

11

Changing Japanese Perceptions and China-Japan Relations

RUMI AOYAMA

SOUND CHINA-JAPAN relations are essential to the stability of trilateral China-US-Japan relations. Japan is the second-largest economy in the world, and China, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, now has the third-largest economy. The trajectory of their bilateral relationship will inevitably affect not only the Asia Pacific region but global politics as well.

Among the three bilateral legs of the China-US-Japan triangle, China-Japan relations have been relatively less stable in the post-Cold War era than US-China and US-Japan relations. This is in part because both Japan and China have made US policy their first priority and have made tremendous efforts to maintain good relations with the United States, the single most powerful actor in the international regime. Over the past two decades, US-Japan relations have generally been stable, and the majority of Japanese people hold a positive view of both the United States and US-Japan relations. Meanwhile, the US-China relationship has experienced some turbulence, but the two countries are now coordinating their foreign policies and co-operating on many fronts. Even though there is still substantial divergence on substantive issues between these two giants, US-China relations are commonly understood to be stable. On the other hand, the China-Japan relationship has seen significant instability during this period. This suggests that a better understanding of the bilateral China-Japan dynamic is thus important in identifying how to manage the overall dynamics of the trilateral relationship.

China-Japan relations are often compared with US-China relations. The current US-China relationship is perceived as "stable," whereas China-Japan relations appear to be substantially more fragile. Since 2008 marked the 30th anniversary of both the announcement of China's reform and opening-up policy and its normalization of bilateral ties with the United States, a general reassessment of the last 30 years of US-China relations was undertaken in China. Most Chinese scholars agree that ties between the two countries were greatly strengthened under the second term of the Bush administration. They point to the approximately 40 channels of extensive high-level contacts that have now been established in various fields and to the fact that the US media has begun covering a broader range of issues in a more positive manner in recent years. While it is true that the foundation of bilateral China-Japan ties has largely been destabilized by an array of tensions (history issues, shrine visits, the cancellation of leaders' meetings, territorial disputes, expressions of mutual distrust, and so on), it is also true that US-China relations have not been immune to such tensions over the past two decades either. And yet they seem to be on more solid footing. This leads to a simple question: how well are the conflicts between Japan and China being managed, and why are China-Japan relations less stable than US-China relations?

The bilateral relationship between Japan and China has drawn tremendous academic attention due to its importance for trilateral relations and for the stability and prosperity of the Asia Pacific region. However, in part because of the longstanding habit that scholars have of focusing exclusively on actual conflicts, the practice of conflict management between the two countries is rarely mentioned.¹ Conflict management refers to "the design and implementation of strategies to minimize the dysfunctions of conflict and to maximize its constructive functions for a more peaceful world."² Even though all conflicts may not be eliminated or permanently resolved, potentially violent conflicts can be transformed into peaceful processes through conflict-management diplomacy.³ In this sense, research focused on how conflicts are managed is essential to assess the state of China-Japan relations.

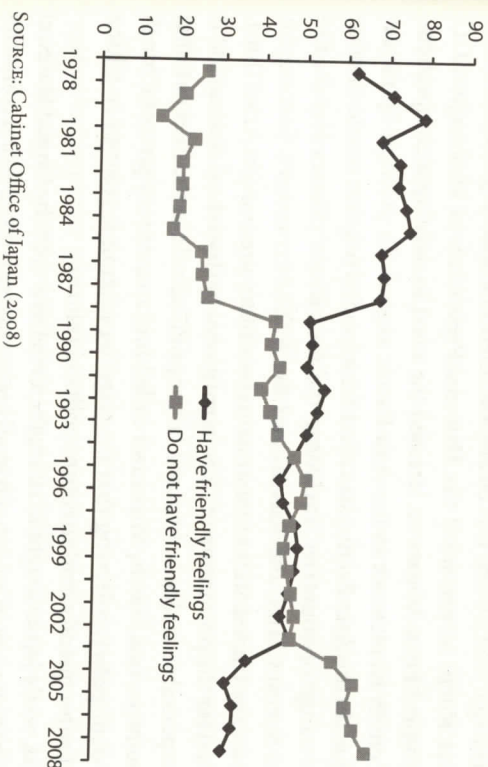
By focusing on conflict management, this chapter examines the changing bilateral relationship between Japan and China in the post-Cold War era in terms of the evolution of perceptions, the broader foreign policy context of the bilateral relationship, and the way in which the management of conflicts has been conducted in China-Japan relations. The relationship between these two countries has undergone notable changes since the end of the Cold War, and these changes have coincided with shifts in each country's foreign policy priorities during this period. If we trace the trajectory of

these shifts, post-Cold War China-Japan relations can be divided into three phases: the departure from the Cold War framework (1989–1995), adjustment to a rising China (1995–2006), and movement toward a new equilibrium (2006–).

DEPARTURE FROM THE COLD WAR FRAMEWORK (1989–1995)

The overall image of China in Japan after the Cold War was negative. In the 1980s, most Japanese admired China and had nostalgic or romanticized impressions of the country.⁴ But these sentiments gradually faded away in the post-Cold War era. As figure 1 demonstrates, the crackdown on the pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square in June 1989 had a fundamental impact on Japanese perceptions, and those holding positive opinions of China dropped sharply from 68.5 percent to 51.6 percent in a single year.

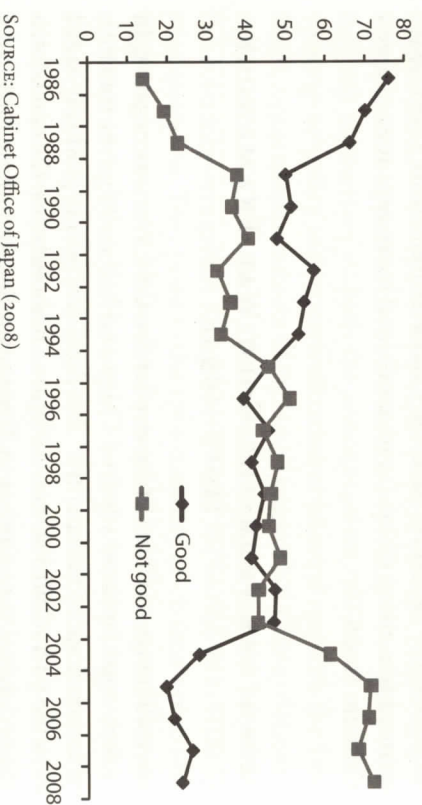
Figure 1. Japanese sentiments toward China (percent)



Source: Cabinet Office of Japan (2008)

Despite this deterioration in public opinion, however, the two governments managed to develop and maintain a cooperative, amicable relationship. This relationship was conspicuously reflected in public opinion in Japan. As shown in figure 2, the majority of Japanese people in the early 1990s perceived that Japan and China had good relations.

