

SINO—JAPANESE RELATIONS

Rivals or Partners in
Regional Cooperation?

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 **World Scientific**

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Chapter 3

Sino–Japanese Relations: A Japanese Perspective

Hiroki Takeuchi

Despite the deepening of economic interdependence, Sino–Japanese relations are one of the tensest among the most important international relations in the world.¹ In April 2005, the largest anti-Japanese demonstrations occurred in Beijing and other Chinese cities. While the demonstrations drew the attention of and provoked discussions by scholars, journalists and officials for many reasons, the following comment from a Japanese journalist reporting on the demonstrations is particularly interesting. In May 2005, he told me: “I understand why many Chinese people have negative views on Japan. But I don’t understand why the Chinese public opinion on Japan is so monolithic. Isn’t it because of the government’s

¹For example, Gries and Yahuda both start their discussions by pointing out the puzzling deterioration of relations despite the deepening economic interdependence between the two countries. See Gries, P.H. (2005). “China’s ‘New Thinking’ on Japan”. *China Quarterly*, vol. 184, pp. 831–850; Yahuda, M. (2006). “The Limits of Economic Interdependence: Sino–Japanese Relations”. In A.I. Johnston and R.S. Ross (eds.), *New Directions in the Study of China’s Foreign Policy*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA. On how economic interdependence might bring cooperative international relations, see Keohane, R.O. and Nye, J.S. (1977). *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*. Little, Brown and Co., Boston. For a pioneering work on this puzzle and Sino–Japanese relations in general, see Whiting, A.S. (1989). *China Eyes Japan*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

'education'? Doesn't the Chinese government manipulate public opinion? The Chinese government should be able to manipulate public opinion because China is not a democracy."

In this chapter, I argue that the key to understanding the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations is the perception of each other's public opinion, especially the Japanese perception of Chinese public opinion toward Japan. As the Japanese journalist I mentioned above explicitly said, the Japanese often perceive that Chinese public opinion toward Japan is monolithically negative. The reasons for the Chinese public's negative views on Japan are not very surprising. With examples such as the lingering "history issue" (*rekishi mondai*), Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's repeated visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, repeated textbook conflicts, Japan's pursuit of permanent membership on the United Nations Security Council, and frictions over the development of oil fields in the East China Sea, Sino-Japanese relations have more than enough sources of tension, even though economic interdependence between these two countries has deepened over the last three decades. However, the lack of a single positive voice for Japan among the Chinese public is puzzling.

Using the observations about the anti-Japanese demonstrations in 2005 as a backdrop, I discuss the following puzzles. First, why is public opinion on Japan so monolithic in China? More accurately, why do the Japanese perceive Chinese public opinion toward Japan as monolithically negative? If it is because of the Chinese government's manipulation, why is the Chinese government successful in its manipulation in this case while it is not successful in other cases (for example, public views on the U.S. or on domestic issues such as income inequality)? Second, does anti-Japanese public opinion benefit the Chinese government? If not, why does the Chinese government keep public opinion on Japan monolithically negative? Third, while Chinese elites (such as scholars and officials) have plural views on Japan, why is public opinion considered monolithic? Or, more accurately, why do the Japanese perceive Chinese public opinion on Japan to be monolithically negative even though Chinese elite views on Japan are more plural?

In this chapter, I extend a theoretical argument about why Sino-Japanese relations have deteriorated, focusing on how the Japanese perceive (and misperceive) the formation of Chinese public opinion. Public

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opinion is formed by the diffusion of news and political arguments through large populations and by individual evaluation of the information. I argue that the process of public opinion formation is different in an authoritarian regime than in a democratic one, and that the Japanese misperceive this difference. While the journalist's view introduced above reflects a common perception that an authoritarian regime can influence, and even manipulate, public opinion more easily than a democratic regime can, my argument suggests a more mixed conclusion. Many studies on democratic politics have shown that in a democracy leaders are not necessarily responsive to public opinion although they are influenced by it. Foreign policy issues are not tangible for the public, so the public has to depend on elite cues in order to evaluate information about policy, to form their political arguments, and to make decisions for voting or for using other channels of political participation. As a result, leaders can guide public opinion in a democratic regime by persuading the policy-making elites. By contrast, it is difficult for an authoritarian regime to introduce plural views on foreign policy to the public. Even if plural views exist among the policy-making elites, the regime has to publicize a single official view, and the public may then jump on the bandwagon. As a result, leaders find it more difficult to influence public opinion in an authoritarian regime than in a democratic one, because leaders in an authoritarian regime have to persuade the whole public directly in order to influence public opinion.

In this chapter, I first discuss the theoretical background of how public opinion is formed and how it influences foreign policy-making in a democratic regime. I then explore the recent history of Sino-Japanese relations from the perspective of the Japanese perception of Chinese public opinion toward Japan. Finally, I compare my argument with another explanation for the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations from the perspective of the power-transition theory. I conclude this chapter by discussing a liberal theory from the perspective of economic interdependence and by providing some hope for the pessimistic future of Sino-Japanese relations.

