

# Modern China's Foreign Relations and East Asia

Liu Jie

## 1. China as Seen from the Outside and the Self-Perception of the Chinese

In 1925, Matsumoto Shigeharu, studying in the United States, was inspired by the research of Charles Beard and realized the fact that “the China problem is the central issue in Japan-US relations.” This led him to the realization that Japan-US relations were Japan-China relations. Dr. Beard warned of the potential for war between Japan and the United States over the lucrative Chinese market. This view is also based on the understanding that the relationship with China was the central issue for Japanese foreign policy. But then, how did Japan recognize China?

First of all, let us take a look at a period that saw the pursuit of models of “independence” and “modernization” seen in the Great Powers. By winning a war with Qing Dynasty, the perception of China among the Japanese people changed dramatically. Speaking in front of a delegation led by Zhang Yinhuan to Japan to sue for peace on February 2, 1895, Ito Hirobumi made the following remarks:

“Traditionally, Qing Dynasty has gone its own way from the Great Powers, at times reaping the benefits that come from joining the community of nations, but making no effort to reflect on the responsibilities that accompany these interactions. Qing’s foreign policy is always based on isolationism and suspicion. Therefore, it lacked the honesty and fairness required to become a good neighbor in international relations” (Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, Vol. 28, Book 2, p. 240).

It is a hard-hitting criticism of China for failing to follow the rules and meet its obligations even as it has benefited from its relationships with other countries. Thereafter, this image of China took root as an important aspect of the perception of China among the Japanese. Following the Sino-Japanese War, this perception spread beyond diplomats and politicians to the general public. The reverence for traditional China faded and the image of China as an outcast extended into the formation of China policy in Japan.

Next, we will look at Japanese perception of China in the period that they pursued the Continental Policy.

After long years of treaty revision negotiations, Japan emerged as one of the five great powers following World War I. Now as a new imperial power, Japan applied military and diplomatic means to defend existing interests on the Korean peninsula and mainland China with the aim of boosting its global presence. In order to achieve this objective in the 1920s, Japan adjusted the China’s policy through Shidehara diplomacy and Tanaka diplomacy but as the structural issues originated from the Meiji Constitution could not be overcome; therefore it caused the Manchurian Incident and led Japan to the all-out war with China.

The Japan’s perception of China after the Manchurian Incident was a continuation of the post-1895 sentiment. This can be seen in the reports of newspapers and other media at the time.

In 1929, the Chinese Nationalist government, having achieved national unity for the present, strongly appealed for revisions to the trade treaty with Japan. The Japanese government, recognised this new government, needed to handle its request seriously. Japanese public opinion was mostly in favor of revision. However, the pages of newspapers revealed distrust of the Nationalist government and its foreign policies. To give one example, the following commentary was published in the *Kokumin Shimbun* of May 17, 1929:

“What we expect from China is honor in the international community: in other words, that it respects its treaties. Even the Nationalist government has deliberately breached or trampled on a number of treaties. For example, under the treaty it was supposed to open a concession in Shandong, yet not only has it failed to adhere to the treaty to date, it has frequently ignored the treaty in a thousand other ways, be it improper taxation, violent occupation of the concession or non-repayment of contractual loans. These treaty aggressions are damaging international confidence in China and are tremendously damaging to the position of China in treaty revisions (*Kokumin Shimbun*, Newspaper Clippings Collection, Research Institute for Economics & Business Administration, Kobe University).

Leaving aside the evaluation for this article in contemporary context, it is true that its skepticism about China’s international credibility. Following the Manchuria Incident in October 1931, *Asahi Shimbun* ran an opinion piece that wondered, “*What is China?*.” The gist of the piece was to criticize the handling of the Manchurian Incident by the League of Nations Council and to justify the Japanese Army’s actions in Manchuria, but it reflected the general sentiment towards China in the media. It asked, “What we want to ask the League of Nations Council is, what is China? In other words, ‘no matter whether today’s China fits the definition of “organised peoples” as found in the preamble to the Covenant of the League of Nations, it is true that China would not respect any treaty obligations. Not only China has the slightest “sincere intention to observe its international obligations,” it has no government in place with the ability to respect treaty obligations.’ (*Asahi Shimbun* morning edition, October 21, 1931) In reply to the question “What is China?,” the piece stated, “this question voiced at the Washington Conference by the French representative still remain fresh today and so as tomorrow. Maybe it is a neverending questions.”

