whereas popular sentiments favored diplomatic relations and expanded trade. The Japan Communist Party and the Japan Socialist Party sought to capitalize on this situation in their propaganda efforts to promote closer relations with Beijing. Pro-Chinese sentiment found support not only in the desire of the business community for a new source of raw materials and a profitable market but also in the popular feeling of cultural affinity with the Chinese. Japanese leaders spent considerable effort trying to manage the Taiwan tension.

Besides the Taiwan Strait dispute that posts potential threat to the regional security, conventional wisdom says that a growing China is the "adversary" which should occupy the planners of American foreign and trade policies. China is a great country with

immense resources, an almost untapped industrial base, an intelligent and energetic populace, a restless social climate and a "blue water" Navy in the making, that is certainly not too dissimilar to the position of the United States one hundred years ago. Indeed, China is a nuclear power with the ability to project herself in the region. China is believed of having developed a naval strength which will give her the ability to challenge American policy and power projection in the western Pacific.⁸ This puts American defense pledges in question and the future of Taiwan, South Korea and Japan at the mercy of Chinese planners. These countries, of course, are not living in a vacuum and are re-arranging their priorities to adjust.

According to the *2003 Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists of the Year of 2003*, the size of the Chinese nuclear arsenal is about 400 warheads. The *Bulletin* estimates that 20 nuclear-armed missiles are deployed in the intercontinental role, and another 230 nuclear weapons are being deployed (or can be deployed) on aircraft, missiles, and submarines with regional capabilities. The 150 remaining nuclear warheads are believed to be reserved for "tactical" uses (short-range missiles, low yield aircraft-dropped bombs, and possibly artillery shells or demolition munitions).⁹

China currently maintains a minimal intercontinental nuclear deterrent using land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). According to the *2003 Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, China operates approximately 120 ballistic missiles of four types: the DF-3A, DF-4, DF-5/5A, and DF-21A.¹⁰ The Dong Feng-5 (DF-5) liquid-fueled missile, first deployed in 1981, has a range of 13,000 km and carries a single multi-megaton warhead. Twenty are believed to be deployed in central China, southwest of Beijing.

⁸ Francis Fukuyama and Kongdan Oh, *The U.S.-Japan After the Cold War*, (Japan, 1993), pp. 24

⁹ William Arkin, "Nuclear Notebook: Chinese nuclear forces, 1999," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* Vol. 55, No. 4 (May/June 1999)

¹⁰ The *2003 Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist*, November/December 2003, Vol. 59, No.6, pp. 77

The DF-5's range gives China coverage of all of Asia and Europe, and most of the United States. The south-eastern US states are at the edge of the missile's range. On the other hand, two additional long-range ballistic missiles are in the development stage, the 8,000 km DF-31 and the 12,000 km DF-41. Both missiles are expected to be solid-fueled and based on mobile launchers. It is not known how many missiles China plans to deploy nor how many warheads the missiles may carry, but it is believed that China is hoping to deploy multiple nuclear warheads and penetration aids. First deployment for the DF-31 is believed to occur before 2005 and the DF-41 is possibly around 2010.¹¹

As a result, Japan feels that it should “keep a close eye” on China's military spending and exercises and its trend toward obtaining higher quality weapons. Japan’s annual Defense Agency report released in 2003 revealed that China's growing military might - including its nuclear capability and increasingly assertive navy - is Japan's major defense worry, not troops in the Russian Far East. “China's moves in developing nuclear capabilities and modernizing its naval and air forces, as well as expanding its activities on the seas... need to be closely watched," the report said.

Since China's military buildup can pose a serious threat to Japan and other countries of the region, Japan feels the need to make strenuous demands for transparency from the Chinese side as regards China's burgeoning military budget.¹²

Japan is already looking at the possibility that it cannot depend on the American military umbrella as the only protection against a China which will need most of the same resources which are required to keep the Japanese economy growing. While it

¹¹ Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, *ibid*, and Federation of American Scientists website: <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/china/icbm/index.html>

¹² Mineo Nakajima and Yusuke Fukada, *Does Asia Have A Future?: Depression in China, Despair in North Korea, Danger for Japan*, (Japan, 1999), pp. 86

may seem like a good idea, in the short run, for Japan to rebuild her military strength in the region. It must be remembered that nearly every nation touching on the Pacific has felt the sting of Japanese military expansion in the last century.