I do not claim that my argument can replace explanations from the power-transition or economic interdependence theories. As shown in the last sections of this chapter, they are indeed not contradictory but complementary to my argument. I argue that the Japanese perception of Chinese

public opinion toward Japan is the key to understanding the development of Sino–Japanese relations and arguably the direction in which Sino–Japanese relations will go in the future. Moreover, I do not claim that Chinese public opinion toward Japan is in reality monolithically negative. Given the lack of reliable comprehensive survey data on Chinese public opinion toward Japan, one cannot have a definitive answer to the question of how monolithic Chinese public opinion toward Japan is. Nor do I intend to speculate on how monolithic public opinion is in reality. My focus is instead on why the Japanese tend to perceive Chinese public opinion toward Japan as monolithically negative — even if Chinese public opinion might not be so monolithically negative — and how that misperception has affected Sino–Japanese relations.

Theoretical Background: Public Opinion and Foreign Policy-Making in Democracies

More than ten years ago, Zaller stated:

Evidence from a half a century of polling in the United States supports the proposition that the more citizens know about politics and public affairs, the more firmly they are wedded to elite and media perspectives on foreign policy issues. When elites are united in support of a foreign policy, politically aware Americans support that policy more strongly than any other part of the public. When elites divide along partisan or ideological lines, politically attentive citizens are more likely than the inattentive to align their opinions with that segment of the elite which shares their party or ideology. And when elite opinion changes, political awareness is a major determinant of which members of the public follow the elite lead.²

Zaller's statement is perhaps the best summary of the argument that policy-making elites lead public opinion on foreign policy in a democratic regime, as opposed to the assertion that democratic leaders are responsive

²Zaller, J.R. (1994). "Elite Leadership of Mass Opinion: New Evidence from the Gulf War". In W.L. Bennett and D.L. Paletz (eds.), *Taken by Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

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to public opinion. In his analysis of the formation of American public opinion on foreign policy, Zaller identifies two paths to public opinion formation: the mainstream effect and the polarization effect.³ The mainstream effect occurs when elites are unified; the public receives a unified message and evaluates news and political arguments based on the unified elites' framework. As a result, elite unification leads to a high level of public support for the policy. Meanwhile, the polarization effect occurs when elites are divided; the public receives contradictory messages and evaluates news and political arguments in the context of the division among elites. As a result, elite division leads to a low level of public support for the policy, particularly among those most aware of the debate.

de Tocqueville once said that democracy was a liability for making good foreign policy, even though his overall evaluation of American democracy was very positive: "As for me, I shall have no difficulty in saying that it is in the direction of the external [foreign] interests of society that democratic governments appear to me decidedly inferior to others. . . . External [foreign] policy requires the use of almost none of the qualities that are proper to democracy, and demands, on the contrary, the development of almost those it lacks."⁴ Morgenthau agreed, saying that "the rational requirements of good foreign policy cannot from the outset count upon the support of a public opinion whose preferences are emotional rather than rational."⁵ More than 50 years ago, Lippmann argued that public opinion on foreign policy tends to be inattentive, uninformed, unstructured, volatile and moody, because the public finds foreign policy intangible compared with domestic policy such as taxation.⁶ Thus, it was conventional wisdom that the public would misguide foreign policy. However, more than three decades after Lippmann's assertion had been published, Shapiro and Page

³Zaller, J.R. (1992). *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge University Press, New York, chapter 6.

⁴de Tocqueville, A. (1835, 1840). *Democracy in America*. Edited and translated by H. Mansfield and D. Winthrop (2000), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, p. 219.

⁵Morgenthau, H.J. (1954). *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 2nd ed. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, p. 532.

⁶Lippmann, W. (1955). *Essays in the Public Philosophy*. Little, Brown and Co., Boston, MA, chapter II. For a similar view, see Almond, G.A. (1960). *The American People and Foreign Policy*. Praeger, New York.

found that American public opinion on foreign policy was neither moody nor unstructured, although it was undeniable that the public was uninformed and inattentive.⁷ While suggesting that the previous finding of unstable public opinion was influenced by the wording of the survey questions, they argued that American public opinion on foreign policy was rational and changed in reasonable ways. Then a naturally arising question is: why is the public able to respond reasonably to events with respect to foreign policy, even though it lacks the information about international and domestic events that influences such policy?

Combining the insights of cognitive science, economics, political science and psychology, Lupia and McCubbins show how people could make reasoned choices with limited information.⁸ They argue that the public "can use a wide range of simple cues as substitutes for complex information."⁹ As a result, the public can collectively make decisions "as if" they have sufficient information to make reasoned choices.¹⁰ In other words, complete information is not needed to make reasoned choices.