Figure 2. Japanese views on China-Japan relations (percent)



Source: Cabinet Office of Japan (2008)

This cooperative relationship was considered to be in the best interests of both countries. Japan's post-Cold War strategy was based on a dual strategy that addressed the importance both of relations with the United States and of relations with other Asian countries, especially with China. This strategic framework was clearly outlined in a speech given by Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa at the National Press Club in Washington DC in July 1992.⁵ First, Miyazawa stressed the need to develop a comprehensive security framework in the Asia Pacific region. To promote "political dialogue" in the Asia Pacific, he called for a framework that would involve a wide range of countries, including the four major powers (Japan, the United States, China, and Russia) and the ASEAN countries. Second, he called for the United States to maintain its military presence in Asia. Third, he called for the promotion of "US-Japan global partnership," stating that it is indispensable for Japan to play a larger political role in the international community. And fourth, Miyazawa called for Japanese support of China's open door policy, believing that the ongoing economic reforms in China would subsequently lead to future political reform.

Thus, while Japan sought to strengthen relations with the United States, at the same time it reasoned that friendly relations with other Asian countries were crucial in order to minimize concerns among Japan's neighbors over stronger US-Japan ties.⁶ Under this strategy, the general Japanese approach to China was engagement.

Strengthening ties with Japan was one of the top diplomatic priorities for China as well. In the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square incident, China faced a harsh international climate. To break through the isolation,

China launched a new diplomatic policy that placed relations with the United States at the top of its agenda, with China-Japan relations as the second priority.⁷

Against a backdrop of lingering US-Japan trade tensions and strained US-China relations following the Tiananmen Square incident, China and Japan were eager to maintain friendly relations at the start of the 1990s. Tiananmen Square had prompted Western countries to impose strict sanctions on China in the form of bans on political and military contact with China and the cutting off of economic aid and cooperation. Yet Japan promoted its own foreign policy line, adopting a strategy to prevent China from becoming isolated. At the 1989 G7 Summit in France, Japan clearly stated that China should not be cut off, and it was successful in getting this goal included in a final "Declaration on China." In November 1990, Japan was first among the industrialized nations to resume official development assistance (ODA) disbursements to China. In January 1991, Finance Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto traveled to China, and in August of that year, Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu became the first head of state from a major industrialized nation to visit China since the Tiananmen Square incident. In 1992, the emperor of Japan made a visit to China, further helping to restore China-Japan relations to normalcy.

The fact that Japan broke ranks with the West was a significant positive gesture from China's point of view and, as a consequence, China then expected Japan to mediate in restoring its relations with the West.⁸ Thus, a confluence emerged between the two countries' strategic goals, allowing what has been called the "friendship framework" to function effectively.⁹ This began to spill over to the private sector as well. After the Japanese emperor's visit, for example, Japanese direct investment in China increased rapidly.

Behind these friendly bilateral relations, however, there were also tangible signs of conflict. China signaled the advent of a new confrontation by expressing its concern about the war history issue and watched with alarm as Japan and the United States moved to redefine their alliance and agreed to cooperate on missile defense system research. Nevertheless, up until the signing of the US-Japan Joint Declaration on Security: Alliance for the 21st Century—a treaty signed in April 1996 by President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto in an effort to strengthen the US-Japan security alliance—most scholars in China were cautiously optimistic, thinking that the US-Japan alliance might serve to keep a lid on the resurgence of militarism in Japan.

In the meantime, China's double-digit military spending and rapid economic growth created an uneasy atmosphere in Japan. In 1995, many

journals and newspapers had special editions devoted to reports on the "China threat." Amid mounting anxiety, most foreign policy opinion leaders remained relatively calm. Tadao Ishikawa, former president of Keio University and a leading area studies specialist, argued, "The nationalism that bolsters the military buildup requires more attention than the military buildup per se. In order to lead China in a reasonable direction, the best choice is to engage China."¹⁰

Although the Japanese government did express its concerns to China, it did not change its general approach. In the process of framing the National Defense Program Outline in 1995, Japan's politicians were divided on using the expression "the China threat," a term that was included in the initial draft prepared by the Defense Agency. In the end, the Murayama administration decided to delete the expression in an effort to accommodate China's sensitivity.¹¹

A number of additional issues affected public perceptions of China during this period as well. The arrival of "boat people" from China—economic refugees who came to Japan pretending to be Vietnamese—drew public attention to domestic security in Japan and led to a deteriorating image of China. Starting in 1989, when the first boatload of Chinese arrived, the number of mock refugees to Japan continued to increase throughout the early 1990s.

The environment, which is of particular concern to Japanese people, also came to the forefront in the early 1990s. A study conducted at that time by an expert from the Maizuru Marine Observatory stated that the acid rain in Japan was caused by the air pollution in Huabei, China. Commenting on this report, Japan's Environmental Agency dismissed the "China environmental threat," saying that there are many factors that may cause acid rain and that the extent to which China's air pollution affects the environment in Japan was still not clear.¹² In fact, the Japanese government perceived cross-border pollution as a North-South problem and viewed it as one of the most appropriate areas in which Japan could contribute internationally. The government resolved to play a leading role in tackling this issue by providing both advanced technology and financial support to developing countries, including China.

This official stance was supported by the public. For example, local governments and many nonprofit organizations enthusiastically involved themselves in planting trees in desert areas in China under the slogan of "bringing green to China" (*Chugoku ni midori o*), and the Sino-Japan Friendship Center for Environmental Protection was established with Japanese ODA in 1995.

