



Celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the People's Republic of China

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Introduction

To commemorate the year 2018, which marks the 40th anniversary of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the People's Republic of China, I am tasked with reviewing the last four decades of Japan-China relations. As my field of study is the history of Japanese politics and diplomacy, I am not familiar enough with Chinese affairs or the present situations between the two countries to evaluate them. Nor am I entitled to make comments on the future of Japan-China relations. All I can do is to finish the assigned task.



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Having said that, I will turn my thoughts toward the future in this essay, giving a general picture of the last four decades and drawing some lessons out of it. I would like to do so in this anniversary year with two specific aims. Firstly, I would like to underline how Japanese historians of my generation review the history of Japanese diplomacy from the 1970s on and what their evocative historiography can tell us about today's Japanese diplomacy. In the first part of the essay I will provide a general picture of the four decades of Japan-China relations based on recent studies and clarify what has tied down Japanese diplomacy toward China during these years and what Japan tried to achieve under the constraints.

Secondly, in so doing I will trace the Japanese diplomatic strategy that has lasted for decades since the Normalization of Diplomatic Relations with China in 1972 even though it is vague enough to overlook if we are careless. In the latter part I will underline that the strategy could live on if Japan wants it to. I firmly believe that it is Japan's strategy and discipline, not China's, that matters when we come to think of the future of Japan-China relations.

International environment, diplomatic strategy and domestic situation

When I look at Japanese foreign policy making, I always analyze both the international environments and the domestic situations. Specific attention is always paid to how Japan approached the international environments and how the domestic situation affected those approaches. So, what have been Japan's China policy-making processes?

As is widely known, Japan and China have a long and complicated history even before the 1970s. In the prewar era Japan was the one and only Westernized country in Asia but Japan's identity as an

Asian nation and inclination toward Asian unity stayed strong. Even in the 1920s when Japan sought to cooperate with Western countries China was still Japan's main target of economic and political activities.

After the Manchurian Incident of 1931 and the Sino-Japanese war beginning in 1937, however, the two events remained particularly thorny problems between the two countries, even after Japan was defeated in 1945. The war responsibility issue has always been the background of China's strong criticism of Japan. Other countries including the United States also took it for granted that Japan should be contained as a non-militaristic power in postwar Asia. Article 9 of Japan's new constitution drafted in 1947 became the symbol of this postwar consensus about Japan.

Then the Cold War came. The Cold War issue was no less a critical factor than the war responsibility issue in Japan-China relations. Following the conclusion of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in April 1952 without Chinese participation, Japan and China divided into the Western and Eastern Blocs and had to live in separate worlds without official diplomatic ties.

As Dr. Soeya Yoshihide once said, Japanese diplomacy was destined to be conducted under this dualism; namely, the world of WWII and the world of the Cold War. This dualism made Japanese diplomacy ineffective from time to time because Japan was not able to approach China without shaking Japan-US relations which was the centerpiece of postwar Japanese foreign policy. Nor could Japan reach an entire agreement to solve the war responsibility problem with China as long as it stayed in the world of the Cold War. The dualism naturally affects other bilateral or multilateral relations, but Japan-China relations were categorically one of the most affected. (Soeya Yoshihide, *Japanese Diplomacy*, Chikumashobo Ltd., 2017.)

It should be noted that that the dualism not only affected relations of the governments but also domestic politics because it aroused strong controversies regarding Japan's policy towards China. Some said that, since Japan was allied with the United States, Japan should also have a tougher anti-communist stance like the United States did and it was acceptable that Japan was unable to build ties with the PRC. This idea was to accept the postwar situation as given. Others said that Japan should stand against the postwar agreement because they believed that it was important for Japan to break free from the Cold War shackles and more clearly show that Japanese diplomacy was autonomous. With this more independent approach, figures such as Ishibashi Tanzan, Utsunomiya Tokuma and Matsumura Kenzo voiced their sympathy toward stronger ties with China. These figures were not unpopular then because many Japanese showed just as strong a passion for regaining ties with the Chinese continent as they did. The natural longings for Asianism originating in the prewar years could easily transcend ideological walls wherever they existed. Thus, the government's irresolute policies toward China were often challenged from right and left wings at the same time, even though the challenges came for different, often completely opposite reasons.