Instability in the Japanese economy adds to the pressure on the current government to look eastward. They see a growing specter of an awakening China and suggest to the United States that they scale down their visibility in Japan.

Although the U.S. debate on the China threat has triggered considerable discussion among Japanese intellectuals, Japan's China experts generally tend to believe that a strong China may be less threatening to Japan than a weak China.¹³ Indisputably, the Japanese Government is somewhat divided on China policy, with some agencies focusing more on the threats that China's growth poses while others saw China as offering extraordinary opportunities. On the balance, the Japanese approach was non-confrontational and muted, typical of Japan's preferred low posture in the conduct of its diplomacy with China, and treats China with dignity and respect.¹⁴

No matter how, it is a fact that Japan would be threatened if its neighbour – China -- experienced serious domestic conflicts and even political disintegration due to its numerous internal problems, since millions of Chinese refugees might be hugely flown into neighboring countries, including Japan. Indeed, such internal unrest and crisis could spill over to other potentially unstable countries in Asia.

¹³ Hideo Sato, *Japan's China Perceptions and Its Policies in the Alliance with the United States*, (University of Tsukuba, September 1998), pp.10-11

¹⁴ Michel Oksenberg, "China and the Japanese-American Alliance", ed. Gerald L. Curtis, *The United States, Japan and Asia: Challenges for U.S. Policy*, (New York, 1994), pp.101

In order to ensure a political and economically stable China, Japan places importance on the democracy and human rights development in China. The Chinese Government has been claimed of suppressing dissenting opinions and maintaining political control over its legal system, resulting in an arbitrary and sometimes abusive judicial regime. China is also accused of using trade and business reprisals to stop other nations from criticizing China's human rights record. According to a worldwide human rights organization - Amnesty International's report in 2003¹⁵, gross violations of human rights continued in the China, including torture, arbitrary detention and unfair political trials on suspected government opponents who were stigmatized as "ethnic separatists, terrorists and religious extremists", as well as key personnel in the media and arts, particularly in Xinjiang and Tibet.

Such accusations have drawn Japan's attention on the political and democratic process in China. From the perspective of the Japanese Government, the salience of the human rights issue reflects the Japanese concern about the Chinese Government's lack of accountability to its people. In the Japanese Government's opinion, cases of serious violations of human rights concerning the lives and freedom of citizens continue to be a cause of concern for the international community. Japan believes that addressing human rights issues is a major challenge that should be tackled by the international community, including Japan. Therefore, Japan keeps a close eye on the human rights issues in China and makes efforts in promoting democracy system in the communist China. However, while the United States speak loudly about issues of human rights and democratization in China, Japan took a more quiet stance that in contrast approached benign neglect.

¹⁵ <http://web.amnesty.org/report2003/chn-summary-eng>

Besides possible security threat, Japan also worries about environmental degradation in China such as air pollution, resources depletion, deforestation, soil erosion, solid-waste pollution and marine pollution, since China is to have largely ignored the effects of economic development on the environment in its eagerness to achieve and sustain rapid economic growth. Moreover, China's sulphur emissions might already be causing acid rain in Japan and South Korea.¹⁶ Thus, Japan has launched major efforts to assist China in the environmental sphere.

To be sure, the Japanese Government had many concerns about the Chinese scene, extending to military expenditures and weapons acquisition, environmental degradation and erosion of the state's capacity to control population migration.

Japan remains highly sensitive to China's importance as a regional power. Considerations concerning China's role in the Northeast Asian region have, if anything, increased as a result of the decline in U.S.-Soviet tensions and rivalry and Sino-Soviet rapprochement. Tokyo seeks to keep open lines of communication as a way of encouraging Chinese economic modernization and promoting co-operation on key foreign policy issues such as maintaining peace on the Korean peninsula.

