

Sino-Japanese Relations and the Need for Confidence-Building Measures

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1. Introduction

In March 2007 the Japanese Foreign Ministry published a leaflet titled “Japan-China Relations enter a New Era—Two Countries separated only by a narrow strip of water.” One picture displayed in this publication shows the former Japanese Foreign Minister Asō Tarō and his Chinese counterpart Li Zhaoxing happily shaking hands. When reading this publication, one could think that the relations between the neighbouring countries have risen to an all-time high. But the truth is that Japan-China relations took much damage during the Koizumi Administration, which Yang Bojiang calls a “lost half-decade for Sino-Japanese Relations.”¹⁾ The relations of the two Asian great powers are recovering only slowly. The two nations seem to be separated by a lot more than a only a narrow strip of water.

The entire Northeast Asian region remains a highly sensible area to date, even though the dark prophecy foretold by Aaron L. Friedberg in his article “Ripe for rivalry”²⁾ has not yet fulfilled itself.

The three major powers of the region, Japan, China and Russia, have competing interests, while a forth power, the United States, is also deeply involved in the region. The divided Korean peninsula, the status of Taiwan and the fact that North Korea has displayed its nuclear capabilities adds additional potential for conflict to the region.

During the past years, a considerable discrepancy between the economic and security relations in the region has evolved. The economic ties between the nations in Northeast Asia have been strong throughout the years and are still growing. The trade volume between China and Japan exceeded \$200 billion in 2006, making China Japan’s most important trade partner. Since China is also South Korea’s leading trade partner, it has now overtaken the United States in both countries.

But the economic cooperation did not have a significant impact on security relations. The security ties in Northeast Asia remain traditionally weak. The countries have failed to develop any multilateral defense mechanisms like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).³⁾ Japan and South Korea for example rely on the United States for their security but have not managed to develop a trilateral alliance.

Especially the relations between the main actors of the region, Japan and China, remain difficult to date. Japan’s history still looms large over relations with its neighbors. During the Koizumi administration, frequent visits to Yasukuni Shrine as well as the textbook issue led to ill feelings in China and South Korea, bringing the relations to a new low. Several unresolved territorial conflicts in the region regularly flare up

and make the region even more unstable. And above all that, a new wave of nationalism is sweeping across Northeast Asia, adding additional difficulty to cooperation in security matters.

Experiences with such an anarchic environment have shown that Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) as well as Track Two diplomacy can be useful tools for building up mutual trust. While CBMs were widely used in Europe during the Cold War, for example between NATO and the Warsaw Pact or through the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE), they only were introduced in Northeast Asia after the end of the bipolar rivalry. During the Cold War, with a closed pre-Deng Xiaoping China and the large Soviet threat, the security environment in the region did not permit CBMs. But even ten years after the end of the Cold War, CBMs are only slowly being established in Northeast Asia.

This essay examines the role of CBMs between Japan and China. After giving a brief overview over the security environment of the two countries as well as the stumbling blocks in Sino-Japanese relations, it describes the CBMs that have taken place and gives suggestions for further measures.

2. Security Environment

2.1. China

China has always been at the center of Asia, not only through its geographical position but also through its influence. Although it has had its ups and downs, since 1990 China appears to be on track again. Its phenomenal economic development over the past years has left the world in awe, making China one of the key actors in Northeast Asia. Alongside its economic development lies its military spending, which has significantly increased in the past decades. Since 1989, Chinese defense expenditures have increased by an average of 14.5 percent each year.⁴⁾ China's total defense expenditure is hard to pin down, mainly because the Chinese military has sources of revenue that are not stated in the official budget. Today China is one of the top military spenders in the region, even overtaking Japan in the process.⁵⁾ Although the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is still far from being a high-tech army, it has been considerably modernized through the acquisition of weapons-technology from Russia and through advances in domestic production. However, in certain areas the PLA still lacks capabilities, especially in its naval forces, which do not yet possess a single aircraft carrier.⁶⁾

China's relationships with most of its neighbours, with the exception of Japan, North Korea, and Taiwan, have never been better. Because of the settlement of border disputes and its engagement in Asian multilateral institutions, "most nations now see China as a good neighbour, a constructive partner, a careful listener, and a non-threatening regional power."⁷⁾ Yet there are still a number of security concerns on China's political agenda.