Which brings us to today. The Genron NPO (the Japanese think tank) and China International Publishing Group conduct a joint survey every year in Japan and China. According to the results in 2020, 89.7% of Japanese people had either an unfavorable or relatively unfavorable impression of China. The second most commonly-given reason after “China’s actions around the Senkaku Islands” was “acting outside the international rules.” A Japanese researcher warns, “There is a vicious cycle at play in which China’s military buildup leads to global unease, making China to feel that the world is pursuing a containment policy, which leads to further Chinese military buildup. This is the scenario of 1930s Japan.” Some Japanese researchers warn that China must not follow the path of prewar Japan (Kokubun Ryosei ed., *Chugoku wa, Ima* [China today]. And Iokibe Makoto also notes:

“In addition to the success of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, China prop up the global economy with a massive 4 trillion yen stimulus package after the Lehman collapse. This triumph boosted China’s ego, with growing calls to move away from Deng Xiaoping’s

doctrine to 'keep a low profile and bide your time (韬光養晦)' from 2009. China's maritime expansion ramped up. It challenged Japan's effective control with incidents over the Senkaku Islands in 2010 and 2012. Therefore, China forcibly reclaimed atolls and fortified the coast of South China Sea around 2014. These efforts by China to dominate the key international sea lanes of the South China Sea ignited strong international opposition. Surely using power to expand its own dominance is no different to previous German and Japanese efforts to achieve superpower status" (*Mainichi Shimbun*, Tokyo morning edition, November 9, 2018).

Japan did view China as a "problem" before the First Sino-Japanese War, but after the Manchurian Incident, China and the United States recognized Japan as their common problem. A century on today, things have changed to the point that China and the US are viewed by themselves and others as strategic competitors. While the China-US standoff sharpens, the core issue of a Japanese foreign policy that centered on the Japan-US alliance continues to be the China problem. As we near the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, Japan is strengthening the alliance with US, exploring ways to maintain friendly relations with China while remaining vigilant about Chinese foreign policy.

On the other hand, China is aiming to become the leading nation in the world. However, it is unclear whether China shares the recognition of requirements for global leader. When discussing the history of China since 1949, the Chinese media use formulaic expressions such as: "Mao Zedong made China independent, Deng Xiaoping made China rich, and Xi Jinping made China strong." The belief is that a country needs to be a "major country" to lead the world, but the problem is the meaning implied by "major country." The Chinese people believe that power comes from economic and military strength. Zhou Enlai once propounded the Four Modernizations of "industry, agriculture, national defense, and science and technology." Contemporary China's major country concept derives from those Four Modernizations. However, some intellectuals are calling for a fifth modernization, "political modernization." They argue that the modernization of politics, or democratization, is essential if China is to join the international community as a major power.

The historians are also discussing about these modernizations. The controversy since the 1980s over the "revolutionary," "modernization" and "civilization" views of history is not only the issues to search the true nature of China's modern history but also to figure out the history of China's foreign relations and how to position China itself in the future international community.

Reviewing the changes of Chinese historical perspective, from the end of the 1970s to the early 1980s, China moved onto a path to modernization, but also its historical perspective switched from a "revolutionary" to a "modernization." And the model for China's modernization was post-Meiji Restoration Japan. As we know, Japan after the Meiji Restoration experienced the First Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War, the Manchurian Incident, the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Pacific War. However, in the early 1980s, China was more interested in how Japanese modernized than in its war history. What was called the modernization perspective represented a big step forward in historical research on modern China. Later, the historians like Yuan Weishi would focus on a "civilization" view of history. Yuan viewed the Boxer Rebellion as an "anti-civilization event." This was a new perspective

on the Boxers that previously seen as a patriotic movement. For Yuan, the “rule of law” is the symbol of modern civilization and he makes the case that the modern history of China should be measured against the standards of rule of law and individual freedom: “Law is the crystallization of human civilization, the rules that govern society. And international treaties are legally binding. No matter how minor power and its people criticized these rules and treaties that created by the great powers, we must honor them until they are revised. Otherwise, the behavior that disregard these orders would lead unfavorable outcomes for weaker nations and for common people.”

With regard to the history textbook controversies, Yuan also points out that before pointing fingers at Japanese side, China needs to consider the issues of its own textbooks.