The Development of Japan-China Relations:

The relationship with China is one the most important themes in Japan's foreign policy at the outset of the 21st century. For both countries, the relationship is one that interweaves "cooperation and coexistence" with "competition and friction". Japan-China relationship is a many-layered cake. It is impossible to eat all at once. Historically, the Chinese cultural influence on Japan has been significant and has led,

¹⁶ Ming Wan, "Fast Growth, Slow Decline: The Impact of China's Economic Growth on the Environment and Economic Development in East Asia", paper prepared for the ISA-JAIR Joint Convention, Makuhari, Japan, September 19-22, (Tokyo, 1966), pp.7

among other things, to the adaptation of Buddhism as well as the Chinese writing system. During the last 100 years, Sino-Japanese relations have soured and erupted into war twice, in the 1890s and later in the 1930s.¹⁷ On both occasions these incidents had occurred on Chinese territory.

Japan maintains a complex and delicate relationship with its most important neighbour - China after the Russian Republic¹⁸, and has had a strong interest in China's economic and political modernization, and its emergence as a participant in the world economy. If we look at the state of economic exchange between Japan and China, we find that the two countries are indispensable to each other.

Nevertheless, the invasion of Manchuria, where over 500,000 Japanese colonists subsequently settled¹⁹, as well as the great numbers of Chinese who died at the hands of the Japanese during World War II, still create a great deal of negative sentiment among the Chinese. Notwithstanding that, there is a shared concern today in fostering peace and prosperity in Asia. China has opened its market to stimulate economic growth and the enormous potential of the market has led many Japanese companies to invest in the country. The early commitment of Japanese trading companies after 1979 has been demonstrated by the substantial number of offices opened not only in Beijing but also in other major cities. However, very few Japanese companies appear to be satisfied with the financial returns resulting from their business with China.

¹⁷ Marie Soderberg, *Shipping Aid to China*, (London, 1996), pp. 213

¹⁸ Akio Takahara, *The Present and Future of Japan-China Relations*, Gaiko Forum Summer 2000, Tokyo, pp. 41

¹⁹ *Loc. cit.*

1895-1911

The history which saw many conflicts between Japan and China began in the late 19th century, when Japan started its imperialistic expansion into the continent, first into Korea, where Japanese and Chinese interests clashed. War broke out between Japan and Qing Dynasty China in 1894 and ended in Japan's victory the next year. As a result of the war, Taiwan was conceded to Japan.²⁰ The most deplorable aftermath of the war was that the Japanese started to look down upon the Chinese.

After the restoration of diplomatic relations between China and Japan on 22 June 1895, Japan observed a low posture policy towards China, even though her armies continued to occupy Weihaiwei until all the instalments of the war indemnity had been paid in 1898. Recognizing China's weakness, however, Japan offered assistance at various levels. For example, it played a constructive role during the Hundred Days of Reforms in 1898.²¹

When battle was engaged on the plains of Manchuria, the Japanese won but at enormous cost in terms of money, men and material. By the Treaty of Portsmouth in September 1905, Japan obtained the residue of the Russian lease of Liaodong (Port Arthur and Dairen), the rights to the Russian railway from Port Arthur to Changchun and associate undertakings, but it failed to obtain an indemnity.²² When the negotiators returned from Portsmouth, Komura surprised the Chinese by going to Beijing to re-negotiate the terms with the Chinese himself.