Many of the major areas of conflict that exist today between Japan and China can be traced back to the 1990s. Nevertheless, both Japan and China managed these conflicts under the friendship framework. In the beginning of the 1990s, the Japanese government recognized the global importance of its relations with China, and a statement made by former Prime Minister Miyazawa in 1995 clearly illustrates the Japanese response to a rising China at that time.¹³ Regarding the military buildup and rapid economic growth in China, Miyazawa said, "China will ultimately become a major economic power, and probably a major military power as well. The Chinese leaders may be preoccupied with hegemony. Even so, it is impossible to contain China and we should not contain China. Hence, it is important for us to engage China."¹⁴

Behind the friendship framework, however, mutual suspicions were on the rise. Japanese concerns about China were being raised on a wide range of issues—from security to the environment—while China had a different perspective, focusing on the historical legacy and Japan's military intentions. All of these tensions rose to the surface in the latter half of the 1990s.

ADJUSTMENT TO A RISING CHINA (1995–2006)

The Changing Perception of China in Japan

The public perception of China in Japan, which had worsened after the Tiananmen Square incident, deteriorated further in the mid-1990s as a result of incidents that occurred in 1995. China executed an underground nuclear test in May 1995, in response to which Japan voiced its strong opposition, calling it a violation of the ban on nuclear tests stipulated in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and demanding that China refrain from further testing. Nevertheless, a second test was conducted in August of that year. In contrast to its response following the Tiananmen Square incident, this time Japan promptly notified China on August 30 of its intention to cut off development aid. Freezing aid in this case was fundamentally different from the 1989 freeze because it was not a product of pressure from the Western camp but was instead a move made by Japan of its own accord, suggesting a change in its China policy.¹⁵

In the midst of these tense Japan-China relations, the "China threat" argument began to emerge from both Japan's ruling party and the opposition. This peaked in 2005, when Seiji Maehara, president of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), and Foreign Minister Taro Aso openly stated that

China was a threat to Japan. All along, however, the official position of the government of Japan was that it did not regard China as a threat. Prime Minister Koizumi denied that China was an immediate threat, and Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga also dismissed the China threat argument, describing China as a "competitive partner."

The Japanese government did, however, express concerns over China's increased military spending. The description of China's military status in Japanese defense white papers changed incrementally. In the post-Cold War period, Japan has gradually begun to look at the Taiwan question as a security issue.¹⁶ Since 1996, Japan's white papers on defense have expressed concerns about China's military buildup, and particularly about the uncertainties caused by the tense relations between China and Taiwan. The 1999 white paper included information for the first time on the fact that "China maintains around 100 intermediate-range ballistic missiles that could reach the entire continent of Asia." The 2000 white paper gave the first concrete statistics on Chinese naval vessels and oceanographic research ships that had been spotted by Japan's Self-Defense Forces conducting operations (and suspected of gathering intelligence) in the waters surrounding Japan. The 2004 white paper expressed concern over China's activities in the airspace surrounding Japan, while the 2005 edition raised the issue of its military use of outer space.

There were changes at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) as well. Based on the conviction that it was important to reinforce US-Japan security relations, Japan embarked on a democratic values-laden foreign policy that adhered to the principle that more affluent and stable democratic societies will be beneficial to the stability of the international community. A foreign policy line based on promoting democracy as a universal value started to become evident. In 1999, the difference in political systems between Japan and China was referred to for the first time in MOFA's diplomatic blueprint.

In December 2005, Foreign Minister Aso portrayed Japan as a "thought leader" for Asia and as a promoter of democratic values. Although democratic values have long been one of the important principles of Japan's foreign policy, the introduction in 2006 of the geopolitical term "arc of freedom and prosperity" triggered strong criticism from China.¹⁷

By 2006, opinion leaders in Japan were divided on the China threat issue. Shigeo Hiramatsu, an expert on Chinese military issues, warned of China's military expansion, citing the country's military buildup and the recent increase in naval activity in the East China Sea.¹⁸ Mineo Nakajima, an expert on China, also considered China to be a threat, labeling the

country as an irredentist that intends to recover its lost kingdom.¹⁹ On the other hand, Akio Takahara, another leading expert on China, rebutted, "The threat is not about China per se. Rather, it stems from the political and economic uncertainties and the social unrest in China."²⁰ Thus, two contrasting images of China coexisted in Japan: one of a rising and threatening China, the other of China as a fragile power. Although different in essence, both posed a "threat" to Japan, and each one required a different approach from Japan.

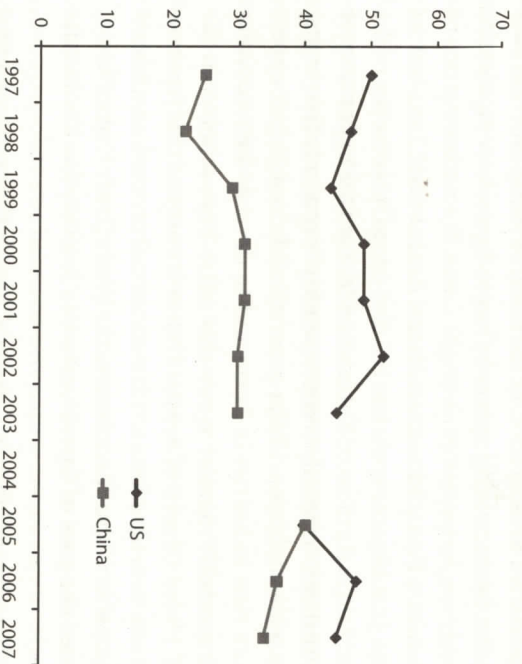
In contrast, few people in Japan have viewed China as an economic threat. Strictly speaking, the argument that China was an economic threat emerged in 2001 and evaporated in 2002. Trade disputes in the towel industry and over such agricultural products as rushes (used in tatami mats), scallions, and mushrooms started in early 2001. In the midst of rising concerns over the possibility that the increasing moves by major Japanese companies to shift their production bases to China might cause the hollowing out of the Japanese industry, Prime Minister Koizumi denied that China was an economic threat. In a keynote speech at the first annual conference of the Boao Forum for Asia in April 2002, Koizumi underlined the importance of strengthening bilateral, "mutually complementary" economic ties, saying that "the advancement of Japan-China economic relations [is] an opportunity to nurture new industries in Japan and to develop their activities in the Chinese market."²¹ Similar views also came from scholars in the economic field. Hideo Ohashi of Senshu University argued that Japanese firms unexpectedly benefited from a "Chinese special procurement boom" (*Chigoku tokujin*) after China's accession to the World Trade Organization, which accelerated the pace of Japan's economic recovery from a decade-long stagnation.²²

