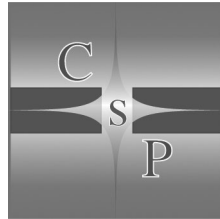


Sino-Japanese Relations

Sino-Japanese Relations: The Need for Conflict Prevention and Management

Edited by

Niklas Swanström and Ryosei Kokubun



Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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In memory of Eric Cheow

A friend and a colleague

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INTRODUCTION

NIKLAS SWANSTRÖM AND RYOSEI KOKUBUN

This book is a result of the conference “The Need for Conflict Prevention and Conflict Management in Sino-Japanese Relations” organized by the Institute for Security and Development Policy (ISDP) and the Institute of East Asian Studies at Keio University in Tokyo, Japan, March 2007. The purpose of the conference was to identify obstacles for improvement of the relations between China and Japan and to develop strategies to improve conditions for this. The authors would like to show their gratitude for the generous financial support that was extended by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Opinions expressed here are of course the ones of the authors and do not represent the views of the sponsors nor the organizations of the authors. This book is dedicated to the late Eric Cheow, a friend and colleague who departed from us during the book project in the midst of his life.

Sino-Japanese relations are of interest to the entire East Asian region due to the fact that Japan and China are the most influential politically, militarily, economically and psychologically regionally as well as in a greater global perspective since they are among the top five economies in the world. In an economic perspective the relations between the two countries heavily affect the possibility of economic cooperation and prosperity in the region. Moreover, Sino-Japanese relations hold key importance for Northeast Asia regional security and need to be considered when looking at the larger picture of security in Asia. Good Sino-Japanese relations could facilitate increased cooperation, whereas poor relations or a breakdown in state-level relations, on the other hand, could generate conflicts beyond the bilateral relations between Japan and China. In this respect, conflict prevention and conflict management in the relations between China and Japan are not only in the interest of the region but also in that of the international community.

The Sino-Japanese relationship during the last decade has been marked by political strife and tension both among the elite as well as at the grassroots. Fortunately, this has not escalated into a military conflict, even though the tension has been troublesome, especially at a political level.

Throughout this period, trust between the states and their populations has decreased and both peoples have commonly viewed the “other side” with a great deal of skepticism. This has changed since 2006, but the political relationship is still very fragile and with the demise of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the emergence of a new leader in Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda it is relatively difficult to predict future development and how China will perceive these changes. Furthermore, the political reshuffling that occurred at the seventeenth Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party has been largely unnoticed despite its importance for the bilateral relations.

The political tension between China and Japan has been reinforced by negative perceptions at the grassroots. Nonetheless the current tension is not only a question regarding tension over contemporary issues but it also has a strong historical linkage that is still vivid, especially for the Chinese. Japan’s occupation of sizeable areas of China in the first half of the 20th century and—according to the Chinese a failure by the Japanese to apologize for this—still is crucial for China. History has been widely used by both sides, at times justifiably and at other times seemingly more to stir up confusion and cause tension. It is important to note here that the large majority of the ruling elite is eager to improve the relations between the two states and they have viewed recent improvements in relations with keen interest.

From an economic perspective, the Sino-Japanese relation is one of the most important in the world as both states are not only among the most powerful economies, but they are also highly interdependent. It is apparent that the strained political relationship that has characterized the last decade, albeit with significant improvements over the last year, has not had so much of an impact on business relations. However, it is also evident that the problematic political relations have sub-optimized the economic potential between the two states. Destruction of Japanese property and products as well as economic obstacles that have been brought forth on both sides have decreased the potential for trade. As a result the business community has also assumed the most active position to advocate better cooperation and improved political relations. Improving current relations is of course not an easy task to handle since they are based on complex history and complex current power relations. Nevertheless, it is crucial. The authors hope that this project would be a meaningful step towards this development but at the same time realize that the improved relationship between China and Japan is difficult to cultivate and easily tainted with further conflicts.

History as an obstacle

China and Japan has had a very long history of interaction and conflict, albeit also many years of positive cooperation and integration. The late Eric Cheow goes back to the very early years of Sino-Japanese relations and their origins. He points out the great level of interaction and peaceful exchange but also the early conflict over the Korean peninsula and over political and cultural influence. While early history does burden the current relationship to some extent, Cheow notes that the much later Japanese occupation of China and the atrocities that took place then have played a much greater role in current relations. Much of the Chinese rhetoric, true and imagined, has a strong foundation in the unfortunate conflicts between 1894 and 1945. The Sino-Japanese War involved a great number of atrocities that the Chinese feel have not been properly addressed, even if the great majority of Japanese have expressed great remorse over this unfortunate event. However, there is a small minority in Japan, but also in China, that have been able to capitalize on this and managed to create sour relations between China and Japan. This has resulted in a situation where the Chinese side has repeatedly asked for a *sincere* apology and a *true* understanding of history. The Japanese interpretation is that they have made repeated efforts to apologize, even if the Chinese have failed to appreciate these efforts. It is worth noting, however, that the Chinese side expressed its official appreciation for Japanese past apologies when Prime Minister Wen Jiabao addressed the Diet (the Japanese Parliament) in April 2007.

