

## Issues in Sino-Japanese relations

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Sino-Japanese relations were beset by a number of political and economic issues throughout the 1980s. This paper will consider some of the major political controversies, focusing in particular on the 1982 "Textbook Issue". The aim is to determine whether Sino-Japanese relations are different from other bilateral relationships, "unique" because of their historical and cultural experiences and their long history of interaction, or whether on the other hand they conform to general patterns of behaviour between states as put forward in the field of international relations.

After a general overview of some of the issues which have plagued the post-war relationship, the paper then focuses in more detail on the events of 1982 and some of the domestic and external circumstances which influenced Chinese and Japanese decision-making during the "Textbook Issue". The final section of the paper assesses what the "Textbook Issue" indicates about the nature of Sino-Japanese political relations.

### Problems in Sino-Japanese relations in the 1980s

Sino-Japanese political relations since 1945 have never really been trouble-free. Prior to diplomatic normalization in 1972, the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) frequently criticized the Japanese government for one of usually three main reasons: for adopting a "two Chinas policy" (that is, carrying on links with both Taiwan and the Mainland), for insisting on the separation of politics from economics (*seikei bunri*), or for attempting to revive militarism. The criticism ceased temporarily between the signing of the Joint Statement in 1972 and the conclusion of the Peace and Friendship Treaty in 1978. This was probably due to the optimism shared by both governments about the assumed benefits which could accrue from a new era of friendly Sino-Japanese relations, and a

reluctance to "rock the boat". The euphoria which accompanied diplomatic normalization soon faded, however, when problems began to resurface in the late 1970s and continued intermittently throughout the following decade.

The "Baoshan Shock" - a series of postponements and cancellations between 1979 and 1981 of joint Sino-Japanese construction projects - was an early indication that the "mutual complementarity" of Chinese resources and Japanese technology had been overrated. While the "Baoshan shock" was primarily an economic problem between the two countries and revealed economic incompatibilities, problems in the political arena from 1982 onwards brought into question the so-called "special affinity" of the relationship,<sup>1</sup> and saw a return of PRC criticism along the earlier lines of Japanese militarist revival or links with Taiwan.

The 1982 "Textbook Issue" was the first major political problem. It started out as a Japanese domestic matter concerning the content of high school history textbooks, but developed into a diplomatic issue between China and Japan and South Korea and Japan. The issue highlighted conflicting interpretations of wartime history, and although it appeared to be resolved within the space of two months it remained on the agenda for a number of years, flaring up very briefly in 1984 and again in 1986.

The next major political issue after the textbook controversy occurred in August 1985 when Prime Minister Nakasone, in his official capacity, chose to visit Yasukuni Shrine where the spirits of the Japanese war dead, including war criminals, are enshrined. This prompted harsh criticism from the Chinese press which was already commemorating the 40th anniversary of Japan's defeat with a series of articles about Japan's war of invasion in China. Although the Chinese government did not make a formal protest against Nakasone's visit, the issue escalated in September when Chinese students in Beijing held demonstrations protesting not only against Nakasone's action but also against a perceived revival of Japanese militarism and Japan's "second occupation" or "economic invasion" of China. This anti-Japanese movement spread to other cities and demonstrations continued until December, causing political embarrassment to both governments.<sup>2</sup>

In 1986 there was a renewal of the "Textbook Issue" when a history textbook produced by an ultra-nationalist Japanese group became the object of renewed Chinese and Korean criticism. The situation was exacerbated by Japanese Education Minister Fujio Masayuki, who made a number of insensitive comments about the Nanjing Massacre and about Japanese actions in Korea and was consequently lambasted in the Chinese and Korean press for attempting to defend and "whitewash" Japan's invasion of China and annexation of Korea. Fujio was subsequently dismissed, and the Japanese government apologised for his improper comments, but the Chinese newspaper the *People's Daily* (*Renmin Ribao*) carried a

commentary warning that Fujio's comments represented part of a growing trend towards a resurgence of militarism in Japan.<sup>3</sup>

A number of events in 1987 added to tension already caused by a trade imbalance and brought Sino-Japanese political relations to a low ebb. A dispute between the Chinese, Taiwanese and Japanese governments concerning the ownership of a Kyoto dormitory for Chinese students was brought to a head in February when a Japanese high court awarded ownership to Taiwan. This was treated as a serious matter by the Chinese government, which regarded the decision as a violation of the Joint Statement (1972) and Peace and Friendship Treaty (1978). Deng Xiaoping himself criticized the decision and reprisals were taken in the form of the expulsion of a Japanese journalist from China. Deng's later criticisms of Japan for reviving militarism and for increasing its defence budget above the 1% ceiling prompted an angry response from some Japanese politicians. Vice Foreign Minister Yanagiya Kensuke implied in a supposedly "off-the-record" response to Chinese criticism that Deng was living above the clouds and did not understand Sino-Japanese relations. This remark in turn incensed the Chinese leadership, which was only pacified after Yanagiya apologised and resigned.<sup>4</sup>