Public opinion, especially regarding foreign policy, relies on elite cues. Lupia and McCubbins say that while people can acquire knowledge by drawing on personal experience or by learning from others, in many political settings personal experience is not sufficient but learning from others is necessary.¹¹ Learning from others is even more inevitable for ordinary people to make reasoned choices on foreign policy, because foreign policy is much less tangible than domestic policy. On the issue of how people learn from others, psychologists have found that who the sender of the message is greatly affects how recipients judge the message.¹²

⁷Shapiro, R.Y. and Page, B.I. (1992). *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

⁸Lupia, A. and McCubbins, M.D. (1998). *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* Cambridge University Press, New York.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁰Bartels, L.M. (1996). "Uninformed Votes: Information Effects in Presidential Elections". *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 40, p. 198.

¹¹Lupia, A. and McCubbins, M.D. (1998). *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* Cambridge University Press, New York, p. 7.

¹²McGuire, W.J. (1968). "The Nature of Attitude Change". In G. Lindzey and E. Aronson (eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology*, 2nd ed., Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA.

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In sum, few members (if any) of the general public can engage in forming opinions or analyses of foreign policy independent of elite perspectives. Moreover, the public will choose elite cues among competing messages based on the credibility of the senders of the messages if multiple competing messages are available. As a result, Zaller summarizes: “even the best-informed members of the public cannot engage in independent analysis but can only evaluate competing news messages on the basis of ideology or partisanship, and . . . much of the rest of the public pays too little attention to know what elites are discussing.”¹³

Public Opinion and Sino-Japanese Relations: An Inference

From these theoretical insights about the nature of public opinion in a democratic regime, what can we infer about the influence of public opinion on Sino-Japanese relations? One inference is that the polarization effect will be unlikely to occur in an authoritarian regime, where official media does not report plural views, even if different views exist among the policy-making elites. More likely, an effect similar to the mainstream effect occurs: the public will be likely to support the official view monolithically. In other words, the public will be likely to jump on the bandwagon with an official view in an authoritarian regime. Thus, an authoritarian regime will find it difficult to generate plurality in public opinion on foreign policy when it wants to lead public opinion to reflect more plural views.

This inference suggests the following ironic implication. It is conventional wisdom that an authoritarian regime has an advantage in influencing — or even manipulating — public opinion compared with a democratic regime. But contrary to conventional wisdom, the inference posed here suggests that an authoritarian regime is at a disadvantage in influencing public opinion. In a democratic regime, leaders can guide the public by persuading policy-making elites and creating elite unification,

¹³Zaller, J.R. (1994). “Elite Leadership of Mass Opinion: New Evidence from the Gulf War”. In W.L. Bennett and D.L. Paletz (eds.), *Taken by Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, p. 188.

taking advantage of the mainstream effect. In an authoritarian regime, leaders can guide the public to a single official view but cannot introduce plural views to public opinion, because they cannot allow the public to be exposed to the plural views that might exist among policy-making elites. When observing the lack of plurality in public opinion on foreign policy in an authoritarian regime, the foreign public might perceive it as a consequence of the government's manipulation and of the leadership's strong preference for unified public opinion. This perception is not problematic if the authoritarian regime really has a strong preference for the officially announced view with which the public jumps on the bandwagon. However, this misperception will be problematic if the authoritarian regime wants to have plurality in public opinion on foreign policy. My argument suggests that monolithic public opinion would occur even if the authoritarian regime prefers having plurality in public opinion.

"All kinds of policymaking, not just trade policy, are increasingly reactive to Internet opinion," argues Victor Shih, a political scientist of Northwestern University and specialist in China's economic policy-making, on why China decided to retaliate against U.S. tire tariffs in September 2009.¹⁴ The U.S. government's decision to levy additional tariffs on tires from China led to nationalistic voices on the Internet in China. The Chinese government's incentive to listen to public opinion is not very puzzling. Recent studies on authoritarian politics have increasingly shown that even authoritarian governments need popular support for the regime's survival even though they are not necessarily exposed to the risk of being ousted from office by elections,¹⁵ and China is not an exception.¹⁶ Nonetheless, it remains surprising why the Chinese government is responsive to the nationalistic public opinion expressed on the Internet. The views expressed on the Internet often include extreme voices, such

¹⁴Quoted in Bradsher, K. (2009). "China Moves to Retaliate against U.S. Tire Tariff". *New York Times*, 13 September.

¹⁵For example, see Lust-Okar, E. (2005). *Structuring Conflict in the Arab World: Incumbents, Opponents, and Institutions*. Cambridge University Press, New York; Magaloni, B. (2006). *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and Its Demise in Mexico*. Cambridge University Press, New York.

¹⁶Takeuchi, H. (2009). "Participation, Taxation, and Authoritarian Rule in Rural China". Manuscript, Southern Methodist University.

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as: "The U.S. is shameless. . . . Why did our government purchase so much U.S. government debt? . . . We should get rid of all such U.S. investments."¹⁷ A democratic government would not be responsive to extreme voices because they usually are not influential on electoral outcomes. However, an authoritarian government would be responsive to extreme voices because they might lead to social uprisings and cause political instability. Therefore, the Chinese government has to be reactive to Internet opinions, even if they are often extreme.