Preventing Taiwan's independence remains Beijing's number one security concern. As stated in China's defense white paper of 2006, Taiwan's struggle for independence still poses a great threat to China's territorial integrity.

Also, the unstable situation on the Korean peninsula, intensified through the missile firings and the nuclear test Pyongyang conducted in 2006, poses a dilemma for Beijing. On the one hand, China has reduced its aid in order to display its displeasure

with Pyongyang's actions. On the other hand, China does not want to see a collapse of North Korea, which would only further destabilize the region. A reunification of the two Koreas would mean that a major ally of the United States would share a border with China, a scenario Beijing has no desire to witness.

But Japan remains one of China's greatest security concerns. The modernization of the Japanese Self Defense Forces (SDF) and the expanding role of the SDF is the cause of great unease in Beijing. In China's view, Japan's "military posture is becoming more external-oriented."⁸⁾

China also views the strengthening of the United States-Japan alliance with great suspicion, a fact that is also stated in its defense White Paper 2006. Therein, China also expressed its suspicion concerning both Japan's constitutional revisionism as well as Japan's pursuit of a right to collective self-defense. What also worries China is the fact that the alliance has sought to broaden its scope and include new countries such as India and Australia. A joint military exercise undertaken in September 2007 off the coast of Myanmar, an ally of China, caused unease in Beijing.

And finally, the possibility of a Japan armed with nuclear weapons is a nightmare scenario for China. Japan possesses the technology and even the plutonium to build such weapons. When in September 2006 several influential Japanese politicians started a debate on whether Japan should adapt nuclear arms, this was viewed with suspicion in China and South Korea.⁹⁾

2.2. *Japan*

Japan's security policy has undergone profound changes since the mid 1990s. Its endeavour to remove post-war restrictions on the SDF and play a more influential role in global security affairs has become evident through several adjustments in its national defense strategy.¹⁰⁾

Since its defeat in World War II, Japan has relied on the United States-Japan alliance for security. During the Cold War, this alliance was quite asymmetrical, with the United States providing the offensive "sword" in Northeast Asia while Japan acted as a defensive "shield," supporting the power projection of the United States in the region.¹¹⁾ Relying on the concept of comprehensive security and withheld by constitutional restraints, Japan has focused more on tools such as ODA and other economic engagement and diplomacy in order to achieve its goals rather than resorting to military power.

But since the end of the Cold War, there have been a number of changes regarding Japan's security policy. When Japan refused to send troops to Iraq during the first Gulf War in 1990-91 and instead supported the Western coalition financially, a wave of criticism swept over Japan and its "checkbook diplomacy." Hence, one of the first changes after the Gulf War was the International Peace Keeping Law passed in 1992, which allowed Japan's Self Defense Forces (JSDF) to embark on non-combat United Nations peacekeeping missions. Since then, Japan has taken part in several peacekeeping missions, for example in Rwanda and East Timor.

The second major change in Japan's security policy occurred in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, when the Bush administration called on its allies in the war against terror. Japan, having learned its lesson from the first Gulf War, responded

promptly, passing several laws that allowed the deployment of troops to Afghanistan and even to Iraq, which was the first mission of SDF troops to a combat region since the end of World War II. These laws and Japan's engagement have further strengthened the United States-Japan alliance, even if these activities were outside the geographic scope of the alliance. Japan and the United States also worked closely together in bringing relief to the victims of the tsunami in 2005. And finally, the decision of Japan to join the United States in constructing a theater missile defense system and the joint effort to develop such a technology has also been a key aspect of the alliance. In short, "Japan's role in the alliance expanded significantly as Tokyo moved from protégé to partner."¹²⁾

Because of Japan's new post-September 11 security role, the SDF have been modernized. The traditional Cold War-style forces have been exchanged for a lighter and qualitatively strengthened army, with newly won abilities like airborne refuelling making the forces more flexible and better fitted for the tasks of the twenty-first century.¹³⁾

Japan taking a more active role in the alliance and also pursuing a more active security policy during the last few years is also due to the number of security threats confronting Japan, the most immediate being North Korea. Pyongyang's actions have led to a deep feeling of insecurity and distrust and made North Korea Tokyo's number one security threat. The firing of a Taepodong missile over Japan in 1998 and the nuclear tests in 2006 have all increased this feeling of insecurity.