In April 1988 Okuno Seisuke, Director General of the National Land Agency, sparked off another row when, in answer to a question about visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, he remarked that it was time to put the ghosts of the Japanese army occupation to rest and that, because China was a communist country, it had little understanding of religion. When the Chinese Foreign Ministry criticized Okuno for ignoring the facts of history and disregarding diplomatic courtesy, Okuno commented that Japan had not intended to invade China. This resulted in further criticism from the Chinese Foreign Ministry and media, joined by North and South Korea. In May the Japanese government issued a statement saying that this and previous Japanese Cabinets adhered to the line that in the Sino-Japanese war "invasion was a fact". Okuno resigned shortly after.<sup>5</sup>

In February 1989 Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru commented that the question whether or not the Second World War was a war of invasion was a problem for future generations of historians to evaluate. The *People's Daily* criticised the statement, but during talks with Qian Qichen, who was in Tokyo for the funeral of Emperor Hirohito, Takeshita managed to prevent the problem from developing further. Takeshita admitted that the comment was a slip of the tongue and that he regretted that it had become an incident which invited criticism from foreign countries. He added that the fact that Japan's past behaviour was "invasive" could not be denied. The Chinese government took the issue no further, but a speech by Premier Li Peng (7th plenum, 12th People's Congress) in March indicated the Chinese dissatisfaction with the state of affairs. Recalling the disaster brought upon the Chinese and Asian peoples during Japan's war of invasion, he warned

that the nature of the war could not be changed and added the standard maxim of Sino-Japanese relations, that "the past if not forgotten is a guide to the future" (*qianshi buwang, houshi zhishi*).<sup>6</sup>

In the 1990s similar problems persist though not with the same frequency as in previous years, nor with the same reaction from the PRC. In 1990 China expressed "concern" about Japan's plans to despatch men of the Self-Defence Forces overseas to take part in UN peace-keeping operations. This was exacerbated by a conflict over a lighthouse built by the Japanese on one of the Senkaku islands (*Diaoyutai*) - a group of eight islands south-west of Okinawa to which both Japan and China lay claim. Although China lodged a diplomatic protest the issue was resolved quickly and quietly.<sup>7</sup> In 1991 the politician Ishihara Shintaro - well-known for his co-authorship of the book *The Japan That Can Say NO* - called the Nanjing Massacre a Chinese fantasy. Yet in this case the Chinese government chose not to complain as it had done in the past.<sup>8</sup> In fact the Chinese government even cancelled two memorial ceremonies planned for August which would have reflected Japan's wartime atrocities, because they would have coincided with Prime Minister Kaifu's visit to China. Moreover, when Kaifu expressed regret for Japan's wartime aggression, the Chinese side remained silent.<sup>9</sup>

The 20th anniversary of diplomatic normalization in 1992 was marked by the Emperor's visit to China. The debate in Japan centred on the question of his official remarks - should the Emperor apologize for Japan's wartime actions?<sup>10</sup> Since the Emperor's role is symbolic rather than political, it was deemed appropriate that his speech should read:

In the long history of the relationship between our two countries there was an unfortunate period in which my country inflicted great sufferings on the people of China. I deeply deplore this.<sup>11</sup>

The Emperor's visit was generally considered a success and the beginning of a "new stage" of friendly Sino-Japanese relations.<sup>12</sup> In 1993 the fall of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was followed by the advent of coalition government in Japan. This allowed for a change in the official attitude of the government. Whereas before the LDP would admit to Japan's wartime aggression only when it really had to, post-LDP coalition governments have openly admitted that Japan fought a war of aggression. Furthermore, Prime Ministers Hosokawa, Hata and Murayama have all apologized to the people of Asia for the suffering inflicted by the Japanese army during the war. With the 50th anniversary of the end of the war being marked in 1995, it remains to be seen whether Sino-Japanese relations have genuinely entered a "new stage".<sup>13</sup>

Chinese and Japanese leaders and politicians are always keen to present a very optimistic picture of Sino-Japanese relations. They frequently refer to friendly, neighbourly relations, the product of 2000 years of contact, Chinese and Japanese cultural and racial similarities, geographical

proximity and economic complementarity. Yet the issues described above indicate that the situation is far removed from diplomatic rhetoric. With the exception of the disputes over territory and the Kyoto dormitory issue, the salient feature of all the incidents described above is the "historical" aspect, the legacy of the Sino-Japanese war. So powerful is this legacy that all the issues seem to follow a pattern where, to quote Allen Whiting, "provocative events in Japan associated with the war trigger an automatic response in China that combines anger over the past with apprehension about the future".<sup>14</sup> Much of the literature on Sino-Japanese political relations tends to stress the historical and cultural aspect of the "Chinese" and "Japanese" experiences to explain why Sino-Japanese relations are conducted the way they are. Such literature explains that this is an emotionally charged relationship, dominated by ambivalent attitudes - Japan's flattery of China stemming from the cultural debt, but also its contempt for China's backwardness; China's superiority complex stemming from centuries of cultural influence and "Middle Kingdom" hierarchy, but its inferiority complex based on its relatively slow pace of modernization.<sup>15</sup> Thus we are told Sino-Japanese relations are conditioned by Japan's cultural debt to China, by 2000 years of history and by memories of the atrocities suffered by the Chinese at the hands of the Japanese.

The 1982 "Textbook Issue" appears to be a typical example of this pattern, that is, the Japanese Education Ministry alters history textbooks and this provokes a justifiable outcry from China and other Asian countries, which see in this attempt at historical revisionism an indication that some Japanese are trying to revive militarism. On closer examination, however, this "historical legacy" line of reasoning oversimplifies the complexity of the issue and obscures the fact that the "Textbook Issue" was not simply concerned with interpretation of history, if indeed it was concerned with history at all.

