



What China can do to improve Sino-Japanese relations?

By Tao Wenzhao

Sino-Japanese political relations are at stalemate due to Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro's insistence on visiting Yasukuni Shrine where 14 class-A war criminals are enshrined together with other war dead. The Chinese people are frustrated. We think that we are generous with Japan, exempting it from war indemnities when the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1970s. But some Japanese politicians are so stubborn in visiting the shrine that it seems as if they want to deliberately insult the feelings of the Chinese and Korean people. The deterioration of bilateral relations serves neither Japanese nor Chinese interests. The two countries must work together to get their political relations out of difficulty. From China's side, certain things can be done.

First, to better manage nationalistic feelings, China should try to present a more balanced picture of Japanese history in the 20th century. Japanese history from the late 19th century to the end of World War II was one of expansion and aggression in the region, including toward China. This is a historical fact that no one can deny. But during the second half of the century, Japan followed the path of peaceful development and became the second largest economy in the world. This should also be recognized.

Second, China should recognize the positive impact of Sino-Japanese rapprochement on China's foreign relations. Although there was a Nixon shock in February 1972, the normalization of China-Japan relations in September 1972 set a model for the normalization of China-U.S. relations that occurred six years later. During the negotiations that led to the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the U.S., Deng Xiaoping clearly said that the U.S. must follow Japan's model with regard to Taiwan. And the normalization of China's relations with Japan and the United States helped China break its international isolation.

Third, China should recognize that Japan was the first country to lift sanctions on China after Beijing's political disturbance in 1989. Western countries imposed sanctions on China after the event. At the G-7 meeting that year Japan tried hard to ease the sanctions on China. In July 1990 the Japanese government resumed Official Development Assistance (ODA) to China. In August 1991, Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki visited China and relations between the two countries resumed. He was the first state leader of developed countries to visit China after June 1989.

Fourth, China should recognize Japan's assistance to China's economic construction. For more than two decades, especially during the early years of China's reform and openness, Japan was one of China's biggest trade partners, and China's major source of capital and technology. Economic and

trade relations between Japan and China are mutually beneficial. Since 1980 Japan has provided ODA to China, an amount that totaled \$27.5 billion by March 2004, of which \$25.2 billion consisted of loans with a 3 percent interest rate. Half of that amount was used to buy Japanese machinery and other equipment, strengthening China's industrial infrastructure. Of course, the loan allowed many Japanese companies to get access to the Chinese market.

Fifth, China should cultivate warm feelings toward the Japanese people and promote people-to-people contacts between the two countries. The Japanese people were also the victim of aggression during the war. During and after the war they suffered a lot. In the 1950s and '60s many Japanese friends in a very difficult situation made strenuous efforts to promote friendship between the two peoples, to develop peoples' exchanges, including bilateral trade. Their contribution will be remembered forever. The late Premier Zhou Enlai often said, "When we drink the water we should not forget the people who dug the well." By "the people who dug the well," he meant those pioneers who devoted themselves to the development of bilateral relations. The process of normalization of China-Japan relations was pushed by people-to-people contacts. We still need to strengthen these contacts and promote mutual understanding between the two peoples. The peoples of our two countries should be good neighbors, good friends, and good brothers. Only a relationship that wins people's minds and hearts is durable.

Sixth, China should continue to develop economic and trade relations with Japan. Economic relations between the two countries are an important part of the two countries' overall relationship. The economic side of bilateral relations is still quite warm; last year's investment surged to a record level. But the political side of the bilateral relations is very cool. The correct response is to let the warm side give a positive impact and warm up the cool side: not vice versa. Last year, some students advocated the boycott of Japanese goods. Boycotts are an out-of-date concept. In 1905, Chinese merchants boycotted U.S. goods because the U.S. was excluding Chinese laborers. In 1919, the Chinese people boycotted Japanese goods because of Japan's greedy demands for privileges in Shandong Province. But now, in an era of globalization when the two countries' economies are so interdependent, a boycott is impossible. If Japanese investment in China were to end, Japanese investors would no longer make money in China, but Chinese workers who work in Japanese companies would lose their jobs as well.

Seventh, China should continue to cooperate in the Six-Party Talks on the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue. China and Japan have very similar positions toward the DPRK nuclear issue and cooperated in the past two years at the four rounds of talks. Japan's willingness to normalize relations with the

DPRK should be respected. Japan's recent efforts to break the deadlock in the talks should be appreciated and encouraged.

Eighth, China should cooperate with Japan in environment protection. China has been making great efforts to protect the environment, such as planting windbreak forests in China's north and northwest. The Japanese people as well as the Japanese government have shown strong interest in this and invested quite a lot of resources. We appreciate Japan's assistance. China will continue to cooperate with Japan to prevent erosion and make our environment better.

Ninth, China should keep the East China Sea issue under control. The East China Sea is not wide enough for the two countries to claim a 200-mile exclusive economic zone. This is a issue for the two governments to discuss and solve through negotiation. The consultation has begun and it may take years. During the process, the two sides should restrain themselves and try hard to avoid any clash, collision, or confrontation.

Tenth, China should launch military contacts and exchanges between the two countries. The military establishments of the two countries at present have no contact. Given the East China Sea situation, this is very dangerous. The two navies should have contact to avoid a possible clash.

These are some rough thoughts of a non-Japan expert. China-Japan relations can be a win-win game or a lose-lose game; they cannot be a zero-sum game. Both of our countries are in this region and we must coexist peacefully. President Hu Jintao announced recently that if the Japanese prime minister stops visiting Yasukuni Shrine, he is ready to meet with him to discuss resuming and improving bilateral relations. I sincerely hope the deadlock in China-Japan relations can be broken very soon.

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