²⁰ Issie Nomura, "Japan-China Relations", *Japan's Foreign Policy*, Universiti Malaya, (Malaysia, 1997), pp.60-62

²¹ *Ibid*

²² *Ibid*

The Japanese viewpoint was that China should have been grateful to them for expelling the Russians from South Manchuria and by extension for removing the threat to the independence of the Chinese Government. The Chinese, however, failed to see it in these terms. In a protocol attached to the Treaty of Peking in December 1905, the Chinese agreed that they would not build railway lines parallel to the ones which the Japanese had just taken over from the Russians. The Japanese argued that the railway that had acquired had been used to excess during the war and had been substantially destroyed, and since they did not receive an indemnity at Portsmouth they would have to reconstruct it out of their own resources. Naturally enough, the Chinese did not regard themselves as being bound to a long-term commitment: within a few years they began to build, or to plan the building of, railway lines parallel to the new Japanese-owned South Manchuria Railway. This was to be a point of great contention for over two decades.²³

But the bitterness of diplomatic – and economic – relations is not the whole story. Paradoxically there was much mutual admiration between China and Japan. Just as the Japanese acknowledged their debt to China's cultural development, the Chinese, especially with the growing national spirit of the reformers, acknowledged that they owed much to the experience of Japan. Many Chinese felt that they were being goaded towards reform by a sense that the incursions of Japan were potentially more dangerous for China than the hated incursions of the Europeans. Chinese officer cadets made their way in increasing numbers to the military academies in Japan where their patriotism was often stirred by the discipline they found in the Japanese soldiers and the success it had achieved militarily. As more and more Japanese instructors were recruited for the new military academies in China, a new class of officers emerged who looked

²³ Ian Nish, *China-Japan Relations, 1895-1945*, ed. Christopher Howe, "China and Japan, History, Trends and Prospects", (Oxford, 1996), pp.23-45

increasingly to Japan with a mixture of apprehension and admiration. Perhaps Japan was regarded as being sufficiently small for it still to be regarded with equanimity.

1911-1927

Nowhere was the complexity of Japanese policy-making more apparent than in the period of China's early revolutions in 1911 and 1913. Official policy in the hands of the Foreign Ministry was essentially orthodox and moderate. It was in favour of moderate reform in China, and the attainment of a constitutional monarchy through the modification of the Ching system of government. It professed to have no official contacts in 1911 with the revolutionaries. Yet it was widely known that unofficially Japanese from the business community and from the military were transacting business with the revolutionaries. When Yuan Shikai emerged as the interim president of the new republic, the Japanese official line was again moderate, working gradually towards the recognition of Yuan and the consolidation of his position by the grant of an international loan. The governments of the day – there were four cabinets of differing persuasions between 1911 and 1914 – operated within the International Banking Consortium of China and took part in the Reorganization Loan to Yuan of April 1913.²⁴

When anti-Japanese outbreaks took place in Hankou and Nanjing, the calls for stronger action were renewed. When the "Second Revolution" took place in July-August, the anti-Yuan forces received assistance from quarters linked to the Japanese army and navy, but this was given against the wishes of the Foreign Ministry and government who claimed that it was the work of a few irresponsible ronin.²⁵

²⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵ *Ibid*

With the outbreak of the European war, Japan asked Germany to surrender her leased territory of Jiaozhou-Qingdao. On 23 August, having received no response, it declared war and launched an invasion force through Chinese territory. The Japanese capture of the city of Qingdao on 7 November 1914 brought Sino-Japanese relations to a new low. It led the Japanese to an elaborate and comprehensive document which was transmitted to Minister Hioki on 3 December. This comprehensive package, known in the west as “Twenty-one Demands”, was an initial bargaining position and are important to the historian as an indication of Japan’s long-term and ambitious intentions in China.²⁶

The Hara cabinet decided to discontinue the loans which had caused antagonism in some quarters in China. It went further and disposed of some of the loans which had been contracted. This was designed to appease the Chinese but also to meet the disquiet of the allies who viewed Japan’s financial manoeuvres with some suspicion.²⁷

These suspicions had the effect of stimulating China’s nationalist upsurge which was to lead to the May Fourth Movement of 1919. Chinese boycotts against Japanese goods were already in evidence. Since every nationalist movement requires an outside stimulus, it is probably true that, in the case of China, that stimulus came from Japan rather than the European imperialists who had departed from her shores.²⁸

Typical of this period was the more relaxed policy of Shidehara Kijuro as foreign minister (1924-27). In the main, his policy was one of non-intervention in Chinese affairs and he was conciliatory towards Chinese nationalism. Thus, he returned Japan’s