By the mid-1960s, as people could no longer see the possibility of opposition parties such as the Socialist Party of Japan coming to power, the ruling party, the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, came to be regarded as something like a natural-born ruling party. However, this did not mean that

the LDP became monolithic in its China policy: a pro-China and pro-Taiwan group came to emerge within. This internal division became the most distinctive domestic structure that affected Japan's China policy from then on and it was gradually intertwined with bureaucratic partisanship in a rather complicated manner. This partisanship is why Japan's China policy was so often frustrated. In other words, no single official strategy of Japan's China policy could be seen during the 1960s.

The transformation of the structure

It was the 1970s when everything started to change. Japan-China relations have been significantly transformed in the last four decades.

(1) The first two decades: 1970s and 1980s

The 1970s and the 1980s were when Japan and China built official bilateral relations based on the two treaties in 1972 and 1978. Also, it was when both countries achieved remarkable friendly relations even though the period coincided with the coming of the new Cold War. That is, the 1970s were an era in which the tensions between the Western and Eastern Blocs relaxed, and the 1980s were an era in which the tensions intensified significantly.

On the other hand, domestic Japanese politics also underwent changes during these two decades. In the early 1970s, Japan entered an era in which the conservatives and the liberals were almost equally balanced and mass media started strong criticism against the long-time rule of the government by the LDP. However, the LDP began to regain its control at the end of the 1970s and reached its prime again in the mid-1980s. It is also interesting that it was in the 1970s when high-speed economic growth ended and a phase of low growth commenced, and in the 1980s when Japanese prosperity was at its height again with the coming of the bubble economy.

All through these years the Pro-Taiwanese group, once strong enough to bring on the wrath of the PRC, gradually decreased in number even while criticism of China became more sharp and bitter than ever before, as could be seen in the case of the Seiran Kai group which was established in 1973 as a sharp reaction to the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations in 1972. Japanese internal division on China policy thus became weaker and the foreign policy making process toward China was on a more stable foundation.

(2) The second two decades: 1990s and 2000s

The second two decades were when the Cold War ended at long last and an age of US unilateral domination began. In the 1990s Japan naturally had to reconsider the meaning of the alliance with the United States which had lost a common virtual enemy. After all these years Japan reconfirmed the importance of Japan-US relations and the effectiveness of their alliance. Japan chose to adjust to the structure of US unilateral domination at the end of the twentieth century.

However, the United States was not only the victor in the Cold War, but also a reformist for the

next international order. The United States worked out what the international order in the coming new era should be like. US measures against terrorism and for human rights and racial issues were the expressions of how the United States thought even though the goals had not been achieved yet.

Interestingly, these changes in the international environment corresponded with the domestic collapse of the almost monopolistic domination of the LDP. An era with a strong reformist drive commenced, called the “Heisei democracy” by Sasaki Takeshi and Shimizu Masato after the earlier “Taisho democracy.” (Shimizu Masato, *The History of Heisei Democracy*, Chikumashobo Ltd., 2018.) During this period, the LDP fell from power for some time, but soon returned to power as a member of coalition governments. With the coming of the twenty-first century, the LDP was revived again as a powerful ruling party under the premiership of Koizumi Junichiro, who was a reformist himself until the reformist drive brought about an administrative change in 2009.