The issue of a proper apology has taken up much of the debate on modern relations and many of the authors in this book have touched upon the fact that the improvement of relations appears unable to overcome this point. The government of Japan argues, like much of its population does, that Japan has repeatedly apologized with sincerity for past events. The debate goes back and forth and undermines trust and confidence between the two actors, much to the obstruction for improved relations. The often discussed issues of the Yasukuni Shrine are a direct outcome of this and have often threatened and sometimes managed to severely disrupt dialogue in Sino-Japanese relations. These issues have directly fed into the emergence of nationalism in both states, a factor that Akio Takahara and Michael Yahuda have gone deeper into and presented in a larger context. It has been pointed out, for example, by Akio Takahara that the dual process of increased interaction and negative nationalism has made much of the relations fragile and less resilient against changes. Much of the nationalist issue, moreover, seems to be out of the hands of the

governments as it appears to be bottom-up nationalism, whose development is something the governments react to rather than direct.

Many Japanese, moreover, feel that they have accepted the past by engaging China in a very generous Official Development Assistance (ODA) program since 1979 and that this should be understood as part of the apology. Japan has arguably also been a true partner for China, and despite harsh times, such as after the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, China has always been able to revive ODA disbursements from Japan swiftly, even during times of an almost universal western ban on dealings with China. The Chinese have rightly pointed out that this has also benefited Japan, but the fact of the matter remains that Japan has been very important to China's economic development. It seems apparent that Japanese ODA is another issue where the parties stand far from each other and would benefit from increased communication about its intent and effect. It is unclear whether this will decrease criticism on China's part, but many feel that it would improve relations if China were to acknowledge Japanese efforts to stand by China. The need for increased communication has been touched upon by all authors directly or indirectly and it seems the failure of high-level contact was an important reason for poor relations prior to the détente since fall 2006.

Several of the authors have also noted the development of a geopolitical rivalry as an important part of Sino-Japanese relations. China and Japan have over the years been succeeding each other as the major power in East Asia and once again there is a power shift in sight. China will shortly (or has already done so to a certain extent) overtake Japan in most, if not all, areas of competition. China's military as well as its economy has developed quickly and Japan could be seen as falling behind her neighbor. Japan's economy is by far the most modern but the sheer size of the Chinese one is, in a global perspective, second only to the U.S. This has created a great deal of tension, especially as both actors have very little trust for each other and certain moves taken by the other are perceived with suspicion. This is apparent in the military field where Yasuhiro Matsuda, Shi Yinhong, Yasuhiro Takeda and Quansheng Zhao have gone into detail in describing the opportunities and challenges.

These negative developments have been reinforced by domestic pressure and bottom-up nationalism, which Akio Takahara has gone into depth to explain that both states suffer from. There has been a demand not to give in to the other part without considerable concessions. It is apparent that the trust between ordinary Chinese and Japanese had hit an all-time low by 2007 and it will be difficult to be completely rebuilt. China has through its patriotic education developed a very negative view of Japan

and anti-Japanese teachings can be found in movies, books and even in comics.¹ Similarly, in Japan the view of China is severely distorted from an outsider's perspective and some of the teachings from the small but visible minorities contradict currently accepted interpretations of history and Sino-Japanese relations. It is important to note that they also differ greatly from the general Japanese interpretation of history.

The development of new strategies and structures

The Sino-Japanese relations have since long been characterized by a lack of communication and the adherence to old principles, distrust and a sluggishness to adjust the basic structure of the relationship to changing circumstances. Politically it has been very difficult to approach the other side with constructive compromises. The political agenda has to a large extent been orchestrated by relatively small extremist parties on both sides that have whipped up negative feelings and a large grassroots movement that has been characterized by skepticism. This has changed somewhat lately but there is still very much a fragile relationship that characterizes the relations, despite the détente after Abe's visit to China in October 2006. The progress of improvement has been halted by structural impediments and an (often) unfunded fear of the other side at the grassroots level. This has created a situation where there is still relatively little contact between the two sides.

In fact there are very few solid channels and linkages between China and Japan. Moreover the institutional framework for creating confidence and conflict management has been very weak. In most mature bilateral and multilateral relations there is a great deal of formal and informal mechanisms for management of conflicts. This is something that is largely missing in Sino-Japanese relations due to the long absence of strong political relations. Mel Gurtov has pointed out that there is a lack of channels for conflict resolution and that there is a need to create a better structure for improving communication and interaction. To accomplish this, Gurtov has offered a structure for continued interaction that focuses on creating a sustainable and effective mechanism for conflict resolution. Even if the focus were modest and dealt only with conflict management and prevention, it would nonetheless remain a difficult task.