### **Domestic and external influences on foreign policy-making**

Before turning to the events of the "Textbook Issue" it is necessary to suggest an organizational framework which will help to explain how and why the events occurred. Foreign policy decision-making theories that were developed within the field of international relations have shown that a large number of factors or variables influence the way governments arrive at foreign policy decisions. These factors can be grouped into two broad categories, external and domestic.

External variables refer to the effects of the structures of the international system (for example, bipolarity or multi-polarity), and the effect of the policies and actions of other nations on a nation's foreign policy.

Domestic variables refer to a large number of indigenous factors which affect the foreign policy decision-maker to a greater or lesser extent. Included in this category, for example, are a nation's attributes - its topographical characteristics, population attributes, economic and military capabilities and its political, economic and social systems. Less quantifiable but equally important is the influence of a nation's character, culture and history. The structure of a nation's government organization, the operating procedures of its bureaucracy and its decision-making processes must also be considered. Finally, one must take into account the perceptions, personal characteristics and beliefs of individual key leaders and the effect these have on foreign policy decisions.

Ideally then, a case study of any nation's foreign policy process must take into account as many of these factors as possible. This is not to say that all of the factors play a highly influential role in all foreign policy decisions. The relative influence of any of the variables on a particular foreign policy outcome depends largely on the type of issue in question. A study, for example, of a "routine" issue which requires a long deliberation and formulation time and involves many decision-makers would produce different findings to a study, say, of a "crisis" issue which demands a rapid response and involves a small corps of decision-makers.

While a number of studies have utilized this type of framework to examine Chinese and Japanese decision-making separately, the literature on Sino-Japanese political relations remains lacking in systematic, methodological case studies. A standard account of Sino-Japanese political relations gives a description of events and developments over a broad time period, usually from the perspective of either the Chinese or the Japanese side, and a forecast of how the relationship will develop in the future. Overemphasis in the literature on the historical and cultural factors was noted above. Undoubtedly these are indeed factors which contribute to Sino-Japanese foreign policy behaviour but, as the foreign policy-making theories illustrate, they are by no means the only factors, nor are they necessarily the key determinants of foreign policy decisions. It is essential therefore when studying an issue in Sino-Japanese relations to consider the possible effect of all relevant variables and to allow also for variations in behaviour according to issue type, be it routine, political, critical or crisis-level. Applying this type of organizational framework to the "Textbook Issue", in other words considering the effects of external and domestic factors on the decision-making process according to issue type, should provide a clearer picture of how Sino-Japanese interaction works.

### The 1982 "Textbook Issue"

Before analysing the events of "Textbook Issue", it is necessary to provide some background to the events of the summer of 1982. At the beginning of June 1982 Premier Zhao Ziyang paid an official visit to Japan. In his meetings with Emperor Hirohito and Prime Minister Suzuki Zenko he talked of "establishing long-standing and stable ties of economic co-operation in the spirit of peace, friendship, equality and mutual benefit". He also commented on the favourable conditions that Sino-Japanese relations enjoyed, namely normalised diplomatic relations, a long-standing traditional friendship and topographical advantages. Zhao and Suzuki both expressed satisfaction over the steady development of political, economic and cultural relations since 1972.<sup>16</sup> By the end of July, however, a bitter dispute over textbooks dominated the Sino-Japanese political agenda. It jeopardized Prime Minister Suzuki's impending visit to China and, according to Japanese Foreign Ministry officials at the time, set back Sino-Japanese relations by ten years.

The content of history textbooks had been a domestic issue in Japanese politics for some years, but it became an international issue following reports in the Japanese media at the end of June which spoke of watered-down accounts of Japanese wartime aggression in China and Korea in the high-school history textbooks that had just been authorized by the Education Ministry.<sup>17</sup> According to the reports (which were by no means consistent), the new batch of textbooks differed from those of previous years not just in their descriptions of Japan's war-time actions but also in the references to the Emperor system, nuclear power plants and citizen's rights and duties. The general tone of these new textbooks was perceived by the media to have reverted to that found in pre-war textbooks, and according to the press this was due to more rigorous textbook authorization carried out by the Education Ministry. The newspapers gave specific examples of how the textbooks had allegedly been altered. On the question of "invasion" the reports said that the Education Ministry had recommended that the phrase "the invasion of China" be changed to "the advance into China". Passages relating to the Nanjing Massacre had also been reworded, with the result that the responsibility for the killings lay with the Chinese army, due to its "tenacious resistance" to the Japanese army. The "18 September (or Manchurian) Incident" was described in the new textbooks merely as "bombing of the South Manchurian Railway by the Japanese army". Ironically, some of these reports were incorrect and it later came to light that the Education Ministry had not recommended that "invasion" be changed to "advance" in connection with descriptions of China in that year's textbook authorization process. By the time the error was discovered (or at least made public<sup>18</sup>), the issue had become a diplomatic matter.