But China's rise also poses a major challenge for Japan. China was called a direct threat to Japanese security for the first time in the Defense Guidelines of 2004. Since then, the aforementioned increase in China's military capabilities, especially its naval force and its ballistic weapons, alongside the lack of transparency concerning military aspects, have increased suspicion in the eyes of many analysts and is also mentioned in Japan's Defense White Book of 2007.¹⁴⁾ The fact that China destroyed one of its own satellites in January 2007 led to doubts about China's intentions concerning the use of space technology.

The security concerns that exist between Japan and China are mutual. But these security concerns are further enhanced by a row of stumbling blocks that have made the relations even more difficult.

2.3. Stumbling Blocks in Sino-Japanese Relations

The relations between the two historical great powers of Asia have always had their ups and downs, but have come to a new low during the Koizumi administration. Several factors taint the relations of the two countries, a few of which will be dealt with in the following section.

2.3.1. History

History has always played an important role in the Sino-Japanese relations and has "an enduring impact on the perceptions, policies and future outlook of both sides."¹⁵⁾ Japan's past aggression towards China and the fact that in the eyes of the Chinese people and government Japan has never dealt with its past in a satisfactory way, has had an important influence on the relationship between the two countries. China, on the other hand, plays out the "history card" whenever it comes in handy, although Beijing

has been more careful with this issue since President Jiang Zemin's visit to Tokyo in 1998, where his constant mentioning of the history issue caused a backlash.

During the Koizumi administration, several actions of the government brought up the history issue and caused further deterioration of the relations between Japan and its neighbours.

The prime minister's regular visits to Yasukuni Shrine, where Japan's war dead, including fourteen Class A war criminals, are honored, caused major annoyance amongst Chinese and Koreans during his term. Although former prime ministers also visited the shrine, Koizumi was the first to continue his visits despite major protests from South Korea and China.¹⁶⁾ These visits not only upset the public in China and Korea, but also made China refuse to have summit meetings with Koizumi. Koizumi's successor, Abe Shinzō, although known to have a "hawkish" attitude, refrained from visiting the shrine during his short term in order to improve overall relations with Japan's neighbors. Also, since it became public that Emperor Hirohito was in fact displeased with the enshrining of the Class A war criminals in 1979, a new debate on possibly enshrining these souls elsewhere has commenced.

Another historical stumbling block is the history book issue. In 2005, major anti-Japanese demonstrations were staged in several Chinese cities when the Tokyo Board of Education approved a history textbook that in the eyes of many Chinese downplayed aspects of the Pacific War. This was not the first time a Japanese history book had drawn intense criticism from the Chinese public, the first incident dating to 1982.

And finally, the unearthing of chemical weapons left behind by the Imperial Army in China also raises the history issue on a regular basis. In 2003 and 2004, several Chinese workers were injured when they unearthed canisters of mustard gas that stemmed from the Imperial Army. When Japan initially refused to compensate the victims, this led to anti-Japanese protests once more.¹⁷⁾

All these aspects "make it difficult for many Chinese to recognize the fundamental changes which have taken place in post-1945 Japan and to trust Japan's intentions."¹⁸⁾ On the other hand, China has used Japan's guilt to its advantage and to pursue its national interests. This has led to the Japanese public becoming more and more annoyed with how China plays out the guilt card at its will. The history issue causes an atmosphere of distrust in both countries. Resolving it would help bilateral relations enormously. Prime Minister Abe's successor Fukuda Yasuo is known to be an opponent of Yasukuni Shrine visits.

2.3.2. Territorial Conflicts

Territorial conflicts can be a heavy burden for the relationship between two countries. This also is the case for Japan and China, where the dispute over the Senkaku Islands has been on the political agenda of the two countries for several decades.

The Senkaku Islands, which are called Diaoyutai in Chinese, are a group of uninhabited islands and barren rocks which lie approximately 120 nautical miles northeast of Taiwan and 185 nautical miles southeast of Okinawa. Although China has produced several historical records that state that China was the first nation to discover these islands, they were incorporated into Japanese territory in 1895. Japan remained the owner of the Senkaku Islands until 1951, when the San Francisco Peace

Treaty gave the United States full administrative power over them. They were given back to Japan alongside Okinawa in the Okinawa Reversion Treaty of 1972. Since a United Nations commission published a survey in 1968 in which the possibility of large oil and gas reserves in the area of the islands was mentioned, the PRC and Taiwan have claimed that the islands belong to their territory. Since that time, the conflict has flared up on a regular basis.¹⁹⁾