The failure to develop new structures for engagement is very much due to the failure of the leadership to act independently of the structural and

¹ Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004).

political limitations as well as the structural impediments that are imminent in Sino-Japanese relations. Despite a relatively high level of interest among the political elites they have not been able to engage due to the situation created by domestic politics. Leaders need to be more effective at seizing opportunities and guiding neutral sentiments towards a more constructive engagement, a task that has been daunting to many leaders. Michael Yahuda has focused on the question of leadership, the importance of it and what roll it will play if the good relations can be sustained. Sino-Japanese relations are without a doubt in the midst of a rowdy sea of domestic politics, nationalism and historical relations. With a good captain at the helm and a clearly chartered route it will undoubtedly be easier to avoid running aground. The inter-state relations will remain difficult to manage formally, and second as well as third tracks have been suggested by several authors as a policy to evade some pitfalls. Yasuhiro Matsuda, for example, has argued that to overcome some of the problems focus should partly be directed towards private initiatives that could lead to dialogue and confidence building to complement the formal initiatives. This is much in line with many other suggestions to broaden the focus and create alternative channels of communication. It has become apparent that combined efforts by civil society, academics, military, and business elites, cultural exchanges etc. are needed to change the mentality and mood of the populations but also to increase further trust between all parties.

Moreover in the past there were obstacles to engagement as China lacked in confidence and Japan lacked in independent strategy. This has changed as China has increased in confidence, a fact that Quansheng Zhao has elaborated on and developed, but also because of the new strategy of Japan to become more independent towards the U.S. As the Chinese economy and its military potential have grown Beijing has become increasingly eager to act and asked for more space in the region, a demand that has not always been seen favorably by Tokyo who has begun to feel the competition from Beijing. This has been accentuated by the decreased interest in Washington to indiscriminately defend its allies. The U.S. has first of all asked for more engagement from the Japanese side, but also intends to decrease its support to Japan and South Korea, as its engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq threatens to bleed the U.S. armed forces dry in a financial perspective. This has forced, or allowed, Tokyo to have an increasingly independent policy, a trend that has been going on for a long time yet perceptions in Beijing are still that Tokyo is under U.S. influence.

Another problem is that there are no common strategies and possibly no common purpose. Shi Yinzhong and Quansheng Zhao go both deeper

into the issue and look at the potential of co-management and strategic interests. Both authors offer interesting views of the problem, but nevertheless differ in important aspects, a difference that gives a good understanding of the complexity of the issues and the problems in finding the right path towards improved relations. The problem does not end at the bilateral level. Northeast Asia is virtually without regional frameworks for conflict management and conflict resolution. There are very weak networks and few informal structures that could enable confidence building and conflict prevention, a problem that is addressed by Niklas Swanström.

The role of the military

The role of the military in Sino-Japanese relations is particularly interesting. Along with the deterioration of political relations high level military relations have also suffered, and only recently have we seen an improvement in relations between the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, symbolized by a port visit by the Chinese Navy (PLAN) in Japan. This is a new development in the military relations and has had an impact on overall relations, albeit not always positive. Military cooperation and confidence building activities are important for many reasons, one being the psychological impact when military structures that are created to defend a state seek to improve interstate relations. This is often perceived as being more far reaching than civilian cooperation due to the function of the military. Secondly, cooperation within the military, and more broadly the defense sector, tends to be crucial in decreasing misunderstandings and military escalation in times of tension. The creation of hotlines, military contacts and crisis management capacity could improve access to correct information and preempt escalation. Thirdly, it is usually more effective to influence and work through several structures to improve trust and conflict management between the actors, especially in a structure that is perceived as being inherently conservative and less prone to compromises. Finally, both the Chinese and Japanese military sectors have been stumbling blocks in Sino-Japanese relations, and much of the conflict has emerged from past Sino-Japanese military rivalry and what is perceived as Japanese militarism in China. If Japan is to reemerge as a militarily strong nation it needs to do so with caution if it seeks to gain China's acceptance, and increased contact and trust building exercises constitute a very important role in this.

The situation is modestly positive, with the port visit as the most important factor but also the increased number of contacts between

military staff. On the one hand there is a rapidly developing PLA and the SDF that has even managed to spot a Chinese submarine using an anti-submarine vessel north of Taiwan and followed it to Chinese water. This did not only raise the question in Beijing why Japan was so close to Chinese water, but also whether the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force is superior to the Chinese navy, a fear that is most likely true in terms of modernity and training of the officers and crew. On the other hand, Japan is seriously concerned with the Chinese military expansion and its nuclear capacity. This situation has been worsened by a lack of transparency and even exchange of a minimum level of information.

