

Representations of China in Japan

Portrayals of China in the 2014 National Diet

Terje Skjefrås Terashima Alsaker



Master's Thesis
Modern Japan
30 credits

Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages
Faculty of Humanities

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Summary

The following master's thesis *Representations of China in Japan - Portrayals of China in the 2014 National Diet* is a study of the rhetorical role that China inhabits within the discourse of the Japanese National Diet of mid-2014. A collection of statements divided into the topics defense and security issues, economy, and education were analyzed based on the main IR theories of realism, liberalism, and constructivism. The results suggest that the trend of a negative portrayal of China in the Japanese Diet discourse has not diminished since 2008 and may in fact have become more dominant.

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the rhetorical role that China plays within the contemporary mainstream political discourse in Japan. To answer this question, I will analyze statements related to China-issues made in the Japanese National Diet by various politicians. These statements will furthermore be compared to previous research on political rhetoric towards China in the Japanese National Diet and put in the context of developing Sino-Japanese relations.

The Sino-Japanese relationship is arguably the most important bilateral relationship between East-Asian states and it has gone through many stages in its over a thousand years of history. As the People's Republic of China economy and military capabilities develops it nurtures the idea of China as the rising power that will sometime in the next 10-50 years become a great power capable of rivalling the hegemonic power of the United States of America. China's rise is not entirely a new narrative, but with China's extraordinary growth in the last few decades pushing it past Japan as the second largest economy and its apparent immunity to the great recession of 2007 has stoked its confidence and drawn great attention worldwide. Popular books by western authors pick historical ruling philosophies like Confucianism or Legalism dating back to ancient China to interpret contemporary Chinese thinking and goals. These interpretations are either positive to China's rise, like in the 2009 bestseller "When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of New Global Order" by Martin Jacques or negative like "Bully of Asia: Why China's Dream is the New Threat to World Order" by Steven W. Mosher. The CCP is trying to frame the development as a peaceful transition, preferring to refer to the process as "peaceful development" in contrast to a "peaceful rise".¹ Others are nervous of China falling to nationalist impulses and using its power to restore its "national integrity" and reclaiming China's "rightful place" in Asia and the world, leading to a derailment of its peaceful transition to great power status.²

Regardless of the nature of China's rise and how far it will go, the Japanese are in a position where they cannot ignore their neighbor. Considering that Japan is an economic, cultural, and

¹ Herrick, Gai, and Subramaniam, *China's Peaceful Rise*, 61.

² Herrick, Gai, and Subramaniam, *China's Peaceful Rise*, 58.

technological powerhouse in Asia, I believe it is important to be aware of the discourse and rhetoric used by Japanese political elites about China.

There has not been much study of the rhetoric used in the Diet on the topic of China, so in order to place this thesis in a proper context I will lean on research on this topic by Linus Hagström and Björn Jerdén. They have analyzed the structure of the Japanese China discourse within the Japanese Diet in the period 1998 to 2008, and their work makes it possible to determine how the statements reviewed in this thesis fit in the historical context of Diet discourse. In their 2010 article “Understanding Fluctuations in Sino-Japanese Relations: To Politicize or to De-politicize the China Issue in the Japanese Diet” they identify two broad representations of China - radical and moderate. The radical representation is tougher on China and generally more confrontational. The moderate representation is not wholly uncritical, but is less confrontational and is generally open to the possibility of strategic cooperation with China.³ They reach the conclusion that while the “moderate” representation of China continues to be the dominant one as of 2008, the discourse has become more “open” and the radical representation of China has been strengthened.⁴

Since then there have been many developments surrounding the Sino-Japanese relationship and hopefully through this thesis I will be able to show the direction in which the discourse has evolved. This thesis will also include references to the three major International Relations theories: realism, liberalism and constructivism. And compared to the research by Hagström and Jerdén, this thesis will look at statements over a smaller period of time and forego a quantitative approach for a qualitative one.

³ Hagström, Jerdén, “Understanding Fluctuations in Sino-Japanese Relations,” 734.

⁴ Hagström, Jerdén, “Understanding Fluctuations in Sino-Japanese Relations,” 737.

2 Methodology

2.1 Approach

For the purpose of analyzing the representations of China in Japanese society this thesis will focus on minutes from a selection of discussions that occurred in various committees in the National Diet across different fields in the year 2014. These discussions will approximately correspond to the fields of security, education, and economics. For this thesis there will be less emphasis on the actual policies that Japan has towards China, and more on the role China is given within the debates and the nature of the discourse used to characterize it. All the data used for this paper are available through the public National Diet search engine administered by the National Diet Library at <http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp>.

My reason for selecting Diet minutes as the source material for this thesis is that I consider debates and statements within the lawmaking institutions of a representative democracy like the Japanese relevant and revealing sources of influential and informed notions and discussions on China. It also makes it possible for me to, to some extent, build upon other research pertaining to the representation of China within the National Diet done by Linus Hagström and Björn Jerdén.⁵

By limiting my analysis to the year 2014 and looking across different fields in which Japan has relations with China, I hope to be able to find if there is a difference in the way China is represented within each category, or if the worsening security environment between the two countries altered the way in which China was spoken about in fields that have historically been considered less sensitive within the Sino-Japanese relationship than security issues. Given that different politicians involve themselves to different degrees within different fields of policy, I expect that that building my analysis on debates in a few policy areas will enable me to discuss the issue from a more diverse perspective and avoid merely discovering the thoughts of a small number of representatives in one particular area.

⁵ Hagström and Jerdén, "Understanding Fluctuations in Sino-Japanese Relations: To Politicize or to De-politicize the China Issue in the Japanese Diet"

Additionally, the year 2014 lacked any major frictions concerning Sino-Japanese relations, like for example the nationalization of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and large anti-Japanese riots in China in 2012, or visits to the Yasukuni Shrine by the Japanese prime minister. This should minimize there being too much focus on a specific incident and give a broader spread of topics for the limited time period chosen. 2014 is however a year generally seen as a low point in the relationship, and I will focus on the period around Prime Minister Abe Shinzō's proclamation of his government's intention to move towards constitutionalizing the right to collective self-defense on 15 May 2014. Implementation of collective self-defense was controversial and by focusing on the period surrounding Abe's proclamation domestic discourse surrounding national security should be heightened while not being overly influenced by any major incident between China and Japan.

On the other hand, while there were few obvious major difficulties in the relationship, 2014 saw several important reforms in Japanese security policy, including Prime Minister Abe's proclamation of his government's intention to move towards constitutionalizing the right to collective self-defense in May and the formation of a National Security Council and a National Security Strategy in December. These reforms in the domain of security policy are broadly viewed as efforts to strengthen Japan's position within the U.S.-Japanese alliance, but one of the major reasons lying behind the necessity to strengthen this position is gradually shifting power balance between China and Japan in Japan's disfavor. Especially with the turbulence that has plagued the Sino-Japanese relationship in recent years it is difficult not to describe these reforms as rational neo-realistic balancing measures against China.⁶

While it is tempting to conclude that a realist balancing of power theory adequately accounts for the development in relations between Japan and China, Jerdén and Hagström point out that historical postwar Japanese policy has not been in line with neo-realistic theory, and that rather than being a hindrance to China achieving its long-term strategic goals, Japan has either taken a mixed line of responses or conformed on most key-issues of large importance for China.⁷

⁶ Berkshire Miller "Abe's Gambit" 57.

⁷ Jerdén, Hagström, "Rethinking Japan's China Policy: Japan as an Accommodator in the Rise of China, 1978-2011" 240.

Japan's posture towards China since the opening of China's economy to foreign investments can be described broadly as having been one of separation between official political relations and economic domain, also known by the term *Seikei Bunri* 政経分離.⁸ The gist of this phenomenon is that while the political relations between the two countries might have had bad periods, this has not majorly affected the interests of the economy and business environment between the two countries. And while there have been some examples of politics interfering in business practices from time to time, Japanese policy towards China has reflected this. The economic ties between them are huge, with China now being Japan's largest trading partner and many major Japanese corporations using Chinese factories in their production of goods.⁹

This thesis analyzes notions of China in three separate policy fields from which sample statements will be taken, and they will each be presented and analyzed in individual chapters:

- a chapter on defense, which will discuss the representation of China in Diet discussions on security policy,
- an economy chapter, discussing representations of China in Diet discussions on economic policy including trade and copyright issues, and
- an education chapter, focusing on the representation of China in Diet discussion on foreign students and foreign guest workers.

2.2 Limitations of the Method

Using minutes from discussions in the National Diet involves some limitations. While Japan is a multi-party democracy, and discussions in the National Diet are open, and the representatives generally free to speak their minds when making statements and asking questions, some things likely affect how and why members of the Diet choose to talk about and represent China in discussions the way they do. These might include matters of decorum and pressure to moderate one's expression in a place where speaking one's mind too freely about a sensitive topic, with or without a factual basis, can lead to unwanted attention and diplomatic misunderstandings. This is perhaps especially the case when the topic is related to

⁸ Sudo, "It Takes Two to Tango: The Conflict as Japan Sees It," 45.

⁹ Nagy "Territorial Disputes, Trade and Diplomacy: Examining the repercussions of the Sino-Japanese territorial dispute for bilateral trade" 54.

China. Compared to the unrestricted and often hostile expressions displayed and encountered in various forums on Japanese websites, stakes are higher and consequences potentially severe for speakers in the National Diet.

Something I also noticed when trying to search for examples of members of the Diet talking about China was how few concrete results I could find. This is interesting, not least in light of Suzuki Shōgo's point that China is being used to project an 'other' in contrast to Japan for both the right and left of the Japanese political spectrum.¹⁰ I had expected there to be more statements supporting such a finding in my material.

Other factors that can potentially influence how China appears in Diet debates are, for example, party affiliation and political loyalties, personal fields of interest, and willingness to talk about a controversial topic. There is little doubt that the Chinese government has great interest in how Japanese Diet members discuss China and fields that are of interest to it. There has also been a historical tendency in the postwar era for discussion on China to be vague and roundabout, which might still have some effect on the findings of this thesis.¹¹ One would suspect that in periods where relations are difficult between two countries, it is more politically opportune to speak up against, or criticize one's counterpart, than it is to try to present them in a more forgiving light and take a consolatory tone. Despite these problems it should be possible to get an indication of the general rhetorical roles of China in the Diet.

¹⁰ Suzuki "The rise of the Chinese 'Other' in Japan's construction of identity: Is China a focal point of Japanese nationalism?" 112.

¹¹ Hagström, Jerdén, "Understanding Fluctuations in Sino-Japanese Relations," 735.

3 Theory

When analyzing Japanese politicians' rhetorical representations of China during Diet committees, it is useful to know the different existing theoretical schools of thought concerning great power relations that possibly color their thinking on China's rise. Most scholars writing on international relations in Asia usually present three main categories of theory that are relevant to the field: Realist theory, Liberal Theory, and Constructivist theory. While no single theory has managed to conclusively explain and predict the practical workings of international relations in the region, they all have their adherents and influence the thinking of both scholars and policymakers working on the subject.