The *People's Daily* carried a short article summarizing these Japanese press reports in its 29 June issue, although with no commentary or analysis

attached. Nearly one month later, however, in the last ten days of July, articles and commentaries criticizing Japan's Education Ministry for attempting to distort historical facts began to appear with increasing frequency not only in the *People's Daily* but in all the major Chinese daily newspapers. On 26 July the Chinese government made an official representation to the Japanese government requesting that certain passages in the problem textbooks be corrected, thereby raising the issue to a diplomatic problem. The sections at fault were those reported in the original Japanese press reports of the end of June, that is, the passages which included the change of "invasion" to "advance" and "all-out aggression against China" to "all-round advance into China", the passages which attributed the Nanjing atrocities to the "stubborn resistance of Chinese troops", and the description of the 18 September Incident as "the bombing of the South Manchurian Railway".<sup>19</sup>

The Japanese government's preliminary response was to entrust the Education Ministry with the task of explaining the textbook screening system to Chinese embassy officials. These initial explanations were rather vague, stressing the independent role of textbook authors and editors while playing down the role of the Education Ministry in the screening process. The Chinese government saw this explanation as an attempt by the Education Ministry to push the blame onto the private publishing companies which produce the textbooks. Further angered by the comments of some LDP leaders (including Education Minister Ogawa Heiji and the particularly vociferous Director General of the National Land Agency, Matsuno Yukiyasu) who had accused China of interfering in domestic matters, the Chinese government retracted an invitation to the Education Minister to visit China in September. This was followed on 5 August by a reiteration of the demand for the textbooks to be corrected.

The South Korean government had also entered the fray by this stage, having requested through diplomatic channels on 3 August that descriptions, amongst other things, of the Korean independence movement be rewritten in a less negative light.<sup>20</sup> The issue was attracting much adverse media attention throughout South-East Asia and the response by the Japanese government in the light of this mounting anti-Japanese movement was to send Education and Foreign Ministry representatives to China and later to Korea to discuss the matter.

In the meantime the Japanese government appeared no closer to resolving the issue internally because of the emergence of a conflict between the Education and Foreign Ministries and within the LDP. The Education Ministry was resolute in its position that the textbooks should not be corrected at the request of a foreign government and that the content of the history books did not, as the Chinese and South Korean governments maintained, violate the spirit of the joint statements and peace treaties signed with those two countries. On the other hand the Foreign Ministry, worried

about the deterioration of relations with China and Korea, urged the Education Ministry to change the textbooks in accordance with Chinese and South Korean requests. The media, public opinion and some LDP members supported the Foreign Ministry view, whereas the Education Ministry gained the support of LDP education-related Dietmen (*bunkyo-zoku*) and hawks like Matsuno Yukiyasu, who in later years would certainly have been forced to resign for some of his comments.<sup>21</sup>

With the second round of explanations failing to solve the "misunderstanding" between Japan and China (and Japan and Korea), the anti-Japanese media campaigns still in full swing in China and Korea and the conflict between the Education and Foreign Ministries worsening, it fell to Prime Minister Suzuki to reach a "political judgement". He instructed the two ministries to "co-ordinate" their views and pledged a solution to the matter before his visit to China in September. The Japanese government finally issued a statement on 26 August which stated that it would make the necessary amendments to the textbooks and that a Textbook Authorization Research Council enquiry would look into the possibility of changing the criteria of the textbook authorization system. Although the statement appeared to accede to the foreign requests, its wording was ambiguous, failing to make clear how and when the corrections would be made. Although the South Korean government accepted the statement in principle, the Chinese government expressed dissatisfaction with its ambiguity. Further talks between the Japanese and Chinese governments took place on 8 September and the Japanese side explained in more detail how and when the corrections would be made. Shortly after this last round of talks Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian announced that the Chinese government accepted the measures put forward by the Japanese government and considered the matter closed - while reserving the right to re-open it if the Japanese government failed to carry out the measures.

When Prime Minister Suzuki visited China in September on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations, he expressed the hope that Sino-Japanese economic and technical co-operation would continue to increase. As an oblique apology for the "Textbook Issue" Suzuki quoted a section of the Japan-China Joint Statement of 1972 stating that "Japan is keenly aware of its responsibility for causing enormous damage in the past to the Chinese people through war and deeply reproaches itself".<sup>22</sup> In response Zhao Ziyang stated that the Chinese government's policy on the development of Sino-Japanese relations remained unchanged, indicating that the "Textbook Issue" had been resolved.

The events described above suggest nothing more than a conflict over the interpretation of history, but when the actions of the Chinese government and the reactions of the Japanese government are studied in more detail, then it becomes clear that the issue goes far deeper than textbook content.

### Chinese decision-making on the "Textbook Issue"

The biggest question surrounding the "Textbook Issue" is why the Chinese government decided to turn a Japanese domestic educational matter into a diplomatic issue, particularly on the eve of Prime Minister Suzuki's visit to China to celebrate ten years of normalization.

The simplest explanation is that the Chinese government was incensed at the distorted facts in the textbooks and perceived a revival of militarism in Japan. After all, as Carol Gluck has pointed out,

When it comes to war, national history is clearly an international affair. Revising one's own history is one thing; revising another country's history is something else altogether. The Rape of Nanking, after all, belongs at least as much to China as to Japan.<sup>23</sup>

This is undoubtedly true. Yet if the "Textbook Issue" was a case of the Chinese government responding "automatically" to "a provocative Japanese action" as Whiting might argue, then why was there a three-week gap between the first report in the *People's Daily* at the end of June and the start of the anti-Japanese campaign at the end of July? Furthermore, considering that Japanese textbooks had contained such euphemistic wording as "advance" in previous years (as the Japanese Education Ministry openly admitted), and that a debate over the "truth" about the Nanjing Massacre had been raging within Japan for over ten years, then why had this not triggered an "automatic response" from China before?

