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Failed Attempts at Sino-Japanese Security Cooperation¹

Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the reasons of failure in establishing a stable framework for Sino-Japanese security cooperation after the end of Cold War. Since the 1990s both countries have tried many times to strengthen mutual trust, institutionalize military exchange or create a telephone hotline for emergency situations, but so far these efforts have remained futile. While in 2006–2010 it seemed that China and Japan started overcoming mutual prejudices, the situation deteriorated after the two East China Sea incidents in 2010 and 2012. The article argues that both countries have been unable to develop a full-fledged cooperation in the security field due to history problems, contrasting visions of regional security system, territorial disputes, and rivalry for leadership in East Asia.

Key words: Sino-Japanese relations, security policy, foreign policy.

Introduction

After the “Nixon shock” in 1971 and normalization of Sino-Japanese official diplomatic contacts in 1972, Japan managed to establish a mutually beneficial relationship with the People’s Republic of China (PRC). While bilateral relations focused mainly on the economic dimension, Tokyo and Beijing treated each other as potential partners in competition against the

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Soviet Union. However, the situation changed after the end of Cold War. Since the mid-1990s China and Japan gradually started perceiving each other as a threat. Tokyo was concerned with China's "missile diplomacy" towards Taiwan, incursions of research vessels and naval ships in Japanese waters in the East China Sea, rapid increase in Chinese military budget, and growing anti-Japanese feelings in the PRC. Beijing, in turn, was dissatisfied with the strengthening of the US–Japanese alliance, Tokyo's attempts at revising the pacifist Article 9 of the constitution, or more assertive posture in territorial disputes. Meanwhile, reoccurring incidents, mainly in the East China Sea, showed a necessity for establishing a reliable channel of communication between both countries in emergency situations.

Despite the need for the institutionalization of security exchange, however, Sino-Japanese cooperation in this field remained much less pronounced than in the economic, political, or cultural dimensions. The aim of this paper is to explain the reasons for this situation. It is argued that while there were several opportunities at strengthening mutual security exchange, they were spoiled by political circumstances in both countries as well as external factors. Due to the rise of nationalism in Japan and China, contradictory national interests and random incidents in the East China Sea, both sides were unable to overcome mutual prejudices in order to institutionalize the security dialogue.

Because of the contentious nature of Sino-Japanese security relations, it is disputes rather than cooperation between both countries that have attracted interest from researchers. This article analyzes several attempts at institutionalization of bilateral security exchange since the 1970s, with emphasis on the post-Cold War era. Separate sections are devoted to description of four periods of mutual dialogue: 1) until the Koizumi administration, 2) under the cabinets of Abe, Fukuda, and Asō, 3) during the reign of the DPJ, as well as 4) under the current Abe administration.

1. First Initiatives in Security Cooperation Between Japan and China

During the Cold War, Japan maintained close security cooperation with its powerful ally, the US, but Tokyo was very reluctant to initiate formal exchange in this field with other governments. Kanemaru Shin who visited Belgium and Western Germany in 1978 was the first Japan Defense Agency director-general ever to pay a different visit abroad than

in Washington. At that time, Tokyo made its first attempts at initiating security dialogue with China as well. In 1974 Japan sent a military attaché to its embassy in Beijing, and in 1978 Deputy Chief of Chinese General Staff Zhang Caiqian for the first time unofficially visited Tokyo. In the 1970s, however, mutual exchange in the security field remained very sporadic and irregular (Hirose 2011, pp. 86–115). As pointed out by Wan (2006, pp. 31–34), lack of any notable bilateral activity in this area during the Cold War contrasted with Sino-Japanese interaction in other fields, as well as with the security exchange conducted by both governments with third countries. One of the reasons was Tokyo's concern that more pronounced military contacts with Beijing could provoke the Soviet Union and alarm the governments in Southeast Asia.