It has become increasingly apparent that Japan and China need to improve their military relations on a wide array of areas, this in spite of the very positive developments over the last year since former PM Abe's visit to China and the subsequent initiation of military relations. However, this is not an easy task and many obstacles still lie on the way. What is much needed is improved confidence and trust between both players as well as measures to deal with historical and contemporary relations. Increased exchanges in the political, cultural and educational spheres are some of these very important new strategies that have been initiated. Laudable as they are however, they alone will not be enough, especially since much of the distrust seems to be directed to the military sectors and the intentions of the increasingly capable armed forces on both sides. In this sense, an increase in trust and cooperation between the armed forces can provide a positive boost to the relationship. Military cooperation has been discussed in greater detail by Yasuhiro Takeda and Yasuhiro Matsuda who have both looked at different possibilities to create further conflict management and prevention by military engagement. Takeda has assumed a more positive stance where he argues that the potential cooperation in Peace-Keeping Operations could increase trust and conflict management significantly. Moreover, he argues that the Japan-U.S. alliance could function as a central element for effective conflict management. This standpoint has been criticized by Chinese scholars who view the Japan-U.S. alliance as a source of instability in the region. Matsuda has in his chapter focused on the inherent contradictions in perceptions and strategies that will create problems for building more effective conflict management. He argues for a more direct focus on crisis management in order to handle present relations. Furthermore, he advocates private initiatives and the need to create more trust between the parties before more comprehensive cooperation can be initiated. The strategic differences and transformation of the armed forces has created a situation where insecurity is devastatingly high.

Both China and Japan have implemented major overhauls to their military and self-defense forces, which has increased a sense of distrust between the two actors. In relation to this it is interesting to note the modernized structure of the Chinese armed forces and their increasing capacity to engage regionally and internationally. Similarly, Japan has developed its military capacity since the 1950s, especially its navy. In other words, both sides have concurrently developed more modern armed forces. They are better educated, have a greater understanding of international relations, and young officers are often trained abroad.

A common strategy for security?

China and Japan face a number of common security concerns, both regionally and globally. However, the level of cooperation has been notably low and far from fulfilling its potential. Northeast Asia is today possibly the only region that lacks a regional framework for security. Security frameworks that have been initiated, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN+3 and the Six-Party Talks, all extend beyond Northeast Asia. The apparent lack of trust between the actors in the region, more specifically Japan and China, has stalemated any attempt to create a truly regional framework for managing security concerns. Niklas Swanström has gone into depth to describe the regional context and to analyze the reasons for the absence of a regional framework. Quansheng Zhao and Yinhong Shi have both gone into much greater detail and analyzed the potential, and need, for a common Sino-Japanese regional security framework as well as the reasons for a lack thereof. In doing this, both the national and international contexts have been covered in both papers.

The problems related to the absence of a common strategy are directly related to the lack of trust between the parties and the differences in strategic and national interests. Shi Yinhong makes a convincing argument regarding the difficulties in creating a common strategy. He calls for a more normative work where feasible. Quansheng Zhao has similarly pointed out differences but the focus has been more on the common ground that exists between China and Japan in security issues, such as the Korean peninsula and to an increasing degree the Taiwan Strait, which could be the foundation for a security framework.

Creation of a common strategy is considered by all authors to be essential, even if the degrees of scope and estimates of its likelihood vary. The basic problem is that there is very little trust and institutionalization due to the tensions between Japan and China. Many point out the fragility

of Sino-Japanese relations and claim that there is very little that can be done before the very basics of the relationship improve. Mel Gurtov has stressed the importance of a structure to improve this, and both Zhao and Shi have in turn developed strategies to improve the relations. Sino-Japanese relations have improved considerably since Prime Minister Abe's official visit to China in October 2006 and consequently reinforced by consecutive visits by Premier Wen Jiabao to Japan in April 2007 and by Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda to China in December 2007. Both sides have agreed to cooperate in the fields of environmental issues, youth exchange and interaction in defense and other sectors, based on a mutually beneficial strategic relationship. However, the precise contents of this relationship remain loosely defined. In this respect, the current leadership on both sides still faces a tremendous task in improving the relations and developing strategies to move the process forward.

SECTION ONE:

A CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND CONFLICT PREVENTION PERSPECTIVE ON HISTORY: FROM A POLITICIZED PAST TO A HEALTHY POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP

UNDERSTANDING SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS FROM THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: ASYMMETRY AND GEO-POLITICS

ERIC TEO CHU CHEOW

This chapter analyzes the asymmetrical relationship between China and Japan, especially from the Japanese perspective of its perception of its own *rapport des forces* vis-à-vis the Middle Kingdom over the past 2,500 years of their common history in Northeast Asia. In this asymmetrical *rapport des forces*, the cultural and social factors have played an enormous role in molding the Japanese psyche vis-à-vis China (and vice versa), as history of the two nations would bear out.