One of the most serious crises occurred in 1996, when a Japanese ultra-rightwing organization travelled to the disputed islands in order to repair a lighthouse. As Japan had also just ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and declared an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) around the islands, this led to massive protests in China and Taiwan. When a group of Chinese activists attempted to land on one of the islands, they were stopped by the Japanese Coast Guard. In the course of the altercation one Chinese activist drowned. This is the usual pattern of this dispute: Either Japanese right wing organizations travel to the island and trigger the anger of the Chinese, or Chinese activists try to invade the islands and are held up by Japanese forces. The issue also flared in 2003 and 2004, when Chinese activists actually managed to land on one of the islands and were arrested by Japanese police forces, which led to massive protests from the PRC's government and to violent outbreaks of anti-Japanese demonstrations in China.

Although the oil reserves in the area make the islands attractive for energy-hungry China and Japan, the material factors alone cannot explain the duration of the dispute. It seems that ideational factors, for example, the symbolic value of the islands, also play an important role in the dispute. To resolve the Senkaku question would mean a great improvement in overall Sino-Japanese relations.

Closely connected to the Senkaku issue is the question of the demarcation of the EEZ in the East China Sea. While China uses the natural prolongation method to support its claims, Japan uses the principle of a median line. Both methods are supported by UNCLOS. This leads to overlapping claims of the two countries in the East China Sea. Incursions of Chinese research vessels and even warships into Japan's EEZ have further increased the Sino-Japanese tensions in past years.²⁰⁾

2.3.3. Nationalism

In April 2005, massive anti-Japanese demonstrations swept through China, caused by several factors, such as the history issue, and ultimately triggered by the fact that Japan had expressed the wish to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. This was clearly a clash of emerging nationalism in both countries, which has been on the rise for the past years. Japan, on the one hand, is trying to become a "normal" country and discard the shadows of the past. In China on the other hand, a state-led nationalism has been promoted as the ideology of Marxism-Leninism has faded with the end of the Cold War.

Japan's powerful pre-war nationalism was abolished after 1945 and replaced with an economic nationalism. The success of the economy and the fact that Japan was a world leader in the fields of science and technology made the nation proud and filled the gap that the abolishment of political nationalism had left. Only after the Cold War, with the rise of a new generation of conservative leaders and encouraged by an

enduring recession, has there emerged a new form of nationalism.

One example of this new nationalism is the discussion on revising Article 9 of the Constitution.²¹⁾ Although the discussion about Article 9 has continued for many years and the Japanese government has always found ways to circumvent the article, for example, through the laws that allowed the SDF to be sent to Iraq, the revision process has become more lively in recent years. When the Japanese constitution celebrated its sixtieth anniversary in May 2007, Prime Minister Abe confirmed his ambitions to make the revision of the constitution one of the major goals of his administration.

Another example in this context is the fact that the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) was made into a full ministry, the Ministry of Defense in January 2007. This was seen as a further step by many analysts for Japan to abolish the postwar defense guidelines and to adopt a more proactive stance in security matters.²²⁾

When Abe gave his first address before parliament, he pledged to work towards creating a “beautiful” Japan, which should be founded on traditional Japanese values. Abe even published a book on this subject, entitled “Towards a Beautiful Country. My Vision for Japan.” He also stated his plans to change the existing Fundamental Law of Education in order to introduce more patriotic content in education, so that students would adopt a more positive image about their home country.

The Japanese public and even the ruling LDP are divided over the aforementioned issues. The revision of the constitution, especially, remains a very sensitive topic. The major losses that the LDP and their coalition partner Komeito suffered during the Upper House elections in August 2007 may also be due to the fact that the voters were displeased with Abe’s priorities. With the lost majority in the upper house, revising the constitution will become even more difficult. How Abe’s successor Fukuda handles these issues remains to be seen, but he has exhibited a cautious stance concerning the revision of the constitution.

