

# The Sino-Japan Relation in the 1990s and the Reemergence of Taiwan Issue

*Keven Huang*

After the cold war, the traditional triangular relation among China, Japan and the USA has disappeared. "The threat from the north" is no longer the nightmare of Japan. How to deal with the ascending country –China– became the major issue of Japan's foreign policy. In the 1990s, the most spectacular event in the Sino-Japan relation is the reemergence of Taiwan issue. Taiwan issue has once again posed a formidable challenge to Japan's stable relations with China. The major questions about this reemergence are how can it happen since the Taiwan issue has almost kept silent for 20 years in the Sino-Japan relation and what are the structural factors behind it. At first, the paper provides a historical review of the Taiwan issue in the Sino-Japan relation since 1972. Then, it gives us the structural factors of the reemergence of Taiwan issue in the Sino-Japan relation. At last, the paper based on these analysis ends with the conclusion of the Taiwan issue in the Sino-Japan relation: Concomitant with the three constant structural factors of the reemergence of the Taiwan issue, the Sino-Japan relation will be more "fragile" or unstable for a long time.

## Chapter 1 Historical Review

After "Nixon shocks" and the subsequent Sino-USA rapprochement, the Tanaka government normalised the relationship with PRC in 1972. The Japanese adherence to a so-called "one-China" policy formed an important basis for the diplomatic normalisation. As a part of arrangement for bilateral diplomatic normalisation, Beijing acquiesced to Japan's unofficial relations with Taiwan, including economic relations and culture exchange. Japan fully understands it. So, according to the 2000 Diplomatic Bluebook, Japan's standpoint of Taiwan issue is the following statement:

Article 3 of the Joint Communiqué of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China clearly states that the Government of Japan "fully understands and respects this stand of the Government of the People's Republic of China," that is, "Taiwan is an inalienable part of the People's Republic of

China." Based on this 1972 Joint Communiqué Japan has maintained its relations with Taiwan as exchanges of a private and regional nature, in other words, working relations on a non-governmental basis.<sup>1</sup>

To some extent, this framework of China-Japan-Taiwan relation is a stable one. Under this framework, the Taiwan issue has become a less prominent one comparing with other factors in the Sino-Japan relation.

But since 1990, the Japanese policy toward Taiwan has some subtle changes. During the whole 1970s and 1980s, Japan had not allowed the leader and cabinet members of the Taiwanese authority to visit Japan. This position is slowly eroding in the 1990s, despite of the PRC's protest. For example, in 1993, Japan allowed Taiwan's foreign minister, Frederick Chien, to make a so-called "private visit". In October 1994, the Japanese government allowed a visit by Taiwan's vice-premier, Hsu Li-Te, to prepare for Taiwan's participation in the Asian Game held in Hiroshima. Also in October 1994, the Taiwanese minister for economic affairs made the first official visit to Japan. He held an official talk with the Japanese counterpart. The controversial visit of Ishihara Shintaro, the newly elected governor of Tokyo and the leading Japanese ultra-nationalist, to Taiwan in November 1999, further tested the limits of Tokyo's unofficial relation with Taipei. Last year, the newly elected Taiwanese president Chen shui-bian visited Japan before he swore in. It is said that he had met with Prime Minister according to Deep-throat from Taiwan. A more serious event which made Chinese government fierce is that Japan grants a visa to Lee Deng Hui. For Chinese government regards Lee as the symbol of Taiwan independence, this event hurts the Sino-Japan relation deeply. The traditional framework of Japan-China-Taiwan relation has been abandoned.

## **Chapter 2 Three structural factors in the reemergence of Taiwan Issue**

How does Taiwan issue reemerge in the 1990s? Is it only a short-term phenomenon? The answer is clear that the reemergence of Taiwan issue in the Sino-Japan relation is based on the solid soil. It has some long-term structural factors which make the reemergence possible.

### **(A) The newly revised American Asia-Pacific strategy**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the USA is on its way to revise its global strategy. In short, it entails: (1) to emphasize the United State's leadership in the world (2) to emphasize the partnerships among Western countries and attach importance to the role of the United Nations and regional organizations, as well as burden sharing (3) to promote American values, ideology and its political and economical model, while improving global liberalism and (4) to assure world stability by military strength and restrict arms proliferation by establishing new international security organizations to diminish the real or potential menace which harms United States interests, and being

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<sup>1</sup> 2000 Diplomatic Bluebook, Japan Foreign Ministry

prepared to use military action if necessary in order to protect the United States' strategic interests.<sup>2</sup>

To pursue these aims, the USA takes some measures in the Asia-Pacific area. The most prominent one is the revision of the 1978 guidelines for U.S.-Japan security cooperation. In the newly revised guidelines, it describes 5 kinds of situation which need U.S and Japan to pay attention: (1) Tensions continue on the Korean Peninsula. (2) There are still heavy concentrations of military force, including nuclear arsenals. (3) Unresolved territorial disputes, (4) potential regional conflicts, (5) the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.<sup>3</sup> Besides the first, other situations have something to do with China. Especially, No4 most likely refers to the Taiwan issue.

