

# Asia-Pacific Security and the Respective Roles of Japan and China<sup>\*</sup>

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Hello everyone. I am Seiji Maehara, a member of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in the House of Representatives. I am much honored to be invited by Peking University to speak here today. I would like to express my heartfelt respect and gratitude to IISS President Wang Jisi, Vice President Yuan Ming and others involved. This time I and seven other members of the DPJ in the National Diet visited Dalian and Beijing on the invitation of the China-Japan Friendship Association. I would also like to take this occasion to express my gratitude to China-Japan Friendship Association, led by President Tang Jiaxuan, and other relevant organizations.

I was born and have grown up in Kyoto, the ancient capital of Japan. In 1982, I was admitted to the Faculty of Law, Kyoto University. During college, I studied international politics under Professor Kosaka Masataka, the famous Japanese international political scientist. That was at the end of the Cold War, when the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) proposed by the US received much attention, but I took a stronger interest in China at that

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time. After the Cultural Revolution ended, the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in December 1978 helped turn China to the reform and opening up. At first, Shenzhen, Shantou, Zhuhai and Xiamen were designated as special economic zones, which were able to attract foreign investment, and gradually got out of stagnation and started to boom. I studied on this, and finished my graduation thesis titled “China’s Modernization”. After graduation and enrollment in the Matsushita Institute of Government and Management, I was increasingly concerned about China. From August 1989 on, I spent about two months on visiting eight cities in China – Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Xiamen, Shanghai, Qingdao, Beijing, Harbin and Dalian, and evaluated more than 50 joint ventures and township and village enterprises, having a closer look at the vitality of China’s economic development by myself.

Now after nearly 37 years of reform and opening, China has achieved remarkable economic development. While China already bears this potential, the state to my surprise achieved such significant growth under good governance of politicians, which made I recognize again the important role of politics. In 2008, I had the privilege of meeting Chinese President Hu Jintao on his visit to Japan. What he said then still impressed me: “The reform and opening up has lasted three decades, but that’s not enough. We should stick to it for five decades. If we can’t, it’s not real reform and opening.” I think that is what a politician would say.

Premier Zhou Enlai, who proposed the Four Modernizations, and Mr. Deng Xiaoping, who steered China towards the reform and opening up and vigorously promote the process of modernization, are the two politicians I respect. Regrettably, I have not had the opportunity to meet them in person. Yet, I was fortunate to meet with Mr. Zhu Rongji three times. In my 22-year career as a National Diet member, one of the leaders who have impressed me most is Premier Zhu Rongji. He once said: “China needs to reform to grow national strength. To do this, we need to conduct reform on state-owned enterprises. We should let China join the WTO and introduce international standards, so that we can resolutely push for reform on state-owned enterprises without any hesitation, even if

we are opposed.” From these words, I feel a real reformer’s sincerity and verve.

Although there is a perception in China that I was a hardliner towards China, however, as I have just mentioned, I have long been concerned about China, and I am proud to have been committed to strengthening relations between China and Japan, which I will talk about later in my speech. I think in the future, China and Japan should frankly exchange views on issues between the two countries, and persevere in solving these issues. In the process, they should not only strengthen bilateral relations, but work together to promote stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region depending on the circumstances.

My topic today is “Asia-Pacific Security and the Respective Roles of Japan and China”.

It has been more than 70 years since the end of World War II. After experiencing two great wars, the world created a variety of orders to avoid renewed hostilities, such as the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT), which later evolved into the World Trade Organization (WTO), and other organizations. In other words, by developing common rules and urging countries to abide by these rules, the world wanted to prevent conflict and promote peaceful resolution of issues between countries, so that countries can achieve coexistence and common prosperity. The world has put a lot of effort into this.

However, what concerns me is that, recently, there are some trends of trying to change the world order established after World War II by force: The Islamic State (IS) denied territorial allocations defined by the Sykes-Picot Agreement after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and tried to reestablish an Islamic State; Russia is not only controlling the Crimean Peninsula, but still planning to split eastern Ukraine and place it under Russia’s influence. These are notable cases in the trends. Russia is a very important neighbor of Japan. I also serve as Vice President of Japan-Russia Friendship Parliamentarians’ Union in Japan’s National Diet, and am committed to promoting the development of Japan-Russia relations. On the issue of Crimea, taking its history into account,

it is not unable to understand Russia's mind, but I still hold that Russia should adopt a procedure that can be recognized by the international community to solve the issue.

In addition, terrorist organizations, which are non-state actors, are now spreading all over the world, and carrying out sabotage activities in various countries. Disregarding the order defined by the international community, they have posed a threat to sovereign states. Such acts of violence cannot be tolerated.