The first meeting between the Japan Defense Agency director-general and Chinese minister of national defense took place in Tokyo in July 1984. Director-General Kurihara Yūkō and General Zhang Aiping agreed to intensify the mutual exchange of military staff. Indeed, in the following years high-ranking bureaucrats from the Chinese Ministry of National Defense and Japan Defense Agency started meeting on a more regular basis. Both sides even promised to commence cooperation in the field of training and exchange of information. Nevertheless, when Japan Defense Agency Director-General Kurihara Yūkō for the first time visited Beijing in May 1987, he stressed that Tokyo should display prudence in establishing close security cooperation with any other country than the US. In fact, the budding Sino-Japanese exchange in this field was suspended after the Tiananmen shock only two years later (Hirose 2011, pp. 115–117).

Interestingly, it is Japan, concerned with a dynamic increase in Chinese military spending, who proposed to resume bilateral security discussions. The first meeting at the bureau-chief level took place in Beijing in December 1993. Nevertheless, the new security dialogue platform was suspended by China in 1997. It was a way of protesting against Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Kajiyama Seiroku's statement that the new guidelines for the US–Japan alliance would cover Taiwan, as well as against Tokyo's plans to cooperate with Washington regarding the construction of the theatre missile defense system (Wan 2006, pp. 36–37).

Meanwhile, in the mid-1990s the bilateral relationship was further exacerbated by China's nuclear tests, series of Chinese military maneuvers near Taiwan, excursions of Chinese and Japanese nationalists to the Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands, and growing tension over the exploration of natural resources in the East China Sea. All these incidents compelled

both sides to seek a reopening of mutual dialogue in the security field. In February 1998, Chinese Minister of National Defense Chi Haotian paid the first official visit to Japan, followed by Japan Defense Agency Director-General Kyūma Fumio's visit to Beijing in May 1998. Both ministers inspected their counterpart's military bases and agreed to continue mutual visits on ministerial, general staff, and army levels on a more regular basis. Moreover, they even admitted the necessity for promoting joint research between the People's Liberation Army (PLA) National Defense University and the Japanese National Institute for Defense Studies as well as starting negotiations on mutual visits of military ships (Hirose 2011, pp. 118–119).

Despite these ambitious goals, Sino-Japanese cooperation in the security sphere kept being hindered by China's increased activity in the East China Sea. The PRC's maritime survey ships appeared in the disputed waters as many as 16 times in 1998, 30 times in 1999 (including four times near the Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands), and 24 times in 2000. Their crews continued excursions despite the calls from Japanese patrol vessels to leave the disputed area. Moreover, PLA Navy ships started infringing Japanese waters as well. In May 1999, as many as 12 Chinese vessels were spotted 110 kilometers north of the Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands. In July 1999, ten military ships were observed 130–260 kilometers north of the disputed archipelago. In addition, in 2000 several Chinese vessels demonstratively circumnavigated the Honshu, Shikoku, Kyushu, and Ryukyu Islands, gathering oceanographic data on the waters surrounding the Japanese Archipelago that could be used for military purposes. Eventually, in February 2001 Beijing and Tokyo signed a marine research prior notification agreement. Both sides promised to inform each other at least two months before their vessels entered waters near the other country (Valencia & Amae 2003, pp. 196–202).

Nevertheless, Sino-Japanese relations further deteriorated under the Koizumi administration in 2001–2006. Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō visited the controversial Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo annually during his term in office, which provoked increasingly decisive protests from China.² The dispute over history problems contributed to the escalation of frictions between Tokyo and Beijing in the security field as well. Feeling that Koizumi was ignoring Chinese demands on the Yasukuni issue, the

² Yasukuni is devoted to all Japanese who died in service of their country. Since 1978 also class-A war criminals sentenced to death by the Tokyo Tribunal in 1948 have been worshipped in this controversial shrine. For that reason, since 1985 China and South Korea have protested Japanese prime ministers' visits to Yasukuni.

PRC became more assertive towards Japan. All these factors destabilized the security situation in the region. For example, Tokyo strongly protested after spotting a Chinese submarine in Japanese waters in November 2004. The atmosphere in bilateral relations became particularly tense in early autumn 2005, when China sent a whole fleet of navy ships to protect the Chunxiao/Shirakaba drilling rig in the East China Sea.³ One of Chinese destroyers even trained its guns at the nearby Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force P-3C patrol aircraft (Manicom 2008, pp. 462–463).

