



How Do We Face a Globalized China?

- Summary -

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1. Why is China such a big problem?

First, China is very big. It is huge compared to Japan. It is also a latecomer to global power. The difference in perspective between the latecomer and the nation who once abused it makes the relationship inherently complicated.

The second factor is that China is an unpredictable and opaque nation. The consequent uncertainties cause Japan's fear and consternation.

The third point is that China is a moral creditor of Japan. Japan is at least ethically in debt to China for its part in the Second Sino-Japanese War, which put our nation in a difficult position. The nature of ethics limitlessly expands the debt, making it ultimately unredeemable.

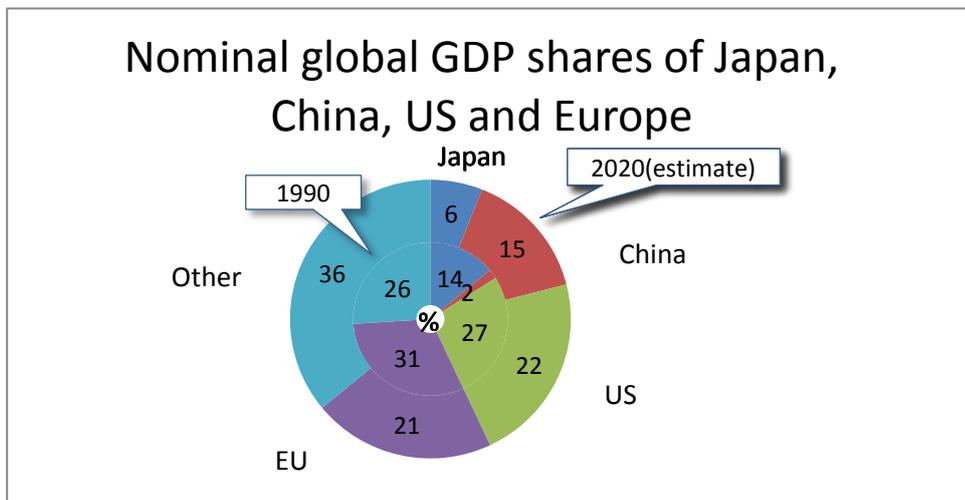
2. A globalized China – Background of strain between Japan and China

IMF data estimate that the GDP of China will be 15% in 2020, against 22% for the United States and 6% for Japan. China's GDP is predicted to grow from 2% to 15% in only 30 years. However, the Chinese share of world GDP was largest at 32% in 1820. In Europe and the US, some say that they will have no choice but to relinquish global hegemony to China, considering that China once accounted for more than 30% of world GDP.

[Table 1: World GDP share – 1990 and 2020 (estimate)]

“Yuragu Kokusai Chitsujo (1)—Nichibei Senryaku Taiou Neri Naose” by Hitoshi Tanaka

(Published on the Nikkei April 15, 2014)



Note: Based on IMF data. EU: 28 member states.

In the era of the early Chinese Empire, the dynasties were quite tolerant in their governance of Tibet and Turkestan. Today's China seems to be focusing on maintaining its sovereignty as a huge modern state rather than building an empire. It is impractical for us to analyze global conditions with a Chinese empire in mind.

3. The present and the future of Japan-China relations

The structure of Japan-China relations has become increasingly complex since 2012. The trilaminar structure of value, power and benefit has become intricately and irrevocably intertwined. Japan-China relations seem to have evolved to a comprehensive confrontation.

There are three pieces of evidence that the Japan-China relationship has changed. We must prepare for very severe Japan-China confrontations. Both Japanese and Chinese politicians have a heavy responsibility to take immediate measures to prevent our disputes from developing into military actions.

4. Three proposals for a fresh start

The first necessity is to establish emergency communication channels between the two nations in order to prevent accidental but highly possible military action caused by the very nature of territorial conflicts and lack of any preventive mechanism.

The second proposal is to establish a tabula rasa for Japan-China relations. Diplomatic actions are the initial requirement.

My third proposal is that both nations initiate cooperative relations for the shared benefit of East Asia beyond their own national interests, such as establishing an earthquake measurement and prediction center, an epidemic prevention mechanism, emergency public funding, human safety centers, and other organizations for the Asian region. There are numerous regional operations in which China and Japan can share responsibilities.

5. The harmonious co-existence of Japan, China and Korea

Japan is currently facing disputes with virtually all of its neighbors in Northeast Asia. To prevent this constant strife, each nation must outgrow its nationalistic exclusivity.

The current Japan-Korea situation dates back to 1965, when the two countries normalized their diplomatic relations. On the other hand, the normalization between Japan and China in 1972 cannot be termed a completion of post-war improvement, even though it did resolve some major challenges.

Japan-Korea affairs may be more adaptable than Japan-China affairs. I would like to point out that the asymmetries between China and Japan, both in size and in their respective statuses of currently emerging nation versus advanced nation on the decline, exacerbate the instability of their intercourse.

Prime Minister Wen Jiabao made a speech to the Japanese Diet in April 2007. He clearly stated that "since the normalization of Sino-Japanese ties, the Japanese government and Japanese leaders have on many occasions openly acknowledged Japan's invasions and expressed remorse and apologies to

countries which became victims of the invasions. The Chinese government and people appreciate such actions.” He also expressed deep gratitude to Japan, saying “The Chinese people will never forget Japan's support of China during our opening, reform and modernization.”

In retrospect, that could have been China's initial offer of reconciliation.

The Japan-Korea joint declaration issued on October 8, 1998 can be an excellent model for mitigating Japan-China confrontations.

Actually, the three nations have already taken their first steps toward reconciliation and share a history as good neighbors to which they can return. Good relationships can be reestablished by acknowledging these facts.

Author’s profile

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Graduated from Ochanomizu University and the Graduate School of Humanities, Tokyo Metropolitan University. Formerly Fellow at the Japan Institute of International Affairs, Professor at School of International Relations, University of Shizuoka, Professor at Faculty of Humanities and International Studies, Yokohama City University, and latterly Professor at Faculty of Political Science and Economics, Waseda University from 1999 to 2010, when she retired. Leader of the “Association of Scholars Advocating Renewal of Japan-China Relationship” since October 2013.

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