Clearly there were factors involved in the "Textbook Issue" other than a mere attempt by the Chinese government to persuade the Japanese to "adopt a correct view of history". Various explanations have been suggested by Japanese and Western commentators to account for the Chinese decision to raise the issue to diplomatic level and all tend to agree that rather than being a spontaneous reaction, the issue was in fact planned and controlled by the top leadership, namely Deng Xiaoping, Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang.

The reasons for this line of thinking are twofold. First, the *People's Daily* campaign showed careful planning - a content analysis by Tanaka Akihiko shows a wave-like pattern where the number of articles relating to the war, Japanese atrocities and revival of militarism increase around the anniversary on 15 August of Japan's surrender in the Second World War and the anniversary on 3 September of the Chinese victory in the anti-Japanese war. Tanaka concludes that the campaign was designed to revolve around these two key dates and similarly was planned to be wound down gradually by 10 September to coincide with the end of the 12th Party Congress.<sup>24</sup>

The second indication that the issue was centrally planned and controlled was that both the Chinese Foreign Ministry and Education Ministry appeared either reluctant to become involved in the issue or ill-informed about it. For example, the Education Ministry issued its invitation to Japanese Education Minister Ogawa after the *People's Daily* campaign

had already started and when Xiao Xiangqian of the Foreign Ministry had just made his representation to the Japanese embassy. According to Okada Hidehiro, this indicates that the Education Ministry had not expected the issue to escalate to this level and had not been involved in the decision-making process at this stage. A week later the Education Ministry rescinded the invitation, but Okada suggests the wording of the rescission implied that it was not really the wish of the Education Ministry to do so. Similarly, the Chinese Foreign Ministry, by targeting its criticism solely on the Japanese Education Ministry, also indicated that it was not in favour of the anti-Japanese campaign.<sup>25</sup>

It having been established that the textbook controversy was centrally controlled, the question remains what factors prompted the leadership to launch the campaign. Explanations of the "Textbook Issue" have suggested many reasons relating variously to bilateral issues, domestic factors in Chinese politics and external factors.

In terms of it being a purely bilateral problem, some suggest that the issue was a way to "bring the Japanese government to heel" or to humiliate Prime Minister Suzuki before his impending visit.<sup>26</sup> Other explanations suggest it was a means of exacting more economic aid from Japan.<sup>27</sup> Such explanations are commonly cited in the literature on Sino-Japanese relations where it is argued that China uses the issue of past aggression as a lever to extract greater economic co-operation and Japan always complies. A third line of explanation relates the issue to another perennial problem in Sino-Japanese relations, that is, Taiwan, suggesting that the "Textbook Issue" was used to indicate the Chinese government's displeasure at the trade talks then in progress between an LDP trade mission and the Taiwanese government.<sup>28</sup>

Other analyses have accounted for Chinese behaviour in terms of the Chinese domestic situation at the time and not a bilateral problem at all. A number of explanations state that the Chinese leadership saw in the "Textbook Issue" an opportunity to achieve one (or more) domestic objectives. One argument states that the Deng-Hu-Zhao triumvirate used the issue to divert attention away from a power struggle that was going on between them and some elements in the People's Liberation Army (PLA), in particular senior military leaders who didn't really approve of Deng's policies which they saw as moving away from Mao's values. This section of the PLA had criticized the leadership for making too many concessions to the United States in connection with the Sino-American negotiations on reducing arms sales to Taiwan. The leadership therefore mounted the anti-Japanese campaign and adopted a hard line to prove that it could take a strong stand against Japan (a representative of the "West") and thus prevent any further PLA criticism of weakness.<sup>29</sup>

Another explanation connected with Chinese internal policies is that the "Textbook Issue" was a means of boosting a youth campaign in China

which aimed to raise awareness about Chinese history, show the superiority of "socialist spiritual civilization" and strengthen support for the Party amongst Chinese youth.<sup>30</sup> According to Tanaka Akihiko, the youth education campaign began in earnest on 25 July, the day before China's protest, and continued until October. The Communist Youth League instructed all its units to organize a movement urging youth to "Learn history, love your country". Tanaka suggests therefore that the "Textbook Issue" was "developed" after 20 July in order to synchronize it with this youth education campaign and in order to help teach Chinese youth about the Sino-Japanese war.

A third set of arguments links the "Textbook Issue" with China's external relations and changes in China's foreign policy. For example, Nakajima suggests that the anti-Japan campaign was used as a way of signalling a shift in its foreign policy posture away from the "West" in favour of the Soviet Union - there had been increasing speculation that the PRC and the Soviet Union were willing to discuss the possibility of opening talks on normalization.<sup>31</sup>

Other analysts suggest that the "Textbook Issue" provided an opportunity for the Chinese government to illustrate that its foreign policy was not shifting in favour of the USSR necessarily, but was moving towards an "independent foreign policy". Zhao Ziyang had talked in April 1982 of the need for China to follow an independent foreign policy, but the concept was officially articulated by Hu Yaobang at the 12th Party Congress at the beginning of September.<sup>32</sup> It is thought that this new foreign policy approach was introduced largely in response to internal criticism (again from the PLA) that China had leaned too much in favour of the capitalist countries. Thus the PRC government's tough stance on Japan over the textbooks was an illustration that this situation was going to change.