What has been significant is the tumultuous history between China and Japan over the past 2,500 to 3,000 years, with a special emphasis on the Sui-Yamatai, Tang-Nara, Yuan-Hei'an and the Qing-Meiji periods of Sino-Japanese history, before the two catastrophic wars between them in 1894-95 and 1931-45, the spectacular reconciliation of 1972 and the present-day "ups and downs" in contemporary politics between Beijing and Tokyo.

This historical perspective is taken more from the Japanese perspective of "nation-building," especially in differentiating the Japanese nation from China, not only historically, but also culturally, philosophically and in terms of religion. Humiliation (mutually) was also a key factor in Sino-Japanese relations, which has provided over the years (and especially in the last 120-130 years), a profound emotional foundation to their troubled relations, although personalities (on both sides) have played crucial roles in contemporary Sino-Japanese relations, especially in the postwar era to either smoothen or aggravate the ties.

Indeed, the relations between Japan and China, or of a smaller country versus a bigger, dominant country in the history of Northeast Asia, clearly translates into a recurrent theme of "asymmetry," which inevitably "flows" through and complicates Sino-Japanese relations.

A Tumultuous Relationship of “Equals” and “Unequals”: From Pre-History to the Golden Cultural Age of Tang-Nara Relations

During the Jomon period (believed to be at least 1500-2000 years BC) in Japan, China was already developing rapidly under the Yin Dynasty (around 1500 BC) with its first use of bronze utensils. From Yin to Chou and Chin, China extended its territorial and cultural dominion in all directions until by Han times, there was one unified empire of unprecedented power in China. Under Emperor Wu-ti, Han China extended her influence into Korea, and in 108 B.C., the peninsula became a part of the Chinese Empire, with four dependent provinces under the Chinese charge. This then provided the vital chance for Han culture to flow into Japan via the Korean peninsula¹.

In fact, around the first century A.D., according to Chinese history, there were already some one hundred small states in Japan. One of them in 57 A.D. had the position of its monarch “confirmed” by the award of a seal by the then Chinese Emperor. A gold seal excavated in Shiganoshima in northern Kyushu in 1784, and believed to be the seal awarded at that time, affords concrete evidence of the exchanges between the small states of northern Kyushu and the Chinese Imperial court under the mighty Han.

According to Japanese historical annals, the next important link between China and Japan took place in the third century A.D. The northern Kyushu state of Yamatai was ruled by a queen, who also stood at the head of an alliance of thirty small kingdoms; the queen maintained relations with the Wei court in China (one of the famed Three Kingdoms of Wei, Wu and Shu, which had emerged from the collapse of the mighty Han Empire), and was presented with the seal of “monarch of the Wo” (“Wo,” meaning small or pygmy, was how the Chinese referred to Japan, their people being referred to as *wo-jen* and the nation *wo-kuo*). The state of Yamatai had then sent an emissary to Chin Court (which had by then conquered Wei) in 266, but makes no further appearance in written records thereafter. It was not until 413, a full 147 years later that Japan once more established relations with the Chin Dynasty of China although it had also actually invaded southern Korea in the latter half of the fourth century, when it forced Paekche (the former Ma Han) into a relation of tribute and occupied Mimana (the former Pyon Han Kingdom of Korea) and waged a

¹ Taro Sakamoto, *Japanese History* (Tokyo: International Society for Educational Information Press, 1988. 4th. printing. This is one of the best books on Japan’s history available in English.

fierce war against Koguryo (Kōguryō) Kingdom further north, thus dividing for the first time the Korean Peninsula between north and south.

But during this period, the Yamato Court, which produced Japan's first Emperor Jimmu in 660, took control over Kyushu and parts of western and central parts of Honshu. By the middle of the fifth century, the Yamato court declined considerably, just as the Silla Kingdom in Southern Korea grew in strength to put pressure on Mimana and Paekche to openly dispute Japanese control over southern Korea. Meanwhile, beginning with Emperor Nintoku (first half of the fifth century), four of his successors maintained relations with the southern Chinese dynasties of Sung, Chi and Liang.

But more importantly, it was during this period that a steady stream of cultural elements flowed from China into Japan via Korea. Firstly, *kanji* or the Chinese script had arrived as a means of communication in a land that had no language tool till then. Secondly, by the sixth century, Confucianism had also accompanied the *kanji* script into Japan. Lastly, Buddhism followed and was introduced formally as a religion in Japan during the reign of Emperor Kimmei, just as Japan's outpost in Korea, Minama, was overrun by its neighbor, Silla, thus ousting Japanese influence on the Korean Peninsula, just as Chinese influence there was increasing with these cultural elements also pouring into the Korean kingdoms.