Another interesting interrelation between the international environments and domestic politics was Japan’s economic slump after the collapse of the bubble economy and America’s retreat from global hegemony. Economic and social stagnation in Japan caused Japanese to find the necessity for further reforms and they heartily welcomed the change of government by the Democratic Party of Japan in 2009 even if they were destined to be greatly disappointed by the DPJ’s unpreparedness as a ruling party and its fragility as a party with a mixture of many different ideologies and policies. The party, which included many liberal politicians who often displayed a pro-Chinese tendency, pronounced a voice of anti-American foreign policy under the premiership of Hatoyama Yukio, which was welcomed in its own way.

Continuities and changes of Japan-China relations

Having analyzed such profound changes over the decades, it should be noted that continuous characteristics of Japanese China policy can also be found.

The first continuous characteristic was the remarkable linkage between domestic politics and foreign policy (or international environment) in Japanese politics. For example, the international Cold War and the domestic Cold War synchronized in the 1950s and the early 1960s. The end of the Cold War and the end of the Liberal Democratic Party’s domination were also almost synchronic in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. (The end of the Showa period was also synchronic.) The establishment of US unilateral domination and the revival of the Liberal Democratic Party also happened at almost the same time in the mid-1990s. These facts indicate that Japanese policy making processes have to be analyzed with the characteristics of international environments in mind.

Secondly, there is the situation in which there was still a group of people with a strong passion for building and maintaining ties with China in Japanese politics. In the 1970s when diplomatic relations between Japan and China were established with the conclusion of the two treaties, China had not yet fully recovered from the disaster of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. China had begun to change its national goal into economic recovery. China wanted capital and technical support

from Japan, and after concluding the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the PRC, Japan responded actively to these requests from China. Of course, not only Japan but also China made significant concessions in their negotiations on numerous issues, expanding the foothills of exchanges, and showed an active attitude toward building better relations.

At the time of the Tiananmen Square protests of June 1989 (the June Fourth Incident) Japan had to make tough choices. Should Japan act in concert with Western countries and impose tough sanctions on China or should they keep friendly relations with China? The Cabinet led by Uno Sosuke opted to impose economic sanctions on China just after the June Fourth Incident but Japan drew a line with Western countries to prevent China from being isolated. The next Cabinet led by Kaifu Toshiki decided to lift the sanctions in November 1990, and Kaifu visited China in August 1991. Although they were not particularly friendly pro-Chinese figures, the two leaders made big gestures toward China. It should be noted that China repeatedly expressed its gratitude to Japan after the sanctions were lifted. It was surprising because in the 1980s China repeatedly criticized Japan over the historical texts and war responsibility issues.

The highlight of Japan-China relations at the end of the twentieth century would be the Emperor's visit to China in October 1992, even in the face of sharp objections from the anti-China camp. At that time, there were strong diplomatic channels that enabled such a bold move to be made between Japan and China.

Japanese gestures toward China continued in the 1990s as the Chinese economic leap became clearer and Japan entered an era of reforms in the face of the economic slump after the collapse of the bubble economy. In September 1992, China finally ceased being a planned economy and set the goal of building a socialist market economy. China entered a high-speed economic growth period on a full scale. This growth was also linked with the global economy. Interdependence of the Japanese and Chinese economies increased and helped to arrest Japan's economic slump. China's gaining membership to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in November 2001 accelerated the interdependence to a whole new level. In 2004, Japan-China trade marked an increase of 35.7% and China became Japan's largest trading partner, ahead of the United States.

After the June Fourth Incident, however, Japan-China relations suffered some changes and many issues arose. Firstly, the June Fourth Incident damaged the Japanese image of China very badly. The percentage of people who answered that China was a familiar country to Japan decreased by 16.9% from 1988 to 51.6%, and did not recover subsequently to the level before the incident. The negative impression that China was governed under a different, illiberal political system has not withered away yet. In addition, China's consecutive nuclear tests from 1987 to the mid-1990s also shook Japanese passion for China. China's maritime advance into and military intimidation of Taiwan sparked a strong sense of China as a threat within Japan. It is sometimes argued that the period of 2008 to 2010 was the threshold of the Chinese threat theory which we can identify in today's Japan. This is true enough, but we cannot dismiss the importance of the early 1990s, just a quarter century after the normalization of the diplomatic ties between Japan and China. (Takahara Akio and Hattori

Ryuji, *Japan-China Relations: 1972–2012*, the University of Tokyo Press, 2012, p. 310.)