Since 2000, the public in Japan has viewed China as the most important country for Japan economically, displacing the United States, which is still of greater political importance to Japan, as illustrated in figures 3 and 4. Along with the strengthened bilateral economic ties, a relatively neutral term, "China risks"—as opposed to "economic threat"—gained widespread use in the economic arena.²³

Whereas the debates on the China threat were intense among politicians and elites, the general public has by and large perceived North Korea as the biggest military threat to Japan. Only 10 percent of the Japanese public felt that China was the country that posed the greatest military threat to Japan according to a survey in 2007.²⁴ Moreover, for the general public, the issue of greatest interest was safety and security within Japan. Data from the Japanese National Police Agency shows that crimes by foreigners in

Japan increased rapidly from the beginning of the 1990s on. By 2006, about 84 percent of Japanese surveyed thought that public safety in Japan had gotten worse, and 55 percent of respondents cited rising crime by foreigners as a primary cause of the worsening public order.²⁵ That perception was due in part to the 2003 "Fukuoka incident," which occurred amid a national campaign against crimes by foreigners. Three Chinese students murdered a family of four during a robbery, and this heinous crime no doubt exacerbated the negative image among the Japanese public of Chinese people and of China itself.

Figure 3. Public perceptions of politically important countries for Japan (percent)

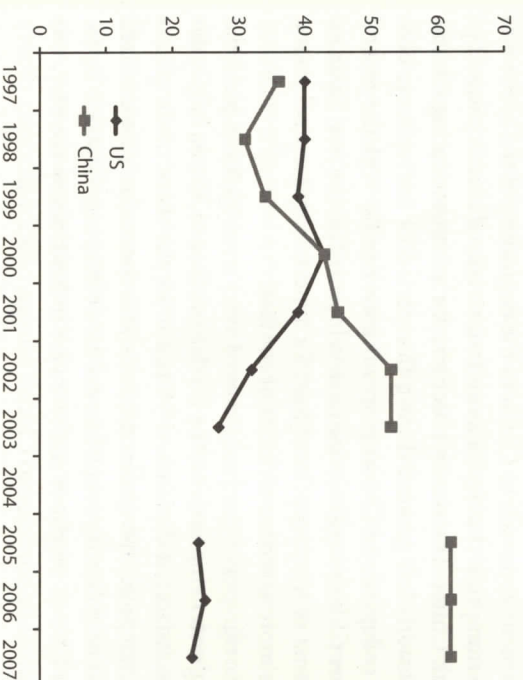


Source: Annual polls conducted by Yomiuri Shinbun-Gallup.

Another domestic security issue related to China was food safety. In 2002, one Japanese person died and 11 others developed liver disorders after taking Chinese diet aids. In the same year, a wide range of products containing contaminated vegetables from China were recalled after high levels of residual agricultural chemicals were detected in imported spinach.

China also drew increased attention over the issue of pollution. As the "don't blame China" consensus that prevailed in the early 1990s faded away, Japan's image of China worsened.²⁶ Since the 1990s, sandstorms in Japan have been increasing in frequency and intensity, and western

Figure 4. Public perceptions of economically important countries for Japan (percent)



Source: Annual polls conducted by Yomiuri Shinbun-Gallup.

Japan—especially Kyushu, Chugoku, and Kansai—have been particularly hard hit. Concerns about the effect of sandstorms on human health are on the rise. Although, as the Chinese government has argued, the sandstorms come mostly from Central Asia and not just from China, many in Japan still view China as the main cause of the problem.²⁷ The level of photochemical smog has also increased since 2000, and China is accused of causing this problem too.²⁸ The fact that Japan has yet to finalize regulations on the emission of nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds, which can create photochemical oxidants, is barely mentioned in Japan. Similarly, in the case of acid rain, most of the ionic sulfate is believed to have come from inland areas of China via the Yellow Sea and the Korean Peninsula. Even though sulfur dioxide emissions in both China and South Korea have been pointed to as the likely sources of the pollution, only Chinese emissions are seen as the cause by most Japanese people.²⁹

Thus, the image of China in Japan during this period varied greatly. Although the Japanese government never officially labeled China a threat, there were strong concerns about China's military buildup among politicians and opinion leaders, and there was a prevailing wariness about crimes by foreigners and China's environmental pollution.

China's Japan Policy and China-Japan Relations

Japan's engagement approach to China in the beginning of the 1990s was based on an assumption that Japan as an industrialized country was supporting a weak China. The strong proclivity for accommodating China's sensitivities steadily lost ground during this period as the Japanese economic bubble collapsed and China's economy grew rapidly. With the general uneasiness over China's rapid economic development on the rise, Japan no longer saw China as an appropriate target for a mere "engagement" policy, and it became more assertive on areas of conflict.

As Japan's foreign policy gradually moved away from its Asian platform and toward a greater emphasis on the US-Japan alliance, China began developing its multifaceted diplomacy.³⁰ Since 1996, the three major pillars of China's foreign policy have been relations with the major industrialized powers, China's neighboring countries, and the developing countries, Japan, which is both China's neighbor and a major industrialized country, was thus of substantial importance to China's foreign relations.

China's foreign policy had to overcome two challenges during this period: resurgent nationalism within China and strong criticism coming from Japan. In 1996, *The China That Can Say No* (Zhongguo keyi shuo bu), a nationalistic, anti-Western critique of American influence on China, became a best-selling book. At the same time, the voices calling for a tougher foreign policy grew louder and criticisms of the government stance were growing stronger. And when President Jiang Zemin visited Japan in 1998, the perception gap between Japan and China on history issues was thrust into the spotlight. But following these bitter experiences, China began to soften its tone in 2000 in an effort to boost ties with Japan.