Just as the Yamato Court was floundering, the grandson of Emperor Kimmei, Shotoku Taishi, became regent to his aunt, the Empress Suiko; Taishi came to power to restore Japan via his seventeen-article "Constitution," which for the first time laid down in writing the fundamental precepts relating to the maintenance of the State and the observance of morality (as in Confucianism) and stressed, amongst other things, respect for harmony, the study of Buddhism and obedience to the Emperor. It was in fact the first legal code in Japan that set out a *Confucian-Buddhist* view of man and life, as well as a code of conduct for government officials and the ordinary citizen, much along the same lines as the Chinese *Confucian* ethos in China at that time. Emissaries were dispatched to China's Sui Court in the early seventh century, which was beginning its process of reunifying north and south China into one big empire, and missions were then established on an "equal basis" between China and Japan for the first time. The Sui-Yamato period was hence the very first "equal relationship" between China and Japan.

As Buddhism spread and flourished in Japan, Japanese culture was very much in sync with Chinese inputs, first via Korea and then directly, through direct contacts between China and Japan. Buddhist culture then

formed the basis of Japanese lifestyle, arts, literature and religion, as huge temples were raised, ranging from the Hokoji in Asuka (which had become the capital of the Yamato Court), the Shitennoji in Osaka or the famous Horyuji near Nara. In fact, Buddhism and Confucianism became the hallmarks of the “Asuka culture,” as Asuka became the Imperial capital of Japan, and Sino-Japanese relations reached stable and great heights.

But it was also during this period that China and Japan also first clashed, and took place over Korea. In 663, Silla and Tang China fought Paekche and Japanese forces, in a naval battle, which the Japanese and Paekche lost. Paekche, a tributary of Japan, had in fact sent an emissary to ask for Japanese aid in its restoration, after being attacked by Silla and Tang forces; large military supplies and troops were sent to the peninsula, but the Japanese empress died whilst directing operations from Asakura, and the combined Tang and Silla forces routed the Japanese forces at the mouth of the Kim River. Japan thus withdrew from Korea and Paekche lost all hopes of being restored, as Japanese administration came to an abrupt end on the continent and Japan began to withdraw into its own splendid isolation.

Fearing an attack from the Chinese, Prince Naka-no-Oe, who ascended the throne as Emperor Tenji, then restored the right of the powerful families to possess men and constitute local armies, thus turning back partially on the famous Taika Reforms till the Taiho Code was finally instituted in 701. But the victorious Tang China had still a huge intellectual impact on the re-organization and political reforms process in Japan, just like Han culture, Confucianism and Buddhism had earlier on.

It was thus during the Nara period in Japan (beginning in 710) that relations between China and Japan were finally stabilized. During the reign of Emperor Gemmei, the nation's capital was moved to Nara and remained there for seventy years spanning seven reigns. China under the Tang Dynasty was experiencing its golden age of prosperity and cultural creativity. Japan adopted this highly developed Tang culture, and fashioned it into a higher and more developed culture to suit local tastes and traditions than had been the case during the Asuka period; its most outstanding characteristic was its emphasis on Buddhism, as the political system, based on the Ritsuryo Code that was fashioned after the *Confucian* teachings from China. But with the ascension of Emperor Shomu in 724, the shift from a *Confucian* government to a Buddhist one began to take place, thus provoking the rise of an aristocracy led by the Fujiwara family, which was advocating a return to the Taika reforms and a Confucian government. The fight between the Buddhist clergy and the Confucian-

inclined aristocracy thus characterized the Nara period, which was clearly torn between its infatuation with Tang culture (with its own “tussle” with Buddhism towards the end of the Tang Dynasty as well) and its general faith in Buddhism and its rising clergy. But Sino-Japanese relations were also probably at their best during this period, and were clearly based on cultural and religious affinities and exchanges.

In 794, Emperor Kammu moved his capital to Kyoto and began the Hei'an period of Japan's development, as a means to distance the monarchy and the government from Buddhism and its politics. Kyoto remained the capital of Japan for the next 1,100 years till the final move to Tokyo in 1869 under the Meiji Restoration. But the first four centuries of Kyoto or “direct rule from Kyoto” by the Emperor were truly known as the Hei'an period, after which the power center shifted to Kamakura under the “shogun system,” which then became known as the Kamakura period in Japanese history. The Ritsuryo Code was systematically implemented, but adapted to the current situation and moreover Kammu regulated the developing Buddhism by sending two monks to study in Tang China, thus founding the Tendai and Shingon sects of Japanese Buddhism, which still dominate the Buddhist landscape in Japan today. During the early reigns of the Hei'an period, Tang-style culture still held unchallenged sway in the Japanese court and the writing of Chinese prose and poetry using characters was extremely sought after. It was also during this period that all the gates to buildings in the Imperial Palace were given Tang style names, like in China. Hence, Chinese culture and influence in Japan reached its zenith during the eighth century and the Sino-Japanese relationship reached its culminating point in history, primarily based on culture and civilization.