Much of the examples used in to illustrate the various IR theories will be America centric. One reason is that IR has historically been a US dominated social science.¹² It is also because Japan holds a subordinate position in its alliance with the US and thus American strategic thinking should have a large influence on the Japanese political elite.

3.1 Realist and Neo-Realist Theory

The realist theory of international relations is the oldest and considered the basis of modern International Relations studies. The theory sees nation states as the highest level of actors within an anarchical system. Nation states in this system have different levels of power and influence, but the goals and motivations are the same: To secure its own survival above all else and from there achieve its other national interests to the largest degree possible.¹³ This theoretical branch is very concerned with balance of power issues. It argues relative power between actors either increasing or decreasing affects the status quo and will consequently lead to balancing reactions in other actors. In this theoretic framework dominant powers will try to prevent the rise of a new power that could threaten its dominant position. Seen through the lens of realism, great power transitions resulting in a peaceful transition of dominance are unlikely.

¹² Walt, Foreign Policy. "Is IR still 'an American social science?'"

¹³ Slaughter, Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law "International Relations, Principal Theories" 1.

The main currencies of this theoretical model are military capabilities and the economic power to sustain them. Other forms of influence, like soft power, shared values, or economic interdependence, are not highly valued as guarantors of state interests. Thus, many consider realist thinking to be a zero-sum interpretation of international relations.

Neo-realists argue that it is possible for actions that seemingly go against the rules of the theoretical systems to be performed by actors. In these cases, the actions will be based on other factors than the rational analysis of the balance of power, but actors who behave that way will be punished by the system.

Critics of the realist theory argue that it does not take account of many vital elements that effect how international relations play out in the real world. American offensive realists like John Mearsheimer and Steven W. Mosher have criticized US foreign policy for being too soft on China in comparison to its hard stance on Russia. They see a Russia with an economy a fraction of the size of the US's as not even being a competitor to US dominance. While China with its large and rapidly growing economy is the only entity that pose a realistic future threat, and the US should take necessary measures to prevent China's ascendancy in order to avoid future conflict.^{14 15}

A typical historical example showing how realist theory works would be how the growing military and economic power of the German Empire threatening the leading hegemon the United Kingdom and leading to it being surrounded and defeated by a hostile alliance system in the First World War. The typical counter-example is the peaceful transitioning of great power from the UK to the US during the Second World War.

3.2 Liberal Theory

While they do not consider the survival of the state to be unimportant, proponents of the liberalism argue that the national characteristics of individual states also influence their international behavior. Important elements that determine this behavior are the political makeup of a state – how democratic or authoritarian it is – as well as the commercial interests

¹⁴ Mearsheimer, *The National Interest*. "Can China Rise Peacefully"

¹⁵ Mosher, *Bully of Asia*

and ideological beliefs of both the political elites controlling the state and those of various influential non-state actors.¹⁶

Japanese policy towards China after the restoration of ties with the mainland has been by and large an attempt at application of liberalist theory. Economic interconnectedness that in theory should lead to a conflict-negating interdependence between the two countries has been fostered for decades. During the Cold War it was the Soviet Union, not China, that was the primary target for containment by the US-Japan alliance. There are arguments that Japan has in fact largely been accommodating towards Chinese development and pursuit of strategic interests since recognizing the People's Republic of China.¹⁷

A common counter used to discredit the efficiency of liberal policy in preventing war is the outbreak of the First World War, which occurred despite there being an unprecedented amount of mutual trade among the conflicting countries. As an answer to this, others point out that the fundamental structure of present day international trade differs from that time. Trade at that time to a large degree constituted resources or finished products wholly produced within the borders of one country. Unlike then, a large portion of international trade of the world today is performed by large international corporations utilizing advanced networks of production spread over multiple countries through a complex chain of supply. While tailored for maximum efficiency at all stages, such a network of production is more fragile and has a higher risk of disruption due to negative political developments. Accordingly, the co-dependency between countries is thereby strengthened and the willingness of states to risk ruining this balance is supposed to decrease.

3.3 Constructivist Theory

Constructivism gained traction as an IR theory after the two other major theoretical models failed to foresee the sudden dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The foundation of this theory simply put lies on the importance of ideas. How states view themselves and others are important for how they behave in the international system. The expansion of military

¹⁶ Slaughter, Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law "International Relations, Principal Theories" 4.

¹⁷ Jerdén, Hagstöm, "Rethinking Japan's China Policy," 242.

capabilities in a state seen as friendly will draw less concern than that of a state which is seen as antagonistic. Perceived values, religious identities, ideology, shared cultural heritage could all be important. These are all social constructions that lack a physical form, though they exist in the minds of the actors and influence the actions that they take.¹⁸

3.4 China's Rise Seen Through the Lens of IR Theory

None of the different IR theories has a monopoly on the truth and can by itself fully explain the complexities of international relations. They have some utility as tools for prediction in a general sense, but are most often used to explain past events through different perspectives.

From the realist perspective the rise of China is seen to be a threat towards Japan and its ally the US. As China develops its military capabilities and increases its economic power, its potential to use force either directly or to coerce neighboring countries in an attempt to secure its international interests becomes more likely. Many argue that China does not have and will not have the capability to challenge the global great power position that the US enjoys for a long time. While China's economy is immense and is rapidly reforming and growing its military capabilities, it is very limited in its ability to project force outside its region.

Compared to the US which has a global reach due to its alliance system and its host of Carrier Strike Groups, China has very little room to maneuver. Its sole ally the Democratic People's Republic of Korea often being a source of trouble and attempts at enlarging its strategic room by militarizing islands and purchasing naval rights in developing countries being viewed with suspicion. However, China does not need to be able to compete with the US on a global to fulfill its main goals. It merely needs to develop its capability of deterrence to the extent that any action taken against it will be too costly to endure. This could be the ability to shoot down satellites or having anti naval cruise missiles that could deny access to hostile fleets. Of course, China also possesses the ultimate deterrence in the form of nuclear weapons which effectively makes any armed response to Chinese actions risky due to the extreme cost that nuclear escalation could lead to.

¹⁸ Slaughter, Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law "International Relations, Principal Theories" 4.

The situation for Japan in a realist worldview is much graver than it is for the US. The US risks losing its large degree of influence in East Asia if it cannot credibly guarantee backing its many regional allies. While US thus could lose its dominance over an important region, it would still be in a position where no other state could threaten it with conventional means. Japan on the other hand, having enjoyed the position as the most powerful and influential Asian nation for large parts of the post-war era, finds itself the near neighbor of a rapidly growing China. In response to this development it must, according to realist thought, balance against it. This can be done in several ways: Developing its own military capabilities or by maintaining alliances with other states. The political and economic situation in Japan has made it difficult, though not impossible, to achieve the latter of these options. Thus, Japan finds itself more and more dependent on its alliance with the US. Since, as many realists point out, the US and China are natural rivals the US and Japan will have a common antagonist and their alliance will as a result, if this theory holds, remain strong for the foreseeable future.

As for the status of the influence of Liberal theory in the relationship between Japan and China, there is the common argument pointing out the interdependence between them due to the existing vast economic links that have been nurtured for decades. Compromising not only direct trade of goods, this economic relation includes many Japanese companies utilizing factories on the Chinese mainland as part of optimizing their production. The Japanese stance towards China has arguably been dominantly liberal in the post-war era. Japanese governments have generally been careful of not directly painting China as a potential rival, and since recognizing the CCP government in 1972 it has with few exceptions attempted to foster strong economic ties with the PRC. Japan has also largely been accommodative of CCP strategic goals and has been the largest contributor of ODA and FDI. Rather than following a course based on realist thinking, Japan has on the contrary helped China increase its power and facilitated its rise.¹⁹

In a Constructivist viewing of the Sino-Japanese relationship there are many elements that can potentially be included in the calculation. There is an immense number of commonalities binding the two countries. There is much shared history, religion, writing system, architecture, food, and belief systems. Some that go back more than a thousand years. Many

¹⁹ Jerdén, Hagstöm, "Rethinking Japan's China Policy," 242.

factors that suggest that the two nations should be able to find common ground and work together. And in fact, this is often case.

On the other hand, there are many areas in which mutual perceptions are not so good. In domains concerning democracy, rule of law, freedom of speech, and human rights. There are also issues stemming from colonization, militarism, pacifism, and war. These modern-day areas of perception can perhaps ultimately be traced back to the different experiences with western powers in the 18th century. Chinese sees this, beginning with the First Opium War in 1839, as the beginning of its century of humiliation in which they have repeatedly been victimized by foreign powers including Japan. Japan on the other hand managed to emulate the western powers and gained an empire and a position of superiority in Asia. Considering that China had up to that point in history held the position as center of civilization in the Sinocentric world order, while Japan was merely a cultural inferior outlier in that system, the reversal in the fundamental order of things was paradigm breaking in both societies and has a great repercussion in how Japanese see themselves and China.

In this thesis I will be using discourse analysis to approach my research question and the political rhetoric I use as the basis for this thesis reflect varying degrees of thinking from the different theoretical branches. Realism and liberalism are important and bound to have a large influence, however, it is in rhetoric that reflects a more constructivist leaning that I expect to find a clearer sense of a perception of not only China and its rise, but also of Japan itself in the eyes of Japanese.

4 Analysis

4.1 The National Diet and the Role of Committees

As explained in the previous chapters, this thesis will largely be based on utterances made by various Japanese politicians during Diet committee meetings. For the sake of the reader I will briefly explain the Japanese parliamentary system and the role these committees have.

Parliamentarianism first came to Japan with the convention of the Imperial Diet in 1889 and the adaptation of the Meiji Constitution. This early parliament had two houses, an elected House of Representatives and a House of Peers consisting of nobility. During this system the Emperor also held a position of great political power, with the ability to veto laws coming from the Imperial Diet and choose a government. The National Diet of today took its present form in 1947 with the end of the Second World War and the implementation of the post-war constitution. Per the Constitution the National Diet is the source of political power in Japan and is constituted by an elected lower and upper house: The House of Representative and the House of Councillors.

In the current Japanese legislative system, a bill may be submitted to the Diet by a Diet member or the Cabinet. In the case of major legislation, the bill is usually sent for review to a committee which after reviewing it holds a vote on sending it to the plenary session as proposed legislation. For a bill to be enacted it must win approval from both houses.²⁰

Between 2012 and 2018, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) under Prime Minister Abe enjoyed success in three general elections of members of the House of Representatives and two House of Councillors elections. These have each time resulted in a majority of the seats going to the LDP and their Kōmeitō partners. The return of Abe as Prime Minister in a landslide election late 2012 marked an end to the years of continuous short-term cabinets and Twisted Diets of opposition control of the Upper House. In all the years between 2007 and 2012, save one, prime ministers and their cabinets had to contend with an Upper House controlled by the opposition thus hampering the government's ability to successfully propose

²⁰ House of Councillors, The National Diet of Japan "Legislative Procedure"

laws and accomplish its intended policy. This resulting political paralysis and the frustration it led to is seen as one of the main reasons for the short-lived cabinets of this period.²¹

The subsequent Abe administration might on the other hand owe much of its electoral success and longevity to being able to avoid a state of Twisted Diet. Abe has been able to show himself and his party as having a vision and being able to accomplish concrete things. This is in contrast to the other administrations which preceded him.