A series of events affecting Sino-Japanese relations in the first half of the 21st century predated the anti-Japanese protests across China in April 2005, the largest anti-Japanese demonstrations since China and Japan normalized their diplomatic relationship in 1972. Gries explores the events that occurred in 2002–2004 and draws a pessimistic prediction for further deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations.¹⁸ Public opinion expressed on the Internet during the period was overwhelmingly negative towards Japan. Note that I do not argue that Chinese public opinion was in reality overwhelmingly negative. Rather, I argue that the views expressed on the Internet were almost monolithically negative. Positive views on Japan or attempts to balance negative views existed, but were not reflected in the public opinion expressed on the Internet. They were always from scholars. In other words, positive and negative views on Japan were never balanced but negative views were dominant among the Internet public.

Gries starts his discussion of the events of 2002–2004 with the publication of a provocative article by Ma Licheng, a Chinese liberal intellectual, "New Thinking on Relations with Japan" (published in 2002), in which Ma had criticized anti-Japanese popular nationalism and argued that the Chinese government should make more efforts to improve Sino-Japanese relations.¹⁹ Once Ma published this view, he was immediately "cursed as a 'traitor' in Internet chat rooms for being soft on Japan."²⁰ When

¹⁷Quoted in Bradsher, K. (2009). "China Moves to Retaliate against U.S. Tire Tariff". *New York Times*, 13 September.

¹⁸Gries, P.H. (2005). "China's 'New Thinking' on Japan". *China Quarterly*, vol. 184, pp. 831–850.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 831.

Shi Yinhong, another Chinese intellectual and a political scientist, defended Ma's position from the perspective that China should improve Sino-Japanese relations in order to balance U.S. hegemonic power, he was also universally criticized by the public on the Internet. Ma's and Shi's arguments generated intense debates among scholars and experts, which suggested that plurality existed among the elites on Chinese views toward Japan.²¹ However, despite the plurality of elite views, public opinion as shown on the Internet was monolithically negative. Thus, as the policy of the Chinese government was "taken up with a passion by both academic experts and popular nationalists,"²² the government was facing plural views from academic experts and a monolithic view from popular nationalists.

The overall trend of Chinese public opinion toward Japan expressed on the Internet deteriorated through 2002–2004, while at the same time scholars and experts intensively debated various views of Sino-Japanese relations.²³ In June 2003, Internet activists organized a trip to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands — the territory claimed by both China and Japan and currently administered by Japan. In July, an Internet-based petition was organized to oppose the Japanese contract for the Beijing–Shanghai high-speed railway project. In August, over a million Chinese signed an Internet petition drive against Japan over the mustard gas incident — toxic gas leaking from the chemical weapons that the Japanese military had left in China during World War II, which killed one and hospitalized dozens in Heilongjiang Province. In September, a group of 400 Japanese businessmen hired hundreds of Chinese prostitutes for a sex party in Zhuhai in Guangdong Province, causing a furious outburst on the Internet. And in October, a lewd skit performance by Japanese students at a university in Xi'an in Shaanxi Province caused street demonstrations and a rampage against the Japanese on the Internet.

Perhaps the events that occurred in 2003 were not as shocking for the Japanese public as the attitudes of the Chinese audience during the Asian Cup soccer tournament held in various cities in China in August 2004.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 840–842.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 831.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 843–847.

The Japanese public does not have direct access to the Chinese Internet, but many of the Asian Cup soccer games were broadcast in Japan, and the scenes of the Chinese audience were delivered directly to the Japanese public. While the Japanese could understand the intense attitude of the Chinese fans against the Japanese team when China faced Japan in the Cup final, they were shocked to see the Chinese fans always root overwhelmingly for Japan's opponents in earlier matches. Japan's opponents were Oman, Thailand, Iran, Jordan and Bahrain — clearly, the Chinese audience supported those teams not because of positive feelings for these countries but because of negative feelings against Japan.

Why do the Japanese perceive Chinese public opinion towards Japan to be monolithically negative? One explanation is that the Chinese government has deliberately mobilized, and even manipulated, public opinion in an anti-Japanese direction. The Chinese government might have an incentive to do so because nationalism could help strengthen the regime's legitimacy. For example, Gries argues that with "the decline of communist ideology as a source of legitimacy for the CCP [Chinese Communist Party], it [China] depends even more on nationalism to legitimize its rule."²⁴ However, this perspective does not explain whether the possible positive effect of anti-Japanese nationalism is worth pursuing at the cost of friendly Sino-Japanese relations. If pursuing the benefits of anti-Japanese nationalism was the Chinese government's choice, then the Chinese government's choice to risk worsening Sino-Japanese relations and sacrificing the benefits of economic interdependence would remain puzzling.

Another explanation is that the Chinese government simply followed public opinion.²⁵ By this interpretation, the Chinese government would be, as Morgenthau warned, a slave of public opinion.²⁶ Though better Sino-Japanese relations would benefit Chinese national interests overall,

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 848.