Obviously, the above problems hindered the institutionalization of Sino-Japanese security exchange. In July 2001 the Japanese *Defense White Paper* mentioned for the first time that the PRC's military potential had exceeded levels necessary for national defense. Bilateral security dialogue was suspended by China in response to Koizumi's first visit to Yasukuni in August 2001. Vice-ministerial security meetings were resumed in Tokyo in March 2002. Both sides agreed to arrange mutual visits of navy ships starting from May 2002, but China once more suspended all security exchange with Japan after Koizumi's second homage to Yasukuni in April 2002. Moreover, Japanese Defense Attaché in Beijing Aono Hiromasa was recalled in November 2002 due to accusations on gathering intelligence in a restricted military zone near Ningbo. It seemed that an opportunity for resuming security dialogue appeared after Hu Jintao assumed the office of Chinese president in March 2003. In September 2003 Japan Defense Agency Director-General Ishiba Shigeru visited China, where he agreed to re-launch mutual navy port calls. As a symbol of good will, in the same month a PLA officer started a training course in the Japanese National Institute for Defense Studies. Yet, just as in previous years, the plans of institutionalizing security exchange were suspended after Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni in January 2004. In August 2005 Tokyo published the new *Defense White Paper*, in which it warned that the modernization of the PLA might shift the balance of power in the Taiwan Strait in Beijing's favor (Wan 2006, pp. 38–43).

The normalization of Sino-Japanese official diplomatic relations in 1972 created conditions for initiation of bilateral security dialogue. Nevertheless, numerous factors inhibited the deepening of mutual exchange in this field. Interestingly, in the Cold War period it is Japan

³ China started preparing for the exploitation of the Chunxiao/Shirakaba gas field in 2003. While the field was situated on the Chinese side of the median line between Chinese and Japanese Exclusive Economic Zones, Japan claimed that the Chinese drilling rig would suck up oil from the Japanese side.

who displayed prudence in strengthening security ties with China, while since the 1990s it is Beijing who started distancing itself from the plans of institutionalizing bilateral dialogue. This change reflected China's strengthened position *vis-à-vis* Japan, but also growing anti-Japanese sentiments in Chinese society.

2. Sino-Japanese Security Cooperation under the Abe, Fukuda, and Asō Administrations

Sino-Japanese security cooperation was eventually re-launched after Koizumi stepped down from office in September 2006. Prime Minister Abe Shinzō, though being a nationalist, treated the improvement of relations with China as one of priorities of his cabinet. By not stating clearly whether he would pay homage to the Yasukuni Shrine or not, he managed to convince the Hu Jintao administration to accept his visit to Beijing in October 2006. Regarding security issues, both leaders "confirmed that they would accelerate the process of consultation on the issue of the East China Sea, adhere to the broad direction of joint development and seek for a resolution acceptable for the both sides." In addition, Abe and Hu agreed to "enhance mutual trust in the area of security through Japan-China security dialogue and defense exchange," and they reaffirmed that they would "cooperate and make utmost efforts through dialogue and consultation for achieving denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and maintaining peace and stability in Northeast Asia" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2006).

In August 2007 Chinese Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan visited Tokyo where he met his Japanese counterpart Kōmura Masahiko. For the first time both sides issued a joint press release, in which they reconfirmed their will to continue their mutual exchange of defense ministers and regular security meetings, return to the initiative of mutual visits of navy ships, create a work team for establishing a communication mechanism between both ministries, strengthen research and training cooperation as well as sports and cultural exchange, coordinate efforts in case of natural disasters, and even send observers to military exercises. As a result, in September 2007 for the first time ever Self-Defense Forces functionaries were allowed to watch military maneuvers in China. Meanwhile, Fukuda Yasuo, known for his sympathy towards China, assumed a prime ministerial post in Japan. Under his leadership the security exchange with

Beijing flourished. In November 2007 the Shenzhen missile destroyer, as the first Chinese military vessel ever, paid a four-day long visit to the Tokyo port (Hirose 2011, pp. 121–122).