The role of committees in the Japanese National Diet is to “examine in detail law bills, budgets, treaties, and petitions. They also investigate other matters that fall within their jurisdiction”. The two houses have 17 standing committees each, with members numbering between 10 and 50 per committee. The members are nominated to the various committees based on proportional representation of political party or group affiliation.²²

While the state of both houses in 2014 is one of LDP-Kōmeitō domination, the fact that members of the committees are proportionally divided based on party strength means that the political spectrum will to a degree be represented in the data I have collected. I will not be able to claim that it will be a perfectly democratic portrayal of a Japanese representation of China, a splintered opposition making it easier for the LDP to win a disproportionate number of seats nationwide.²³ However, it should be possible to ascertain some truth pertaining to how the Japanese political view China and themselves through the data analyzed in the following chapters.

4.2 Representations of China within the Debates on Defense Policy

4.2.1 The Context of the Security Debate in 2014

During the Cold War China was not seen as a threat to Japan. Compared to the other powers, China was still to a large extent undeveloped and had its own internal problems to contend

²¹ Woodall, *Growing Democracy in Japan – The Parliamentary Cabinet System since 1868*, 201.

²² House of Representatives, The National Diet of Japan “Committees”

²³ Miyano, ChuoOnline. “One Perspective on the Results of the 2012 Lower House Election”

with. Japan's security interests were to a large extent determined by its alliance partner the United States of America. Japan's main role in the U.S.-led capitalist order was as a provider of American bases from which to project power into large parts of East Asia in order to stem the influence of the Soviet Union and communism.²⁴

After the end of the Cold War, Japan has reluctantly been attempting to find its place in a new, more complicated, geopolitical situation that has arisen in East Asia. China's position has been strengthened and they have become fully integrated into the international economic order. Although China is now often perceived as an emerging rival to U.S. superpower, for much of the post-Cold War era the west has been supportive of Chinese growth.

Seeing China as a potential threat to Japan is perhaps not a new phenomenon, but in the context of discussions in the National Diet there has previously been a tendency to downplay rhetoric towards China. In the post-war period China has held a special position for many in the Japanese political elite, many of whom had lived through the time of Japanese aggression towards its Asian neighbor. A sense of indebtedness or guilt heavily influenced the attitude of the Japanese people towards China and this could be seen in the general positive view of China that existed in the Japanese population and in higher level policy.²⁵

4.2.2 The Diet Discussions on Defense Policy

Working with this project I have noticed that representations of China emerge most profusely in debates relating to defense and security matters. While 2014 was a year with no obvious major direct clashes, diplomatic, military or otherwise, Chinese actions in the South China Sea, as well as various issues that had occurred in recent years between Japan and China deeply colored the discussions. And, as mentioned earlier, 2014 also saw several developments in Japanese defense policy. Security and defense were certainly high on the agenda in 2014, and China has a major position within Japanese thinking on these issues. In what follows, I have attempted to present some debates from the Japanese National Diet that feature commonly encountered representations of China. All except one date from late May

²⁴ Inoguchi, "Japanese Strategic Thought toward Asia in the 1980s," 51.

²⁵ Yahuda, *Sino-Japanese Relations after the Cold War*, 14.

and early June, following Abe's announcement on the right to exercise collective self-defense, and many of the committees were focused on this issue.

Security and defense are topics that accentuate various forms of realist thinking. Open discussing often leads to a focus on the military and economic capabilities of oneself and those of perceived allies and rivals.

As part of this study I have managed to find several key concepts that pertain to how Japanese politicians talk about China on the subject of security and defense. Among these were the attribution of negative traits to China while drawing comparisons, either implicitly or explicitly, to positive traits inherent in Japan and its allies. There is also a wide perception that China's rise and its growing assertiveness is ruining the balance of the post-cold war status quo. However, though there is a general concern about China and its motivations, there are also statements that show hope of getting along with China.

Rhetoric Surrounding the Changing Balance of Power

The presentation of China as a rising threat has become a common one in rhetoric used in the Diet. While there were not any direct flare ups between Japan and China in the period reviewed by this thesis, outside events involving China were sometimes brought up during discussions. When talking about these issues, China is with few exceptions presented as a solo player that takes unilateral actions to promote its interests at the expense of weaker nations. Its actions are portrayed as disturbing the "status quo", not respecting the international rule of law, expanding at its neighbors' expense, and being destabilizing in general.

In the committee discussions there were several statements that touched upon the changing balance of power in East Asia.

On 28 May 2014, during a discussion in the 16th Committee on Budget of the 186th Diet, Lower House member Nakatani Gen of the LDP, inquired Prime Minister Abe about the future implementation of collective self-defense. He said that presently the U.S. wishes to pull out of Afghanistan and the Middle East to rebalance towards Asia, but he is concerned about the realism of a speedy rebalance. He said that the U.S. is planning on cutting a third of its military spending, and that it still has not completed pulling out of the Middle East. He contrasted this with China, who, he reported, has experienced an extreme growth since 1990, both in terms of GDP and military spending. Referring to his sources' estimates (without specifying which), Nakatani reported that China's annual military spending is equivalent to

14 trillion JPY, almost three times higher than Japan's less than 5 trillion JPY. He pointed out that China has a larger military budget than the industrialized countries Japan, France, and Great Britain put together. He went on to mention that the U.S. currently comprises half of the world's military spending, but added that China is rapidly catching up with them and has already accumulated considerable power.

Abe responded by stating that the Chinese military budget had increased fourfold in the last decade, and compared to 26 years earlier, it was now 40 times larger. He repeated the phrase '40 times' again for dramatic effect. He said that this year China's military spending had increased by 12%, remarking that if China increased its spending by 12% for two years in a row, their military spending would have grown by the size of more than half of Japan's total military expenditures. He also stated that Chinese numbers are not transparent, and that it is a cause for great concern for Japan. Abe said that in response to China's unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the South China Sea, Japan and the ASEAN countries cooperate in asserting the rule of international law. He stressed the crucial importance of the Sino-Japanese relationship and emphasized that good mutual relations are of great strategic importance. He affirmed that the two countries share a mutual responsibility to maintain this relationship through talks, cooperation, and regional development. He concluded by referring to an incident from the week before which could have accidentally developed into a confrontation between the Chinese military and the JSDF. He said that while the situation remains the way it is, the "Japanese government will work towards strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance in order to protect the lives and livelihood of the Japanese people".²⁶

At a meeting in the Joint Committee on Security and Foreign Affairs on 2 June 2014 Lower House member Harada Yoshiaki of the LDP brought up a question concerning the increases in Chinese military spending. While raising this question he stated that China's latest movements, as discussed at a G7 meeting the same day, was causing great concern among the international community. These movements, he said, were connected to the increase in defense expenditure and budgets. He continued by saying that history shows that military spending and military action go hand in hand.²⁷

²⁶ Minutes from the 16th Committee on Budget of the 186th Diet

²⁷ Minutes from the 1st Joint Committee on Security and Foreign Affairs of the 186th Diet

In response Minister of Foreign Affairs Kishida Fumio stated that on 5 March, the Chinese government at the National People's Congress released a report on public finances saying that there would be a 12,2% increase in military spending for 2014. He explained that Chinese defense spending, with the exception of the year 2010, has increased annually by two-digit percentage points for 26 years in a row, and the government is aware of this. He wished for greater transparency in Chinese defense capabilities, policy, and spending. China's activity at sea makes the international community nervous. He argued that Japan should continue to cooperate with the other affected countries and should facilitate talks, exchange, and interaction in order to improve transparency of defense policy and push for compliance with a code of conduct based on international law.

Another statement that touches upon China in this discussion is one by Lower House member Tamaki Denny of the People's Life Party (Seikatsu no tō) in which he said that while the U.S. is rebalancing towards Asia and focusing on China, Japan on the other hand is seen by the U.S. to be too focused on issues related to North Korea like the abductions of Japanese citizens by North Korea in the 70's and 80's, and their development of atomic bombs and missiles. He said that Japan is perceived by its ally to be preoccupied with attempting to envelop North Korea. He relayed that some American think tanks that he has talked with are worried about how Japan will be able to cooperate with the U.S. when Japan is worried about other issues instead of the expanding regional power of China. He ended by saying that Japan is in danger of being ignored by its ally.²⁸

In this statement we are led to believe that China is not getting the attention it should be by Japan, and Tamaki, by relaying the opinion of certain institutions within the U.S. that he does not specify, implicitly warns that if Japan does not refocus it can have consequences within the alliance. Does this perhaps link back to the perception among some Japanese that Japan has in the post-war period historically been too soft in its stance towards China?

In a meeting in this Committee on Security on 6 June 2014, LDP Lower House member Mutō Yōji said that even though China's expansion of its military spending is linked to its

²⁸ Minutes from the 1st Joint Committee on Security and Foreign Affairs of the 186th Diet

economic expansion, Japan must realize that China now defines the Senkaku Islands as a core interest on the same level as Xinjiang and Taiwan.²⁹

In statements like those above, China's development and increasing military expenditure is presented as a threat to the "status quo". It is implicitly contrasted by the fact that Japan has been restricted from increasing its defense budget due to low economic gains since the 90's and an "unspoken rule" limiting defense spending to 1 percent of GDP.³⁰ Added to that is the fear that U.S. power will either be eclipsed by China, or that Japan will not be able to rely on its ally in the future. These themes have not been uncommon in Japanese strategic thinking after the end of the Cold War.³¹ However, it is striking to see China being used rhetorically in such a way in the Diet.

While China has invested a massive amount of resources into modernizing its military and increasing its military capabilities the last decades, it would be unfair to ignore the very challenging strategical position it finds itself in. From a realist perspective it is very much geographically boxed in by U.S. allies Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), the Philippines and Taiwan. Even countries like Vietnam and India welcomes U.S. involvement in the Asia-Pacific region as a counter-balance to increasing Chinese power. It might presently be the main candidate for the position of rival of the U.S., but its military power is still just a fraction of the U.S.'s and it largely lacks military partners and allies. Its only real ally the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is often a source of problems for China internationally. While Chinese reported military spending has been higher than the rate of economic expansion, it stands mostly alone and must take on much of the burden of securing itself and its interests by itself. President Barrack Obama's high profile "pivot to Asia" was also according to seen by some as a rhetorical mistake because it implanted an exaggerated image of the U.S. coming back after having seemingly abandoned Asia. Claiming that the U.S. never left Asia, the "pivot" should have been called a rebalance. Calling it a "pivot" instilled a larger than necessary reaction from China, concerned about increasing U.S. power in the region, and from Japan, concerned that the U.S. not having been fully prioritizing Asia.³²

²⁹ Minutes from the 8th Committee on Security of the 186th Diet

³⁰ Nippon.com "Japan's Defense Budget and the 1% Limit"

³¹ Gries, "Sino-Japanese Relations: The American Factor," 78.