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ *Ibid*

share of the Boxer Emergency Funds for cultural use in China. It was condemned by the opposition parties as weakened diplomacy.²⁹

In China proper the problem for Japan was how to handle Chinese nationalism. The northern expedition of the Kuomintang (KMT) armies which the Japanese tended to described as the expansion of the “Southern forces” began in 1926 and captured Hankou in September. It was hard for the KMT leadership to enforce discipline and anti-foreign outrages took place. By the time Chiang Kai-shek’s forces had reached Shanghai in March 1927, there was talk of the powers involved in China sending a joint international military force. But Shidehara robustly resisted pressure to join it, stating that non-intervention was essential in promoting “economic co-operation for co-existence and co-prosperity between the two nations”. At the end of March Lieutenant Araki who was in charge of some Japanese units at Nanjing was unable to cope with his duties by means of “non-intervention” and in a dramatic gesture attempted to commit suicide. This was followed by a KMT assault on the Japanese concession at Hankou on 2 April; and the cabinet authorized the use of Japanese marines to drive out the Chinese. Although there was a move within the navy to send a fleet to the Yangzi region to ensure the safety of Japanese citizens, it was not approved. The cabinet resigned on 17 April, unable to cope with the financial crisis or deal with the critics of its China policy.

How does one assess this phase of Sino-Japanese relations? For five years from 1911 to 1916 there was a period of Japanese interference, if not direct intervention, in Chinese affairs. This raised many doubts in the minds of Japan’s intellectuals and it is said that the May Fourth Movement deeply affected men like Yoshino Sakuzo and Ishibashi Tanzan. This interventionist phase was followed by a decade when the Japanese

²⁹ *Ibid*

thought they were following a policy of friendship and co-operation. For the most part it was friendship with one or other of the cliques in a warring and unstable China. It was, of course, open to the criticism that the friendship was merely time-serving and designed to smooth the path of Sino-Japanese trade. The fact was that by the 1920s the China trade was crucial to the Japanese economy. Consequently, competition with Chinese producers and boycott by Chinese customers were sensitive matters for the Japanese Government. Shidehara tried to tackle this problem by adopting in the mid 1920s the principles of co-existence and co-prosperity. This may have created a spirit of goodwill – the fact that Chiang Kai-shek was prepared to visit Japan for negotiations suggests that the atmosphere had improved since 1919. But Sino-Japanese relations still fell far short of cordiality, partly because xenophobia was one of the natural pillars of surging Chinese nationalism and partly because Shidehara's policy was by no means universally accepted in Japan.³⁰

1927-1936

When General Giichi Tanaka came to power as head of the opposition Seiyukai cabinet in April 1927, he gave the China question high priority. Tanaka was convinced of the need to unify the various approaches to China. He gathered delegates involved in various aspects of Japan's interest in China and Manchuria – diplomats, politicians, army and navy spokesmen and some who could be regarded as businessmen. The conference failed to bridge the gap between Chinese nationalist aspirations and Japan's growing appetite for continental expansion. This was to be the main challenge for policy-makers over the next decade.³¹

³⁰ *Ibid*

³¹ *Ibid*

The end of the 1920s was a period when China took the initiative. The Nationalist Government tried to pursue a vigorous foreign policy whereby foreign governments were asked to take part in negotiations over tariffs and extra-territoriality. Faced with a wave of anti-Japanese boycotts, demonstrations and strikes, Japan was the country most reluctant to entertain these overtures favourably, partly because of its own financial position since the 1927 recession and partly because Japan, as the largest importer into China, was likely to be required to make the greatest sacrifices if duties were to be increased.³²

The Manchurian crisis broke out on 18 September 1931. Underlying the crisis was Japan's perception of China. Japan's Foreign Minister Yoshizawa said in a foreign policy speech: "We should not regard China as a well-organized and coherent state, comparable in the efficacy of its authority to the settled states and Government of Europe." This led to the allegation that a disorganized China was a threat to the stability of the region and that this gave Japan a natural cause for concern, if not a ground for action.³³