In China, nationalism has also been on the rise for the past two decades. Up to the present, the Chinese government has been able to control the masses, mostly through restriction and censorship. The fact that living conditions have improved for many Chinese due to the economic development also aided the government in this task. Once the economic boom slows down, however, the public is likely to become less supportive of one-party rule. The Chinese leadership thus views nationalism as a useful tool to increase its own legitimacy.²³⁾ China introduced a large campaign of patriotic education in the 1990s to compensate for the loss of the Marxist–Leninist ideology as a source of legitimacy. Chinese nationalism takes various forms, one of them being an anti-foreign nationalism. This form is partly due to the negative experiences of China during the “Century of Humiliation,” when China suffered under the hands of Western and Japanese imperialism.²⁴⁾ Anti-foreign nationalism, supported by the government, has surfaced on several occasions. When the United States Air Force accidentally bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, there were massive anti-American protests. The same occurred when an American spy plane collided with a Chinese jet in 2001. But the anti-foreign nationalism is more often directed towards Japan. A form of anti-Japanese feelings is kept alive by the state-run media in China. Visits to Yasukuni Shrine, the textbook issue, and the Senkaku Island incidents all have sparked massive protest directed against Japan that often turned violent. Usually

these protests are at first supported by the Chinese government and even encouraged by the state-run media. But since China's leaders are always afraid that the protests could get out of hand, they usually calm down the masses once they have let off some steam. These anti-Japanese feelings have grown over the years and increased the fear of a "China Threat" in Japan and other foreign countries, which is the reason why a small group of Chinese intellectuals criticize this practice.

As can be seen in the foregoing, the growing nationalism in both countries undoubtedly increases the difficulties that Japan and China face in improving their relations.

3. Confidence Building Measures between Japan and China

As shown above, the relations between the two main actors in Northeast Asia are strained and remain difficult mainly because of the lack of trust between them. In order to improve the overall relations the first step should therefore be to enhance the trust between Japan and China. This could be achieved through CBMs, which Ralph Cossa defines as:

... both formal and informal measures, whether unilateral, bilateral or multilateral, that address, prevent or resolve uncertainties among states, including both military and political elements²⁵⁾

There are several categories of CBMs: declaratory measures, such as non-attack agreements, transparency measures, including information, notification and communication measures, and, finally, constraint measures, such as risk reduction regimes or constraints on personnel and equipment.²⁶⁾ Confidence-building measures in the military sector can be used to reduce the threat of conflict and to ease tensions. But CBMs do not necessarily have to be limited to the military sector. They can also include political and cultural aspects.

China has approached CBMs, especially ones in the military sector, with great caution. While CBMs were already common in Europe between NATO and the Warsaw Pact or through the OSCE during the 1970s, these measures were frowned upon in China as something only feasible in the West. This attitude began to change in the late 1980s. One example of this change of conduct is China's handling of transparency measures. China for a long time refused to publish a Defense White Paper because the Chinese government saw the publishing of information concerning the military as a threat to national security. Only after international pressure became immense did Beijing publish a White Paper on National Defense in 1998. Since then, each Chinese White Paper has become a bit more revealing, although critics argue that China still lags behind in terms of accuracy.

Oddly, although by now China is very much engaged in CBMs with other nations, it seems reluctant to conduct such measures with Japan. In the field of military diplomacy, for example, the PLA is participating in a variety of exchanges, ranging from the dispatch of high-level military personnel to the hosting of foreign officers at the National Defense University in Beijing.²⁷⁾ In addition, the Chinese Navy is involved in combined naval exercises with several foreign navies, even including former adver-

saries such as Vietnam. In contrast, Chinese leaders are still reluctant to cooperate with the Japanese military, also because this implies the acceptance of the SDF as a legitimate national army, which China does not want to acknowledge.²⁸⁾ For example, there have been no reciprocal visits of naval ships between China and Japan so far.

This procedure is quite typical for China: where it sees advantages through CBMs, it is not hesitant to use them. China made frequent use of CBMs in order to solve border disputes with its direct neighbors in Central Asia, which led to troop reductions and helped the military cut costs. Yet in cases where the advantages are not so apparent, for example, in disputes with Japan, China does not use CBMs so willingly.²⁹⁾

Things look a bit better concerning the exchange of military personnel, though.

Over the past decades, there have been several mutual visits of high-level defense officials between the two countries. For example, the PLA chief of staff visited Tokyo in 2000, while the chief of the Japanese Air-SDF visited China the same year. During these reciprocal visits, a wide range of topics were covered, but no substantial agreements were entered into. These visits also came to a halt when the history issue flared up again in 2001 and 2002. They were only taken up again in November 2006, when a high-level PLA delegation visited Japan. An important step was the visit of China's Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan to Japan in August 2007, the first visit by a Chinese Defense Minister in almost a decade. During this meeting the decision was reached to negotiate a military hotline and to arrange a visit of a Chinese warship to Japan, among other matters. The port call of the Chinese vessel took place in November 2008.