³² Christensen, *The China Challenge*, 251.

China, though not currently a threat to the U.S. by itself, is however developing capabilities that could deter the U.S. and its allies from acting against Chinese moves to secure their regional goals. Japan is afraid that in such an event the U.S. will come to a risk-benefit conclusion saying that standing up to China in the interests of its allies is not worth the amount of American lives it will cost.

The narrative that can be seen from the previous statements frames China and its actions as something that is of great concern for the entire region which international cooperation is necessary to prevent. I was not able to find many alternative narratives including China in a balance of power perspective for the period included in my study.

Rhetoric Concerning Naval Disputes Between China and Other Countries

The event which gained the most attention in the National Diet in this period was a series of naval incidents between the Vietnamese navy and Chinese vessels in disputed waters lasting from May to July 2014.³³ The dispute began when China moved an oil rig along with a small flotilla into an area south of the Paracel Islands. The Vietnamese responded by sending Coast Guard ships to disrupt Chinese operations and large public demonstrations were held in major cities. The US and ASEAN gave diplomatic support to Vietnam, with the US state department singling out China's "unilateral" actions as "provocative and unhelpful". This marked a low point in China-Vietnam relations.³⁴

There were parallels to previous actions by China's towards the Senkaku Islands that resonated with the several Diet members. On 13 May 2014, during the 14th Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense Minister of Foreign Affairs Kishida Fumio opened the deliberations by stressing the importance of preserving rule of law-based freedom in the Asia Pacific area. He relayed that both Prime Minister Abe and President Obama had agreed to cooperate with China in various areas, allowing them an opportunity to participate with the international community, and that the U.S. and Japan should "unambiguously oppose any attempts to forcefully change the status quo". Kishida went on to specify that in that

³³ BBC "Vietnam and China ships 'collide in South China Sea'"

³⁴ Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative "Counter-Coercion Series: China-Vietnam Oil Rig Standoff"

connection, Obama had also stated that all territory under Japanese administration falls under the terms of the U.S.-Japan alliance, including the Senkaku Islands.³⁵

During the same meeting Upper House member Satō Masahisa of the LDP voiced concern about the incidents and noted that Chinese military capabilities, including its ability to police the sea using both its coast guard and navy, are on a completely different scale than those of Vietnam and the Philippines. He said that this is a very difficult situation for them and enquired about the possibility of offering them Japanese patrol boats in order to support their efforts. Minister of Foreign Affairs Kishida replied that preservation of the security of the sea lanes in the South China Sea is of “paramount importance to Japan”. He added that Japan is cooperating with the ASEAN countries for the sake of international law, free sea movement, and security by strengthening their capabilities for executing naval law through facilitating instruction of personnel and provision of patrol boats.³⁶

The clashes between Vietnam and China were also a topic at the Shangri-La Dialogue of 2014. The event is organized by the independent think-tank International Institute for Strategic Studies and is held annually at the Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore. It is attended by heads of government, defense ministers and military leaders from various Asia-Pacific states.³⁷

In a meeting of the 19th Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense held on 29 May 2014, a day before the Shangri-La meetings in Singapore, independent Upper House member Hamada Kazuyuki gave his assessment of what Japan’s regional role should be. He said that the Vietnam-China incident has the world’s attention, and that the world is watching Japan “in this history and world defining period”. He mentioned Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng’s keynote speech at the opening of the previous year’s dialogues, stressing that despite heightened tensions due to Chinese movements at the time, the Vietnamese PM “did not once mention China by name”, though he did raise concerns about the stability of the Asia Pacific region and the rule of international law. This indirect way of criticizing China without explicitly using its name which Hamada is disapproving of has also been common in Japanese

³⁵ Minutes from the 14th Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense of the 186th Diet

³⁶ Minutes from the 14th Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense of the 186th Diet

³⁷ IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 2018

politics.³⁸ Hamada noted that even with this soft stance towards China tensions are significantly increasing. He raised a question to Abe about what the prime minister will say to China, Asia, and the world at the upcoming Shangri-La meeting, effectively calling for Abe to make use of the occasion to show a stronger stance towards China.³⁹

This shows how some Diet members perceive China as an entity to contain by offering materiel and training to ASEAN countries that have disputes with China. Vietnam and the Philippines have been the two main countries for this type of aid. Vietnam, though a communist one-party state, has clashed militarily with its northern neighbor several times from 1979-1991 and claim the Paracel Islands currently de facto controlled by China. The Philippines lies closer to Japan ideological level, being a democratic state, but it also has had some frictions with China. The Philippine government brought China's 9-dash line claim covering a disproportionate area of the South China Sea to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague in 2013 and received a positive verdict with a complete rejection of China's claims in 2016.⁴⁰ Ideology and values, while an important part of the Japanese rhetorical posturing in regard to China seems to be of lesser importance for some when considering possible allies against Chinese pressure. Freedom of travel, international law, and stability are key elements brought forth repeatedly by not only Japan, but also the US and other nations in alignment with the US against China.

Like for the Japanese with the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, Chinese claims in the South China Seas and its increasing efforts to gain de facto control over the area is alarming to many of its neighbors. Some Japanese politicians as shown in this chapter see a common ground for making a stand against China by giving aid in the form of boats and training to some ASEAN countries.

Rhetoric on Concrete Measures Against China

As previously mentioned the implementation of collective self-defense was a major issue of debate during this period. It would lead to a change in Japanese responsibilities within the U.S.-Japan alliance and undercut Japan's position as a pacifist country. Abe has since before

³⁸ Hagström, Jerdén, "Understanding Fluctuations in Sino-Japanese Relations," 735.

³⁹ Minutes from the 19th Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense of the 186th Diet

⁴⁰ Permanent Court of Arbitration "PCA Press Release: The South China Sea Arbitration"

taking office for the second time used the term “proactive pacifism” to describe his policy goals on defense and security. In short, this policy is aimed at making Japan a stronger player within the U.S.-Japan alliance and actively taking part internationally e.g. in U.N. led peace keeping operations abroad.⁴¹ This has been a controversial line to take in historically pacifistic Japan and met there have been many large demonstrations opposing his plans. Abe has had the two-thirds majority in the two houses necessary to get a revision of Japan’s “pacifist” constitution to a national referendum. However, he chose instead not to risk a defeat by pushing through a reinterpretation allowing for collective self-defense in 2015.⁴²

With that development in mind here is how China is placed regarding statements connected to what concrete measures should be taken.

Statements like Nakatani Gen’s (LDP) noting that China’s increasing power is “being felt in all East Asian countries” is not uncommon. He further claimed that what is currently worrying East Asia is “Chinese expansionism” and that if Japan does not stand up to Chinese attempts to undermine the current order, “Japan will lose the ability to protect freedom and the stability of law”.⁴³

The day before the Shangri-La meeting Abe in the 19th Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense laid out his position that he would present there. Since the Shangri-La meeting is a “place to discuss security policy and peace in Asia”, he therefore wants to tell Asia and the world about his “stance of proactive pacifism based on international cooperation”. He said he will “stress the necessity of respecting and following international law and standards, that actors will not be allowed to unilaterally change the regional status quo through use of force, and that rule of law should be respected”. Cooperation with the ASEAN countries would also be empathized. In this way he says he hopes to express Japan’s “fundamental thoughts”.⁴⁴

While not explicitly mentioning China, Abe here detailed a Japanese position that puts them alongside the U.S. and Asian nations that feel pressure from an assertive China. It also

⁴¹ Kitaoka “The Turnabout of Japan’s Security Policy: Toward “Proactive Pacifism””

⁴² Shinoda, *Contemporary Japanese Politics – Institutional Changes and Power Shifts*, 234.

⁴³ Minutes from the 16th Committee on Budget of the 186th Diet

⁴⁴ Minutes from the 19th Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense of the 186th Diet

contrasted Japan with the Japanese view of China. The message is that Japan follows the rules and wants to cooperate with others while China does not.

After that Hamada Kazuyuki (LDP) followed up with a question about how Abe will appeal for support of the rule of international law in light of “current Chinese actions”. Abe replied that he will proclaim that “respecting the law benefits all parties, and so does maintenance of safe sea and air travel over open international waters”. Hamada then wondered if there are any concrete plans to deepen talks with Chinese leaders, or to get Lee Kuan Yew, founding father and former prime minister of Singapore, to facilitate such talks, so that Japan can influence Chinese actions in a “better direction”. Abe said that “Japan has for a long time been open to dialogue”, but that there were no talks planned for the near future.⁴⁵

Once again, the respect of international law and freedom of travel over international waters are mentioned as cornerstones of Japanese policy. Additionally, when asked about the possibility of high level talks with China Abe claims that they welcome talks, thereby implicitly blaming his Chinese counterparts for being unwilling to have talks.