Some of the explanations described are more plausible than others, and it seems most likely that the "Textbook Issue" provided the PRC leadership with an opportunity to boost the youth education campaign and divert attention away from the power struggle with the PLA, thereby giving itself time to consolidate its power at the 12th Party Congress. What is certain is that the Chinese government was not merely (perhaps not even) concerned with settling a conflict of interpretations of Sino-Japanese history - there was only a handful of references to Japanese textbook content or Japanese history teaching in the hundreds of paragraphs given over to the "Textbook Issue" in the *People's Daily*.



### Japanese policy-making on the "Textbook Issue"

A study of the Japanese government's response to the "Textbook Issue" and the decision-making process involved shows some similarities to the Chinese case in terms of the dominance of domestic factors.

To understand the Japanese response, it is necessary to explain the background of the Japanese domestic "Textbook Issue" which emerged after the occupation but came to the fore in 1980. Education in post-war Japan has been dominated by antagonism between the LDP and the Japan Teachers' Union (JTU). The LDP has constantly tried to limit the influence of the Marxist JTU on the education system and in turn the JTU has consistently tried to block LDP moves to recreate what it perceives to be a pre-war authoritarian education system. When the LDP won an overwhelming majority in the double elections in June 1980 it was in a position to carry through a tougher policy on textbooks. Worried about a Left-wing bias in textbooks apparently due to the influence of the JTU and the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), the LDP recommended that the Education Ministry tighten up its textbook authorization system in order to produce more patriotic textbooks. It was the textbooks authorized under these new guidelines which gave rise to the internationalization of the "Textbook Issue". Furthermore, there had also been a debate in the 1970s about what really happened during the Nanjing Massacre, and from this debate originated the idea that the massacre was a fantasy or fiction. According to Fujiwara Akira, this debate in turn enabled the Education Ministry to allow more vague descriptions of the Nanjing Massacre or the omission of the numbers of Chinese killed or wounded with the excuse that there was no conclusive proof.<sup>33</sup>

Against this background then, the Japanese government was suddenly faced with a "critical" diplomatic issue. The term "critical" is used in the same sense as Fukui Haruhiro in his study of Japan's foreign policy-making in the run-up to normalization with China.<sup>34</sup> A critical issue is not a crisis because there is no threat to national security, but it shares the three main characteristics of a crisis (though less acute), that is, surprise, short decision time and threats to decision-maker's values or goals.

In the "Textbook Issue" the surprise element was the sudden attack by the PRC media on the Japanese Education Ministry followed swiftly by diplomatic representations by both the PRC and ROK governments. Indeed, the Japanese press considered that the government had responded slowly to the foreign demands precisely because it had not expected the issue to go to these levels. The short decision-time element was present in the Chinese and Korean governments' demands for immediate corrections and the mounting pressure in the form of media campaigns spreading throughout East Asia and touching off an anti-Japanese movement. The threat to decision-makers' values or goals could be seen in the response of the Education Ministry which resolutely opposed all pressures to change the offending passages in

the textbooks on the grounds that such action would undermine the textbook authorization system - a system that, as we saw earlier, the Education Ministry was in fact in the process of trying to strengthen. In more general terms there was widespread fear in the LDP that if the Japanese were seen to give in to foreign interference in what was essentially a domestic issue, their international credibility would be affected at a time when they were trying to raise their status in world affairs.

A critical issue is resolved by a small number of high-level political leaders whose decisions are easily identifiable. The decision-making core on the Japanese side was made up of Education and Foreign Ministry bureau chiefs, vice-ministers and ministers, the Chief Cabinet Secretary and the Prime Minister. The final decision was that of the Prime Minister, who given the failure of diplomatic moves was called upon to reach a political judgement. Of course, none of these decision-makers operated in a vacuum and their decisions were affected by a number of other "actors" - the LDP factions, the education "tribe" or *bunkyo-zoku*, the bureaucracy, the opposition parties, the media and public opinion. One of the most striking characteristics that the "Textbook Issue" revealed was the number of conflicts not only between ministries but within the LDP and within the *bunkyo-zoku*. Yet most of these conflicts were concerned not with how best to appease the Chinese and Korean governments but with how to defend respective corners and maintain the *status quo*.