And in 2021, China launched a project to fully restore traditional culture by 2025. According to the State Council, the representative values of the Chinese traditional culture to be restored are benevolence, people-centricity, honesty, justice, concord and harmony but at this stage, there is a lack of clarity. Above all, how will China reconcile traditional Chinese culture with the common values of the international community? There does not seem to be much awareness of the issue.

## **2. “Reconciliation of Historical Interpretation” for a Better Security Environment**

Reviewing the post-war history of reconciliation between China and Japan, three stages can be observed. The first stage was government-to-government. After the war, the Japanese government sought reconciliation between nations as a way to break the shackles of war and colonialism, while striking a balance with domestic politics. The Treaty of “Peace” between the Republic of China and Japan in 1952 recognized “the need for a settlement of problems that have arisen as a result of the existence of a state of war between them” without touching on the matter of war responsibility, merely declaring the state of war to be terminated. Neither did the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea of 1965 mention any regret for the colonial occupation.

As for Sino-Japanese relationship, Japan initially decided to establish diplomatic relations with the ROC government in Taiwan rather than the PROC government in Mainland China because of its aversion to a socialist political system. However, Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei, who visited China in 1972, declared that “the Chinese Communist Party is socialist” but the socialists are not monolithic group, and “the Japanese people have gradually come to understand that Chinese socialist will not invade them” (Takeuchi Minoru, *Nichu kokou kihon bunkensyu* [Basic Documents on China-Japan Relations] (Sososha Publishing House, 1993), p. 227). Tanaka launched the normalization of relations with the People’s Republic of China. For Japanese people at the time, the image of China was of a neighbor with deep historic and cultural ties, rather than “socialist.” The presence of the strongly communist Soviet Union also served to lighten China’s communist image. Above all, for Japan, which faced the Northern Territories issue with the Soviets, China was a “friend” that shared a common enemy: Soviet Union, given their intense antagonism at the time. A factor in the normalization of Japan-China relations was the historic links between Japan and China, but mutual strategic thinking also

played its part. Of course, it is undeniable that the sudden détente between the United States and China exemplified by the visit of President Nixon to China was also a strong tailwind for the normalization of ties.

As such, the Japan-China Joint Communiqué of September 1972 includes the phrase, “The Japanese side is keenly conscious of the responsibility for the serious damage that Japan caused in the past to the Chinese people through war, and deeply reproaches itself,” as well as the statement that “The Government of the People’s Republic of China declares that in the interest of the friendship between the Chinese and the Japanese peoples, it renounces its demand for war reparation from Japan,” show that both countries intended to achieve not just legal settlement but a psychological and emotional reconciliation of peoples. For a time there was broad sense of relief that the historical reconciliation with China had been achieved from the Joint Communiqué and the restoration of the diplomatic relationship. But as the track record to date shows, the Joint Communiqué was no more than the start of a reconciliation process with no end in sight.

The second stage is the reconciliation among the general population. In the early era of PROC, people had forced to obey and worship the first generation of revolutionaries such as Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. Therefore the feelings of the reconciliation led by the government’s strategy filtered down to the people widely. In the 1970 and 1980s, Japan and China enjoyed an unprecedented honeymoon. The first textbook controversy of 1982 and the Prime Minister Nakasone’s visit to Yasukuni Shrine in 1985 were not enough to stem the tide of reconciliation among citizens of both countries. According to Prime Minister’s Office public opinion survey on foreign policy released on March 15, 1987, in response to the question of which country people felt most affinity with of the United States, the Soviet Union, China and the Republic of Korea, 68.6% of Japanese people chose China. It was followed by the US (67.5%), Republic of Korea (39.7%) and the Soviet Union (8.9%). Common factors in this feeling of friendship with China shared by so many Japanese people included historical and cultural affinity and a sense of guilt for being wartime aggressors. The Japanese who endorsed China’s modernization policy expected that if China advanced modernization, Japan and China would be closer together in terms of values.

However, diplomatic normalization and the achievement of some reconciliation between the people of China and Japan did not mean the whole issues disappeared. Even though the gap of the historical perception on modern history had become obvious, the high-level political judgment of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai papered over this cracks. The Senkaku Islands dispute, which might have derailed normalization negotiations, was put to one side. In the process of the negotiations, there was basically no room for intervention from intellectuals (researchers). The leaders of both side did not show any interest in forming a consensus backed up by academic knowledge.