1937-1945

Ordinarily diplomatic relations between two countries lapse with any outbreak of war between them. But the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1938 did not have that consequence. The fiction was maintained by the Japanese that there was not war but, first, "the North China Incident" and later "the China Incident".³⁴

The Japanese by their military operations were primarily intent on forcing the submission of the KMT Government, and later crushing it. Government-to-government

³² *Ibid*

³³ *Ibid*

³⁴ *Ibid*

relations had in effect terminated with the “*Kokumin seifu aite ni sezu*” (Have no truck with the Nationalist Government) declaration of January 1938.³⁵

Although China and Japan were at war and diplomatic relations, strictly speaking, did not exist between the governments of Chongqing and Tokyo, relations of an informal kind persisted throughout the war. Apart from the military campaigns, there was a propaganda war in progress. From the Japanese side the unilateral pronouncements on the New Order in East Asia (1938) and the Great East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere (1941) drowned the calls for negotiation.

Caught in the crossfire between Chongqing and Tokyo was the Wang Ching-wei Government established in Nanjing in March 1940. While both the Japanese and Wang supporters were united in their hostility to communism, in expelling imperialist powers from Asia and in getting rid of foreign extraterritorial privileges in China, it could not be said that there was anything approaching an identity of interest between them. Wang was looking to Japan for aid, seeking collaboration without political interference and trying to secure the widest measure of independence possible. Many Japanese, however, regarded Wang as a puppet who need not be taken seriously.³⁶ Thus, the Japanese did not give advance warning to Wang of their intentions about risking a war with the United States with whom he had optimistic hopes of peace talks. Despite the new demands on Nanjing which followed the declaration of war on the United States and Great Britain, Wang felt that his hand had been forced and decided to declare war alongside Japan, though it was a long time before Tokyo acceded to this policy. In the final analysis, Wang was desperately disappointed with the collapse of his high expectations from the Japanese, while the Japanese treated Wang as less than an ally in

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ *Ibid*

whom they could place great confidence. In 1943 the Nanjing National Government entered into a treaty of alliance with Japan. At the Great Asia Conference of November 1943, intended as the great symbolic occasion to demonstrate East Asian solidarity, Wang attended as the representative of China (excluding Manchukuo). But he was to die in a Nagoya hospital in the following year, a disillusioned man, unable to find in the Japanese the compromising spirit which he – and his spiritual mentor, Sun Yatsen, before him – had sought.

If Wang had a sense of failure and disillusion, so also did the Japanese for their China campaign. For some it was best described as Japan's China ulcer, thus employing the medical metaphor of Napoleon's Spanish campaign.

Post World War II

Japan's had no official relations with the People's Republic of China for as long as twenty years from 1952 to 1972 except for some non-governmental contacts in trade and fishery.³⁷ Active governmental dialogue only started after the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China that was started by Japan's Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka as soon as he came to office in July 1972.³⁸

In fact, the majority of Japanese also desired that relations with China be reestablished. In a public opinion poll in 1952, the year Japan concluded the peace treaty with Taipei, 57 per cent of respondents were in favour of restoring diplomatic relations with mainland China. Results of similar public opinion polls conducted in the following years indicated that the majority of Japanese citizens consistently supported the

³⁷ Issie Nomura, "Japan-China Relations", *Japan's Foreign Policy*, Universiti Malaya, (Malaysia, 1997), pp.60-62

³⁸ Saori N. Katada, *Why did Japan Suspend Foreign Aid to China? Japan's Foreign Aid Decision-making and Sources of Aid Sanction*, *Social Science Japan Journal*, University of Tokyo, 2001, Vol. 4, No.1, pp. 39-58

normalization of relations with China during that period. In a public opinion poll in 1960, 75 per cent of the respondents answered in favour of normalization. In the face of such national sentiments, the Japanese Government cautiously welcomed the development of trade and other non-governmental exchanges between Japan and China.³⁹