At the beginning of May 2008 President Hu Jintao visited Tokyo, where he signed the Joint Statement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Comprehensive Promotion of a "Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests." Both governments admitted that "Japan and China now have great influence on and bear a solemn responsibility for peace, stability, and development of the Asia-Pacific region and the world." Moreover, "The two sides recognized that they are partners who cooperate together and are not threats to each other." Among the five pillars of dialogue and cooperation that were specified by both leaders, three directly referred to security issues. In the first pillar (Enhancement of mutual trust in the political area) it was decided to "enhance the exchange of high-level visits in the area of security, promote various forms of dialogue and exchange, and further enhance mutual understanding and trust." The third pillar (Enhancement of mutually beneficial cooperation) contained commitment to "work together to make the East China Sea a 'Sea of Peace, Cooperation and Friendship'." In the fourth pillar (Contribution to the Asia-Pacific region), in turn, China and Japan agreed to "jointly do the utmost to maintain peace and stability in the Northeast Asia region and to together promote the Six Party Talks process" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2008).

Immediately after returning from Japan, in mid-May 2008, President Hu had to face a serious humanitarian crisis caused by a large-scale earthquake in Sichuan Province. Despite initial reluctance, for the first time ever, Beijing accepted Japanese disaster-relief teams who provided aid for the victims. The efforts of the Japanese rescuers were widely transmitted by the Chinese media, which to some extent improved the image of Japan in that country (Shiroyama 2009, pp. 43–46). The Fukuda government also proposed to use Japanese Air Self-Defense Force for sending supplies to the disaster areas. Beijing was initially willing to accept this proposal, but unfortunately it had to change its mind when a wave of anti-Japanese protests appeared on the Internet as well as among some of senior Communist Party of China (CPC) officials. The protests were caused by anti-Japanese feelings deeply embedded in Chinese society (Shimizu 2009, pp. 72–73). This incident clearly showed that even when political relations between both countries thrived, history problems kept hindering mutual exchange in the security

field. Nevertheless, in June 2008 the Japanese convoy Sazanami visited Zhanjiang in the Guangdong Province. It was the first ever visit to China by a Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force vessel. The convoy brought blankets, food, and other supplies for the victims of the Sichuan earthquake (Hirose 2011, pp. 122–123).

The greatest achievement of cordial relationship between Fukuda Yasuo and Hu Jintao was the signing of the East China Sea resources joint exploitation agreement in June 2008. Although the joint development zone covered only a small part of the disputed area, it stretched both east and west of the median line, which was consistent with Japanese demands (Manicom 2008, pp. 466–469). Unfortunately, the agreement was never ratified due to anti-Japanese protests in China, which were probably to some extent incited by President Hu's competitors in the CPC. Nevertheless, bilateral security cooperation was continued under the administration of Fukuda's successor, Asō Tarō, who became the Japanese prime minister in September 2008. In March 2009 Defense Minister Hamada Yasukazu visited Beijing. He agreed with his Chinese counterpart Liang Guanglie to continue a high-level exchange in the security field, broaden it to junior officers, investigate the possibility of sharing intelligence on piracy off the coast of Somalia, start a second round of negotiations on establishment of a maritime communication mechanism, as well as strengthen research and educational cooperation. Subsequently, in July 2009 Chief of Staff of Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force paid a visit to China (Hirose 2011, p. 125).

Koizumi's successors on the post of Japanese prime minister managed to achieve a rapid amelioration of relations with China. Bilateral security exchange peaked under the administration of Fukuda Yasuo, who was considered a pro-Beijing politician. Both sides not only realized mutual navy port calls, but also started negotiations on the establishment of a maritime communication mechanism. Nevertheless, protests against accepting Japanese Air Self-Defense Force in Sichuan or against ratification of the East China Sea resources joint exploitation agreement showed that in order to overcome all obstacles, political plans had to be backed by a stable environment for long-term cooperation.

3. Failed Attempt at Sino-Japanese Rapprochement under the DPJ Government

When the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) won parliamentary election and formed new government in September 2009, it seemed that Sino-Japanese security cooperation would thrive. Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio admitted that Japan in the past had been overly dependent on the US and that Tokyo should increase efforts towards building the East Asian Community with the neighboring countries, including China. Yet, two incidents in the East China Sea in 2010 and 2012 quickly caused unprecedented deterioration in Sino-Japanese relations.