Nevertheless, the Japan, China and Korea made progress with their reconciliation of history. In October 1998, President of the Republic of Korea Kim Dae-Jung made an official visit to Japan as a State Guest. In talks with Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo, agreement was reached “to raise to a higher dimension the close, friendly and cooperative relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea which have been built since the normalization of their

relations. . . so as to build a new Japan-Republic of Korea partnership towards the twenty-first century.” In the Joint Declaration, the Japanese leader proposed that “in a spirit of humility the fact of history that Japan caused, during a certain period in the past, tremendous damage and suffering to the people of the Republic of Korea through its colonial rule, and expressed his deep remorse and heartfelt apology for this fact.” The Korean leader then pledged to accept “with sincerity this statement of Obuchi’s recognition of history and expressed his appreciation for it. He also expressed his view that the present calls upon both countries to overcome their unfortunate history and to build a future-oriented relationship based on reconciliation as well as good-neighborly and friendly cooperation” (Database “The World and Japan.” <http://worldjpn.grips.ac.jp/documents/texts/JPKR/19981008.D1J.html>).

When Chinese President Jiang Zemin visited as a State Guest in November that year, China and Japan also announced the Japan-China Joint Declaration on Building a Partnership of Friendship and Cooperation for Peace and Development. In line with the Japan-Republic of Korea Joint Declaration, this was an attempt by China and Japan to resolve the history issues. The Japan-China Joint Declaration states, “Both sides are of the view that Japan and China share a history of friendly exchanges spanning more than 2,000 years, as well as a common cultural background, and that it is the common desire of the peoples of the two countries to continue this tradition of friendship and to further develop mutually beneficial cooperation” (Kazankai, *Nitchu Kankei Kihon Shiryoshu 1972-2008* [Basic Documents on Japanese-Chinese Relations], Kazankai: 2008, p. 457).

Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro also applied his own logic to put a stop to the history issues plaguing Japan-China relations. The self-described “friend of China” visited Yasukuni Shrine once every year during his term as Prime Minister a total of six times. After his first shrine visit in October 2001, Koizumi made a one-day trip to China, paying a visit to the Marco Polo Bridge on the outskirts of Beijing, location of the Chinese People’s Anti-Japanese War Memorial Hall. There, he expressed his heartfelt apology and condolences to those Chinese who lost their lives, explaining his own visits to Yasukuni Shrine were not an attempt to whitewash the history of Japan’s wars of aggression. Rather, he was trying to create a new relationship with China separating foreign policy from history. However, China reacted to Koizumi by aborting summit diplomacy. The period of “politically cool, but economically hot” relations continued.

An overview of advances and setbacks in the process of government-to-government and citizen-to-citizen reconciliation reveals a lack of “reconciliation for intellectuals.” While China was in a hurry for modernizing, there was a vague atmosphere of the historical reconciliation over both sides. The precondition for sustainable reconciliation among citizens is the objective analysis and clear explanation. However, both countries focused on the performance of a mood of friendship, rather than sharing wisdom. What we can observe today is the fact that there is no “common knowledge” which is vital to a stable relationship between both countries. This is because the real problems between Japan and China were covered by strategic appeals without a long-term perspective of both sides and the atmosphere of the Japan-China friendship between peoples. There was an experiment in pursuing “common knowledge” by governments through joint history research, with the results of research projects taking place from 2002

between Japan and the Republic of Korea and from 2006 between Japan and China published. While this joint research was a major event in East Asian history reconciliation, unfortunately it did not have any impact on reconciliation at the level of the public.

So then, the third stage of history reconciliation is “intellectual reconciliation.” Now, from the point of view of the intellectual reconciliation, what are the history issues? They are categorized into three groups. The first one is unsettled issues caused by war. In China these are known as the “remaining issues of history.” Specifically, these are the issue of abandoned chemical weapons, the issue of comfort women, issue of former civilian workers from the Korean Peninsula, the issue of the forced transportation and labor of Chinese workers, and the issue of remaining Japanese in China.

In order to resolve the issue of abandoned chemical weapons, the Abandoned Chemical Weapons Office was established in the Prime Minister's Office (now the Cabinet Office) in April 1999. China also set up an office responsible for abandoned chemical weapons in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Defense. However, due to restrictions on archives and diplomatic reasons, there has not been enough historical research on the issue.