Japan-China relations in the first decade of the twenty-first century were characterized both by the dramatic deepening of economic interdependence and the feuds between the two countries. China's new thinking in diplomacy was deadlocked and the peaceful rise theory received a curt response in Japan. Anti-Japanese remarks and behavior strengthened in China and mistrust of China in Japan expanded. From 2008 to 2009, we saw the Frozen *Gyoza* (Chinese dumpling) Incident (2007 to 2008), the turmoil in Tibet and the global confusion over the sacred torch relay at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games (March 2008). There is no wonder that Japanese public opinion showed no signs of improvement. The multi-faceted relationships of the two countries including the territorial issue, the historical issue and military threat issues with which Japan is now dealing very seriously entered a full-scale phase in the early twenty-first century.

The genealogy of Japan's diplomatic strategies

Why did these changes happen then? There is some truth in blaming China for its illiberal behavior in the June Fourth Incident for Japan's worsening image of China. As a predecessor of liberal democracy in Asia, Japan could not blink her eyes as her neighbor acted so severely against its own people. China's hardening diplomatic stance could be another cause. It is true that China became severe on Japan as China grew to become an economic giant in the 1990s. The retirement of the older generation who had a great passion for the China problem could be another reason why Japanese sympathy toward China faded away.

Beyond the public opinion level it was the Japanese diplomatic strategy that mattered. As I mentioned earlier in this essay, recent studies of Japanese political and diplomatic history tell us that the postwar Japanese diplomacy from the 1970s on began to show considerably proactive diplomatic strategies. Japan-China relations could also be revisited along these lines of thought.

(1) Omnidirectional diplomacy and the expansion of the diplomatic horizon

One of the lines of revisionism is that Japan, after entering its high-speed economic growth phase in the 1960s, began to mobilize the fruits of growth and growing national prestige for foreign policy in the 1970s. Japan's economic assistance policy was a good example. According to Dr. Takahashi Kazuhiro, Japan tried to strengthen ties with Asian countries with economic aid in the 1970s, which was doubted in previous studies. (Takahashi Kazuhiro, *Japanese Diplomacy under the Ikeda and Sato Administrations*, "The North-South Issue and Southeast Asia Economy Diplomacy," Minerva Shobo, 2004, and Takahashi Kazuhiro, *Japanese Diplomacy during the Period of the Transformation of the Cold War*, "The Economic and Diplomatic Strategy of Japan as an Economic Power," Minerva Shobo, 2013.)

The discussions about postwar security policy are another good example. These had become animated within the government and the prime minister's brain trust groups in the 1970s too. Even the Okinawa base issue, which continues to be one of the fundamental issues to Japan's security today,

was also discussed in real earnest around the time of the return of Okinawa to Japan, because Japan's growing national prestige enhanced the probability of the relocation of US military bases. (Watanabe Akio and Kono Yasuko, *Security Policy and Postwar Japan 1972 to 1994: The Japan-US Security Alliance in Memory and Records*, Chikura Publishing Company, 2016.)