In the midst of this policy shift, debate was rampant in China over the "new thinking" (*xin siwei*) school of thought. In 2002, Ma Licheng, who was an editor at *People's Daily* (Renmin ribao) at the time, published an article titled, "New Thinking Toward Japan" (Dui Ri guanxi xin siwei), and Shi Yinhong, a professor at the International Relations Department of Renmin University, published a paper titled, "Sino-Japanese Rapprochement and Diplomatic Revolution" (Zhongri jiejin yu wajiao gemin).³¹ They both suggested shelving the history issue, acknowledging Japan as a major power, and strengthening political and economic ties with Japan. Though these suggestions met with fierce criticism, it is important to note that even the critics recognized the importance of Japan to China, since their arguments were based on the assumption that tense political relations would not damage the active bilateral economic relations. It is not clear whether the

Chinese government was behind the emergence of this new thinking, but it did quietly start to make serious efforts toward improving the image of Japan in China from 2004 onward.³²

Despite China's adjustments to its Japan policy, Japan during this timeframe was adopting a more assertive stance on such issues as the gas fields in the East China Sea. The anti-Japanese demonstrations in 2003 and 2005 negatively affected the image of China in Japan, and the 2004 incident in which a Chinese submarine briefly entered Japanese territorial waters further bolstered the "China threat" argument in Japan. All of these incidents triggered a debate over the continuation of development aid to China. Although there were some voices pointing out the important role that ODA played in pushing China—which was still a developing country despite its formidable political power—to become further integrated into the international community, the prevailing view was that Japan should not give the Chinese military a boost by providing it with ODA.³³ A decision was consequently made to end payments in 2008, to which China quietly conceded.

Management of Conflicts

Overall, China-Japan relations from 1996 to 2006 can be labeled as "hot economics, cold politics," but even in the midst of the political chill, there was significant interchange not just in the economic field but in a broad range of fields, and that dialogue and cooperation in fact supported the relationship from below.

During President Jiang's visit to Japan in 1998, Chinese-Japanese disputes over historical matters received a great deal of attention, but the importance of the Japan-China Joint Declaration on Building a Partnership of Friendship and Cooperation for Peace and Development that was issued by the two leaders, and their agreement on 33 initiatives—including the creation of an intergovernmental hotline, security talks, and energy cooperation—were hardly mentioned. These 33 initiatives actually set the framework for future cooperation between the two countries.

Subsequently, a number of agreements were reached that sought to reduce tensions and strengthen ties between the two countries. To tackle the problems of crimes committed by Chinese nationals in Japan, the two governments agreed to open dialogues between their public security authorities in 1999. The next year, during Premier Zhu Rongji's visit to Japan in October, both sides further agreed to open regular talks between customs

authorities. To prevent incidental territorial disputes, both sides agreed in August 2000 to create a framework for mutual prior notification of ocean survey operations. To strengthen economic ties, Prime Minister Koizumi and Premier Zhu agreed in principle at the first Boao Forum for Asia in April 2002 to set up the Japan-China Economic Partnership Consultation, and Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi later confirmed that those talks would commence by the end of the year. Also that year, an incident involving the Japanese Consulate General in Shenyang in May triggered a bilateral dialogue on creating a framework for consular cooperation.³⁴

At the summit between Prime Minister Koizumi and President Hu in St. Petersburg in May 2003, the two sides agreed to establish the New Japan-China Friendship Committee for the 21st Century, a government advisory committee comprised of public intellectuals. In autumn of 2004, the Chinese side relayed its desire to construct a framework for strategic dialogues, leading to the launch of the Japan-China Comprehensive Policy Dialogue in May 2005. One year later, a summit between the Japanese and Chinese foreign ministers was held in Qatar, where agreement was reached on four points: increasing strategic dialogues; boosting economic and trade relations, including cooperation on energy-efficient and environmentally friendly technology; promoting interaction between civilians, particularly the youth of both countries; and conducting talks at the vice foreign minister level on international security, as well as continuing friendly exchanges between military forces.

To tackle environmental problems, new cross-border cooperation was begun and existing programs were strengthened. Starting in the early 1990s, Japanese ODA had focused on controlling emissions in China. As noted above, during President Jiang's 1998 visit to Japan, an agreement was reached on 33 initiatives, among which environmental cooperation was at the top of the agenda. Even since 2000, when ODA to China began to be scaled back, funding for environmental projects continued. Moreover, cross-border cooperation was expanding from the bilateral level to the multilateral level as well. In 2003, the governments of Japan, China, South Korea, and Mongolia launched a project to collect data on the increasingly frequent yellow sandstorms and to come up with countermeasures.³⁵

With deepening economic interdependence, exchanges of people between Japan and China have become an important factor supporting bilateral relations. In 1972, roughly 9,000 people traveled between Japan and China; by 1987, the number had risen to 490,000, and in 2007, no fewer than 5.1 million people traveled between the two countries. In 1989, there were 109 sister-city relationships. Two decades later, this number had

increased to 314. Approximately 50 Japanese private-sector organizations are now planting trees in China every year, covering almost 25 provinces.³⁶ In this way, Japan-China relations started to broaden beyond the central-government context as regional governments, the private sector, and individuals became increasingly engaged in bilateral ties.

Even in the decade of "cold politics," various actors were working to facilitate greater interaction between the two countries and, as a result, Japan and China began cooperating more closely on a wide range of issues, including domestic security, economic cooperation, and the environment.

MOVEMENT TOWARD A NEW EQUILIBRIUM (2006-)

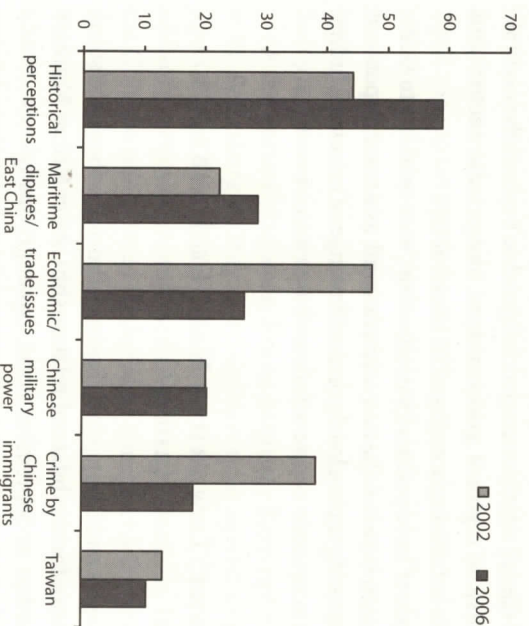
Since 2006, both Japan and China have shown enthusiasm for establishing a more stable footing for the bilateral relationship. After Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took office in September 2006, Japan gradually moved back to its dual approach of strengthening relations with both the United States and Asia. Repairing political relations with China was high on the agenda of the Abe administration.

