

# Japan-China Relations in The World of 'Cool War'

By Mineo Nakajima

Professor of International Relations and  
Modern China Studies  
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Although it is extremely difficult to predict the course of international relations in the 1980s, one can say with certainty that a trend has already begun. With the relative decline of U.S. power recently, especially during the latter half of the 1970s, the situation in Asia centering around Indochina has continued to be unstable, wherein the Soviet Union has been able to increase its strategic military strength on a global level. The normalization of diplomatic relations between China and the U.S. in January 1979 has been one response to this growing Soviet influence.

Along with the relative decline of the status of the U.S., American society itself is facing dangerous straits, both internally and externally. In addition, it is beginning to adopt political and economic postures that are unthinkable for a world leader. On one hand, the opinion is spreading in the U.S. that the stronger the threat from the Soviet Union, the more the U.S. should regard China as a counterweight to the Soviets in developing its relations with the continental giant. Hence, according to this opinion, relations should not be limited only to political and cultural exchanges, but should also encompass military technology transfers and assistance to the Chinese.

Current international relations are heavily influenced by the maneuverings between the superpowers that began in the early 1970s, i.e., the detente policies between the Soviet Union and the U.S. These affected the neighboring countries and smaller countries throughout the world, contributing to political unrest in those regions. In other words, the power games between the superpowers contributed heavily to the instability and unrest in those regions. Confronted with such overwhelmingly global and unprecedented problems as the rising price of oil and the North-South gap, international relations are thus entering a new period of Cold War, more aptly termed a "Cool War," that has seen increasing competition between the superpowers. It is also recognized that the conflict between the Soviet Union and China, which may well be termed as China-Soviet Cold War, is adding to the tensions.

The global expansion of Soviet military power is interpreted as the counteraction to the shift of China—a subsystem in the Cold War context—to the American side. That is, the Soviets are activating a global strategy, a China enclosure policy, and an Asian collective security policy.

In this increasingly fluid and changing international system is Japan, whose giant economy with a \$1-trillion GNP

has come to occupy 13% of world GNP.

## A Chain Reaction

In such an international environment, relations between Japan and China cannot be regarded as being the sole interest between these two countries, but instead must be viewed as having a substantial impact on the whole world. For instance, the strengthening of bilateral relations through the normalization of relations between Japan and China (1972) and the signing of the Treaty of Peace and

events of international importance during the period following the signing of the Peace and Friendship Treaty between Japan and China: as mentioned before, the treaty between the Soviet Union and Vietnam, normalization of relations between China and the U.S., and the border war between the Soviets and Chinese. In addition, there was the formal dissolution of the Sino-Soviet Treaty, the resumption of talks in Moscow on the vice-ministerial level for a new treaty between the Chinese and Soviets, and the assassination of South Korean President Chung Hee Park. Each event, although each originated in a unique domestic environment, has served as a catalyst to strengthen the so-called "Anti-Hege-mony Alliance of U.S.-China-Japan" in the Asia-Pacific region. In response, the Soviets have initiated a series of international strategic thrusts unprecedented

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Friendship (1978) is not only a concern of the two countries, but, in a larger sense, a phenomenon that has had a great impact on the world.

One example of this impact is the expanding Soviet military presence in Indochina as a result of the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Vietnam and the Soviet Union, which directly followed the completion of the treaty procedures between Japan and China. I do not think that one can deny that the strengthening of relations between Japan and China was not one of the reasons leading to the chain of events of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and the brief war between Vietnam and China last year.

Another example is that the Soviets are taking a more aggressive military stance towards Japan: it was recently revealed that military bases were established on three of the four islands in the Northern Territories, which are legally territories of Japan.

Therefore, one must regard relations between Japan and China not only in the small sense of relations between two Asian countries, but in the larger global sense. In other words, it is not possible for Japan to think of the bilateral items as a mere war reparation problem, which have been dragged on unresolved even to today. This lag, along with the strengthening of bilateral relations between the second largest economy in the free world and a huge continental country that has great economic potential and already exerts enormous political power in the international arena has made the bilateral relations into global ones.

Asia has been undergoing many

the advocacy of the modernization goals.

These domestic political changes will certainly continue into the 1980s and, later, one can say that domestic political changes in China have the latent potential to smooth the way for resolution of the problems between China and the Soviet Union; this trend favoring rapprochement with the Soviets is becoming stronger even today. At least in the party-to-party ideological sphere, I think that the differences between the Chinese and Soviets have practically disappeared.

Rapprochement between the Soviet Union and China, now only a recurrent nightmare of policy-makers in the State Department, would undoubtedly be a huge shock to the United States, which has based much of its fundamental foreign policy on the Sino-Soviet split.