These examples clearly show that in the 1970s Japan's diplomatic horizon began to expand, as Dr. Iokibe Makoto has said. (Iokibe Makoto, *The Third Revised and Enlarged Edition of The History of Postwar Japanese Diplomacy*, Yuhikaku Publishing Co., Ltd., 2014.) Dr. Wakatsuki Hidekazu's discussion of the possibility of "omnidirectional peace diplomacy" deepened the idea, which was fulfilled under the premiership of Fukuda Takeo. (Wakatsuki Hidekazu, *The Age of Omnidirectional Diplomacy*, Nihon Keizai Hyouronsha Ltd., 2016.) According to Dr. Wakatsuki, Tanaka Kakuei, who led an administration in the early 1970s, did not pay attention to this ideal because he was a real pragmatist. However, Even Tanaka, with good consultations with Ohira Masayoshi and Miki Takeo who had been active in terms of building Japan-China ties under the Sato administration, achieved the normalization of diplomatic relations with China as soon as he came to power. Tanaka also successfully achieved the Japan-Soviet Summit in October 1973 and took one step further toward a peace treaty. Miki, who rather leaned toward a liberal diplomatic policy as a leftist in the LDP and succeeded Tanaka as prime minister in 1974, participated in the first G6 Summit, which was held in Rambouillet, France in November 1975, and the second G7 Summit, which was held at Dorado near San Juan, Puerto Rico in June 1976. Thus Miki undertook global activities amid the Lockheed Scandal and tough political struggles with the aim of toppling Tanaka. Ultimately, both men practically contributed to the expansion of the diplomatic horizon of Japan.

It is important to note that the term "omnidirectional diplomacy" was being used as early as the early 1970s. According to Dr. Morita Yoshihiko, the originator was Dr. Wakaizumi Kei, a professor who taught world politics at Kyoto Sangyo University and became a secret messenger under the premiership of Sato Eisaku during the negotiations of the return of Okinawa to Japanese rule. According to Dr. Wakaizumi, omnidirectional diplomacy was rather a complicated concept. It should be based on the firm commitment to liberalism and democratic values as well as pacifism. It should be supported by healthy judgements of international environments and objective analysis of Japanese power to clarify the priorities of Japanese diplomacy. The idea should be totally opposite to a please-all policy. The concept should boost diplomatic flexibility and negotiating ability. How could all these multiple goals be fulfilled? It is all about using the fruits of economic growth and growing national prestige as diplomatic resource. The postwar Japan after the period of economic growth was exactly like that. (Morita Yoshihiko, *A Critical Biography of Kei Wakaizumi*, Bungeishunju Ltd., 2011.)

(2) The presentation of Asia-Pacific regional design

The expansion of Japan's diplomatic horizon continued in the 1980s and 1990s as well. That Ohira Masayoshi's policy research groups presented the concept of comprehensive security was a good example. (Fumio Fukunaga, *Ohira Masayoshi*, Chuokoron-Shinsha, Inc., 2008.) That Prime Minister

Suzuki Zenko visited London during a round of trips to European countries in June 1981 and stressed the necessity of shifting Japan's diplomatic stance from that of a passive player to that of an active creator in the international community is another important example. Suzuki became famous for referring to Japan-US relations as an "alliance" (although Ohira was the first prime minister to refer to Japan-US relations as an alliance), by which he meant that the Japan-US alliance should be an economic alliance, not a military alliance. (Wakatsuki Hidekazu, *The End of the Cold War and Japanese Diplomacy*, Chikura Publishing Company, 2017, p. 66.) Nakasone Yasuhiro, who succeeded Ohira, was a prime minister who defined diplomacy as the prime minister's major job. The essence of Nakasone's diplomacy, which was sometimes regarded as hawkish and simplistically pro-American because of Nakasone's "unsinkable aircraft carrier" remark, was a great example of Japan's proactiveness. (Sato Susumu, "Japan as an Economic Power and Asia," in Miyagi Taizo ed., *The Asian Policy of Postwar Japan*, Minerva Shobo, 2015.)