The change in Japan's China policy coincided with a similar shift in China that also aimed to bolster bilateral relations. In April 2005, amid anti-Japanese demonstrations, the Chinese government issued a document on China-Japan policy that laid out its policy on bilateral relations and its stance on Japan's bid for permanent membership on the UN Security Council. In early 2006, a Japan policy coordination group was established, directly under the lead of State Councillor Tang Jiaxuan.

In this context, the relationship between Japan and China improved substantially. During the 2006 Beijing summit, Prime Minister Abe and President Hu reached consensus on building a "mutually beneficial strategic relationship" to promote cooperation—especially in the economic and environmental fields. After Prime Minister Abe's "ice-breaking trip" and Premier Wen Jiabao's "ice-thawing visit" to Japan in April 2007, bilateral relations entered a "warm spring" when President Hu visited Japan in May 2008. Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and President Hu agreed to deepen cooperation on the environment and signed a joint statement on climate change.

Above all, the most remarkable sign of the improvement in relations between Japan and China is the fact that the two countries have finally come to agree on what the disputed problems are. Since the latter part of the

Figure 5. Japanese public perceptions of the top issues troubling Japan-China relations, 2002 and 2006 (percent)



SOURCE: "Nitchu kankei ni kansuru yoron chosa" [Opinion poll on Japan-China relations], Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

1990s, Japan and China have had various confrontations, but the primary concerns and priorities of the two countries have differed. For China, the main problems it had with Japan in the late 1990s and early 2000s were the history issue, the territorial dispute over the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands, the Taiwan issue, and the US-Japan alliance. Issues such as the East China Sea dispute, China's increasing military capabilities, and crimes committed by Chinese nationals living in Japan received a great deal of attention in Japan but were not mentioned by the Chinese. In fact, China viewed many of Japan's concerns as being overblown. For example, in late 1997, a book titled, *Behind the Scenes of Demonizing China* (Yaomohua Zhongguo de beihou) became very popular in China. The main message of the book was that the major Western media outlets were demonizing China—an idea that was shared by both the Chinese government and the public. The majority of Chinese dismissed Japanese anxieties over food security and pollution as biased and exaggerated.

After decades of disputes, however, Japan and China have finally come to agree to disagree. There is a growing public perception that, for the most part, the big issues that bother the other side are indeed valid issues and should be resolved, even if the publics in both countries may disagree on

the most desirable solution. Largely because domestic safety has become a major concern in China as well, the majority of the Chinese public is now showing an increased understanding of Japan's concern about food safety and environmental pollution in China.³⁷ At the same time, as indicated in figure 5, the majority of the Japanese public has come to recognize that the history issue needs to be overcome.³⁸

Moreover, both governments have shown restraint on issues where conflicts exist. No sitting prime minister has visited the controversial Yasukuni Shrine since Prime Minister Koizumi's visit in August 2006, and recent leaders have also confirmed that Japan will "firmly maintain" its position on a one-China policy as expressed in the 1972 Joint Communiqué. For its part, Chinese leaders have refrained from mentioning the history and Taiwan issues. After taking office, Japan's Prime Minister Aso also refrained from reviving his controversial call for the creation of an "arc of freedom and prosperity." China, in return, has refrained from mentioning the "resurgence of Japanese militarism." In the meantime, China has repeatedly and openly expressed appreciation for the ODA that it received from Japan and has shown understanding about Japan's wish to play a larger role in the international community. During his trip to Japan, President Hu remarked positively on Japan's postwar years as a peaceful nation and its contributions to world peace and stability, and he acknowledged Japan for the first time as a major power in the global arena. Although some issues such as the gas fields and the Senkaku Islands dispute have not yet been resolved, they are at the very least being managed.

In contrast to the warming of bilateral relations at the government-to-government level, however, Japanese public sentiment toward China has continued to fluctuate. In 2008, amid a series of recalls of Chinese products in the United States, "poisoned dumpings" imported from China were discovered in Japan. Great attention was drawn once again to the safety of Chinese food, and around 93 percent of the Japanese said that they felt very anxious about the safety of imports from China.³⁹

The massive earthquake that struck Sichuan Province in 2008, however, brought a softening in Japanese sentiments toward China. Immediately after the earthquake, the Japanese government announced that it would provide emergency grant aid of US\$1.7 million for humanitarian assistance. It also dispatched a disaster relief rescue team and a medical team to search for and rescue victims. The Chinese public welcomed the help from Japan and expressed their appreciation. The image of Japan in China improved dramatically (though not enough to overcome wartime memories or to allow the use of Japanese Self-Defense Force aircraft in the relief operations in

China). Conversely, the improvement in the image of Japan in China has also to some extent bolstered the image of China in Japan.

Table 1. Main dialogue channels between Japan and China

Title	Inauguration
Japan-China Committee on Science and Technological Cooperation	Jun. 1981
Japan-China Security Dialogue	Dec. 1993
Japan-China Joint Committee on Environmental Protection and Cooperation	Dec. 1994
Japan-China Consultation on Disarmament and Non-proliferation	Feb. 1999
Japan-China Public Security Authorities Consultations	Dec. 1999
Japan-China Meeting of Cooperative Fisheries Delegates	Jun. 2000
Japan-China Economic Partnership Consultation	Oct. 2002
New Japan-China Friendship Committee for the 21st Century	Dec. 2003
Japan-China Climate Change Dialogue	Mar. 2004
Japan-China Consultations Concerning the East China Sea	Oct. 2004
Regular Exchange between the House of Representatives and China's National People's Congress (NPC)	Apr. 2005
Japan-China Comprehensive Policy Dialogue (Japan-China Strategic Dialogue)	May 2005
Consultations between Japan and China Concerning UN Reform	Dec. 2005
Japan-China Ruling Party Dialogue [Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-Liberal Democratic Party dialogue]	Feb. 2006
Japan-China Press Secretary Consultations	Aug. 2006
CCP-DPJ Dialogue	Jan. 2007
Regular Exchange between House of Councillors and NPC	Mar. 2007
Japan-China Energy Ministerial Policy Dialogue	Apr. 2007
Consultations between Japan and China concerning Africa	Sep. 2007
Japan-China High-Level Economic Dialogue	Dec. 2007
Japan-China Policy Dialogue on the Mekong Region	Apr. 2008

As shown in table 1, since the end of the Cold War, a considerable number of bilateral talks have been established between Japan and China, and a variety of other issues are under negotiation as well. These efforts by the two governments, however, have had little direct impact on public opinion. This is in part because the resolution of areas of conflict, such as environmental issues, takes time. The outcome of intergovernmental efforts such as these tends to be incremental and efforts rarely produce immediate, tangible results. Nonetheless, they appear to be having a longer-term impact in terms of conflict management.