Because of this, we need a world order jointly developed by countries and based on the rule of law, and maintaining the order is our top priority. Of course, there are some limitations in the post-war order. It has not always been working all the time. For example, during the Cold War, the US and the Soviet Union vetoed against each other on various issues, resulting in difficulty in reaching agreements for the UN Security Council. Even today, agreements are hard to reach at times. Nevertheless, the world order established after two world wars to protect and develop the international community still plays a critical role today. Therefore, we have to say that as one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and the world's second-largest economy, China bears great responsibilities.

The following content may sound harsh for all of you from China. But I hope you can understand that I make the speech with expectation and respect only because I am facing China, a country that has made extraordinary achievements and grown from a strong developing country into a country with world influence.

Accompanied by the remarkable development, China's diplomacy has also undergone a rapid change in recent years. However, many countries are not yet able to understand "the true intention of China". What is China's diplomatic goal? If they have to choose between the two alternatives, many countries are not sure whether China is a "supporter" or a "challenger" for the world order built after two world wars.

As a supporter, China has performed its duties as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. However, considering China's recent initiatives in the South China Sea and the acts of unilaterally setting up an air defense identification zone in the East

China Sea two years ago, it is also inevitable to regard China as a challenger. When the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was initially established, some argued that it was a challenger to the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which are important institutions for the post-war order. Now with 57 member states and having agreed a cooperation financing program with the ADB, the AIIB has been praised for its initiatives and for advocating the existing order and further promoting regional prosperity and stability under the leadership of China. In general, how should we understand these initiatives? Can we say that maximizing national interests is the core of China's diplomacy?

One of the quotes I like is credited to Mr. Gorbachev, the last General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: "there are no enemies or friends but only national interests in diplomacy." To pursue national interests through diplomacy is quite appropriate for any country. Yet the wisdom we have accumulated over the past 70 years is that to prevent the pursuit of narrow national interests from triggering off disputes, we should build a set of rules as a basis for countries to pursue their own interests. China's diplomatic stand is "to coordinate the domestic and international situations". Needless to quote Mr. Gorbachev, this idea applies for any country. But is China focusing more on the domestic situation? On a number of complex issues, leaders of China often argued that "the key to these issues is whether the neighboring countries can accept China's development," which makes me believe that this kind of view reflects China's diplomatic gesture.

Mr. Deng Xiaoping is believed to promote a strategy of "keeping a low profile and fostering potentials", which showed China's diplomatic gesture of adhering to international cooperation and coordination. However, in recent years, leaders of China often use the statement of "the peaceful development policy", and add that China will stand firm to "defend sovereignty" basically every time when declaring the policy. "Defending sovereignty" is self-evident for any sovereign country, then why does China emphasize it? Many countries have doubts about this.

The reason I refer specifically to such a problem is that it is indispensable for the stability of East Asia's regional order to

maintain constructive relations between China and Japan. And avoiding miscalculations on the strategic intent of each other is the basis for building constructive relations. Therefore, we hope that as the world's second largest economy and a key strength to maintain the stability of the Asia-Pacific region, China should not just advocate "neighboring countries should accept China's development" in diplomacy, but show a "just and fair diplomatic philosophy" that goes beyond national interests. Without such a philosophy, not just the stability of East Asia and the Asia-Pacific, but the stability of the world will not be achieved. We would like to see a diplomatic gesture that is consistent with China's status as the world's second largest economy and with the spirit of noblesse oblige.

Now that I have put forward such a request to China, it is necessary for me to clearly state Japan's strategic intentions: Japan wants to be the supporter of the world order. I will illustrate it from the two directions that are especially important to Japan's diplomacy.

As you know, Japan is an island country made up of many islands. An island country usually gives people the impression of seclusion, but I would like to quote words of Sakamoto Ryoma, my favorite reformist from the Bakumatsu period, that we are an "ocean state", which means we are a country communicates freely with other countries through the ocean that is free to sail. And Japan does not have abundant natural resources, though "flammable ice" and hydrothermal deposit are found in the seabed of Japan's waters in recent years. Because of this, the "free trade" that allows the freedom of communication with foreign countries is essential to Japan.

Some of you may be surprised that I talk about free trade first under the topic of security issues. In the exposition of his historical materialism, thinker Karl Marx makes a point that "the foundation determines the superstructure." The foundation refers to the various relations of production. It can also be understood as various economic activities. I am not a Marxist, but I agree that various activities associated with human life are affected by the economy, it is a truth. To borrow my advisor Mr. Kosaka Masataka's words, "all

the countries are systems of power, systems of benefits and systems of value.” Economic strength, plus military power and ideology, are the important factors in a country’s prosperity, and I am sure that guaranteeing free trade is the basis for developing economic strength.