²⁵For example, see Jin, X. (2006). "Higashi Ajia no Keizai Kyōryoku to Chugoku no Senryaku: Nit-Chu Kankei no Shiten Kara [Economic Cooperation in East Asia and Chinese Strategies: From the Perspective of Sino-Japanese Relations]". In N. Kiyokatsu and X. Gang (eds.), *Higashi Ajia Kyōdōtai no Kōchiku [Construction of the East Asian Community]*, Minerva Shobo, Kyoto.

²⁶Morgenthau, H.J. (1954). *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 2nd ed. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, p. 532.

the Chinese government would have to follow public opinion even if it contradicts those national interests. Even an authoritarian regime is not immune from public opinion in its policy-making. Thus, the Chinese government has to face certain constraints of public opinion on its policy-making toward Japan. However, this explanation does not solve the puzzle of why the Chinese government cannot lead public opinion but simply has to follow it, while democratic governments can lead public opinion.

Building on a body of literature on how democratic governments might lead public opinion through elite consensus making, I suggest another explanation for the Chinese government's reaction to the seemingly monolithic anti-Japanese public opinion. In a sense, an authoritarian regime would find it more difficult to influence or lead public opinion than a democratic regime. When leaders in a democratic regime need to guide public opinion, they might do so by persuading policy-making elites to create a unified elite view. However, when leaders in an authoritarian regime need to introduce plurality in public opinion, they cannot do so by introducing the plural views that might exist among the policy-making elites, because an authoritarian regime has to publicize a single official view. Even if there were intense debates among policy-making elites, in an authoritarian regime the public would not be exposed to the plurality of the elite views in the debates. Whether in an authoritarian regime or a democratic regime, the public relies on elite cues to evaluate information and develop preferences on foreign policy because of its intangible characteristics. The public in a democratic regime would be exposed to unified elite cues if policy-making elites were unified and exposed to contradictory elite cues if elites were divided. Meanwhile, the public in an authoritarian regime would always be exposed to unified elite cues irrespective of elite unification or division. In other words, the government in an authoritarian regime is unable to introduce plurality to public opinion on foreign policy even if plurality exists among policy-making elites.

Theoretically, it would be possible for an authoritarian regime to lead public opinion in another direction by replacing the official view, with which the public could then jump on the bandwagon. In the case of Sino-Japanese relations, however, it would be hard to imagine the Chinese government sending pro-Japanese elite cues clear enough to replace the monolithic anti-Japanese public opinion with a monolithic pro-Japanese

allow public opinion even if it is an authoritarian regime is not policy-making. Thus, the Chinese manipulation of public opinion on its policy-making does not solve the puzzle of public opinion but simply has led to public opinion.

Democratic governments might influence public opinion. In a sense, an authoritarian regime or lead public opinion in a democratic regime need to be persuaded by policy-making elites, when leaders in an authoritarian regime manipulate public opinion, they cannot do so. There might exist among the policy-making elites in a democratic regime has to publicize a single debate among policy-making elites would not be exposed to the public. Whether in an authoritarian regime relies on elite cues to evaluate foreign policy because of its manipulation. In a democratic regime would be manipulated by policy-making elites were unified and manipulated. Meanwhile, the policy-making elites may be exposed to unified elite manipulation. In other words, the government is unable to introduce plurality to policy-making. Plurality exists among policy-

in an authoritarian regime to lead public opinion, replacing the official view, with a bandwagon. In the case of China, it is hard to imagine the Chinese elites clear enough to replace public opinion with a monolithic pro-Japanese

public opinion.²⁷ Arguably, a collectively moderate public opinion on Japan would be optimal for the Chinese government and perhaps for national interests. However, a collectively moderate public opinion would not be achieved unless the Chinese government allowed the public to be exposed to the debates among policy-making elites, and it would be difficult to make policy debates open to the public under the authoritarian regime.

In sum, I argue that understanding the formation of public opinion in authoritarian regimes helps to explain the recent deterioration in Sino-Japanese relations, because the Japanese perception that Chinese monolithically negative public opinion toward Japan is a result of the Chinese government's manipulation of public opinion has exacerbated tensions in Sino-Japanese relations. Now I will turn to comparing my argument with two propositions based on international theories: the power-transition theory and the liberal theory focusing on economic interdependence.

Power-Transition Theory: Rising China and Declining Japan

From the perspective of the power-transition theory, the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations is a necessary consequence of the rise of China. The rise of China will lower Japan's relative power, and the Japanese would feel fear due to the relative decline in their power. Japan's defensive response to the rise of China might be taken as offensive by China, which would make Sino-Japanese relations even more tense.²⁸ Thus, it would be inevitable for a rising power and a declining power to be in conflict, exacerbating the tension in their relations. Sino-Japanese relations would be no exception.

²⁷Perhaps the attempt for the Chinese government to lead Chinese public opinion in the direction of more pro-Japanese views has started under the Hu Jintao administration, which took power in 2002. I will discuss this point more in detail in the last section of this chapter, referring to what Kokubun in this volume calls the "2006 Framework."