Japan's relations with China entered into a new stage of development in 1978. During this period, the basic trend in Japan-China relations was the massive and rapid increase in various types of mutual exchanges and deepening of interdependence between the two countries. Japan's basic policy towards China was to provide economic assistance, such as low-interest 'yen-loans' and ODA, to support Deng Xiaoping's policies of economic reform and opening to the West, based on the traditional principle of non-involvement in the Sino-Soviet confrontation.⁴⁰

In January 1981, the relationship between Japan and China deteriorated because of "Hozan (Baoshan) shock." The crisis was resolved by Tokyo's decision to extend additional financial assistance to Beijing, and Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang, who visited Japan from late May to early June 1982, emphasized the importance of establishing stable, long-term friendship between the two countries.

That summer, however, the dispute over the so-called 'textbook problem' again changed the atmosphere surrounding bilateral relationship suddenly and drastically. It started with newspaper reports in Japan in late June alleging that the Japan's Ministry of Education, through the official school textbook screening system, had ordered the

³⁹ Kamiya Mataka, *Japanese Foreign Policy towards Northeast Asia*, ed. Inoguchi Takashi and Purnendra Jain, "Japanese Foreign Policy Today", (New York, 2000), pp. 227

⁴⁰ Kamiya Mataka, *Japanese Foreign Policy towards Northeast Asia*, ed. Inoguchi Takashi and Purnendra Jain, "Japanese Foreign Policy Today", (New York, 2000), pp. 231

publishers of school history textbooks to replace the term “aggression” (*shinryaku*) with the term “advance” (*shinshutsu*) to describe Japan’s military actions in Asia before 1945.⁴¹ As a result, an intense anti-Japanese press campaign was launched in Beijing in late July.

After autumn 1982, the Chinese attitude towards Japan again became friendly. In August 1985, however, an official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine by several members of the Japanese Cabinet including Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone caused another incident of friction between the two countries, again leading to anti-Japan student demonstrations in Beijing and various other cities in China. Before the incident, however, Nakasone had succeeded in building such a good relationship between Japan and China that the state of the bilateral relationship in 1984 was even described as “the best in its two-thousand-years history.” For example, Nakasone made a statement in a session of the Japanese Diet in February 1983 admitting that Japanese war against China was an act of aggression. In March of the next year, Nakasone in turn visited China and announced that Japan would provide ¥470 billion from 1984 to 1989 as the second yen-loan to China.

From the end of 1985 to the beginning of 1987, Japan-China relations were calm. In February 1987, however, the relationship became tense again after the Osaka High Court ruled that ownership of a student dormitory named Kokaryo, which had been purchased by the Taiwanese Government in 1952, still belonged to Taiwan even after the termination of the diplomatic relations between Tokyo and Taipei. China harshly criticized the High Court ruling and insisted that the Japanese Government, which had acknowledged in the September 1972 joint statement that Beijing is the sole legitimate

⁴¹ *Ibid*, pp. 232

government of China and Taiwan is a part of China, should promptly overturn the court's decision. Tokyo, however, properly claimed that it was impossible for the Japanese Government to intervene in the judicial system, which is independent.

In that context of improved relations, Emperor Akihito made a formal visit to China in October 1992 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the normalization of the relationship between the two countries. It represented the first visit ever to China by an Emperor of Japan. China enthusiastically welcomed the emperor, and Chinese President Yang Shangkun remarked of the visit that it “marks the beginning of a new stage of development in Sino-Japanese relations.” The emperor, in turn, said in his speech that “there was a period in the past when my country inflicted untold hardships on the people of China. This remains the source of my profound sorrow.” China's *People's Daily* said that the imperial visit represented proof that China and Japan were developing friendly relations, while Japan's Chief Cabinet minister viewed it as “having achieved a significant result in promoting friendship and amity’ between the two countries.

The honeymoon between Japan and China in the early 1990s did not last long. Difficulties in managing the relationship between the two countries have gradually become salient since late 1994, and Japan has been growing nervous about China.