A few days ago, in Atlanta of the US, 12 countries, including Japan, reached broad consensus on the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP). Given that a lot of information involved has not been made public, I will not comment on specific details of the agreement, but I agree with the agreement on framework. The TPP’s importance to Japan was first presented during the DPJ’s administration. As Minister for Foreign Affairs, President of the Policy Affairs Research Council of the DPJ, and Minister of State for Economic and Fiscal Policy at that time, I had been committed to the TPP negotiations.

Why is free trade important? With the development of free trade, the movement of people, goods and funds will be freer, which will not only make the economies more active, but facilitate the complementary relationship between countries. Consumers can buy products at cheaper costs, and countries work to strengthen their own industrial competitiveness. As long as the countries make efforts, they can create a win-win environment. As more countries are enjoying the benefits of free trade, countries involved would attempt to protect the foundation of benefits, namely, to protect a peaceful and conflict-free environment, which would therefore has the effect of keeping them out of war.

But I think the TPP is only one of the milestones in creating a wider free trade zone. The current task is to achieve the “Bogor Goals”, which are a set of goals for realizing “free and open trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific by 2010 for industrialized countries and 2020 for developing countries”. The Bogor Goals were set at the APEC meeting in November 1994, in which China and Japan were participating as member states. I think the TPP is an effective way to reach the peak of the Bogor Goals. Yet, there are many other ways to reach the peak. China, Japan and South Korea should also reach an agreement on free trade, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is the platform we

seriously hope to push for. Meanwhile, the free trade agreements China is promoting with other countries are also very important. Accumulation of these agreements will help achieve the Bogor Goals. I hope Japan and China could work together and make every effort to achieve the Bogor Goals.

Another pillar of Japan's diplomacy is the "diplomacy for peace". In the constitution drafted after war, Japan established "renouncing war" as a law of the country. We will resolve all disputes by peaceful means. This resolution will not waver.

Meanwhile, Japan adopts the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) that always adhere to the "exclusively defense-oriented" policy as a self-defense measure to enhance deterrence and provide against any contingency. For a long time, the SDF and the Japan-US alliance together constitute the two pillars of Japan's security. I think we should stick to this approach in the future. The conclusion of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan was initially resulted from intensification of the Cold War, and one of the triggers was the outbreak of the Korean War. Although time has changed greatly, I think as a public good for maintaining Asia-Pacific stability, the Japan-US alliance will continue to play its role in the future. Yet, it is necessary to elaborate on the motivation for developing this alliance, in particular to China and other neighboring countries.

I currently belong to the opposition party, so I am not in a position to explain the policies promoted by the Abe administration. But let me provide a personal view on the issue of Peace and Security Preservation Legislation lately discussed in the National Diet.

Looking at its content, the Peace and Security Preservation Legislation will expand the scope of SDF activities in four areas.

First, by changing the interpretation of the Constitution, it lifts the restriction that Japan can only exercise some rights of self-defense, so that Japan can exercise part of collective self-defense.

The second is, when Japan itself is not under direct attack, but the development of situation is posing a significant impact on Japan's security, this kind of situation is called the "situations in areas surrounding Japan" under the existing law. If the situations are found to meet the definition of "situations in areas surrounding



Japan”, the SDF can provide logistic support for US troops under the existing law. After this legal amendment, the situations that will not cause Japan itself under direct attack but will have a significant impact on Japan’s security are renamed the “situations that will have a significant impact”. If the situations are identified as “situations that will have a significant impact”, Japan can provide logistic support not only to the US but to other countries on a global scale. In other words, the amendment will expand the contents of logistic support and the scope of countries it provides support for, and lift the geographical limits of logistic support.

The third is, in the past, under the situations that were not identified as “situations in areas surrounding Japan”, if Japan wanted to provide support for military activities of US troops, Japan must enact a special measures law each time if necessary. But through the amendment to the law, we have enacted a permanent law that allows supporting multinational forces at any time.

The fourth is, it will realize the emergency escort for the UN’s peacekeeping operations that is not allowed so far. We are essentially in favor of this aspect.

The problems lay in the rest three aspects. We the DPJ are not entirely against the exercise of collective self-defense by amending the interpretation of the Constitution. The statement we used to conclude our comments is, “we are opposed to the general exercise of collective self-defense by changing the interpretation of the Constitution.” By saying “opposed to the general exercise”, we leave room for the situations where the exercise of collective self-defense can be accepted.

Then what problems do we see in the government’s program? First, the law itself might be considered unconstitutional. Article 98 of Japanese Constitution states that “all the unconstitutional laws are null and void”. Before discussing the necessity of the law, the government should submit a law that will not be accused of unconstitutional first. Another point is specific cases that are used by the government as the legislative basis of Japan’s exercise of collective self-defense, such as “mine clearance in the Strait of Hormuz” and “providing escort for US warships that take Japanese citizens”, are basically unthinkable in reality.