²⁸The negative spirals of tension caused by defensive strategies taken as offensive are called the security dilemma, which might occur because "in an uncertain and anarchic international system, mistrust between two or more potential adversaries can lead each side to take precautionary and defensively motivated measures that are perceived as offensive threats"; see Christensen, T.J. (2003). "China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia". In G.J. Ikenberry and M. Mastanduno (eds.), *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific*, Columbia University Press, New York, p. 25.

Gilpin introduces hegemonic war theory to warn that war might occur when a hegemonic power declines and a challenger rises in the regional power balance.²⁹ Gilpin's theory suggests the following: a stable system would be maintained with a single dominant state (a "hegemon"); the relative growth of a subordinate state would upset this stable system; a declining hegemon and a rising challenger would struggle for preeminence; and this struggle might escalate into war, which should be called hegemonic war. Gilpin develops his idea based on Thucydides' argument that the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta was made inevitable by the rise in power of Athens and the *fear* this caused in Sparta.³⁰ Another example is the conflict between rising Germany and declining Britain, which arguably escalated into World War I.³¹ The "fear" that a declining hegemon might feel from the rise of a challenger is the key for a conflict escalating into a hegemonic war. For example, in the case of World War I, on January 1, 1907, the British Foreign Minister, Sir Eyre Crowe, expressed the fear that the rise of Germany caused in Britain:

[If] Germany believes that greater relative preponderance of material power, wider extent of territory, inviolable frontiers and supremacy at sea are necessary and preliminary possessions without which any aspirations to such leadership must end in failure, then England must expect that Germany will surely seek to diminish the power of any rivals, to enhance her own by extending her dominion, to hinder the co-operation of other States, and ultimately to break up and supplant the British Empire.³²

The fear that a declining hegemon might feel towards a rising challenger is dangerous because it might cause a preventive war according to

²⁹Gilpin, R. (1988). "The Theory of Hegemonic War". *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 18, pp. 591-613.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹I say "arguably" because there have been many debates about whether World War I was a hegemonic war. Reviewing these debates is, of course, beyond the scope of this chapter. For such a review, see Geiss, I. (1984). "Origins of the First World War". In H.W. Koch (ed.), *The Origins of the First World War: Great Power Rivalry and German War Aims*, 2nd ed., Macmillan, London.

³²Quoted in Geiss, I. (1984). "Origins of the First World War". In H.W. Koch (ed.), *The Origins of the First World War: Great Power Rivalry and German War Aims*, 2nd ed., Macmillan, London, pp. 59-60.

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the following logic: when the relative power of one side is expected to grow rapidly, the declining country may have an incentive to fight today on favorable terms rather than face greater threats tomorrow on unfavorable terms.³³ This logic assumes that by fighting today, it is possible to prevent or slow the power shift. It corresponds with the logic of the containment view in the debate about the U.S. response to the rise of China.³⁴ The containment view argues that China's power is inherently threatening and needs to be checked, and hence the U.S. should contain China through regional alliances and slow China's growth by denying it favorable trading terms. In sum, the power-transition theory implies that the Japanese should naturally feel fear from the rise of China because Japanese power is declining along with the rise of China, at least in relative terms. The policy that the Japanese government takes as a result of this fear would aim to slow China's economic growth and contain China's military power by allying with the U.S. and its allies in East Asia such as South Korea.

To what extent does the power-transition theory explain the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations in the 21st century? The results of surveys of the Japanese show a steep decline in positive images of China, apparently following the theory's prediction that a declining hegemon will feel fear from the emergence of a rising challenger. Figure 1 shows that 66.6% of those surveyed in 2008 answered that they had a negative feeling (*shitashimi o kanjinai*) about China, while 31.8% answered that they had a positive feeling (*shitashimi o kanjiru*). More importantly, in 2008 the ratio of those who had negative feelings about China was the highest, and the ratio of those who had a positive feeling was the lowest, since the Ministry of Foreign Affairs started conducting this survey in 1978. Moreover, the ratio of those who had negative feelings about China

³³This logic comes from Fearon's argument that war is a result of the failure to resolve disputes through negotiations; see Fearon, J.D. (1995). "Rationalist Explanations for War". *International Organization*, vol. 49, pp. 379-414. For historical examples of how power shifts have contributed to major wars, see Van Evera, S. (1999). *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.

³⁴The counterargument against the containment view is called the engagement view. For a review of the debate between the containment view and the engagement view, see Christensen, T.J. (2006). "Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster? The Rise of China and U.S. Policy toward East Asia". *International Security*, vol. 31, pp. 81-126.