Others went further in their recommendations for Japan’s future course. Lower House member Harada Yoshiaki of the LDP stated that “peace is not attained just by waiting for it. Instead of just implementing a line of proactive pacifism, Japan should go further and take firmer control of its own diplomacy. Several countries surrounding China have been reluctant to state their worries clearly and have instead been vague in their approaches”. He added that to some extent this is also true for Japan. In contrast, he noted that the Obama administration has criticized China directly on several occasions, and he credited Abe for expressing Japanese worries about Chinese military expenditure during a trip to the European Union in May. Harada said that “China tends not to listen to others, so Japan should actively say what is right”.⁴⁶

Imamura Hirofumi, Lower House member from the Japan Restoration Party (Nippon Ishin no Kai), voiced concerns about the relationship between China and ASEAN, especially with regard to Chinese attempts to secure a route for imports through Myanmar. He was also concerned about China’s construction of naval bases in the Indian Ocean to surround India

⁴⁵ Minutes from the 19th Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense of the 186th Diet

⁴⁶ Minutes from the 1st Joint Committee on Security and Foreign Affairs of the 186th Diet

with a 'Pearl Necklace'. He saw these cases as examples of how China is shrewdly trying to win over the ASEAN countries. Imamura said that "China is, through the establishment of its One Belt, One Road initiative and its formation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), endeavoring to control the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea, and the East China Sea". He explained that China, even with its large territory, cannot sustain its enormous population without imports, so securing trade routes is an obvious strategic goal for them. He recommended that Japan must take a leading role to preserve peace and stability in the region and work together with the ASEAN countries. He added that Japan cannot rely on the U.S. to act as the world's police forever.⁴⁷

In contrast to the otherwise negative portrayals of China, Lower House member Suzuki Katsumasa of the People's Life Party (Seikatsu no Tō) said that he was born during the Second World War and reminiscing about the early postwar period. He said that his memory of the war is of the wounded in white bandages going from village to village having to beg. He then asked if good relations are possible with Japan's neighboring countries. He referred to Abe's stance on China; that he is open to talks despite China's declaration of an exclusive air zone and issues at sea. Suzuki wondered if talks are realistic in the current mood, expressing concern that increasing Japanese military capabilities will make neighbors feel threatened and could invite a worsened security environment in North East Asia. He also pointed out that the most pressing issues in "Japanese security thinking at the moment, the conflict surrounding the Senkaku islands and North Korea's abductions of Japanese citizens, are unconnected to the implementation of collective self-defense".⁴⁸

Suzuki Katsumasa was born in 1943 and therefore over 70 years old at that time. Being 15 years older than the average age in the House of Representatives⁴⁹ he represents the older generation of politician that had some form of personal experience with the war and dominated Japanese politics up till the 00's.⁵⁰ He does not exactly provide a positive portrayal of China and cites several problems that exists between Japan and China. However, his statement suggests that he believes that tackling the security issues does not necessitate

⁴⁷ Minutes from the 8th Committee on Security of the 186th Diet

⁴⁸ Minutes from the 16th Committee on Budget of the 186th Diet

⁴⁹ Tōyōkeizai "Rule by old men is a root of evil in Japan"

⁵⁰ Shinoda, *Contemporary Japanese Politics*, 77.

increasing Japanese military capabilities. This goes against the overwhelming realist rhetoric regarding China by other Diet members.

The larger consensus is that Japan should be to some degree be on guard against and stand up to China. While Japan is open to dialogue with China, it is implied that China is unwilling. Because China is acting unilaterally and threatening the international rule of law, Japan should take a more active international role alongside its allies and be firm and clear in its criticism of China. When China attempts to gain influence in ASEAN states and other countries using diplomatic and economic means it is presented as being manipulative and having dangerous goals like trying to surround India. For the Diet members focusing on China in these committees the way forward for Japan is clear: Japan should be less reliant of the U.S., take a stronger role internationally, and balance against China with the ASEAN countries.

On the issue of Taiwan

Discussions regarding Taiwan came up several times in committee meetings on security. Lower House member Watanabe Shū from the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) attempted to ask Minister for Foreign Affairs Kishida Fumio about how collective self-defense will apply to and influence government actions in case of a conflict between Taiwan and mainland China. He brought up scenarios of Japan protecting Taiwanese ships entering Japanese waters and Japanese nationals in or fleeing from Taiwan. He pointed out that this is an important question wanting serious consideration because Japan does not have a policy allowing for the recognition of two separate Chinas and does not presently recognize Taiwan as an independent country.⁵¹

Here again is an example of reluctance to talk about China in certain contexts that can lead to consequences outside the Diet. The issue of Taiwan in the context of Japan's use of collective self-defense is a valid one, particularly because Taiwan already entered the scope of the U.S.-Japan alliance in revisions of the defense guidelines in 1996 and 1997.⁵² There is a view of Taiwan among many Japanese (though it is most associated with the Japanese right-wing) that sees Taiwan as a 'good' example of a Chinese society in contrast to the People's Republic of

⁵¹ Minutes from the 1st Joint Committee on Security and Foreign Affairs of the 186th Diet

⁵² Wu, "The End of the Silver Lining: A Chinese View of the U.S.-Japanese Alliance" 125.

China based on shared democratic values and its history as a Japanese colony.⁵³ Still, the Taiwan question is highly sensitive, and Japan does not officially recognize it as a sovereign nation.

Upper House member from Your Party (Minna no Tō), Nakanishi Kenji, noted that Prime Minister Abe had explicitly mentioned China in reference to its “blatantly increased military spending and naval expansionism”. In contrast he pointed out that ASEAN has not done so even when the situation has developed to this stage of elevated tension. Even though ASEAN is also greatly concerned, they have not uttered criticism of China in any official proclamation. Arguing that Japan should firmly question China’s attempts at unilaterally altering the status quo in Asia, he wanted to know if at a time when Japan is about to implement collective self-defense, a move that could be predicted to garner a negative response from China, it is wise to criticize China by name?

Minister of Foreign Affairs Kishida just affirmed that Prime Minister Abe touched upon facts such as China’s military expansion in a speech to NATO, but Kishida did not go into details.⁵⁴

Also noteworthy was Lower House member Asao Keiichirō’s (Your Party) question. He repeated the claims concerning the growth of China’s military budget, its unilateral pursuits of its maritime territorial claims, as well as other one-sided decisions, and he asks Abe and Minister of Defense Onodera Itsunori about the risk of a possible air incident involving U.S. and Chinese military aircraft in Japanese air space. In their answers, Abe and Onodera avoided using the word China, using instead the term ‘a certain country’, which perhaps hints at the sensitivity of the topic being discussed. Their answers amounted to explaining how the law can be difficult to interpret in such situations, making it difficult for them to say what could be done under the current rules.⁵⁵

Kishida responded that it is crucial that discussions about Japan’s defense policy be performed in a proper manner, and that one should be cautious about making hypothetical

⁵³ Ming, “Japanese Strategic Thinking toward Taiwan,” 165.

⁵⁴ Minutes from the 14th Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense of the 186th Diet

⁵⁵ Minutes from the 16th Committee on Budget of the 186th Diet

scenarios using named countries. He said that doing so can directly influence international relations, and that he would refrain from commenting on them.⁵⁶

To this Watanabe countered with saying that when the prime minister at press conferences uses the examples of the situations in the South China Sea and East China Sea, everyone can understand by the context which countries he is referring to.

In a sense China is here being portrayed as an overly sensitive and irrational entity. It cannot be talked about with complete candidness due to the possibility of causing a negative reaction. This creates an interesting dynamic coming from the fact that while many Japanese view Taiwan favorably, economic and political concerns lead to a necessity to choose one's words carefully in regard to this topic in the Diet.

Presenting a Mirror Identity

How Japanese politician frame their narrative on China can often be interpreted as a form of reflecting a counter-narrative upon Japan. Simplistically, this happens by giving the other a negative trait and thereby imply that one's own side has an opposite positive trait. Portrayals of this sort been commented on earlier in this section, but I will now present the most egregious examples I managed to find during this study.

In one example Representative Harada Yoshiaki (LDP) recollects a diplomatic trip to China in 2006 after calling for a tougher Japanese stance towards China. Harada finished with an anecdote about a diplomatic trip to China in 2006 under Prime Minister Koizumi. At the time, Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni Shrine had become an issue, and Harada's Chinese counterparts had suddenly cancelled a meeting. This, he claimed, demonstrated that unlike China, the Japanese have actually learned the teachings of the Chinese classics like Confucius, and that the Japanese values, morals, ethics, and familial bonds are based on these. He stated that in China people do not keep their promises, that morality is determined by the strong, and everyone is only concerned with their own problems. He ended his statement by revealing that he had used the occasion to ask the Chinese "where the spirit of the teachings of Confucius had gone."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Minutes from the 1st Joint Committee on Security and Foreign Affairs of the 186th Diet

⁵⁷ Minutes from the 1st Joint Committee on Security and Foreign Affairs of the 186th Diet

He complained that “this China does not listen to others”, making it necessary for Japan and the international community to take a firm stance against it. Not only is this China threatening, it has also failed the teachings of the ancient founders of Chinese culture and morality. For him, the Japanese are the true heirs of Confucius and his legacy, making Japan China’s moral and cultural superior.

While presenting the threat from China as “clear and obvious”, Lower House member Nakayama Yasuhide made a colorful description of the Chinese and North Koreans. Arguing that there is “no time to waste”, and that there is a “security hole”. Further he reasoned that Abe cannot implement collective self-defense through constitutional reform is because it would take many years to achieve. He said that there were chances to reform under prime ministers Nakasone and Koizumi, but they had “resulted in nothing”. He presented the current situation as one of “a foreign country”, without specifically mentioning China, as “threatening Japan” and “wielding a kitchen knife while increasing its military power”. He said that if “mosquitos are trying to suck his blood”, it is only logical that he would “take some form of preventive measure”. Similarly, if the “mosquitos were the Chinese People’s Liberation Army or the North Koreans”, he would “defend himself”. He concluded that self-defense is a natural right, and that deterrence is an important part of self-defense.⁵⁸

For Nakayama too, China is an obvious threat that needs prompt action as a response. Not only does he compare China to a knife-wielding aggressor, he also compares their armed forces to bloodsucking mosquitos, which, although an imaginative way of representing a sovereign nation, is perhaps not the most diplomatic descriptor one could use. It can even be called dehumanizing. Mosquitos and their bites are in most cases not life-threatening, but they are generally regarded as irritating pests that are completely ok to kill. With the kitchen knife metaphor, China gets portrayed as an unstable aggressive actor that Japan of course should have the right to defend itself against.

On 16 October 2014 we get the final example that I will use from Upper House member Tanaka Shigeru from Your Party. He claims that while he believes that South Korea might have some reason for its criticism of Japan, in China’s case it is influenced by and follows their security interests. He gives this as the reason why he believes that Sino-Japanese relations will not improve soon. He also says that he believes China’s criticism of Japan is

⁵⁸ Minutes from the 8th Committee on Security of the 186th Diet

used to strengthen their bargaining position. He ends by saying that he thinks that the reason there have been no high-level meetings between China and Japan is because Prime Minister Abe prioritizes his ideals over national interest, for instance by visiting Yasukuni in 2013.⁵⁹

Here Tanaka portrays the Chinese authorities as calculating and manipulative by inferring that political reasons lay behind their decision when they criticize Japan. In his perception this also makes it difficult to deal with China, because any apologies and attempts to fix the underlying issues from the Japanese side will be in vain due to China having cynical motives behind their actions.

4.2.3 What can be Deduced from the Security Discussions

The common thread in representations of China in discussions on security in the Japanese National Diet is one of an overwhelming perception that China poses a threat to Japan, a threat that is already very strong and is gaining in strength each year. China comes across as unpredictable and untrustworthy, willing to aggressively go against its neighbors unilaterally to get its way. One should ask if this is perhaps a natural phenomenon when countries that are generally perceived as rivals are talked about in a national security context. The timing of the clash between Chinese and Vietnamese ships near the Parcel Islands also seems to have had a large effect on the conversation, reminding many of the dispute with China over the Senkaku Islands. This might explain the hawkishness of some of the Diet members in this paper.