In the second group, we have those issues arising from the gap between historical facts and historical interpretation. A representative example would include the question of Japan's colonial rule of Korea and Taiwan, the Tanaka Memorial forgery, the Fifteen-Year War theory, the origins of war between Japan and China, the number of people killed in the Nanjing Atrocities, and the fact and the historical evaluation of Chinese wartime collaboration (“puppet regimes”). There is a significant gap between Chinese and Japanese historians over the facts and interpretation of these issues. At times, these issues of historical interpretation spill over into political issues, directly affecting bilateral relations.

For example, when it comes to Chinese wartime collaboration's regime, many issues remain unclear. In the 1930s, a large number of these regimes backed by Japanese military force emerged in China. China calls these “false regimes,” but among Japanese historians, it is felt that subjective value judgments should not be part of historical research. They claim that it is the mission of historical study to understand the multifaceted complexity of the occupied territorial regimes. We had better be prepared for a long road ahead when it comes to dialogue over the interpretation of East Asian history.

The third group consists of those issues that are bound up with politics and foreign policy. Examples are territorial issues such as the Senkaku Islands and Takeshima, visits by Japanese prime ministers to Yasukuni Shrine, and the textbook disputes. These issues have both historical and political or diplomatic aspects, but we have a responsibility to investigate them academically in the field of history, free of any political influence. The findings could be used to supply the academic evidence for reconciling their histories.

### **3. China in the World: The Path of China's Modern Diplomacy**

So then, how did China's transition from Hua-Yi (Sinocentricism) to the western modern world occur?

If we look at the characteristics of China's modern diplomacy, three periods become

evident. They are 1) the “traditional diplomacy period” from the Opium War to 1901, 2) the “modern diplomacy period” from the signing of the final protocol concerning to the Boxer Rebellion in 1901 to 1949 and 3) the “major country diplomacy period” since the foundation of the People’s Republic of China.

The first period involved the pursuit of Hua-Yi (“Chinese-Barbarian”) order (華夷秩序) based on Confucian traditions. Following the Opium War, there was a switch of consciousness about foreign relations as “barbarian affairs (夷務)” to “Western affairs (洋務).” However, the tribute system with “vassal States (藩屬)” and trade relations with the “outside of civilization (化外)” were seen as privileges bestowed on foreigners. The objective of external relations was the maintenance of China’s power. Modern international law and foreign relations were rejected. China was aware of it was falling behind the Great Powers at the time, but its humiliating experiences fed antiforeign sentiment and led to frequent actions against foreign nations such as the Boxer Incident. There was very little space for professional diplomats, perhaps the symbols of “modernization,” and the views and experiences of consuls posted abroad were not reflected in government foreign policy.

The treaties signed with the Great Powers after the Opium War stipulating matters like territorial concessions, extraterritoriality or the jurisdiction of consular courts, tariff agreements and unilateral most favored nation status were extremely unequal for China. On the other hand, the denial of the Hua-Yi order, free trade, and freedom of internal travel, residence and evangelization ended up being elements promoting China’s modernization. In recent years, debate over the “inequality” of these treaties has flared. Extraterritoriality, the symbol of the unequal treaties, the modernization of the Chinese justice system and tariff agreements have been highlighted as aspects that in fact promoted the internationalization of the Chinese economy.

Li Hongzhang, governor-general of Zhili Province before the First Sino-Japanese War, saw the infiltration of Western powers into China through commerce and evangelization as “the strangest situation in thousands of years.” Some of the Chinese elites admitted that Europe had taken a long lead over Asia after the Enlightenment and sought a way for China to have its own Enlightenment. Following the Second Opium War, Qing Dynasty began to prepare a modern diplomatic system, such as establishing the Office for the General Management of Affairs Concerning the Various Countries. At the time, moves aiming to modernize China by bringing in Western technologies and investment was called “Western affairs.” In order to progress Western affairs, Jiangnan Manufacturing Bureau, the Foochow Arsenal, the China Merchants Steam Navigation Company Limited and the Jiangnan Shipyard were founded and a new education system implemented. The Foochow Arsenal Naval College and Beiyang Naval Academy were leading educational facilities that contributed to the development of naval officers with modern knowledge.