Moreover, the guideline has a very important part, which has special links with Taiwan. This part is titled with "Cooperation in Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan That Will Have an Important Influence on Japan & Peace and Security (Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan)". The interpretation of the surrounding from both Japan and U.S includes Taiwan. One American official put this bluntly, "if American and Chinese are killing each other" over Taiwan, and "Japan doesn't support us, the alliance is dead."<sup>4</sup> It was based on this understanding that, Japan made an official statement that the guidelines naturally would cover armed conflict in the Taiwan Strait by the Chief Cabinet Secretary.

This is the revision of the 1978 Guidelines for U.S-Japan Security Cooperation, which has inexorably linked the U.S-Japan alliance with Japan's relations with Taiwan. It means that not only the official communication is needed in the Japan-Taiwan relation, but also the military channel is available.

#### (B) Japan's growing economic interests in Taiwan

Taiwan's rapid economic ascendancy as one of the four Asian tigers has not only won increasing Japanese admiration but also led to Japan's expanding economic relation with the island. For many years, Japan has enjoyed a large trade surplus with Taiwan. Taiwan has been an important market outlet for Japanese exports, especially high-tech products such as communication technology and machine tools. In 1994, Taiwan absorbed 6 percent of total Japanese exports, more than the total imports China took from Japan (4.7%). Similarly, Taiwan has also been an important source for imports. Taiwan has also attracted a sizable Japanese foreign direct investment, worth about \$278million by 1994. While there is no question that Japan has more economic interest in China than in Taiwan, given the size of China, Japan's economic interest in Taiwan has grown to such a significant extent that it can no longer be ignored. In the economy-dominated era, the heated economic relation consequently warms up the

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<sup>2</sup> 1996 National Address, Bill Clinton

<sup>3</sup> The Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation

<sup>4</sup> Suan V.Lawrence, "Miles to go," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 November 1998, p.23

political relation. So does the Japan-Taiwan relation.<sup>5</sup>

### (C) The reemergence of Taiwan Gang in Japan

Before the 1970s, the Taiwan Gang had great influence in Japan. After 1972, some of the important politicians in the Taiwan gang disappeared from the political stage. Now in the 1990s, for the whole tendency of Japanese politics is toward conservatism, the new generation of Taiwan gang has the important role to play. Some of them are the successor to the old ones. Except for the historical link between Taiwan and some Japanese politicians, another important reason of the reemergence of Taiwan Gang is the lobbying effect. In the 1990s, Taiwan spent a lot of money in lobbying Japanese politicians. When Lee Deng Hui was in power, every year he invited more than 40 Japanese politicians to visit Taiwan and then built strong personal relation with them. As long as Taiwan continue to spend money in lobbying, the Taiwan Gang will continue to exist and will try their best to heat up Taiwan-Japan relation.

The three factors mentioned above have coherently logical relationship. The changing strategy of the USA is the dominant outside factor in the Japanese foreign policy. The direction of US-Japan alliance is under the control of the USA. So if America makes up its mind to include Taiwan into the area surrounding Japan, the only way Japan can choose is to follow the USA, Japan's growing economic interests in Taiwan make certain percentage of the big companies and ordinary people support Taiwan. The willingness of them can be expressed in different way which can indirectly influences the Japan's foreign policy. The third and most obvious factor, Taiwan gang in the Japanese politicians can exert great influence over the Taiwan issue in the Sino-Japan relation, for the US-Japan alliance has give enough outside impulse and the domestic interest group which has links with Taiwan give them enough internal support.

## **Conclusion**

According to the analysis provided above, we can get such kind of image of the reemergence of Taiwan issue. It is not springing to the mind in a second. It results from the structural factors, which will keep invariable in the long future. The base of the reemergence is very solid. So the Sino-Japan will be more "fragile" or unstable in the recent future.

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<sup>5</sup> Yoshio Nakagawa, "Nitchu Kankeini okeru Taiwan (Taiwan in Japanese-Chinese Relations)," in Masuda and Hatano, *Ajia no Nakano to Chukoku*, pp.172-176