The main conflict was between the Foreign Ministry, which recommended going along with the requests regardless of how this would affect the education system in order to avoid further diplomatic problems, and the Education Ministry, which opposed changing the textbooks regardless of the diplomatic consequences. The LDP was also split on the issue, four "hawks" (Matsuno Yukiyasu, Fujio Masayuki, Nakagawa Ichiro and Minowa Noboru) expressing the view that the demands by China and Korea represented interference in internal affairs and that Japan should not give in, and LDP "doves" (Kosaka Tokusaburo) recommending moderation. There was also a conflict within the education *zoku*, some members (Mitsuzuka Hiroshi, Ishibashi Kazuya and Aoki Masahisa) defending the textbook authorization system, and others (Fujinami Takao) recommending caution.<sup>35</sup>

Factional conflict was not a salient feature of the issue; this can be explained by Fukui's argument that because factions are not issue-oriented, factional conflict does not always play a significant role in a "critical" issue.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, factional conflict was probably eased in this case because the non-mainstream factions, being largely pro-Korean, did not want to see a deterioration in Japan-Korea relations and so did not raise as much objection as they might have done had Korea not been involved.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible that some non-mainstream faction members (for

example, Nakagawa) saw the issue as an opportunity to make comments that would humiliate Prime Minister Suzuki and prevent his re-election.

The opposition parties, the JTU, the media and public opinion were very much united in their criticism of the government's handling of the issue, although each had a slightly different reason. The financial world, worried about the possible adverse effects on trade with China, Korea and Asia as a whole, exerted pressure on the government to resolve the issue as quickly as possible. Indeed one analysis states that, as the issue developed, one of the major concerns of the LDP leadership was the extent to which trade with Asia would be affected.<sup>38</sup>

Faced with this plethora of conflicting attitudes and pressures, the Prime Minister had to reach a "political judgement" which would accommodate the foreign demands without abandoning domestic policies and losing domestic support. It appears that in the decision-making process domestic issues played a greater role than concerns over whether or not the Japanese view of history was correct. The Chinese and Korean governments were appeased by the Japanese government's promise to correct the errors in the textbooks and by the inclusion of a clause in the criteria for textbook authorization which pledged "consideration of international harmony in the treatment of history involving neighbouring countries". On the other hand refusal to stipulate a time schedule and method of correction pacified the Education Ministry and those opposed to changing the textbooks.

Schoppa suggests that as a result of the internationalization of the "Textbook Issue", textbook screening did become less strict. Certainly the following year the Education Ministry made no recommendations that passages containing "invasion" be altered to "advance". However, the recurrence of the "Textbook Issue" in 1984 and 1986 suggests that the issue did not bring about a permanent or decisive change in textbook content.

### Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to establish whether Sino-Japanese political relations are better explained in terms of their unique cultural and historical interaction or in terms of general theories of inter-state behaviour. As the analysis has shown, the "Textbook Issue", although sparked off by Japanese media and Chinese government indignation at apparent attempts to tone down descriptions of the war in textbooks, was concerned with the interpretation of Sino-Japanese history only at a very superficial level. As such the "Textbook Issue" should not be considered solely within the framework of historical interaction of China and Japan and their resultant "special" relationship.

It is necessary therefore to take a wider view of the relationship and to look to some of the foreign policy-making theories for an explanation of Sino-Japanese relations. As described, domestic factors in each country played a particularly influential role in the outcome of the issue. On the Chinese side the "domestic factor" explanations are good illustrations of the phenomenon described by Robert Jervis:

"when decision makers are faced with internal discontent they will tend to look for foreign adventures to divert the energies of their people and to create a unifying spirit".<sup>39</sup>

On the Japanese side bureaucratic politics - or the conflicting interests of bureaucracies - clearly affected the decision-making process.

When attempting to analyse Sino-Japanese political interaction the interplay of domestic and external considerations must be taken into account, and systematic application of foreign policy decision-making theories to this and other issues in Sino-Japanese relations is necessary for a greater understanding of the workings of this bilateral relationship.

### Notes

1 Walter Arnold, "Japan and China" in *Japan's Foreign Relations*, Robert S. Ozaki and Walter Arnold (eds), Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985, p.106.

2 Tanaka Akihiko, *Nitchu Kankei 1945-1990*, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1991, pp. 137-145; and Allen Whiting, *China Eyes Japan*, Berkeley, LA, London: University of California Press, 1989, pp. 53-54, 67-70

3 Tanaka, 1991, pp. 150-152; Laura Newby, *Sino-Japanese Relations*, London, New York: Routledge, 1988, p. 53, and Whiting, 1989, pp. 62-65.

4 Tanaka, 1991, pp. 155-62; Whiting, 1989, pp. 152-162, and Newby, 1988, pp. 59-60.

5 Tanaka, 1991, pp. 168-169 and Whiting, 1989, p. 200.

6 Tanaka, 1991, p. 169.

7 In 1992 however the PRC decided to reassert its sovereignty over the islands, causing outcry in Japan's ultra-nationalist circles. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1 November 1990, pp. 19-20 and 28 May 1992, p. 23.

8 *ibid.*, 5 September 1991, p. 16.

9 *ibid.*, 22 August 1991, p. 10.

10 For the debate on the Emperor's trip see *Japan Echo*, Vol. XIX, No. 4 Winter 1992, pp. 6-26.

11 *ibid.*, Vol. XX, 1993, p. 46.

12 *ibid.*, Vol. XX, 1993, pp. 45-51.