With such a possibility in the background, and judging from the recent visit to China by Vice President Mondale and Defense Minister Harold Brown's upcoming visit to China, one must conclude that the U.S. is making a stake in the Chinese as a counterweight to Soviet influence in the Asia-Pacific region. China is seen as more than a mere partner. In the background is the recent defeat of China in the border war with Vietnam earlier last year; Chinese leaders realize that the present is a crucial period to modernize its weapons systems.

Haunted by the nightmare of a united China-U.S.S.R. front, I think that the U.S. leaders are trying to avoid such a possibility by enticing the Chinese with military arms assistance, to modernize their weapons systems to the level of the NATO systems. When then President Nixon visited China in 1971, he offered communication satellites as gifts to the Chinese. As a result, the Americans are now able to monitor China's airspace since China has entered the INTELSAT system. If the Chinese continue this course by accepting American military aid, they will have to rely on the U.S. for the maintenance of those weapons and spare parts, which I think will lead to the insanity of China having to oppose the Soviet Union. Officials in the U.S. government deny any such plan, but it is undeniable that there are such trends in the U.S. Pentagon now, as revealed in a news leak to the *New York Times* in October 1979.



(UPI-SUN-KYODO)  
**Ohira during his recent visit to China:** "Japan cannot assist China in its program of military modernization or commit any of its resources to it."

The COCOM regulations, which are supposed to establish uniform standards for the export of weapons from all OECD countries to Communist nations, have collapsed, in my opinion, to the point where the U.S. can do anything it wants. Even if the U.S. does not directly sell weapon systems to the Chinese, there are a variety of other ways to get the goods there indirectly. The British can sell Harrier jets to the Chinese with tacit approval from the U.S., or one can transfer soft hardware to the Chinese and let them hook the equipment to the hard weapons systems—both of which require prior U.S. approval.

If these trends continue, the Mutual Security Treaty of U.S.-Japan becomes a serious problem. Namely, even though the growing relations between Japan and China have no aim of becoming intertwined in the anti-Soviet line of the U.S., there is a strong risk that Japan can be dragged into such a policy.

In its strategic planning, the U.S. regards the Asia-Pacific region as a place where an anti-Soviet, or anti-hegemonic, alliance should be built up to supplement its policies of detente in the European theater. This poses a serious risk to Japan, even if favorable to the U.S., and brings to the surface a host of new problems.

I do not think, however, that the domestic political environment in Japan has come to realize that Sino-Japanese relations have evolved from a purely bilateral relationship to one that is an important element in the global power structure. Japan will have to grapple with some very severe problems in the 1980s, especially if this reality continues to be disregarded.

### New Relations with China Start

During his visit to China, Prime Minister Ohira stressed in his speech in Peking that Japan's assistance to China in its modernization program is meant to benefit the economic welfare of the Chinese people on the principle of improving the mutual friendship and understanding of the Japanese and Chinese people. Also, Ohira said that Japan cannot assist China in its program of military modernization or commit any of its resources to it, which in that sense, is a stance that must be welcomed.

Yet whether Japan likes it or not, it is heading for the center of such a movement. And China itself has great interest in such things. Therefore, the Soviets will always look upon actions such as the visit of Ohira to China as a movement to develop an anti-Soviet alliance unless Japanese diplomats clearly deny officially any development of a military alliance between the U.S., Japan, and China. Furthermore, I think that, even if the Soviets do not sincerely believe in such an alliance, they can publicly declare it and thus use it as a lever in various strategical moves against the Japanese.

In contrast to quickly strengthening relations between Japan, China, and the U.S. to a form of an alliance, the backward state of relations between the Soviet Union and Japan poses one of the greatest problems for Japan's diplomacy. The backward state of Soviet-Japanese relations will become even more prominent when Hua Kuo-feng visits Japan in May this year,



(UPI-SUN-KYODO)

*Even though the growing relations between Japan and China have no aim of becoming intertwined in the anti-Soviet line of the U.S., there is a strong risk that Japan can be dragged into such a U.S. policy. Photo: Teng Hsiao-ping (left) and Walter Mondale, when Mondale called on Peking in last August.*

i.e., relations between Japan and China become even tighter while relations between Japan and the Soviet Union stagnate. A visit by Brezhnev to Japan is unthinkable and one by Foreign Minister Gromyko, although often discussed, is difficult in the near future. One cannot deny the reality that, even since the inclusion of the anti-hegemony clause in the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between China and Japan in 1978, the two countries have been gradually developing the close relations that by fate they possess. This appears contrary to Japan's traditional stance of equidistant diplomacy.

In the difficult international environment that surrounds Japan, the strengthening of Sino-Japanese relations have taken on an enormous importance to Japan that cannot be explained only as the bettering of friendly ties between the two countries.