However, the Qing’s reforms were limited. At the height of the “the Western affairs movement” on January 26, 1876, governor-general of Zhili Province and Beiyang Trade Minister Li Hongzhang held talks with Mori Arinori, the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary from Japan. When Mori was asked by Li about the good plan for revitalization of the Qing Dynasty, he replied, “Unless your country produces another 30 Li Hongzhangs, it

will be difficult" (Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, Vol. 9, p. 171).

Certainly, "Western affairs" did achieve some results, but reform bureaucrats like Li were few and far between within the Qing Dynasty. Nor did Li himself give any thought to venturing into systemic reform. In the eyes of Chinese scholars before the First Sino-Japanese War, the reforms after the Meiji Restoration in Japan that introduced Western institutions were not necessarily a model to follow. The Japanese invasion of Taiwan and Ryukyu disposition dismayed the Chinese intellectuals, who hoped that "China and Japan would cooperate single-mindedly and help one another" (Wang Tao, "Xingyahui yidu qibi" [Xing Ya Hui should eliminate its defects], in *Shinpen Genen Chugoku Kindai Shisoshi* [New edition: History of Modern Chinese Thought], vol. 2, p. 198).

However, even as they saw the rise of Japan in Asia, China did not overcome its sense of superiority as a "celestial empire." The superiority complex was above all moral. The view of the international order among Chinese scholars was colored by this traditional moral framework. When it came to international relations, they believed that "influencing people morally is best, followed by a combination of morality and power, building mutual trust through honor" (ibid.). Due to the superstitious belief in its historic superiority and pride in 30 years of Western reform, officials were infected with overconfidence in the power and might of China. Following the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War on August 28, 1894, Shen Bao wrote a declaration for Japan, warning that "We the Celestial Kingdom have the largest national territory, the most people, the deepest purse and elite soldiers. China is ten times stronger than Japan....Should Japan admit its mistake, China will do no harm to either the territory or the people of Japan. If it does not, our great army will overrun your country and all will burn." The opening of hostilities by the Qing dynasty was due in part to its self-perception and its perception of Japan.

From the start of the 1890s, Japan and China were increasingly cautious and suspicious of one another as they sought to improve their own status amid the sense of crisis engendered by the aggressive penetration of Western powers into Asia.

Meanwhile, following the Second Opium War, Qing dynasty faced risks to its rule and while it emphasized its status as an imperial power, it was loosening its grip over the Korean peninsula. At the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese Friendship and Trade Treaty at Tianjin in 1873, Ambassador Soejima Taneomi and others, who had proceeded to Beijing, were told by the Office for the General Management of Affairs Concerning the Various Countries that with regard to Korea, "the Tributary system had to be adhered to, but it would not influence domestic affairs" (Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, Vol. 6, p. 160). In other words, the Qing would maintain its formal imperial status with regard to Korea, but not intrude upon its domestic affairs. Regarding the inviolability and preservation of Korea, a tentative understanding was established between Japan and the Qing dynasty (Harada Keichi, *Nisshin, Nichiro Senso* [The Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars], Iwanami Shoten, p. 53).

The second period of diplomacy covered the New Policies of the late Qing, the Beiyang government that emerged after the 1911 Revolution and later the Nationalist government. The goal of Chinese foreign policy at the time was to establish equal relations with foreign countries as a modern nation. The key point here was that diplomacy was led by professional

diplomats with experience of studying abroad and working in diplomatic missions overseas. Professional diplomats of the Beiyang government, such as Wellington Koo, Yan Huiqing and Alfred Sao-ke Sze, understood the modern treaty system. Therefore, the diplomacy of the Beiyang government prepared the groundwork to break down the “unequal treaty” system.