The First Cultural and Philosophical “Distanciation” between China and Japan during the post-Tang Dynasty-Hei'an Period

However, in 858 in the beginning of the Hei'an period, there was a power shift in Japan that resulted in the first “distanciation” of the Japanese political system from that of Tang China's, viz. the introduction of the Shogun or Regent “on top” of the Confucian system that still dominated the Kyoto court. Then, in the first half of the eleventh century, a further power shift in Japan distanced Japan even further from China, with the emergence of the first provincial samurais. The Tang Dynasty had also fallen from power in China by then, and Chinese culture was fast dissipating in Japan; the time had now come for the Japanese, having

masticated and absorbed that culture, to blend it with their own and create something new on the territory of Japan.

The amalgamation of Buddhism with the native Japanese Shinto (animistic cult) gave rise to a peculiar phenomenon in which native gods and Buddhist deities (basically from China) became confused. The Tendai and Shingon sects were in the process of Japanization, just as “Pure Land” sects were promoting in the eleventh century an even stronger “Japanese feeling”. This period marked the beginning of a certain “divorce” between Chinese and Japanese cultures, whereas Japan effectively embarked on a political era of “cloistered Emperors,” powerful shoguns and the rise of the samurai class. These two events, cultural and political, marked the first real “differentiation” of Japan from China, which have lasted up to the present day.

The samurai class created a distinctively Japanese political structure and system, whereby the “bakufu” or “government by the warrior class” (as opposed to the “mandarin class in traditional Chinese-Confucian tradition) became progressively transformed into the “shogunate” or “rule by general,” which lasted all the way up to the Meiji Restoration of 1868. This could be perceived to have been the first rise of militaristic force in Japan, which even today is a facet of Japanese society. During this *bakufu* period of the shogunate, closely associated with the Kamakura period of Japan’s history, there was another “close shave” of a conflict between Japan and China, the second direct confrontation in their history before 1894 (the first being during China’s Tang Dynasty, involving Silla and Paekche in Korea).

In 1274, the Mongol Empire under Genghis Khan was fast expanding its empire and control in all different directions. In 1268 in the time of Kublai Khan, the Yuan Dynasty in China sent envoys to Japan to demand tribute, which the then Japanese regent, Hojo Tokimune, rejected outright. In 1274 and 1281 the Mongol forces brought large numbers of vessels to attack northern Kyushu, but Japan was saved by the storms that fortunately rose to decimate the Mongol troops and forced the retreat of China’s Yuan Dynasty from conquering parts of Japan. In part, it was luck on the side of Japan (which later believed strongly, thanks to this “twist of fate in history,” in its own “divinity powers and splendid isolation,” up to World War II, as well as the effective samurai and warrior class system, that established the superiority of the Japanese fighting spirit.

This Mongol attack on Japan also led to further Japanization as the samurai class gained political ascendancy and indigenous Japanese culture took roots, thus wiping out the remaining Tang culture during the Nara period; similarly, there was a quasi-collapse of the aristocratic class with

the concurrent rise of the warrior samurai class and culture in Japan, a probable precursor to the rise of militarism during World War II and Japan's dismissive and disdainful attitude towards China and Chinese culture. This "great Sino-Japanese divorce" was therefore provoked by an abrupt break in culture, civilization, politics and even militarism, which have all plagued contemporary Sino-Japanese relations, from Meiji, through the two Sino-Japanese wars, to World War II till today.

A new era in Sino-Japanese relations began with the fall of the Yuan Dynasty and its replacement by the Han-led Ming Dynasty in China in 1368. Japan had by then entered the Muromachi period (begun in 1338) and diplomatic relations with the Ming were formally established in 1398, with a first Ming envoy arriving in Japan in 1402. The focus in Sino-Japanese relations was clearly on coastal trade and the potential problems such trade was causing in bilateral relations, as inhabitants from the west of Japan were now appearing frequently in the coastal areas of China and Korea to conduct private trading. Where trade was not permitted, or where the Japanese were disadvantaged, they resorted to military force to seize what they wanted from the Chinese and Koreans. Known as *wako*, these Japanese "pirates" were much feared in these coastal regions, thus underscoring this problematic episode on the Chinese coast and its trade with the rest of Asia.

But officially, Shogun Yoshimitsu (1368-94) sought to expand trade with Ming China to bolster his own finances in Japan. However, the Ming authorities, ignoring the "equal treatment" principle established during the Sui Dynasty in the early seventh century, insisted that trade with China should be formally recognized by Japan as a "tribute" from Japan. Ming China had also demanded that the Japanese shogun rein in its *wako* and control piracy along the Chinese coasts. These two elements were later woven into the Kango Trade Treaty, signed in 1404, and later revised in 1434.

China's demands over Japan submitting to its tributary system were never satisfied (as Japan remained the only big neighbor to China to have officially refused to accept China's Imperial tributary system), although the Japanese did satisfy the Chinese to some extent on the *wako* and trade, as a means of securing the profitable Chinese trade. The Chinese imposed strict restrictions on trade from Japan to three ships at a time once every ten years, as well as special trade marks for "official ships" so as to distinguish them from *wako* vessels. Japanese goods exported to China to earn foreign capital included copper, sulphur, swords and gold-inlaid lacquer-ware; imports from China included copper coinage, raw silk, silk fabrics, cotton thread and cotton cloth.