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In this regard, I do not think most Japanese realize that, in particular, the huge economic power of Japan in the world exerts a tremendous influence on its diplomacy.

The so-called gift that Ohira took with him to China, the yen loans, may create some problems. The huge size of these loans, the first time Japan has officially offered such loans to China, ¥50 billion (\$227 million at \$1 = ¥220 rate) for next year in tied loans will actually result in a commitment of \$1.5 billion—poses various problems between the two countries. Also, I think that these loans will affect Japan's policy towards Asian countries. I think that especially it could very well work to worsen the situation in Indochina, where the relations between Vietnam and China are already deteriorating; the effect there will be very great. In the pact, the granting of yen loans was thought of only in relation to ASEAN countries, but now one must think of such a policy as affecting relations with China's neighboring countries, also.

In addition, one cannot expect the total sum of US\$1.5 billion to be able to satiate in any manner whatsoever the tremendous demand for capital in the modernization plans of the Chinese—it is like pouring water into an empty shoe. Furthermore, the feasibility of all the projects has not been totally proven.

Finally, Japan's attitude that, since it is an economic superpower, it is being benevolent to the Chinese in granting them these yen loans will only serve to injure the self-respect of the Chinese people. They may fail just like the *Nishihara loan*\* of the pre-war period, which caused great resentment among the Chinese. In other words, we Japanese must grasp the various subtle problems which international loans of this type create in international relations. From the standpoint of the Japanese people, also, one must remember

that the source of these loans will be national bonds, which are already suffering tremendous pressures. Although some good causes for extending loans are inevitable, the notion of reparation for the unhappy war will not be one.

From both the standpoints of total international relations and, especially, the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept, it is my personal opinion that Japan's prime minister should have first visited the countries that have been neglected by Japan's diplomacy up until now even though they are essentially important for Japan: New Zealand and Australia.

Even though Japan by its fate is always going to have to try to attach itself to large, continental countries, it is very important for the survival of the Japanese people that it also develop a more diversified global strategic concept that detaches itself from this tendency. I think that this will become one of the strategic goals of the 1980s.

### Unhappy Forecast

The most unhappy outcome of

Japan's decision to extend loans to China will be if Brown announces a military commitment from the U.S. to China during his upcoming visit. An almost certain outcome of such an event would be a second Sino-Vietnamese War. If such comes to pass, Japan must not only accept its responsibility for such an event, but also accept the inevitable retaliation from the Soviets, who will drag Japan into the international arena of power politics. In order to prevent such a disaster, Japan must express in clear terms its mind to the Chinese on these matters, while, at the same time, developing more diversified diplomacy.

In analyzing the recent souring of relations between the U.S. and Iran, I think that Khomeini's revolution is similar to Mao's concept of revolution as a means of total cultural transformation. It is fine if Khomeini succeeds, but what will happen if he does not? In such a case, there is a strong possibility that Iran will become engulfed in a struggle among the superpowers when one remembers that the Soviet Union will begin to import oil by the middle 1980s. For Japan's diplomacy, therefore, the task becomes how to exert its utmost efforts to avoid entanglement in the power games of the superpowers and to strive to use peaceful means to solve such problems within the international legal framework. The answer to Japan's security problems is not merely a build-up of its defense forces, as is advocated by some elements in Japan. In Sino-Japanese relations, a fundamental change in thinking must first occur in Japan which regards those bilateral relations as an integral part of the international system.

One more unhappy outcome would be, in spite of such overheated conditions, some sort of rapprochement developing between China and the Soviet Union. I think that Sino-Soviet relations will take various patterns in the 1980s, along with the internal changes in China.

If Japan overextends itself in its commitments to China, there may come a time when China no longer feels the need for Japan's help in which case one must fear the possibility that Japan will be tossed to the side. Therefore, Japan must take a diplomatic stance that gives ample room to maneuver in adjusting to changes between the Soviet Union and China. Also, if one emphasizes the brotherly and traditional ties between the Chinese and Japanese peoples too much, there is a danger of a new type of Asianism (or Asian nationalism) developing, which would cause problems and misunderstandings in Japan's relations with Europe and the U.S. Thus, in all cases, Japan must analyze the situation with a cool head and adopt appropriate measures after due deliberation.

In any case, I think that Japanese should decide that Japan will have to pay compensation for her past grasping of China not in the framework of the world power structure but rather in that of Japan-China relations alone.

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**Editor's Note:** *Nishihara loan* was extended by Japan to China through Kamezo Nishihara, a businessman, in 1917-18 in order to make the level of Japanese influence overwhelming in assisting anti-revolutionary movements in China. This evoked much criticism at home from China, and from other major powers.