In an era where the “revolutionary” view of history predominated, the foreign policies of the Beiyang government and Nationalist government were seen as either “revolutionary diplomacy” or “capitulation diplomacy.” However, the main achievements that time were from the treaty revision diplomacy. In August 1917, China declared war on Germany and Austria and simultaneously abrogated its treaties with the two countries. China’s stance was welcomed by Great Britain, the United States and Japan, which declared their support for China as a “great power.” China redeemed the German and Austrian concessions and announced the abolition of extraterritorial privileges the countries had enjoyed. In 1919, the Chinese representative to the Paris Peace Conference refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles in protest at the handover of the Shandong concession to Japan. This effort resulted in the China-Germany peace agreement of 1921. China took the opportunity of the Russian revolution to bring a de facto end to its concessions, forced it into relinquishing its extraterritorial privileges in China (Tou Keika, “Kokusai Shakai to Chugoku Gaiko [The International Community and China’s Diplomacy], in *20 Seiki Chugokushi* 2 [The Chinese History of the 20th Century, Vol. 2], University of Tokyo Press, 2009). In the era of the Nationalist government from 1928, Foreign Minister Wang Zhengting led a series of negotiations with the Great Powers to restore China’s tariff autonomy. By 1930 the Nationalist government had concluded tariff agreements with the United States, Great Britain and Japan to restore China’s tariff autonomy, fulfilling a long-held ambition for China. Once the dust had settled on the Manchurian Incident, the Nationalist government opened negotiations with Great Britain and the United States on the abolition of extraterritorial rights. When the Pacific War broke out, Great Britain and the United States acceded to China’s wishes in the fight against Japan. Japan also acceded to treaty revisions with the Wang Jingwei regime (which governed regions seized by Japan) in the fight against Great Britain and the United States. As a result, China achieved the long-held goal of eliminating all unequal treaties in 1943.

In this period, the Republic of China deliberately gained the status of great power. At the establishment of League of Nations, China was unable to even obtain one of the four non-permanent seats, let alone a permanent one. However, Wellington Koo, ambassador to Great Britain and representing China in the first session of League of Nations from November to December 1920, claimed the principle of geographical distribution of seats and gained the assent of Asia and South America. As a result, China won a non-permanent seat along with Spain, Brazil and Belgium (ibid).

When the Pacific War broke out, T.V. Soong, head of the foreign delegation of the Nationalist government, signed the Declaration of United Nations as one of the major countries on January 1, 1942. For China, which had lost its great power status through the Opium Wars and the Sino-Japanese War to sign an international treaty as one of the Four Powers, was cheered as a historic turning point for China’s modern diplomacy. It goes without saying that the improved status of China in the international community was the outcome of diplomacy to

draw closer to the Great Britain and the United States amid its war with Japan. Supporting this diplomacy was the mastery of modern international relations by foreign-educated diplomats and scholars like China's ambassador to the US, Hu Shih. Of course, President Roosevelt's empathy and support for China also played a major role. (Shi Yuanhua et al., *Chuka Minkokushi* [History of the Republic of China], vol.10, Chung Hwa Book, p. 12).

The establishment of the China theater was another symbol of China's improved status. On December 29, 1941, General Marshall recommended to President Roosevelt the establishment of the China theater which had jurisdiction over eastern Burma, Thailand and the Indonesian region. The President agreed to this proposal, with the exception of Burma. On December 31, Roosevelt sent the following telegram to Chiang Kai-shek:

"I propose that Your Excellency should take responsibility for commanding the Allied forces active now and in future within China with the consent of the governments of Great Britain and the Netherlands. I have also proposed that your China theater should have jurisdiction over Indochina and Thailand where the Allied forces expected to reach. And in order for the high command to execute this, I believe that a Staff Office of the Combined Plans and Operations should be settled with the participation of representatives of China, the United States and Great Britain forthwith" (Tei Shukesu, Sou Hei, eds. Collection of Documents of Chiang Kai-shek, vol. 2. Misuzu Shobo, p. 1063).

Of course, it is doubtful that the United States and Great Britain treated China as an equal (Shi Yuanhua et al., vol. 10, p. 13). However, it cannot be denied that the establishment of the China theater following the Declaration of United Nations solidified China's status as a great power.

On November 18, 1943, Chiang Kai-shek left China to attend the Cairo Conference at the invitation of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill (The Chronological Events, Vol. 55). Talks between Roosevelt and Chiang Kai-shek on November 23 would be important to the content of the Cairo Declaration, postwar Japan and the formation of the postwar international order. The establishment of the United Nations was decided at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in April 1945 and China became a founding nation of it. Elite diplomats and scholars with special expertise like Wellington Koo and Wang Chong-hui contributed to the establishment of China's status as a great power through cooperation with the Allies.

Going back a little further, the diplomacy of the Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jingwei Nationalist governments in the 1930s was led by diplomats who knew Japan. Gao Zongwu, who played a leading role in diplomacy toward Japan, reminisces as follows.

"Until then, Chinese diplomacy had been principally concerned with the West. China was traditionally focused on Great Britain and the United States, and they placed their faith in these western countries. Most officials in the foreign ministry had studied in those countries. At least they had to understand English. Those diplomats were also in charge of Japan affairs.