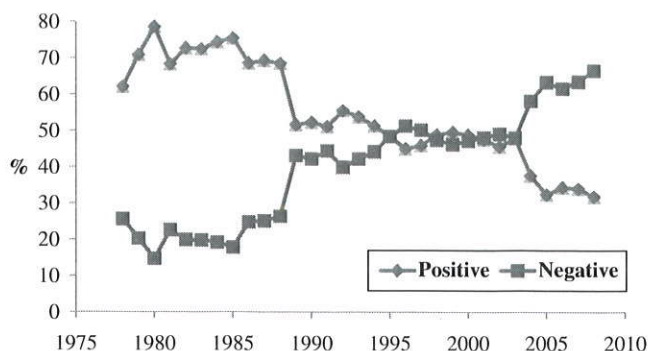
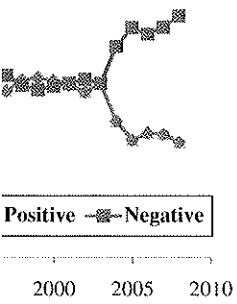


Figure 1. Japanese Attitudes toward China, 1978–2008

increased sharply in 2004. The increase (decrease) in negative (positive) feelings in 2004 compared to the previous year was the second largest, next to 1989. One can easily understand the increase in negative feelings in 1989. The Tiananmen Incident occurred in 1989 and the suppression of democratization movements by the Chinese government disappointed international society and had a huge negative impact on the Japanese impression of China. Therefore, the increase in negative feelings in 1989 is not surprising, but the rise in 2004 remains puzzling.

Though the power-transition theory might explain the deterioration of Sino–Japanese relations to a significant extent, it is not sufficient. Historically, a declining power’s fear of the emergence of a rising power does not always escalate the conflict between them. For example, during World War I it was not Britain (a declining hegemon) but Germany (a rising challenger) that initiated a preventive war.³⁵ Germany started preparing for a war with Russia because of its fear of the rise of Russian industrial and military power. At the same time, Germany started preparing for a preemptive war with France to avoid fighting wars with Russia and France at the same time. To fight a war with France, Germany invaded Belgium, which triggered British participation in World War I because Britain was a guarantor of the Belgian neutrality. In sum, Britain’s fear

³⁵To see how prevention and preemption led to World War I, see Van Evera, S. (1984). “The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War”. *International Security*, vol. 9, pp. 58–107.



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d War I, see Van Evera, S. (1984). World War". *International Security*,

about Germany's rise did not directly cause World War I, although Germany and Britain fought with each other.

While the Japanese fear of the rise of China might exacerbate tensions in Sino-Japanese relations, we need to think about the factors that might mediate the mechanism for a declining power's fear to escalate the conflict. The Japanese perception that the Chinese government is manipulating public opinion towards Japan increases the Japanese fear of the rise of China. As I have discussed, an authoritarian regime is not in an advantageous position to influence or manipulate public opinion compared with a democratic regime. However, misperception by the Japanese public of the formation of Chinese public opinion undermines the mutual trust between these two countries, exacerbates the fear that the Japanese might feel from the rise of China, and therefore leads to deterioration in Sino-Japanese relations.

Conclusion: A Liberal's Hopes?

So far, I have developed a pessimistic argument that might explain the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations in the 21st century. To conclude this chapter, I focus on an optimistic aspect of the relationship: the institutionalization of the relationship based on economic interdependence. In a sense, the current deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations is a consequence of the widening and deepening of interactions and interdependence. In other words, the worsening relationship is a victim of its own success. Deepening interaction and interdependence have disillusioned each country regarding the romantic images of the other and brought the real images of each to ordinary people in the other. To conclude, I argue that negative public opinion based on reality is still better than positive public opinion based on romanticized images.

Liberal theories of international relations have argued that institutionalization should bring cooperation and eventually peace to the relationship.³⁶

³⁶Note that liberal theories of international relations are not directly related to liberal ideas in American politics. Actually, liberal theories focusing on economic interdependence, called liberal pacifism or commercial liberalism, are more directly related to conservative ideas (economic conservatism) in American politics. See the discussion about liberalism in international relations in Doyle, M.W. (1986). "Liberalism and World Politics". *American Political Science Review*, vol. 80, pp. 1152-1155.

Theoretically, institutionalization should change the structure of incentives in international exchange by creating the expectation of repeated interactions across time (the “shadow of the future” cooperation), by defining standards of acceptable behavior, by providing information about each other’s activities, and by creating linkages across issues.³⁷ Under the condition of anarchy (absence of world government), the degree of formality of institutionalization is not of primary importance. Even if nations conclude a treaty (formal institutionalization), no international institution would have the means to enforce punishment. However, repeated interactions with the same partners can prevent one another from defecting or free riding in any given interaction.³⁸ Thus, institutionalization would occur if both nations perceive their relationship as repeated interactions. In other words, iteration or the perception of iteration is more important than formality in evaluating the institutionalization of international relations.

What would create the perception of iteration in exchange and of linkages across issues in international relations? What would play the role of “glue,” which would connect a current interaction with a future interaction, link various issues in the relationship, and give the public of each nation the perception that international cooperation between the two countries — in this case, China and Japan — is sustainable? One liberal theory, commercial liberalism, argues that economic interdependence should create a common interest, because interdependence would cause prosperity in both nations and prosperity is a major interest for any nation. Then why did Sino–Japanese relations deteriorate in the 21st century despite the deepening of economic interdependence?