Even though not many CBMs have taken place between Japan and China, there have been a few steps in the right direction. One of them is the Japanese-Chinese security dialogue, which was initiated in 1993. In these meetings, topics included confidence building through enhanced transparency and nuclear proliferation, among others. The security dialogue met once a year up to 2000, when the next meeting was delayed until 2002 because of the Yasukuni issue. This is one of the problems of the security dialogue: "Just at a time of conflict of interests when the need for enhancing mutual understanding and reducing the political temperature is most needed, China reduces, or even suspends, political and security dialogue."³⁰⁾

Another promising CBM is the people-to-people exchange. This form is especially useful to help overcome prejudice and misperceptions. Japan and China have initiated the "Japan-China 21st Century Friendship Program" in 2006, which promotes the exchange of high school and university students. In the first year, approximately 1,200 Chinese students went to Japan while 150 Japanese students went to China. This could be an excellent way of enhancing mutual understanding of entire generations who will include the leaders of tomorrow.

Concerning the history issue, Japan and China agreed to start a joined research project on the history of the two countries, in which scholars from both sides will take part. This too is an important step towards a better understanding. The Joint History Study Group had its second meeting in March 2007. The scholars agreed to publish articles on such topics as Yasukuni Shrine by June 2008.

Another way of increasing mutual understanding could be reached through Track Two initiatives between Japan and China. Track Two initiatives are interactions be-

tween individuals or groups that occur outside official government channels. Track Two processes have been on the rise in the Asia-Pacific region for the last decade. One example is the Track Two counterpart of the Asian Regional Forum (ARF), called Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), which consists of scholars and other non-governmental security specialists, as well as government officials in their “private capacity,” who meet regularly, form working groups, and prepare reports to inform and influence their official counterparts.³¹⁾ These working groups cover such fields as maritime cooperation or CBMs. Although Japan is a founding member of the CSCAP and China joined later, due to the multilateral nature of this initiative, it is only partially suitable for improving the bilateral relations of the two countries. But CSCAP shows that Track Two initiatives can be useful in reducing tensions and, at least to some extent, can help prevent a crisis.³²⁾ Further, a Track Two approach could be especially useful in overcoming imbroglios such as territorial disputes, where the official stance of the involved governments make it difficult to discuss new ideas and scenarios.

4. Conclusion

Japan and China are the main actors in Northeast Asia. A peaceful and stable relationship between the two countries is in the interest of the entire region. Even though the economic relations between Japan and China are as strong as ever, the political and security relations lag far behind. During the Koizumi Administration, Sino-Japanese relations were severely damaged. The fact that Prime Minister Abe’s visit to China in October 2006 was the first visit of a Japanese Prime Minister since Prime Minister Obuchi Keizō’s visit in 1998 shows how severe this damage was.

The main goal of the two countries should therefore be to mend their damaged relations as quickly as possible. One way of achieving this is through CBMs. The Abe Administration undertook the right steps on this matter. The fact that Fukuda was elected as Abe’s successor gives hope that more will be done in this regard. But China also has to do its part. China should not only use CBMs when it sees a clear advantage in doing so. Suspending CBMs when conflict arises and they therefore are most needed is counterproductive and a wrong approach to CBMs. China should acknowledge the fact that CBMs have worked in improving China’s relationships with many of its neighbors, and they could similarly improve China’s relationship with Japan.

Further research concerning the Sino-Japanese relations could include the deciphering of the national images.³³⁾ Annual Japanese government opinion polls on Japanese sentiments toward China reveal that the percentage of people not feeling close to China have rapidly increased over the last five years.³⁴⁾ This also is the case on the Chinese side, where the picture the Chinese public has of Japan is even worse.³⁵⁾ These mutual perceptions seem to be a key aspect in the Sino-Japanese relations. Why the people of these two nations view each other with such suspicion would be an interesting topic for further research.

2008 will see the thirtieth Anniversary of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and China. This presents a golden opportunity to enhance the cooperation between the two countries and initiate further CBMs. Good relations between the two countries are more important than ever. Hopefully, one day Japan and China

will in fact be two countries separated only by a narrow strip of water.

Notes

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