China paid little heed to its neighbor, Japan. People had no doubt that establishing good relations with Great Britain and the United States would making it easy to deal with Japan. Japanese people said that the Chinese had been poisoned by Anglo-American culture and they were strongly dissatisfied with it. Great Britain and the United States had built a lot of mission schools in China and were developing a great number of the pro-British and Americans.

After the Manchurian Incident, it became clear that League of Nations was not working. Those people who had spoken highly of League of Nations lost their confidence. The government began to focus on the Japanese problem. Among the minister and vice-ministers of the foreign ministry, there was an implicit understanding that there needed to be at least one "Japan hand" (Gao Zongwu, *Nippon Shinso* [The Truth of Japan], Hunan Education Publishing House, 2008).

Chiang Kai-shek promoted as many specialist diplomats as possible in pursuit of national interests amid international cooperation. The polity was a "party-state," but in foreign affairs he favored international cooperation and actively promoted expertise for diplomacy.

Then, in the third period, we have the diplomacy of the People's Republic of China. This can be broken down into Mao Zedong period (revolutionary diplomacy), the Deng Xiaoping period ("bide your time" diplomacy) and the Xi Jinping period (major country diplomacy).

Mao Zedong proclaimed China the "center of world revolution" (a "major country") and did not stint with support of Communist regimes in Korea and Vietnam. Diplomacy was based on Mao's world view and strategy, leaving no room for expertly trained diplomats to conceive diplomatic strategy or plan foreign policy. As pointed out by many researchers, the decision to "lean to one side" and commit to the Soviet Union, to join the Korean War and to intervene in the Vietnam War arose from Mao's traditional view of international relations. Deng Xiaoping, who moved China onto the path of modernization, changed the diplomatic strategy to one of "keep a low profile and bide your time" in acknowledgement of the errors of the Mao era. This involved returning to international cooperation as well as a focus on developing specialist diplomatic personnel. There was a partial return to foreign policy led by expert diplomats, resulting in the peaceful global environment required to build up a modernized China, such as WTO membership. However, the "major country diplomacy" based on the concept of "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" declared by Xi Jinping has been difficult for professional diplomats to input their ideas into. The One Belt One Road initiative and the economic order it seeks to impose has raised the suspicions of the international community as a return to traditional Sino-centric diplomacy.

Surveying modern Chinese diplomacy, we can say that the 30-odd years of elite diplomatic corps-driven foreign policy under the Nationalist government—the second period of Chinese diplomacy—was exceptional. Meanwhile, the first and third period were fundamentally linked by their traditional diplomatic concepts and methods. The period of Nationalist government sandwiched between them saw expert diplomats leading foreign policy and the development of genuine diplomatic negotiation with Western countries. However, the People's Republic of China saw the revival of "traditional diplomacy" based on the Chinese worldview. What has China's traditional diplomacy brought to Asia and the world's understanding of China? Meanwhile, can diplomacy that pursues national interest by a worldview and methods that are oriented to tradition become a diplomacy that accounts for the consciousness of individual citizens? In short, to what extent does China's diplomacy reflect the country itself?

On the other hand, to what extent has thinking about modern diplomacy, international relations and international law penetrated among Chinese citizens in the course of China's modern history of 150 years? It is undeniable that the achievement of China's process of

modernization was “Westernization.” One such “Westernization” was the corps of professional diplomats who represented Beiyang and the Republic of China. However, the scope of China’s Westernization and the introduction of Western systems did not produce leaders influenced by the West but rather, traditional leadership in a traditional Chinese system of government. That is why the period from the 1910s to the 1940s in which professional diplomats led foreign policy was clearly something special.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The rise of contemporary China in the 1980s has only come to the fore as a security issue for East Asia since 2010. China’s self-perception switched from “great power” to “major country” and its diplomatic stance has changed with it. This change in China has not had a positive impact on Japan-China relations because it occurred without the attendant reconciliation of histories. It is a precondition of historical reconciliation between China and Japan that history stop using history as a political tool and give up the “right to interpret” to the (civilian) historians. However, in East Asia, there remains a lot of roads to travel before this goal is reached. Just as history is interpreted by historians, it is also vital that diplomacy be conducted by diplomats well-versed in the international mainstream. As such, the sharing of a “common knowledge” is essential to the security of East Asia.