With the coming of the 1990s, Japan began to present very diverse regional designs for Asia. (Oba Mie, *Asia as a Multilayered Region*, Yuhikaku Publishing Co., Ltd., 2014.) The regional concept of Asia-Pacific, which originated from Ohira's policy research group, came to be considered in earnest in the true sense. In 1994, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was finally established and an attempt to consider security in the region from multiple broad angles was realized. (Miyagi Taizo, *The History of Modern Japanese Diplomacy*, Chuokoron-Shinsha, 2016, p. 45.) The East Asian Community design, which was an unfinished design that was pursued in Japan in the early twenty-first century, was another design among many. The expansion of the scope of the Self-Defense Forces' activities such as humanitarian assistance and logistical support in the 1990s further supported Japan's attempts to expand its diplomatic horizon (Sato Akihiro, *The History of Self-Defense Forces*, Chikumashobo Ltd., 2015.)

Japan-China relations revisited

Lastly, taking the Japanese diplomatic initiatives mentioned above into account, I would like to reconsider Japan-China relations from the 1970s from a broader perspective. In fact, Japan has consistently sought to incorporate Japan-China relations into a broader initiative, or has at least not allowed them to take over other diplomatic issues. In addition, the idea of "engagement policy," which began to be mentioned in terms of Japan's policy toward China after the Cold War, could already be seen in the 1970s. It is interesting to note that engagement policy was in a way a good means to get over the innate dualism issue between Japan's China Policy and US-Japan relations.

For example, it is widely known that there were three issues as Japan and China negotiated the normalization of their diplomatic relations in 1972. That is: (1) the recognition of the time the Sino-Japanese war ended, (2) whether the PRC has the right to claim compensation or not and (3) the Taiwan issue. All these issues could turn into new challenges for Japan to tackle when it tried to expand its diplomatic horizon because negotiators could touch on the legitimacy and confidence of

Japanese diplomacy since the San Francisco Peace Treaty. Persons in charge of these negotiations could successfully settle them only with extreme difficulties, having to balance many factors such as the structure of the San Francisco Peace Treaty and internal pressure from Pro-Taiwan groups that still had considerable influence. Until the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the PRC was concluded in 1978, the "anti-hegemony clause" issue had been a fish bone stuck in the throat. If Japan admitted China's interpretation of the clause the treaty would run counter to the policy of expanding the diplomatic horizon peacefully because the treaty would become hostile against the Soviet Union while that was exactly what China wanted in the 1970s. (Ishii Akira, etc., *The Negotiations about the Normalization of the Diplomatic Relations between Japan and China and the Conclusion of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the People's Republic of China*, Iwanami Shoten, Publishers, 2003.) In September 1975 the four principles of Japanese Foreign Policy were issued by Foreign Minister Miyazawa Kiichi. The principles were to show that the Japanese government would oppose hegemonistic behavior by any country. This was an attempt to counter the Chinese interpretation of the anti-hegemony clause. The various attempts introduced above indicate that Japan has been trying to place Japan-China relations in the context of an *omnidirectional diplomatic initiative*.

It is easy to see that initiation of Japan's engagement policy toward China was not very far from here. In a way, Japan's China policy has been consistently one of engagement since the 1970s. Japan's policy toward China after the June Fourth Incident was a good example of engagement. Japan abided by the logic to support China known as the "three principles" of Zhao Ziyang. That is, "peaceful and friendly relations," "equality and reciprocity" and "long-term stability," which were issued when Zhao Ziyang visited Japan from May to June, 1981. Japan considered that it was more dangerous to isolate China from the world of liberal democracies than to reopen economic aid so quickly. The fact that Japan's lifting of sanctions practically led to the reopening of Western engagement policy toward China from October 1990 to November 1991 could be considered the very success of the Japanese engagement initiative.