However, what surprised me is the scarcity of dissenting representations of China in these sources. Several speakers called for dialogue to improve Sino-Japanese relations, but, like the statement from Representative Suzuki from the People's Life Party, without offering an alternative view of China. Rather their rationale was that Japan, by taking measures such as implementing collective self-defense, would be perceived negatively by neighboring countries and jeopardize its own security environment.

The government's representations of China, as seen from the answers and statements given by Abe and his ministers, are in fact among the most balanced. On the one hand, they perceive China as a country against which one should not flinch in one's ideals or give ground and view the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan alliance and building of ties to the ASEAN countries

⁵⁹ Minutes from the 2nd Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense of the 187th Diet

as important steps to that end. On the other hand, they repeatedly stress the importance of keeping good relations with China, purportedly welcoming high-level dialogue and meetings with Chinese leaders. Such an attitude indicating that they perhaps do not perceive China as completely unpredictable or untrustworthy, and perhaps as an entity one can reason with, even if the circumstances are difficult. There are also recurring efforts to avoid mentioning China directly when speaking about sensitive topics, even in one case going so far as avoiding a question about how collective self-defense would be deployed in a potential attack on Taiwan by Mainland China and lecturing the inquirer on the rules of decorum. One may wonder if party affiliation might influence how frankly one can speak considering the inquirer of the Taiwan question was from the opponent party DPJ, while the LDP representative who compared China to a knife-wielding aggressor and its armies to mosquitos did not get any lecturing. At the very least, from the way these officials express themselves there appears to be a perception among the Japanese government of China being very sensitive about certain topics when discussed by Japanese politicians, so even Diet discussions cannot be completely frank.

4.3 Representations of China within the Debates on Economic Policy

4.3.1 The Context of the Economic Debate in 2014

In this chapter, I will analyze the representation of China in National Diet discussions related to economic issues. The economic ties between Japan and China are arguably the strongest and most robust aspect of the Sino-Japanese relation. China is not only a source of cheap labor and goods for Japan's companies, it is also a huge market that perceives Japanese products to be of high quality⁶⁰ and which is quickly obtaining more money to spend. Since China opened its economy to foreign investment in 1978, the interests of capitalism and trade have, with a few exceptions like China's temporary ban on exports of rare earth metals to Japan⁶¹, been for the most part unaffected by political controversies and security issues that have plagued Sino-Japanese relations during the last decades. As of 2016, China is Japan's

⁶⁰ Tsuchiyama. "The New Meaning of 'Made in Japan'"

⁶¹ Saunders, "China's Role in Asia," 161.

second-largest export market after the United States. Japanese exports to China were valued at nearly 120 billion US\$ representing a market share of 17,65%. However, imports from China were at a value of over 150 billion US\$ in 2016, making the PRC the largest source of import goods representing a market share of 25%. Trailing behind as number two, the United States was the source of only 11,41% of Japan's total imports.⁶²

From China's perspective, trade with Japan is significant, but it represents a smaller part of their total trade than trade with China does for Japan. The 2016 figures show Japan as China's third largest market, after the U.S. and Hong Kong, with an approximate share of 6% of total Chinese exports. On the import side, Japan is right behind South Korea at number two with 9% of total Chinese imports.⁶³

During the election campaign ahead of the 2017 Japanese general election, many though supportive of Prime Minister Abe's economic policies expressed concern that he would use a large majority to pressure for security and constitutional reforms considered potentially destabilizing to the economic bonds between Japan and China.

Noteworthy on the economic front in the year 2014 was the first expansion in members of the China-run Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank which, along with the proclamation of PRC President Xi Jinping's "One Belt One Road Initiative" the year before, further punctuated China's move into an area traditionally dominated by Japan in Asia; that of large-scale provider of loans and development aid for infrastructure purposes.

4.3.2 The Diet Discussions on Economic Policy

In this chapter, I will use examples taken from four different Diet committees on topics related to economy and trade, in which various aspects of China appeared during the discussion. I would have liked to have used data from approximately the same period as the one used in the previous chapter on defense in order to perhaps achieve better grounds for comparison, material that links economic topics and usable representations of China was in much lower supply than that which links security and China.

⁶² World Integrated Trade Solution "TRADE SUMMARY FOR JAPAN 2016"

⁶³ World Integrated Trade Solution "TRADE SUMMARY FOR CHINA 2016"

Some chose to portray China as damaging trade with Japan due to political reasons. On 13 March Upper House member Nishida Makoto of the Kōmeitō made a statement concerning a surprising decrease in exports to China affecting the Japanese trade balance harder than the increasing oil prices. He noted that according to Chinese statistics, the amount of imports from Japan was decreasing while imports from other entities like South Korea, the ASEAN countries, the U.S., and Europe were increasing. He claimed that it is difficult to determine the exact effect of Sino-Japanese relations on the trade balance and China's decreasing imports from Japan, but worried that they might be related.⁶⁴

Although short and rather vague, Nishida's statement hinted at a way of thinking that pictures Japan as being very much in disfavor with China, even compared to other countries commonly seen as China's rivals like the USA, and that this might be due to the strained political relations between the countries.

Others focused on how China, due to its lack of transparency and undeveloped institutions could be a source of risk for the Japanese economy. In a meeting in the 11th Committee on Financial Affairs on 9 May 2014, LDP Lower House member Ogura Masanobu expressed concern about the risk of bubbles in China's shadow banking system, a system of loans and investments existing outside the regular banking system and lacking government regulation.⁶⁵

Minister of Finance Asō Tarō replied that the reality of shadow banking is to a large extent hidden and even in China nobody has a full understanding of its extent. He said that it is spread out over many regions and his impression was that even though the central Chinese government claims to have control over the situation, they probably do not grasp the full extent of the problem. His view was that there are structural problems inherent in the shadow banking system that could be of concern. In that connection he especially questioned if the concept of moral hazard, an economic concept referring to a situation in which the actor who decides to take a risk is different from those burdened with the consequences of that risk⁶⁶, is sufficiently understood in China. On the other hand, he reassured the committee that there are very few, if any, foreign investors involved in Chinese shadow banking. A collapse in the

⁶⁴ Minutes from the 3rd Committee on Financial Affairs of the 186th Diet

⁶⁵ Minutes from the 11th Committee on Financial Affairs of the 186th Diet

⁶⁶ Economic Times "Definition of 'Moral Hazard'"

system would have limited effects outside China. He stated that the Japanese government is collecting, and will continue to collect data, concerning the phenomenon, although it is difficult to get accurate information.

Executive Director and Assistant Governor of the Bank of Japan Momma Kazuo noted that there have been some examples of problems due to shadow banking, but that their effect on the market has been limited. Chinese authorities have started to take stronger measures against shadow banking, including steps towards creating a safety net which includes a savings insurance system.

In his closing statement Ogura referred to the effects of the 2007 US subprime mortgage crisis leading to a massive worldwide financial crisis. He agreed with Asō that China's financial system is wrapped in mystery, and that Japan must continue to pay attention to it. He noted that Japan is uniquely experienced with the build-up and bursting of bubbles, while China will tentatively jump into any lucrative activity. He argued that a Chinese economic meltdown would certainly have large negative consequences for Japan, Japan should take the role of an adult within the framework of financial cooperation and teach China how to deal with such issues.⁶⁷

These statements reveal concern that there are hidden elements in China's financial system that could potentially lead to economic instability which in turn might influence Japan's economy negatively. China comes across as chaotic and under-regulated. Even though Momma from the BoJ mentioned that the Chinese authorities are implementing reforms to prevent any potential negative effects, Ogura's last statement portrays China as being on a lower stage of development compared to Japan, presenting it as Japan's duty to graciously ignore the problems that exist in the political relationship between the countries and take it upon itself to help China by taking the role of an adult already experienced with bubbles. China implicitly comes across as an irresponsible child in need of help and instruction from more capable and experienced others to handle things properly.

Projections of China Reflecting on Japan

On 18 April 2014, there was a discussion concerning reform of areas of the patent law in the 11th Committee on Economy, Trade and Industry. Lower House member Edano Yukio of the

⁶⁷ Minutes from the 11th Committee on Financial Affairs of the 186th Diet

DPJ stated that because of pressure due to fierce international competition, especially from China, it is important for the sake of Japan's intellectual property strategy to have the capacity to examine patents promptly. He called for recruitment of more staff in the relevant agency with proficiency in reading Chinese because of the increase in Chinese patents. This statement is an example of China being presented as a competitor to Japan, as a creative entity capable of producing its own patents of interest to Japan. Alternatively, this could also be a call to improve the Japanese ability to detect misuse of Japanese intellectual property in China. However, the context of the statement leads me to believe that Edano primarily had the former possibility in mind.

Another perspective on the topic of intellectual property was first brought up in a question by Lower House member Imai Masato of the Japan Restoration Party concerning the illegal registration of Japanese copyrights in China. He gave the example of the cartoon character Kureyon Shinchuan having been registered as a trademark in China by an unrelated third party without the permission of the original Japanese creator. He wanted to know the extent to which this problem disadvantages Japan. In response to his query, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Matsushima Midori answered that she was aware of the Kureyon Shinchuan case, and that it resulted in genuine editions of the cartoon being barred from stores in China. The Japanese publisher went to trial in China to regain the rights to the trademark in 2005 and finally won the case in 2013, being awarded damages compensation and a halt in further sales for the perpetrator. She described it as a landmark case although it took eight years to achieve, and that during this process the Japanese government, the Japanese embassy in China, and the Japan Patent Office were repeatedly in correspondence with their Chinese counterparts and provided support to the publisher.⁶⁸

Furthermore, she added that among the illegal trademark registrations in China there are many regional Japanese brands. She said that as of February 2014, misuse of 555 brands have been registered, and that according to previous investigations by the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), unlawful appropriation of 12 regional brands had been registered before March 2013. She noted that the reputations of these brands have been carefully built up over a long time and deemed this appropriation a serious hindrance to the expansion of these brands abroad.

⁶⁸ Minutes from the 11th Committee on Economy, Trade and Industry of the 186th Diet

In response, Imai said he had even heard of names of Japanese prefectures and cities having been illegally registered as trademarks in China. Naming several places, including his home prefecture of Gifu, that had ostensibly become victims to this type of registration, he argued that this issue should rightly be considered connected to Japan's national interests and requested solutions. Matsushima stated that taking preventive measures is the best way to protect oneself in cases like these and explained that whenever JETRO discovers a third party having illegally registered a Japanese trademark in China, the agency contacts the rightful copyrights holders in Japan and offers to assist in rectifying the situation.⁶⁹

Although generally quite negative in its representation of China, this sequence contains elements that hint at a gradual improvement in some areas of the intellectual property situation in China. As Matsushima stressed, Japanese interests can prevail in the Chinese legal system. Furthermore, effective communication takes place with the relevant Chinese agencies, indicating that the Japanese authorities consider China an entity that can be dealt with rationally and is capable of solving intellectual property issues, although slowly and with some reluctance.