As indicated in Figure 1, the ratio of the Japanese respondents that had a positive image of China was at its lowest ever in 2008. But when was this ratio at its highest? Figure 1 shows that the ratio of Japanese respondents with a positive image of China reached its peak in 1980,

³⁷See, for example, Axelrod, R. and Keohane, R.O. (1985). “Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions”. *World Politics*, vol. 38, pp. 226–254; Keohane, R.O. (1984). *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ; Voten, E. (2005). “The Political Origins of the UN Security Council’s Ability to Legitimize the Use of Force”. *International Organization*, vol. 59, pp. 527–557.

³⁸Axelrod, R. (1984). *The Evolution of Cooperation*. Basic Books, New York.

change the structure of incentives (expectation of repeated interactions, "cooperation"), by defining the structure of information about each side's interests across issues.³⁷ Under the condition of repeated interactions, the degree of formality and the degree of importance. Even if nations conclude no international institution. However, repeated interactions are another from defecting or cooperation, institutionalization would be more important than repeated interactions. In international relations, the degree of information in exchange and of linkage is more important than the degree of information.

What would play the role of linkage in a future interaction with a future interaction and give the public of each country a sense of cooperation between the two countries? One liberal theory, that interdependence should create a sense of cooperation would cause prosperity and peace for any nation. Then why has the world in the 21st century despite the

of Japanese respondents that the ratio of Japanese respondents reached its peak in 1980,

(1985). "Achieving Cooperation under the Condition of Repeated Interactions." *Journal of International Politics*, vol. 38, pp. 226-254; Keohane, R.O. (1985). "The Political Origins of the 'Cooperation' Force". *International Organization*,

Basic Books, New York.

when 78.6% of the respondents had a positive image of China while only 14.7% had a negative image. This was the time of "China fever" in Japan when "many contracts in the steel and chemical industries were signed and . . . [the Japanese had] the prospect of market development [of China]."³⁹ Because Japan had already normalized the diplomatic relationship with China in 1972, business interactions had already started when the U.S. normalized the diplomatic relationship with China in 1979. Moreover, a romanticized image of China emerged among the Japanese public then, because a very popular Japanese documentary entitled "Silk Road" "gave a considerable boost to the romantic feelings of Japanese" toward China.⁴⁰ In short, the "China fever" in 1980 was due to a romantic image of China and hopes for the prospect of China's development, which was not based on a tangible understanding of China.

In contrast to the "China fever" of 1980, the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations during the deepening of economic interdependence in the 21st century was called "cold politics and hot economy" in both China (*zhengleng jingre*) and Japan (*seirei keinetsu*). Why did the "hot economy" not warm up the "cold politics"? To conclude this chapter, I tentatively argue that the process of warming up "cold politics" with the "hot economy" has just started with political initiatives from both China and Japan. In 2006, then-Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe chose China as his first foreign visit after assuming office. Abe's China visit was followed by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Japan in 2007 and President Hu Jintao's visit in 2008.

Kokubun's chapter in this volume defines a series of joint statements issued through these summit meetings as the "2006 Framework."⁴¹ It contrasts the "2006 Framework" with the "1972 Framework," which had characterized the basis of Sino-Japanese relations since the normalization of the diplomatic relationship in 1972. The 1972 Framework was represented

³⁹Kokubun, R. (2007). "Changing Japanese Strategic Thinking toward China". In G. Rozman, K. Togo and J.P. Ferguson (eds.), *Japanese Strategic Thought toward Asia*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, pp. 147-148.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁴¹Kokubun, R. (2009). "Sino-Japanese Relations: From the 1972 Framework to the 2006 Framework". Paper presented at the Conference on Sino-Japanese Relations: Rival or Partner for Regional Cooperation?, Tokyo, December.

by the Japanese commitment to the history issue (*rekishi mondai*) and to the “one China” principle on the Taiwan issue. Since Abe’s visit to China in 2006, the joint statements have been much briefer on the history issue and sometimes do not mention the Taiwan issue at all. Instead, they have focused more on the future and have mentioned appreciation of Japan’s peaceful behavior since World War II.⁴²

In this chapter, I have suggested that an authoritarian regime needs to send a clearer signal to influence public opinion on foreign policy than a democratic regime does. While a democratic regime can influence public opinion by persuading policy-making elites, an authoritarian regime must persuade the public directly. As a result, the signal the authoritarian regime sends must be unambiguous enough for the public to be able to understand it. Though we cannot go beyond speculation, the Hu Jintao administration seems to have started sending a clear signal once the Japanese administration was ready to respond to that signal. In this sense, economic interdependence has not been a sufficient condition but a necessary one to improve Sino–Japanese relations. Political initiatives from both sides were needed for interdependence to lead to the improvement of relations. Now that the administrations of China and Japan are both ready to take political initiatives to move Sino–Japanese relations one step forward, the conditions are right for economic interdependence to promote cooperation and peace.

⁴²For a more detailed discussion, see Kokubun, R. (2009). “Sino–Japanese Relations: From the 1972 Framework to the 2006 Framework”. Paper presented at the Conference on Sino–Japanese Relations: Rival or Partner for Regional Cooperation?, Tokyo, December. Each joint statement is accessible on the webpage of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<http://www.mofa.go.jp>).