The strong current of the engagement initiative in the 1990s has survived amid the negative image of China after the June Fourth Incident. Former ambassador to China Miyamoto Yuji, who was Chief of the Chinese section of the Asian Bureau in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the early 1990s, had this attitude toward China. According to Ambassador Miyamoto, the Second Japan-China Joint Statement, which was published in May 2008, was also part of this initiative. This was based on conventional ways of thinking about Japan-China relations, but it was an epoch-making statement in that it advocated partnerships based on even more enlightened principles than before for the following three reasons. First, the statement declared that facilitating the partnerships between Japan and China would promote economic globalization and the irreversibility of mutual dependence; that is, economic rationality. Second, the statement stressed the common recognition that "cooperation for long-running peace and friendship is the only option for both Japan and China." Third, Japan positively evaluated China's development after its economic reform and China positively evaluated

postwar Japan's history as a peaceful nation. The statement also declared that the two countries would aim to utilize completely equal and positive bilateral relations from the broader perspective of "the good future of the Asia-Pacific and the rest of the world." (Miyamoto Yuji, *How Japan Should be Related to China from Now on*, Nikkei Inc., 2011)

Conclusion: What will happen in the next decade

Considering the four decades of history of Japan-China relations, however, it seems natural to conclude that any agreements among nations may just be tentative or provisional with so many exchanges of national interests, whether they are treaties, statements or unofficial agreements. Unlike the imperial system or the feudal system, international politics today is in a state of anarchy which is based on equality of states and without world government. It is quite natural that in this world each nation has its own sovereignty and diplomacy is just a means to an end of expanding self-centered interests to the maximum extent.

Thus, negotiations are necessitated in such a world. And the history of Japan-China relations was colored with numerous episodes of clashed interests on the negotiating tables. It cannot be denied that historians have been too gentle to make those characteristics inconspicuous. "Heart to heart understanding" was too often heard to lead us to a misunderstanding of the nature of the negotiations. In fact, men of modesty in the history of Japan-China relations in the 1960s such as Matsumura Kenzo, Takasaki Tatsunosuke and Furui Yoshimi, who are all pro-Chinese figures, had often met with heated debates in Beijing and they retorted very strongly. It is unfair not to shift our focus to their hard-earned experiences of negotiation with China when we criticize pro-Chinese figures' easy-going, facile approaches to China. Neither must we forget the hardship of diplomats who have worked behind the scenes. The extent of the hardship our diplomats have suffered in the last decade is inestimable.

It is obvious that we need as much "diplomatic patience" now as ever before. After the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, we have seen China's rise turned into a new phase. We have seen the 2010 Senkaku boat collision incident and the nationalization of the Senkaku Islands in 2012, which together brought relations between the two countries to a stalemate and we must expect more such incidents to come.

On the other hand, Japan is making steady preparations for celebrating the 40th anniversary of the 1978 treaty. In June 2017, Prime Minister Abe announced that he would cooperate with China's One Belt, One Road Initiative conditionally, although he had consistently been vigilant against it. In September 2017, Prime Minister Abe, who attended a memorial event in celebration of the 45th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China hosted by the Chinese Embassy with Nikai Toshihiro, Chairman of the General Council of the Liberal Democratic Party, announced that he would develop Japan-China relations on the basis of "reciprocity based on common strategic interests." It was the first time in fifteen years that our prime minister attended a

Chinese official ceremony. At the end of December when Nikai Toshihiro, Chairman of the General Council of the Liberal Democratic Party, visited China, he expressed his intention to the Chinese side of achieving visits between the leaders of the two countries following the Japan-China Summit, which was held in Da Nang, Vietnam in November of the same year.

Thus, the two countries' relations have begun to improve. Whether or not these preparations bear fruit, it is certain that Japan will have to undergo tough negotiations with China for years to come. I say so categorically because Japan-China relations have been like this since long before.

I firmly believe that it is in Japan's interests to protect the international order based on the rule of law and free trade. It is also in our interest to maintain the status quo relations with China. Let us wait for new light to shine for the two countries to make the next move. All we can do is to throw a pebble and listen carefully to the sound of water. Let us refine our qualities as a liberal democratic state to carry on our task for the next generation.

The history of Japan-China relations over the last four decades appears to tell us that Japanese diplomacy is highly disciplined and equipped with the ability to face this great task.

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