In addition, bouts of ‘China fever’ among Japanese firms, which had rushed into the Chinese market, driven by competition with Western companies and their rivals at home, soon subsided in the face of disappointed expectations. Chinese inability to honour agreements and the general difficulties of operating in a tightly controlled command economy with its bureaucracy, red tape and corruption quickly dampened their ardour.

The Chinese for their part complained that Japanese motives were purely exploitative, that they refused to transfer up-to-date technology and that they used the Chinese market to dump surplus and inferior goods. Nevertheless, the Japanese Government encouraged the private sector to persevere, providing various forms of assistance to that effect, not least through the provision of substantial loans for the development of infrastructure (power generation, railways, ports and technological training).⁴²

Nevertheless, historical issues are always an obstacle for Sino-Japanese friendship even though Mao Zedong had declared that “Let the past be forgotten”.⁴³ It is most unfortunate that disputes over the recognition of historical facts still keep bothering Sino-Japanese relations. Firstly, occasionally high ranking Japanese politicians remark about the past Japanese conduct in China as if it were justifiable. Naturally the Chinese media and authorities sharply criticize such remarks. Secondly, the way Japanese textbooks describe the country’s misconduct during the war occasionally becomes another bone of contention. Interpretational discrepancies on historical events can have lasting negative impact on bilateral relations. Thirdly, the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo is a Shinto shrine dedicated to 2.5 million Japanese servicemen who lost their lives in their services. Class A war criminals are also enshrined there. Visits by Japanese politicians including prime ministers always raise sharp criticism from the Chinese and Koreans. The fact that Class A war criminals are among the enshrined has an effect of aggravating such criticism.⁴⁴

The territorial dispute over the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands also surfaced from time to time in incidents which coincided with a delicate phase in the bilateral relationship.

⁴² Wolf Mendi, *Japan's Asia Policy* (London, 1995), pp.82.83

⁴³ Okabe Tatsumi, *Japan-China Relations, Past and Future: Moving Beyond The Misunderstandings*, Gaiko Forum (Tokyo, Summer 2001), pp.4

⁴⁴ Issie Nomura, “Japan-China Relations”, *Japan's Foreign Policy*, Universiti Malaya, (Malaysia, 1997), pp.67

One such crisis took place at a critical stage in the negotiations over the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, when a large number of Chinese fishing boats, some armed with machine-guns, operated around the islands in April 1978.⁴⁵

China continues to remind Japan of its claim to sovereignty over what the Japanese insist belongs to them. When the Secretary-General of the CCP, Jiang Zemin, visited Japan in April 1992, Japan's Prime Minister Miyazawa raised the issue because the National People's Congress had enacted a law in February, which in effect declared Chinese sovereignty over the islands.⁴⁶ As on previous occasions, the Chinese avoided a direct confrontation by falling back on Deng Xiaoping's statement on 25 October 1978 that the dispute would be shelved for some time because "the people of our generation don't have enough wisdom. The people of the next generation may be wise enough to find a good solution". Therefore, the territorial dispute over uninhabited islands⁴⁷ remains to haunt Sino-Japanese bilateral relations.

The absence of the Taiwan factor is an interesting phenomenon in the discussion of contemporary Sino-Japanese relations. China makes it clear that it cannot accept independence of Taiwan. China is concerned about Taiwan getting self-assertive and gaining international recognition as its economy grew stronger.⁴⁸ Japan accepts that Taiwan belongs to China and will want to remain aloof from any conflict over the islands in its Joint Statement with China. The Japanese might prefer to see the

⁴⁵ Wolf Mendl, *Interest and Policy in North-East Asia*, "Japan's Asia Policy", (New York, 1995), pp.81-82

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

⁴⁷ Issie Nomura, "Japan-China Relations", *Japan's Foreign Policy*, Universiti Malaya, (Malaysia, 1997), pp.66

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pp.60-62

emergence of an independent Taiwan, but certainly not if that brought them into confrontation with China.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Wolf Mendl, *Interest and Policy in North-East Asia*, "Japan's Asia Policy", (New York, 1995), pp.89