The first economic and commercial relations between China and Japan were thus formally established under the Ming Dynasty, with potential disputes from illegal trade (meaning pirates under the Japanese *wako* system) already in the air. Economically, Japanese commercial culture developed tremendously during this period of extensive interaction with Ming China, as Chinese copper coins circulated increasingly and freely in Japan, and as retail and the “monetization” of the indigenous Japanese economy took off, thanks to Chinese “inputs” at that time. Buddhism was still prevalent, but no longer as a religion; it was more of an important influence in Japanese arts and architecture; as an example, the famous Kinkakuji in Kyoto, built in 1397, “fusioned” the traditional style of an aristocratic Japanese mansion with the Buddhist architecture that was imported from China. These “cultural exchanges” were thus complemented by the trade that was now clearly regulated between the two countries.

Towards the end of the Azuchi-Momyama period (1568-1600), but also before this period, Regent Hideyoshi began to be receptive of European trade and influence, including the arrival of Christianity in Japan, via the Jesuits from Portugal (in 1549) and Spain. European influence began to penetrate Japan, and Hideyoshi even proscribed Christianity in Japan, which had as its corollary, the existence of a certain “balance” for Japan between its new-found European influences and its traditional Chinese cultural influences; this tradition of “balance” was to continue all the way till Meiji, when the tilt went decisively in favor of European influences, after the Meiji Emperor found the “declining” Chinese culture and civilization largely “inferior,” as compared to the budding and blossoming Western culture.

However, trade was developing fast beyond the Chinese and Korean coasts into the Ryukyus, Formosa, Annam, Siam and Southeast Asia, just as silver, the main trading currency in the Far East (replacing copper) at that time was plentiful in Japan. Emboldened by its new-found trade prowess, Japan under Regent Hideyoshi even asked Korea to act as an intermediary to force Ming China (in its agonizing years of decline) to “pay tribute” to Japan; Hideyoshi then despatched his first Korean Expedition in 1592 during the Bunroku War, and again, a second Korean Expedition in 1597 in the Keicho War. Both attempts at launching a war against China were unsuccessful, especially the second expedition, when the military campaign was bogged down and an armistice agreement was reached. Since the conditions of the agreement were not observed, the military campaign went further, only to be curtailed and Japanese troops withdrawn from Korea, when Hideyoshi died suddenly in 1598. This event

highlighted the rise of militaristic elements and nationalistic pride in Japan, even before Meiji, and thus symbolized the rise of Japan as an “asymmetrical” power to China.

A Sino-Japanese military conflict was thus averted at the very last minute (what would have been the third, if it had taken place, since the Tang and Yuan attacks on Japan). It was also during the Tokugawa period that Japan officially refused China’s tributary power and system (in the earlier days of the Ming), whilst attempting contrarily to obtain tributary rights from a weakening China towards the end of the Ming Dynasty. These incidents marked the beginning of a troubled relationship between China and Japan, although the latest “disaster” expedited the fall of the Toyotomi regime in the beginning of the Edo Bakufu period under the powerful shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu, who began closing the country from external influences, whilst developing trade with Asia and the West.

The Edo period, which began in 1603, became known as the “closing in” period of Japan, and prompted the further estrangement of its cultural and philosophical relations with China. There was growing concern under the powerful Tokugawa clan at the head of the Shogunate that Christianity could ultimately threaten Japan’s Shintoism and Buddhism, and thus, shake the political foundations of the nation, the shogunate and Japanese society. In the world of scholarship, official Confucian studies continued to flourish but this period saw the emergence of *kokugaku* (“national learning”), which set out to counterbalance the over-emphasis on traditional Chinese learning with studies of the ancient Japanese language and to promote a return to the ancient indigenous ways of life and thinking, decidedly “a clear escape from the predominantly Chinese outlook that had bound Japan for too long”.

In 1853, Matthew Perry, commander of the U.S. East India Squadron, entered Uraga harbor with his warships, bearing a letter from the U.S. president seeking trade with Japan. In 1854, on his second attempt, Perry obtained an agreement with Japan, whereby two ports, Shimoda and Hakodate, would be opened to American ships for fuel, water and food; a formal Treaty of Trade and Friendship was then signed in 1858 with the United States. Similar trade treaties of friendship were also signed with England, Russia, the Netherlands and France, thus opening the nation’s doors to foreigners or *gaijin* after two decades of seclusion during the Edo period.

These trade treaties, as well as the shelling of Shimonoseki by the combined naval forces of the United States, England, France and the Netherlands in 1864 (as a result of rising anti-foreigner feelings within Japan, thanks to the opening up of trade with the *gaijin*, which had