Before the incidents, however, mutual exchange thrived indeed. The Chief of Staff of Japanese Air Self-Defense Force participated in ceremonies of the 60th anniversary of establishment of the PLA Air Force in November 2009. In the same month, PLA Navy training ship visited Japan. Chinese recruits not only made acquaintance with the recruits of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, but they also participated in a tour to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. Moreover, at the verge of November and December 2009 Chinese Defense Minister Liang Guanglie met in Tokyo with his Japanese counterpart Kitazawa Toshimi. They confirmed they would hold mutual conversations on an annual basis, continue exchange of all kinds of military forces, envisage joint maritime rescue exercises, and cooperate on security issues on multilateral forums. Minister Liang also met Prime Minister Hatoyama, to whom he promised that China would increase transparency of its security policy. In addition, he visited the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force base in Sasebo, where he was allowed to inspect the Aegis-equipped missile destroyer Chōkai. The series of mutual high-level exchanges was continued in February 2010, when China was visited by Chief of Staff of Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force (Hirose 2011, pp. 125–126).

In June 2010 Hatoyama was succeeded by Kan Naoto. While the new prime minister was not an as eager supporter of creating the East Asian Community as his predecessor, it seemed that the cordial relationship between Japan and China would be maintained. After all, Kan was opposed to visits to the Yasukuni shrine as he wanted to avoid frictions with neighboring countries. At the beginning of September 2010, however, a dangerous incident occurred in the East China Sea. A Chinese trawler collided with a Japanese Coast Guard vessel near the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands. Prime Minister Kan ignored Beijing's demands for the

release of the captain of the Chinese fishing boat, which led to a drastic escalation of the dispute. The PRC not only halted all diplomatic and cultural exchange with Japan, but also suspended export of rare earth metals to that country and detained four Japanese citizens accused of espionage in Hebei Province. Tokyo eventually extradited the Chinese captain at the end of September 2010, but at that point bilateral relations had been exacerbated beyond quick repair. Anti-Japanese demonstrations continued all over China until November 2010, and Chinese vessels started infringing Japanese waters in the East China Sea on a semi-regular basis (Żakowski 2015, pp. 134–140).

In addition, Japan spoiled an opportunity at re-launching security cooperation with the PRC after the Great East Japan Earthquake that ravaged the Tōhoku region on March 11, 2011. Beijing sent rescue teams to the disaster areas and most Chinese people felt solidarity with the victims. On the other hand, China was concerned with the effects of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant crisis and dissatisfied with the fact that Japan refused to accept a Chinese hospital ship to the disaster region. Moreover, the Chinese government felt offended that condolences offered to Japan by President Hu Jintao who visited Japanese embassy in Beijing were not sufficiently appreciated by Tokyo.⁴

Despite Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko's visit to China in December 2011, the bilateral relationship was still characterized by a lack of mutual trust when another diplomatic incident occurred in 2012. In April 2012 Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintarō announced his plans to purchase three of the Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands from a private owner, which compelled the government to nationalize them in September 2012. Beijing reacted very harshly to this decision, and a wave of violent anti-Japanese demonstrations spread over the whole country (Żakowski 2015, pp. 185–192). Sino-Japanese diplomatic and cultural exchange was once more suspended, and Chinese military vessels started regularly patrolling the disputed waters in the East China Sea.

Interestingly, despite many successes in strengthening security cooperation with China since the first Abe administration, LDP politicians were unable to convince Beijing to establish an emergency hotline between the navies of both countries. After the end of Cold War Japan had managed

⁴ In fact, Japan refused the acceptance of the Chinese hospital ship for technical reasons, as it would not be able to approach the ravaged seashore. See: Matsumoto 2014, pp. 37–46.

to create a similar communication mechanism with South Korea and Russia, and China had done so similarly with Russia and the US (Hirose 2011, p. 128). In this light, there were no technical obstacles against establishing a Sino-Japanese hotline as well. Nevertheless, several rounds of negotiations on that matter did not lead to any significant progress. As admitted by Nukaga Fukushirō, former director-general of Japan Defense Agency, preparations for creating such mechanism were advanced before the 2012 Senkaku/Diaoyutai incident, but they were spoiled by the diplomatic crisis.⁵ According to former Ambassador to China Miyamoto Yūji, China's reluctance resulted from the fear that whoever answered a phone call from Japan could be held responsible for the response.⁶

The two East China Sea incidents occurred at the least expected moment. It seemed that Sino-Japanese rapprochement would be continued under the DPJ government, but the sudden diplomatic crises broke the fragile thread of trust between the leaders of both countries. Under these circumstances, all achievements of the Fukuda administration in security exchange with China were nullified.