13 Later in 1994 problems soon resurfaced when two Japanese Cabinet ministers were forced to resign for their insensitive remarks about the war. In May Justice Minister



Nagano Shigeto remarked that the Nanjing Massacre never happened, and that Japan's invasion of China and other Asian nations was not an act of aggression but was aimed at liberating these countries from colonialism. In August Director General of the Environment Agency Sakurai Shin said that Japan did not fight with the intention to wage a war of aggression, and added that Japan liberated Asia from Western colonialism. The comments of both politicians drew condemnation from China, North and South Korea and throughout Asia, and consequently they were both forced to resign. Once again, however, the PRC chose not to let it develop into a diplomatic incident. Jiang Zemin reportedly said: "The bonds of friendship between China and Japan must be developed while keeping in mind the past as an admonishment for the future." *Japan Times Weekly*, 16-22 May 1994, pp.1, 5, and 29 August-4 September 1994, p. 8.

14 Whiting, 1989, p. 41.

15 For examples of this type of approach see: Ijiri Hidenori, "Sino-Japanese controversy since the 1972 diplomatic normalization" in *China Quarterly*, 1990, Vol.124; Chalmers Johnson, "The patterns of Japanese relations with China 1952-1982" in *Pacific Affairs*, 1986, Vol. 59; Iriye Akira, "Chinese-Japanese relations 1945-1990" in *China Quarterly*, 1990, Vol.124; Robert Taylor, *The Sino-Japanese Axis*, London: Athlone, 1985, pp. 96-116.

16 *Beijing Review*, 14 June 1982, pp. 5-6.

17 The following account is based on the reports of *Asahi Shimbun* and *Renmin Ribao* June to September 1982.

18 It appears that the newspapers which first printed the erroneous reports were well aware of the mistakes but continued to give the impression that "invasion" had been changed to "advance". Furthermore, the Education Ministry was also aware of the errors but failed to take any action against the press. See Watanabe Shoichi, 1982, "Banken kyo ni hoeta kyokasho mondai" in *Shokun*, October, pp. 26-27, and Sugiyama Takao, 1982, "Naze Monbusho wa kono 'ogoho' o hochi shita no ka" in *Shukan Bunshun*, No.37, p. 159.

19 See *Asahi Shimbun* 27 July 1982, p. 1 and BBC *Summary of World Broadcasts* FE/7090/A3/1.

20 According to the Japanese newspapers, the Education Ministry had recommended that the word "riot" be used in descriptions of the Korean Independence Movement

21 Examples of Matsuno's remarks: "Changing the wording in textbooks according to a foreign request is interference in Japan's domestic affairs. To change advance into invade would be a distortion of facts and children would lose respect for their forefathers." - *Asahi Shimbun* (pm edition) 29 July, p. 1. "At the time that Japan advanced into China it had the view that the whole nation was united into one and no one thought of it as aggression. It should be set forth, specifically, that we did not think of it as aggression, in the past, and, specifically, that today, it is this way." - *Nihon Keizai*, 27 August, p. 1.

22 *Beijing Review*, 11 October 1982, pp. 7-9.

23 Carol Gluck, "The Idea of Showa" in Carol Gluck and Stephen R. Grambard (eds), *Showa: The Japan of Hirohito*, 1992, p. 15.

24 Tanaka Akihiko, "Kyokasho Mondai o meguru Chugoku no seisaku kettei" in Okabe Tatsumi, *Chugoku Gaiko*, Tokyo: Nihon Kokusai Mondai Kenkyujo, 1983, pp. 198-202; see also Doi Masayuki, "Kyokasho hihan no uragawa ni aru mono" in *Asahi Jinnaru*, 13 August 1982, p. 7.

25 Okada Hidehiro, "Kyokasho kentei wa chugoku no naisei mondai da" in *Chuō Kōron*, October 1982, pp. 90-92.

26 Akasaka Taro, "Kyokasho ni mo 'Kakuei' ari" in *Bungei Shunjū*, October 1982, p. 163, "China was not satisfied with the China policy under the Suzuki administration"; see also Chalmers Johnson, "Patterns of Japanese relations with China 1952-1982" in *Pacific Affairs*, 1986, Vol. 59, pp. 420-421.

27 See Walter Arnold, "Political and economic influences in Japan's relations with China since 1978" in K. Newland, *The International Relations of Japan*, London: Macmillan, 1990, p. 139.

28 Okada, 1982, p. 84; Doi, 1982, p. 9.

29 Okada, 1982, pp. 91-3; Ijiri, 1990, pp. 645-646

30 Tanaka, 1983, pp. 200-206

31 Nakajima Mineo in *Sankei Shimbun*, 20 August 1982, p. 11, translated in *Daily Summary of Japanese Press*, 25 August 1982, p. 12.

32 Hu Yaobang, "Create a new situation" in *Beijing Review*, 13 September 1982, p. 29, and *Sekai Shūbō*, 19 October 1982, p. 21.

33 Fujiwara Akira, "Nankin Daigyakusatsu", *Iwanami Pamphlets Showa History Series*, 1988, No.5, p. 22.

34 Fukui Haruhiro, "Tanaka goes to Peking: A case study in foreign policy-making" in T.J. Pempel, *Policy-making in Contemporary Japan*, Ithaca: Cornell, 1977.

35 Leonard J. Schoppa, 1991, *Education Reform in Japan*, London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 61-2.

36 Fukui, 1977, p.101.

37 *Japan Times Weekly*, 11 September 1982, p. 4.

38 Paul S. Kim, "Japan's bureaucratic decision-making on the textbooks" in *Public Administration*, 1983, 61, p. 293.

39 Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989, Morningside Edition, p.34.