One of the following representatives, Kinoshita Tomohiko of the Japan Restoration Party, indicated his perception that Japan may be “winning on the technological front, but losing businesswise against China”. He wondered about the extent of lost revenue due to counterfeiting of Japanese products by Chinese companies. Tani Akito, Deputy Director-General of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, informed the committee that a study on counterfeit goods by the Japanese government identified China as the largest factor, making up 62,1% of the reported cases of pirating in the period 2004-2013. Furthermore, a 2005 study by the International Federation of Phonogram and Videogram Producers (IFPI) concluded that 85% of the Chinese market consisted of pirate editions. Kinoshita responded by first noting that based on the information given 60% of the damages due to counterfeiting of Japanese products originated in China. He conceded that China is becoming more involved in international agreements like the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), and that its domestic laws are becoming more strictly enforced, which he said should warrant an expectation that these numbers will decrease. However, given the extent of damages to Japanese companies, he called for Japan to be firmer in its

⁶⁹ Minutes from the 11th Committee on Economy, Trade and Industry of the 186th Diet

demands towards China, and that this effort should not be undertaken by the Japan Patent Office alone, but on a government-wide level.

Kinoshita then explained how features of Chinese culture contribute to this problem being especially large in China. He said that while stealing is viewed negatively in China, the perception of who is the creator of a given work is different than in other countries. He explained that he had read that many people in China do not distinguish between, on the one hand, copying something and making one's own version of it, and, on the other hand, thinking something up for oneself and making it. He brought up a Chinese concept that he claimed had existed since ancient times called *Shānzhài Bunka*, 山寨文化. The literal meaning is 'mountain fortress culture', but in modern use it refers to the factories creating cheap no-brand or fake products.⁷⁰ He explained that, apparently, common people in China have since olden times created counterfeits and look-alike products in mountain forts away from civilization. He claimed that he was not making any normative judgements about the practice, but merely stating that it is a part of popular Chinese culture which has existed since ancient times. According to Kinoshita, this concept partly explains why the situation with large scale piracy and proliferation of counterfeits exists in China, a problem fueled by a rapidly widening income gap and many consumers unable to afford genuine brand products despite the overall growth of the Chinese economy.

Furthermore, he claimed that Chinese companies attempt to gain contracts with large telephone manufacturers like LG or Samsung for the assembly of their mobile phones in order to achieve the capability to make phones by themselves, cancel their contract with the foreign company and then begin manufacturing and selling cheap counterfeit phones based on somebody else's technology with lower costs. He said that these counterfeit phones are popular in places such as Eastern Europe and have become a large industry. He concluded that the problem is difficult to solve as it reflects an ingrained part of Chinese culture. Nevertheless, he concludes that the Japanese government should do its utmost to try to find a solution to it.⁷¹

⁷⁰ China Internet Information Center "How does Japan view China's 'Shānzhài' culture"

⁷¹ Minutes from the 11th Committee on Economy, Trade and Industry of the 186th Diet

Kinoshita has an interesting idea of Chinese culture, but it is doubtful if Chinese common people of the past were that much different from most other past cultures in their view on intellectual property protection and the concept of ownership. Considering Japanese products of the early post-war period had a similar reputation of being cheap but functional copies of western products, one might even say that China is taking a similar route for building its industry. While he commended China for recent efforts to reign in this problem, he seemed to consider piracy and counterfeiting as a serious issue that is even more severe because of the copycat culture of the Chinese.

Another interesting perception of China emerged clearly during a meeting in the special committee about government-backed developmental aid on 20 February 2014, where independent Upper House member Hamada Kazuyuki called China “Japan’s strongest rival on the ODA front in the world”. He referred to recent statements by China on ODA and claimed that they showed that the Chinese have “stolen” (using the colloquial verb form ‘pakutta’) Japan’s methods to a near complete degree. Hamada wondered how Japan can cooperate with a country that is purportedly planning to “send 300 million Chinese colonists to Africa and paint the continent in Chinese colors”. He suggested that the Chinese government is pushing its poverty- and inequality-related trouble of the inner, agrarian, portions of China out of the country by relocating the population to Africa in order to gain control over African resources.

He concluded his statement by saying that he approved of the ODA system Japan has been utilizing for the last 60 years, which he claims lets the profits and benefits stay in the target country and does not allow the contributing country to take advantage of the receiving country. He expressed hope that China will change to a Japanese-style ODA system, and that Japan would continue to work towards such a result.⁷²

The most extraordinary part of Hamada’s statement was surely the idea that China is planning to send 300 million settlers to Africa. I managed to trace such an idea to an observation made by a Chinese scientist to a reporter from *Le Figaro* in 2007 on how large a population China can sustain and how many must leave for Africa in order to survive.⁷³ This comment was later

⁷² Minutes from the 2nd Special Committee on Official Development Assistance and Related Matters of the 185th Diet

⁷³ Bloom ‘Analysis, Part II: Why China needs Africa more’

picked up by various websites and had some circulation, with the Daily Mail presenting it as official Chinese policy to solve over-population and pollution.⁷⁴ While China does currently have interests in Africa and is involved in infrastructure projects in exchange for access to resources in several African states, the notion that official Chinese policy is to send 300 million of its rural inhabitants to Africa for whatever reason seems highly unlikely and frankly absurd. Current information regarding the movement of Chinese to the African continent does not suggest an existence of a top-down scheme. Rather, what movement there is seemingly stems from a combination of Chinese fortune seekers looking for a better life and Chinese workers from state-run companies dispatched to work various projects paid for with Chinese loans.⁷⁵ The numbers are also less spectacular than 300 million, from a peak of about 1 million in 2013 and falling slightly as of 2017 with worsening economic incentives for migrants.⁷⁶ That a member of the House of Councilors chooses to frame China in such a way is perhaps telling of how difficult it is to gain real knowledge of the People's Republic of China's inner workings.

It is also slightly contradictory that Hamada wished for China to employ the same ODA system as Japan when in the beginning of his statement he likened the Chinese ODA policy to a plagiarization of the Japanese model. He said that he was open to some form of ODA cooperation with China, but at the same time portrayed China in a negative light, as a rival and copycat of Japan, and as a heavy-handed government which could use extreme measures to relieve domestic problems and secure resources abroad.

4.3.3 What can be Deduced from the Economic Discussions

The examples in this chapter showed several negative representations of China in discussions on economic issues while also showing how patient engagement with China can bring positive results. The Chinese financial system is enigmatic and potentially a threat to the Japanese economy, a copycat of nature, a rival in ODA, but also slightly inexperienced and in

⁷⁴ Malone 'How China's taking over Africa, and why the West should be VERY worried'

⁷⁵ French, *China's Second Continent*, 263.

⁷⁶ Financial Times "Chinese return from Africa as migrant population peaks"

need of Japan's guidance on certain issues. Chinese were more willing to look upon Japan and its economy as a model for its own development late into the Cold War years.⁷⁷

It is possible from these statements to see how engagement with China fits in the trend of liberal thinking that has defined the economic relation between the countries in the since the late 70's. Constructivist themes were also prominent, especially the claim that copy-cat behavior is an inherent part of Chinese culture and that the Chinese government has a secret plan to send 300 million to Africa, which demonstrate the view that China is both a lawless land that at the same time has a state powerful and controlling enough to ship a quarter of its population across the globe. Although a strong state and lack of laws are not necessarily mutually exclusive, these portrayals implicitly show a Japan in contrast as a country of laws and freedom from arbitrary decisions by the state.

4.4 Representations of China within the Debates on Education Policy

4.4.1 The Context of the Debate on Education in 2014

In this chapter, I have chosen to focus on two category, foreign students and foreign trainees from China to analyze representations of China in statements made in Diet committees pertaining to these. My reason for doing so is that one of the most controversial aspects of education policy is internationalization and the admittance or exchange of foreign students. The influx of many foreign students or trainees into a new environment creates many opportunities for strengthened bonds and good experiences between communities, but it can also potentially cause unforeseen frictions and misunderstandings. Especially in the age of the internet, when descriptions of disputes and injustices can go viral instantaneously, representations of the 'other' can spread quickly on both sides.

The two groups, Chinese foreign students at Japanese universities and Chinese foreign trainees working in Japanese businesses, are clearly different, one of the most important differences being the fact foreign students in most cases pay to attend Japanese universities and are discouraged from working, while foreign trainees go in Japan to learn skills and

⁷⁷ Yahuda, *Sino-Japanese Relations after the Cold War*, 19.

techniques through temporary employment at a Japanese workplace. However, the groups are similar in that, at least on paper, they are in Japan to learn something and experience Japanese culture on an individual level. For that reason, some of the politicians in my material tend to lump the two categories together, and I have consequently chosen to gather statements from discussions concerning both these categories.

Since the Meiji period, students from across Asia wishing to learn have sought out Japan and Japanese universities. Among these, Chinese students make up one of the most noteworthy groups. For them, the image of Japan has changed many times during the past two hundred years. Japan has gone from a being a peripheric backwater on the edge of Chinese civilization, to potential role model for development, to colonial invader, to unrepentant about a troubled past but economically superior, and now having a troubled past but being challenged economically.

As of 2017, the total number of Chinese students studying in Japan is reported to be 107 000, comprising over 40% of the total group of 267 000 foreign students.⁷⁸ The 2016 number for trainees showed Chinese being 17 500, making them the second largest group after the Vietnamese with 35% of the total 49 000 trainees in Japan.⁷⁹

4.4.2 The Diet Discussions on Education Policy

From these discussions regarding China's rhetorical role in the Diet discourse on education I managed to discern two main stances. The first seems to be the most common one, that cultural exchange is good and that these institutions allow Chinese to get a good impression of Japan. This fits within the liberal theory of engagement for decreasing the likelihood of conflict. The second one is concerned about the fact that at the time most foreign trainees were Chinese and questions the wisdom of helping China, which has already gained a high level of development, with development aid in the form of the foreign trainee system.

⁷⁸ JASSO "International Students in Japan 2017"

⁷⁹ JITCO "Operational Statistics of Jitco Concerning Training and Technical Internship"

Possible Bridge for Facilitating Understanding Between Two Countries

In the 3rd Committee on Budget held 6 February 2014, Independent Upper House member Hamada Kazuyuki noted, in response to hearing from Prime Minister Abe that he would not be able to personally meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping during the Sochi Olympics, that “in times like these when leaders are unable to meet, that it is important to turn foreign trainees and students (of which Chinese are the largest group) into allies of Japan”. Abe agreed and stated that he hopes they can leave Japan with good impressions. While they “might have had prejudices before arriving”, he hopes they can “interact with Japanese and gain an understanding of Japan”. He emphasized that taking in foreign students and trainees is important to developing relations between different countries.