4. Sino-Japanese Frictions under the Second Abe Cabinet

Instead of trying to ameliorate Sino-Japanese relations, Abe Shinzō who returned as prime minister in December 2012 employed an assertive posture towards Beijing. Not only did he exclude the possibility of making any compromises on the Senkaku/Diaoyutai dispute, but he also visited the controversial Yasukuni Shrine in December 2013. Concurrently, Abe's efforts towards the strengthening of alliance with the US and establishing security cooperation with other countries in the region were perceived as a way of encircling and containing China. Under these circumstances, it is easy to understand why the Sino-Japanese security cooperation was not reinitiated.

One day after formation of his cabinet, Abe proposed a concept of "Asia's democratic security diamond" that encompassed Japan, India, Australia, and the US state of Hawaii. Pointing to the China threat, he emphasized that the four states of the geopolitical diamond should

⁵ Authors interview with Nukaga Fukushirō, Parliament of Japan, February 27, 2013.

⁶ Author's interview with Miyamoto Yūji, Tokyo, July 12, 2013.

“safeguard the maritime commons stretching from the Indian Ocean region to the western Pacific” (Abe 2012). During his visit to ASEAN countries in January 2013, in turn, Abe announced the Five Principles to Build the Future. The second principle encompassed “ensuring that the seas, which are the most vital commons to us all, are governed by laws and rules, not by might” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2013). Obviously, it was a reference to the incursions by Chinese ships in Japanese waters in the East China Sea. At the same time, Abe emphasized the need for strengthening the defense capabilities of Japan. As he stressed, it was physical force, not negotiations, that would be vital in protecting the Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands (Abe 2013, p. 248). Apart from the US, Australia, and India, Abe strengthened security dialogue with the undemocratic states of Russia and Vietnam. Soon after assuming office he launched a wide-scale diplomatic offensive by visiting until May 2013 Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, the US, Mongolia, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey (Ogawa 2013, pp. 204–216).

At the end of 2013, the Abe administration established the National Security Council. The new institution, administered by former Administrative Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Yachi Shōtarō, became an organ in charge of coordinating Japan’s security policy. In December 2013 Abe coined the concept of “Proactive Contribution to Peace” (*sekkyokuteki heiwashugi*) that was included in the National Security Strategy. The new doctrine was to strengthen Japan’s deterrence capabilities, enhance alliance with the US and improve stability on the global level based on universal values. As for relations with Beijing, the Strategy warned that “China has been rapidly advancing its military capabilities in a wide range of areas through its continued increase in its military budget without sufficient transparency. In addition, China has taken actions that can be regarded as attempts to change the status quo by coercion based on their own assertions, which are incompatible with the existing order of international law, in the maritime and aerial domains, including the East China Sea and the South China Sea” (Cabinet Secretariat 2013, p. 12). While perceiving China as a threat, the Strategy stated that Japan would strive to enhance the mutually beneficial relationship with Beijing in all areas, including security. Regarding China’s use of coercion towards neighboring countries, the document declared that “Japan will urge China to exercise self-restraint and will continue to respond firmly but in a calm manner without escalating the situation” (Cabinet Secretariat 2013, p. 25).

China responded assertively to Japan's initiatives. In November 2013 it established the Air Defense Identification Zone extending over the disputed areas in the East China Sea. Since then, Chinese military aircrafts have started regularly patrolling the disputed region. In April 2014 China was to host the international naval review during the Western Pacific Naval Symposium in Qingdao. While it invited as many as 20 countries to join the event, the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force was not invited. As an act of solidarity with Tokyo, Washington cancelled the participation of US navy ships, which prompted Beijing to cancel the whole review (Yomiuri Shinbun Seijibu 2015, pp. 33–34).