CONCLUSION

Japan and China have never before been powerful at the same time in history, and from the mid-1990s on, the two countries have been working to adjust to each other's new and evolving status, carefully weighing the extent to which the other should be treated as a threat or a partner.

Japan's image in China might be volatile and emotional, but this largely stems from Japan's perceived military intentions and its historical actions. The image of China in Japan has been somewhat mixed. In the beginning of the 1990s, Japan viewed China's domestic instability and its possible collapse as a threat. With China's rapid economic growth, there are now two contrasting images: a rising China that requires caution and a fragile China that needs engagement.

Both Japan's affinity for China and China's affinity for Japan have been put to the test since the end of the Cold War. The deteriorating public images have not always resulted in a worsening Japan-China relationship, however. Shortly after the end of the Cold War, the friendship framework functioned effectively, sustained by the assumption that "a strong Japan embraces a weak China." With China's increasing presence in the world community, both Japan and China experienced difficulties in adjusting their relationship to suit the new situation, which led to a period of "cold politics" between the two countries. Since 2006, however, political relations appear to be thawing as Japan and China have finally recognized each other as major powers, acknowledging the other's standing in the international community and the legitimacy of the other's concerns regarding their bilateral relations.

Although Japan and China have experienced bumpy relations in the post-Cold War era, there have been efforts at various levels of government to keep official relations from spiraling out of control, as evidenced by the establishment of more than a dozen channels of high-level dialogues. Even though talks between the top leaders have been suspended at times, the bilateral relationship has been supported by the central governments as well as by regional governments, the private sector, and individuals. It may be a while yet before permanent solutions to all the issues troubling Japan and China are found, but there is no doubt about the positive effect that intergovernmental and civil society dialogue is having on preventing existing problems from becoming worse.

After a decade of adjustment and learning, Japan and China have come to recognize each other as major global powers, have agreed that each other's concerns should be treated as valid, and are holding talks to resolve their

disputes. This is only the first step, but it is a very significant step toward creating a new equilibrium.

In order to further stabilize this new equilibrium and to make conflict-management diplomacy more effective, a cooperative architecture based on traditional and nontraditional security agreements is indispensable. First, there is a need to sustain existing governmental dialogue to ensure that negative perceptions do not translate into heightened conflicts. Second, there is a need to expand joint China-Japan initiatives to the regional and global levels. The two governments have already worked together on issues such as the environment, food safety, and crime. A wider range of cooperation beyond the bilateral level may help identify shared challenges and enhance political trust. Third, there is a need to build up the underpinnings of China-Japan relations to improve mutual perceptions over the long term. Due to the fact that both China and Japan are undergoing dramatic social changes, the improvement of mutual perceptions may require a good deal of time, and the role of scholars and journalists will be crucial in helping the publics of both countries understand and accept those shifts.

Finally, it is important to point out that China-Japan relations are heavily influenced by US policy toward these two countries since both China and Japan address US policy as their first priority. In this sense, the stability of China-Japan relations depends not only on the degree of success that China and Japan have in building future cooperation but also on how much progress can be made in constructing a new architecture for the trilateral China-Japan-US relationship.

NOTES

1. Samuel S. Kim, "China's Conflict-Management Approach to the Nuclear Standoff on the Korean Peninsula," *Asian Perspective* 30, no. 1 (2006): 7. <http://www.asianperspective.org/articles/v30n1-a.pdf>.
2. Samuel S. Kim and Abraham Kim, "Conflict Management," in *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, 2nd ed., ed. Mary Hawkesworth and Maurice Kogan (London: Routledge, 2003), 980.
3. For a more detailed analysis of the conflict-management approach, see Kim, "China's Conflict-Management Approach," 5-38.
4. Ryosei Kokubun, "Changing Japanese Strategic Thinking toward China," in *Japanese Strategic Thought toward Asia*, ed. Gilbert Rozman, Kazuhiko Togo, and Joseph P. Ferguson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 155.
5. For Prime Minister Miyazawa's speech at the National Press Club, see Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Gaiko Seisaku* 1992 [1992 Diplomatic Bluebook] (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1992).