Hamada then posed a question about how to improve relations with Vietnam, noting that Vietnam has territorial and economic issues with China, and is deepening its relations with other regionally important countries such as South Korea, Russia, India and the USA. Abe replied that Japan’s relationship with Vietnam is of utmost importance and is a strategic relationship, also economically. Japan and Vietnam are very close on defense issues since both nations have interest in keeping the sea and its common resources open. Both nations recognize this common interest in contributing to the peace and safety of the region.⁸⁰

In a meeting in the 5th Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense held on 25 March 2014, Upper House member Ishikawa Hirotaka from the Kōmeitō entered into a question about the importance of accepting foreign students into the country. In framing his question, he used a story about the famous Chinese writer Lu Xun (1881-1936) and his personal friendships with Japanese even during times of difficulty and political strife. Minister for Foreign Affairs Kishida Fumio affirmed that just like with Lu Xun’s example, foreign students studying in Japan today also create many connections and build friendships with Japanese, and that he had heard that these connections often last even after the students have returned to their home countries. He stated that he felt the importance of these kinds of bonds. While the discussion opened with the example of a Chinese writer during a sensitive time between Japan and China, the rest of the discussion ignored where the foreign students will come from, and instead was limited to practical matters such as student housing and how best to achieve the

⁸⁰ Minutes from the 3rd Committee on Budget of the 186th Diet

government's goal of 300,000 foreign students by 2020.⁸¹ It might be of interest to add that in the following years, while the number of Chinese students has remained relatively stable, the number of foreign students from Vietnam has increased by a great deal.⁸²

China Presented as a Threat

As the most noteworthy representative of the portrayal of China as a threat in the context of this chapter we have former Lower House member Nishida Yuzuru from the Japan Restoration Party. At a meeting in the 10th Committee on Judicial Affairs on 8 April 2014, Nishida brought up questions concerning the use of foreign trainees in Japanese industries, pointing out that although the program was meant as a method of contributing to the international community by allowing foreigners to gain advanced skills in Japan, the fact that 70 % of the participants are Chinese makes the program appear to effectively operate as a contribution to China. He mentioned the current strained relations between Japan and China and questioned if the planned expansion of the program would be wise in that context.

In response to Nishida's questions Minister of Justice Tanigaki Sadakazu noted that the degree of Chinese trainees within the program was not unnatural based on China's enormous population and has in fact been slowly declining. Tanigaki also relayed that he knew of several trainees who after returning to China had told families and friends favorable things about Japan based on their experiences there.⁸³

At a meeting in the 19th Committee on Judicial Affairs on 23 May 2014, several experts on the trainee system gave presentations followed by time for questions. During this meeting Nishida once again brought up the issue on the foreign trainee program being used to help develop China due to the majority of the trainees being Chinese. Giving the example that Chinese unmanned probes have reached the moon to show that China is already a state with a high level of development, he questioned the necessity of such a program when the present conditions are in China's favor and wanted to know the experts' opinion on the matter.

⁸¹ Minutes from the 5th Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense of the 186th Diet

⁸² JASSO "International Students in Japan 2017"

⁸³ Minutes from the 10th Committee on Judicial Affairs of the 186th Diet

Nijima Yoshio, Executive Vice-President of Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO), responded by pointing out that the program is run by non-governmental organizations and does not discriminate based on country of origin. He stated that the dispatch of trainees goes through various organizations in 15 different countries, and that the needs of industry and developmental goals are both taken into account. In his view, China has a natural place within this system, although the current trend of the percentage of Chinese trainees gradually falling is likely to continue for a while.

Other representatives during this meeting including Tōyama Kiyohiko of the Kōmeitō and Kōri Kazuko of the DPJ expressed concern for the rights of the trainees and the conditions that foreign trainees were made to work under. Tōyama even went as far as comparing some of the conditions to slave labor.⁸⁴

4.4.3 What can be Deduced from within the Discussion on Education

As the statements above show, some Diet members including Nishida see potential threats in Japan's education policy regarding China. Specifically, the major issue for him seems to be that he feels that the foreign trainee program is helping China develop faster at Japan's expense. Determining how, and how much, China actually gains from this system is outside the scope of this thesis, but the program has received criticism for being susceptible to abuse by employers, with reports of breaches of labor standards, pay being withheld, overtime violations and subjection of workers to unsafe conditions. More importantly, although the system is supposed to facilitate the teaching of technical skills to its participants, many of the trainees are reportedly placed in jobs that do not teach or develop technical skills.⁸⁵ This suggests that it is perhaps Japan which is getting the better end of the deal here by being able to exploit cheap labor provided by foreign trainees with few rights and protections.

Nishida's statements seem to imply that he believes Japan and China are competing in a zero-sum game where Japan weakens itself by helping China.

⁸⁴ Minutes from the 19th Committee on Judicial Affairs of the 186th Diet

⁸⁵ Iwamoto "Abuses rampant in foreign trainee program, Japan labor ministry finds"

However, it would be unbalanced to put too much focus on Nishida's statements. Given that he was a one-term Lower House member from a minor party, his was hardly a very influential voice. Others who spoke at the meetings I studied were more interested in other matters such as the treatment of the trainees.

In contrast, Hamada seemingly viewed the experiences of foreign students and trainees as having an important diplomatic function. While he did not specifically refer to those of Chinese background, the context made it obvious that he was referring to that group. Also, by following it up directly with a question pertaining to Vietnam's trouble with China and the necessity of building good relations with Vietnam, it is possible to discern a strategic picture of Japan and Vietnam cooperating for common interests against China.

The most common representation of China in debates on education policy is the one seen in the statements by representative Ishikawa and the responses from Minister of Foreign Affairs Kishida. While the writer Lu Xun and his experiences as a foreign student in Japan was brought up to introduce the theme and illustrate the potential of connections on a private level, further discussion on foreign students did not mention nationality or China in any way, focusing instead on practical policy matters.

Within the Japanese education policy debate concerning foreign students and trainees there seems to be little that can be considered to be representations of China as a state entity. Nishida's thoughts in these discussions seem to be an outlier. The other examples all seemingly subscribe to the notion that these programs are beneficial due to the intercultural exchange that enables greater understanding of Japan and its culture among foreigners. The roundabout way in which China was represented in these contexts shows that there is a concern about China and Japan's relationship to it, but there was not a lot of specific discussion on China in debates on these subjects. In this debate it is therefore possible to conclude that there has been little overt influence from the negative relationship between China and Japan in 2014.

5 Conclusion

If one looks at previous research on rhetoric in the Japanese National Diet and Sino-Japanese relations and compares it with the findings in this paper, one can conclude that there has been a shift in how China is being represented in at least a very influential part of Japanese society. There are several possible factors that might explain this phenomenon. The world has seen an increased instability in the geopolitical order during the 2010s compared to the unipolar order that emerged in the decades after the Cold War. In the case of China, there has been a large increase in capabilities as well as in the will to use them to secure Chinese regional interests. It is both using its economic and military power to influence the region, with its claims and actions in the South China Sea and towards Japan being the most obvious examples of that. This also comes in tandem with the rise of Xi Jinping as General Secretary of the Communist Party of China in 2012 and the worsening prospects in the country for political reform and western notions like free speech, democracy and human rights.

This thesis, while being limited only to statements made in the Japanese National Diet over a limited period, has shown some interesting trends in the rhetoric on China. In the case of the statements taken from the committees on security and defense issues China was portrayed in a very negative way, as a growing threat with dubious intentions, with nearly no counterarguments to that portrayal. In the statements made in committees on economic matters China was presented as both an economically less developed entity that should learn from Japan as well as a possible source of danger and instability. It uses cunning tricks like cheating on copyright issues and using trade to punish other countries. Finally, in the statements regarding education there was a more positive outlook concerning China and portraying the subject as an opportunity for Chinese to learn about how good Japan is firsthand. Though it was mostly presented as aimed at the citizen level. One representative however acted very concerned about China taking advantage of Japan by stealing knowledge and techniques.

I was a little surprised to find that such an overwhelming majority of the politicians who used China rhetorically as part of their statements were negative and hawkish conservative. While it is not unbelievable that segment would do so, the lack of opposing portrayals from other sides of the political spectrum gave away much power of definition to very critical voices on China. Cabinet members frequently signaled openness to dialogue while holding firm on

reiterating the ideals Japan must stand up for. However, the previous Asianist trend exemplified by DPJ Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio's attempts in 2009-2010 at seeking reconciliation with China as a balance against the U.S.⁸⁶ just was not there. What reasons could explain this dynamic?

Certainly, it was a difficult time in Sino-Japanese relations. Favorability towards China in Japan had fallen from 20-30% to a low of 5-15% after 2012,⁸⁷ making it a difficult political choice to be seen as 'soft' on China. Issues related to China like the controversial implementation of collective self-defense could better be argued against without mentioning China. For example, by arguing that it is unconstitutional and an affront to Japanese pacifism. Politicians hoping to play on nationalist sentiments on the other hand could gain by portraying China negatively.

The committee seats being proportionally balanced also gave a numerical advantage to conservatives, giving them a larger opportunity to speak. This might have narrowed the breadth of discussion some extent. Perhaps utilizing a different source of data like media, articles, or books would give a better representation from the opposition. However, despite being underrepresented, the center-left opposition were still represented in the two houses and therefore it is interesting that there was a relative silence regarding China from that direction.

At least in the Diet, the various LDP factions and rightist parties enjoyed a monopoly on China discourse, which both feeds from and exacerbate negative perceptions on the current China and its rise. There were strong elements of realist thinking visible in many of the statements, but perhaps most of the arguments fit a constructivist frame better. In realist thinking, why should China and its growth be a danger, when the U.S. is so much stronger in real terms? Instead values that are common between Japan and the U.S. are repeatedly brought up along with negative Chinese traits which implicitly mirror Japanese positive traits. This is perhaps curious considering the historical and cultural roots that Japan and China shares. Portrayals of a liberal nature were not apparent in the statements looked at, though it is still a very strong factor in Sino-Japanese relations. It is important to remember that this thesis

⁸⁶ Yahuda, *Sino-Japanese Relations after the Cold War*, 53.

⁸⁷ Herrick, Gai, and Subramaniam, *China's Peaceful Rise*, 15.

looks at a limited rhetoric, and while it is important it ignores a lot of the real contact between Japan and China on many levels.

Compared with previous discourse on China in the Diet, this fits into the ongoing trend of the discourse opening up and strengthening of the “radical” representation of China.⁸⁸ The domination of the “moderate” representation seems to have slipped, leading to a very negative discourse on China. Whether this will continue or not depends on how the relation between the two countries develops. The actions of other Asian actors and especially the U.S. are important. The dynamics are slightly changed now with Trump steering the U.S. in a protectionist direction while Xi has received the role as champion of free trade. This uncertainty is speculated to have contributed to thaw in Sino-Japanese relations signaled by a visit by Abe to Beijing in October 2018.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Hagström, Jerdén, “Understanding Fluctuations in Sino-Japanese Relations,” 737.

⁸⁹ Financial Times “China and Japan reset strained relationship”

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