One year after Abe's visit to Yasukuni, China and Japan started mending bilateral relations. Prime Minister Abe and President Xi held a brief meeting during the APEC summit in Beijing in November 2014 and a longer conversation during the Asia–Africa Summit in Jakarta in April 2015. In a joint statement issued in Beijing, both sides agreed “that they had different views as to the emergence of tense situations in recent years in the waters of the East China Sea, including those around the Senkaku Islands, and shared the view that, through dialogue and consultation, they would prevent the deterioration of the situation, establish a crisis management mechanism and avert the rise of unforeseen circumstances.” Moreover, they confirmed their intention to “gradually resume dialogue in political, diplomatic and security fields and make an effort to build a political relationship of mutual trust” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2014). In Jakarta, in turn, Abe expressed his hope for “early commencement of the implementation of a maritime and aerial communication mechanism between the defense authorities” of both countries and he welcomed “the resumption of the Japan–China Security Dialogue after four-year interval” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2015).

Despite these declarations, however, so far no significant progress has been made in establishing a durable framework for security cooperation. One of obstacles was Japan's indirect engagement in the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Responding to Beijing's provocative acts in the waters surrounding the Spratly Islands, Tokyo strengthened its security cooperation with ASEAN countries. In July 2013 Abe promised to use Official Development Assistance to provide 10 patrol vessels to the Philippine Coast Guard. In June 2015, in turn, Maritime Self-Defense Force for the first time participated in joint exercises with the Philippine Navy. Japanese P-3C maritime patrol aircraft even demonstratively flew over Palawan Island that is situated close to the area disputed with China.

In addition, in August 2014 Japan signed an agreement with Vietnam, in which Tokyo promised to donate six old military ships to that country (Yomiuri Shinbun Seijibu 2015, pp. 78–81). Obviously, such actions did not contribute to melting the ice in security cooperation with Beijing.

Instead of repeating his endeavors in promoting amelioration with China from his first administration, Prime Minister Abe put emphasis on strengthening Japan's power of deterrence. Lack of trust in Sino-Japanese contacts made the deepening of bilateral security exchange impossible.

Conclusions – Analyzing Obstacles in Sino-Japanese Security Cooperation

Japan and China are two main powers in East Asia who have been haunted by numerous disputes in the security field. The account of failed attempts at institutionalization of bilateral security exchange confirms that even a strong will by top decision makers in both countries may not be enough to overcome mutual prejudices. In each of the analyzed periods different factors hindered the strengthening of Sino-Japanese security cooperation. During the Cold War, it is reluctance by Japan to develop military exchange with countries other than the US that slowed down the process of enhancing mutual ties in this field. At the verge of the 20th and 21st centuries, in turn, China's growing assertiveness in the East China Sea became both an obstacle in institutionalizing security cooperation and an incentive for Tokyo to seek a more reliable emergency communication channel with Beijing. Paradoxically, when China displayed more willingness to initiate a constructive dialogue on security issues under the Hu Jintao administration in 2003, Prime Minister Koizumi's regular visits to Yasukuni spoiled this chance.

The years 2006–2010 provide perhaps the most interesting example of progress in Sino-Japanese security cooperation. Beijing and Tokyo not only displayed strong conviction that both countries should cooperate in the security field, but they also intentionally avoided any decisions that could exacerbate tensions in bilateral contacts. There were some results of this rapprochement, such as the realization of mutual port calls or signature of the agreement on joint development of East China Sea resources. However, the budding security exchange was abruptly suspended due to the Chinese trawler collision crisis in 2010 and nationalization of the Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands in 2012. Abe's and Xi's

assertive stances on the territorial dispute and history problems buried any chance at the continuation of security cooperation. Despite decades of negotiations, even such an essential task as the creation of an emergency hotline between both governments has not been realized.

The analysis conducted in this chapter seems to indicate that while China and Japan may build friendly security relationship, this process is likely to be gradual and long lasting. Mere good intentions by both governments are only a necessary prerequisite, they have to be backed by a stable environment for mutual cooperation. Unfortunately, numerous history problems, mutual prejudices, and contradicting national interests can easily mar any attempts at a lasting reconciliation.

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