And as to whether it is necessary to change “situations in areas surrounding Japan” especially into “situations that will have a significant impact”, we also have doubts. I think there is nothing wrong with the approach adopted so far, namely, when there is a need to cooperate with US troops, Japan responds by enacting a special measures law. In any case, the adjustment of the Peace and Security Preservation Legislation is not to target any specific country and region, but to increase Japan’s ability of response and deterrence in case of emergency. We have called upon the government and the ruling party for detailed description of this to other countries to prevent tension caused by such legal amendments. We also hope to continue to work on this effort.

Finally, I would like to offer views on how to advance and deepen the China-Japan relations in the future. As I have mentioned, I have a strong interest in China, which has never changed. In 2009, as the new prime minister took office, I assumed the position of Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. I tried everything possible to increase people-to-people exchanges between China and Japan. I believed that, if such exchanges increase, the two countries can understand each other better, and the development of bilateral relations can be promoted. Based on this idea, I made efforts in relaxing visa restrictions for the Chinese. I made adjustments to the status that Japan visa was only issued to group traveling. Starting with issuing individual visas to Chinese tourists, I worked on easing restrictions relating to the proof of income, and relaxed visa conditions step by step. In addition, the places of visa issuance had been increased from the three cities of Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou to seven cities. And, in order to increase the places that allow paying with China UnionPay cards, I actively conducted consultations with travel and tourism organizations and business sectors.

Although it was not concluded within my term of office, during my visit to China as Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism in 2010, I talked with then Vice Prime Minister Li Keqiang, and reached consensus on signing an aviation liberalization agreement between China and Japan soon. Now that the China-Japan aviation liberalization agreement has entered into

force, flights from China and Japan can circulate freely between almost all the airports of the two countries. I think this is really a great thing. Because of these agreements, the number of Chinese visiting Japan is increasing year by year. More Chinese people are able to know Japan. I am very glad to see this happening. I hope to further expand mutual exchanges between the two countries in the future, so that the basis of mutual understanding between the two countries will be more solid.

Furthermore, I think the two countries' close cooperation on difficult issues facing both countries would also be beneficial for strengthening bilateral relations. With a population of 1.3 billion, China faces a variety of challenges. As a politician at the helm of such a country, President Xi Jinping proposed the Two Centenary Goals, showing determination to further the reform. I will keep an eye on the progress. I think China and Japan should continue to deepen the ongoing cooperation on environmental issues. Meanwhile, I am thinking whether the two countries can have more in-depth and direct exchanges on all aspects of society and promote cooperation.

Recently, China's economic slowdown has become one of the main topics of meetings such as the G20 summit. This phenomenon may be partly attributed to the remaining effect of China's policy combinations after the 2008 global financial crisis, but it is actually impossible for any country to always maintain a high economic growth rate. I think it is essential to recognize that China's economy is transitioning from a period of high growth into a period of stable growth. Japan has also experienced the same transition, and it had to adjust its industrial structure during the period. Based on our common experience, there should be room for discussions on the changes that should happen in China's social structure and industrial structure, and the two countries truly have a wide range of areas of cooperation.

China's population is about 10 times that of Japan, but the demographic structure is following a similar pattern, with a 15-year time lag. This means that China will also see a falling birth rate, a shrinking and an aging population, and a declining workforce. While Japan's labor force has begun to decrease since around 1995,

so has its total population since around 2008, China's labor force has begun to decrease since 2012, and its total population will begin to decline in 2025. As a pioneer in dealing with these issues, Japan had to overcome the problems of a falling birth rate and an aging population by adjusting fiscal revenue and modifying medical, caring, pensions and other social security systems. I would like to share Japan's experiences and lessons with China, and hope to help China overcome the problem.

In order to prevent desertification in China, several organizations in Japan come to China every year to plant trees. About ten years ago, as deputy chief of an organization, I went to a place called Horqin Left Rear Banner in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region to join in a tree planting activity that lasted for several days. A few days ago, I visited Horqin Left Rear Banner again with someone who also participated in the tree planting activity. People there happily told me that the trees we planted have taken root and grown healthily, we have succeeded in turning desert into forest. That makes me really happy. China and Japan are neighbors, and cannot move away. We had misfortunes in our history, and we have all sorts of problems today. But it is extremely important to tackle these problems based on the overall situation of coexistence and common prosperity of the two countries and regional stability and prosperity. Please join me to grow seedlings, and transform barren deserts into green forests. As a member of the National Diet of Japan, I will work with you, and vow to make a greater effort to improve China-Japan relations. That concludes my speech. Thank you.