6. Statement by Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama in July 1991.
7. Rumi Aoyama, "Chugoku no tai-Nichi gaiko to Nichu kankei" [China's foreign policy toward Japan and Japan-China relations], in *Go bunya kara yomitoku gen dai Chugoku* [Understanding contemporary China by examining five fields], ed. Ryoko Iechika, Tang Lang, and Yasuhiro Matsuda (Tokyo: Koyo, 2005), 253-65.
8. Ming Wan, *Sino-Japan Relations: Interaction, Logic, and Transformation* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, Stanford: Stanford University, 2006), 177.
9. The term "friendship framework" was coined by Ryosei Kokubun in 2001. See Ryosei Kokubun, "Reisen shuketsugo no Nichu kankei: 72-nen taisei no tenkan" [Japan-China relations after the Cold War: switching from the '1972 Framework'], *Kokusai Mondai* [International Affairs], no. 490 (January 2001): 42-46.
10. Tadao Ishikawa, "Minzoku-shugi no yukue ga shoten" [The focus is on what will happen to nationalism], *Asahi Shinbun*, November 11, 1995.
11. "Chugoku no kyoi meguri funkryu, yoto boei chosa kaigi" [Ruling party defense study group meeting in disagreement over 'China threat'], *Asahi Shinbun*, November 25, 1995.
12. "Nihon no sansetu, Chugoku no osen ga eikyo" [China's pollution the cause of Japanese acid rain], *Asahi Shinbun*, January 16, 1991.
13. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Gaiko Seisaku* 1992.
14. "Kawaru kankyō, Nihon no sentaku wa? Nichibei anpo zadankai" [Symposium on the US-Japan alliance: what are Japan's options in a changing environment?], *Asahi Shinbun*, November 21, 1995.
15. 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* 4, no. 1 (2001): 39-58.
16. Yoshihide Soeya, "Taiwan in Japan's Security Considerations," *China Quarterly* 165 (March 2001): 141.
17. Speech made by Japanese Foreign Minister Aso in November 2006. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Speech by Mr. Taro Aso, Minister for Foreign Affairs on the Occasion of the Japan Institute of International Affairs Seminar 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons,' November 30, 2006," <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fm/aso/speech0611.html>.
18. "Higashi Shinakai shinsutsu wa tomarana!" [Advance in the East China Sea is not stopping], *Voice* (June 2006): 62-71.
19. Mineo Nakajima, "Higashi Ajia kyodotai wa genso da" [East Asia community is an illusion], *Voice* (February 2006): 129-35.
20. Li Shogen, Akio Takahara, and Yasuhiro Matsuda, "Chugoku wa 'kyoi' ka—anzem hosho no jirema o koeru taiwa o" [Is China a 'threat'? Dialogue tries to overcome the national security dilemma], *Sekai* 756 (September 2006).
21. "China Is Not a Threat: Koizumi: Neighbor's Growing Economic Power Called an 'Opportunity,'" *Japan Times*, April 13, 2002, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/mn20020413a1.html>.
22. Hideo Ohashi, "The Sino-Japanese Economic Relations under the Koizumi Administration," *Senshu Keizai Gaku Ronshu* [Economic bulletin of Senshu University] 42, no. 3 (March 2008).
23. "Kyoi-ron yori risuku-ron" [More a theory of risk than a theory of threat], *Asahi Shinbun*, March 28, 2002.
24. Nippon Research Center, "Findings of Joint Public Opinion Poll on Relations between Japan and China" (November 26, 2007), <http://www.nrc.co.jp/english/pdf/071126.pdf>.

25. Based on a public opinion survey on public safety conducted by the Japanese Cabinet Office in 2006.
26. "Kokkyo o koeru kankyo hozen" [Environmental protection that transcends borders], *Asahi Shinbun*, October 5, 1990.
27. "Kosa no nagare, Nicchu chosa" [The flow of yellow sand—a Japan-China survey], *Asahi Shinbun*, April 19, 2001; "Rainendo kara kosa gensho no jittai kaimei e" [Clarifying the state of the yellow sand phenomenon from next fiscal year], *Asahi Shinbun*, August 22, 2001.
28. Takao Ikeuchi, "Rising Smog Levels Threaten Health, Crops; China Link Seen," *Japan Times*, November 28, 2007.
29. "Laboratory Tracks Acid Rain's Seasonal Roots," *Japan Times*, June 24, 2000; "Sanseiu vs. kosa" [Acid rain vs. sandstorms], *Asahi Shinbun*, April 1, 2008.
30. Prime Minister Koizumi's statement in November 2005 that "the better [US-Japan] bilateral relations are, the easier it will be for us to establish better relations with China and neighboring countries" illustrated the tendency in Japan's foreign policy of weighing bilateral relations between Japan and the United States above its Asia policy. See "Simplistic View in a Complex World," *Japan Times*, November 26, 2005, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/weekly/ed/ed20051226a1.htm>.
31. Ma Licheng, "Dui Ri guanxi xinsuiwei" [New thinking toward Japan], *Zhanlue yu Guanli* [Strategy and management] no. 6 (2002): 42–47; Shi Yinhong, "Zhongri jiejin yu waijiao geming" [Sino-Japanese rapprochement and diplomatic revolution], *Zhanlue yu Guanli* no. 2 (2003): 71–75.
32. Rumi Aoyama, *Gendai Chugoku no gaiko* [Contemporary foreign policy in China] (Tokyo: Keio University Press, 2007), 453–5.
33. "Tai-Chugoku do suru" [How to deal with "anti-China-ism"]], *Asahi Shinbun*, January 31, 2001.
34. In May 2002, five North Korean refugees attempted to enter the Japanese Consulate in Shenyang to seek asylum. Chinese police officers entered the consulate compound to drag the North Koreans out and arrest them.
35. Eric Johnson, "Yellow Dust Storms Getting Worse," *Japan Times*, April 22, 2008.
36. Most of these activities are conducted by foundations like the Obuchi Foundation (starting in 1997) or the Japan International Cooperation Agency.
37. According to a 2008 joint opinion poll conducted by the China Daily, Genron NPO of Japan, and Peking University, 38.8 percent of Chinese surveyed said they are concerned about the safety of Chinese food.
38. According to a 2008 joint opinion poll conducted by the China Daily, Genron NPO of Japan, and Peking University, 53.9 percent of Japanese respondents raised the history issue as an obstacle for future China-Japan relations.
39. Based on a 2007 public opinion survey conducted by the Daily Yomiuri.

12

Chinese Public Perceptions of Japan and the United States in the Post-Cold War Era

FAN SHIMING

THE WORD FOR "perception" in Chinese literally means "observation and interpretation" or "interpretation through observation." Perception is thus considered to be the result of the subjective or psychological cognition of the observer rather than the objective reflection of the object that is being observed.

In his famous book, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Robert Jervis introduces the cognitive variable to explain state behavior by saying, "It is often impossible to explain crucial decisions and policies without reference to the decision makers' beliefs about the world and their images of others. That is to say, these cognitions are part of the proximate cause of the relevant behavior." While Jervis focuses mainly on the perceptions held by foreign-policy makers, the public's perceptions of foreign countries also matter in understanding policy choices and international relations. Mainstream public opinion might not necessarily be shared or accepted by decision makers, but it sets up the atmosphere for policymaking, delivers messages to foreign countries, and can be used by both domestic and foreign politicians to justify their choices. Moreover, in many instances, the people's understanding of international relations is based more on the perceived world rather than the real one.

There is no single, commonly shared perception of either Japan or the United States among the Chinese public. Perceptions vary depending on individuals' socioeconomic or peer group, the topic, and the particular point in time, and thus are always diverse and dynamic. One can, however,