THE 1972 SYSTEM: NEGOTIATING THE NORMALIZATION OF SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS

1. *Introduction*

On September 25, 1972, Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, accompanied by Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ohira and Chief Cabinet Secretary Susumu Nikaido, visited Beijing. Over four days of negotiations, both sides issued the "Joint Communique of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China" (hereafter the China-Japan Joint Communique or Joint Communique) on September 29, formally announcing the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Diplomatic relations between China and Japan were thus normalized.

Records of the negotiations leading to the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations have been declassified and released by the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA). What agreements did China and Japan reach during these negotiations regarding the future of their bilateral relationship? These agreements constitute the foundation of postwar Sino-Japanese relations, which this article refers to as the "1972 System" of Sino-Japanese relations. This article re-examines the meaning and content of the 1972 System through a detailed analysis of the normalization negotiations and discussions between China and Japan.

Numerous narratives and studies exist on Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization, often recounting the tumultuous journey and offering poignant memoirs from those directly involved. In academic research, discussions mainly focus on the textual content and significance of the provisions concerning Taiwan and historical issues in the Joint Communique[1]. Prior studies on the

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[1] For example, Zhai Xin, "The Formation and Essence of Japan's Official Position on the Taiwan Issue: An Analysis of the Process of the Tanaka Kakuei Cabinet's Policy of Reopening Diplomatic Relations with China," *Riben xuekan* [Japanese studies], no.1, 2009, pp. 8–22.

1972 System can generally be categorized into two types: those exploring its substantive content and those debating its relevance today. These studies also reveal divergent perspectives between China and Japan. Chinese research tends to emphasize the former, emphasizing the substantial promises Japan must adhere to regarding history and the Taiwan issue[2]. Meanwhile, much of the Japanese research discusses the latter, proposing theories of the framework's obsolescence or "tectonic shifts"[3]. The question of obsolescence inherently implies an answer, suggesting that significant changes in the domestic and international landscape over the past fifty years, along with Japan's equivocal stance on the Taiwan issue, rendering the framework outdated[4].

Discussions on the substantive content of the 1972 System invariably focus on Taiwan and historical issues, which are widely regarded as the two most important and sensitive issues in Sino-Japanese relations. The basic premise of the 1972 normalization was that "China and Japan reached an agreement on the principles and methods of handling these issues"[5]. Additionally, some scholars

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[2] Wang Haibin and Duan Zhen. "The Consensus of the '1972 System' and Sino-Japanese Relations", *International Forum*, Vol.9, No.2, Mar., 2007, pp. 58–59.

[3] For example, Takahara Akio, Tang Liang, Nam Kijeong, Takenaka Chiharu, and Sunayama Yukio, "Records of the International Symposium Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Normalization of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and China: Japan-China Relations in the Global Context-Tectonic Shifts in the 1972 System", *Aichi Daigaku Kokusai Mondai Kenkyujyo Kiyo* [Bulletin of the Aichi University Institute of International Affairs] 160, October 2022, pp. 1–71.

[4] Kokubun, Ryosei. "Changes in the '1972 System' and the path to develop coordinated relationships", *Riben Xuekan* [Japanese Studies], No.5, 1997, pp. 43–50. Kokubun, Ryosei. "Seeking Japan-China relations beyond the '1972 system': 30th Anniversary of Normalization of Diplomatic Relations", *Gaiko Foramu* [Foreign forum] 15(10), 2002, pp. 16–23. Ito, Go. "The Cracks in the 1972 System: International Order in East Asia and U.S.-China Relations", Igashira Takeshi ed., *Amerika Gaikou to 21 seiki no sekai* [American diplomacy and the world in the 21st century]. Kyoto: Showa do, 2005. Kawashima, Shi. "The Shaking 1972 System: Searching for a way to 'escape from the normalization of Japan-PRC relations and the severance of Japan-Taiwan diplomatic relations'", *Chian foramu* [Public safety forum], 21(1), 2015, pp. 30–38. Takahara, Akio et al. op. cit., pp. 1–71. Eto, Naoko. "China's Changing Perception of Japan: A 2022 Review of the "1972 System" Discourse and the "New Thinking on Japan" Debate." *Asia-Pacific Review*, 30(1), 2023, pp. 59–79.

[5] Gao, Lan. "Breaking through the '72 year system': establishing a new type of China-Japan relationship within the framework of a strategic and mutually beneficial relationship", *International Observation*, No. 1, 2015, pp. 87–98.

have identified stable Japan-U.S.-China relations and Japan's support for China's modernization as important components of the 1972 System[6].

This article examines the specific content of the 1972 System, while offering several new perspectives. Regarding the Taiwan issue, it extends beyond Japan's commitments to suggest that "Japan maintains practical relations with Taiwan," which has profound implications. Furthermore, beyond Taiwan and historical issues, it highlights agreements like the construction of Sino-Japanese relations within the framework of the Japan-U.S. security arrangements and the development of relations "beyond systemic differences." These constitute the four key elements of the 1972 System.

In addition, this article analyzes how these agreements were formulated, offering a meticulous examination of the negotiation process and policy decision-making. It aims to address previous research gaps by utilizing declassified diplomatic archives from the Japanese MOFA, government documents from the United States (such as FRUS and DNSA), and Chinese leaders' chronicles. In light of these sources, it reconstructs the negotiation and deliberation process between China and Japan regarding diplomatic normalization.

Similar issues can also be found in other regions of the world, where the points of agreement reached on various bilateral issues during the process of normalization often become the starting point for subsequent bilateral relations. Therefore, examining how such issues were negotiated in the course of diplomatic reconciliation, and how historical problems were incorporated into postwar diplomatic frameworks, has broader international significance.

2. *Exchange of Draft Proposals for the China-Japan Joint Communique Prior to the Normalization Negotiations*

The official negotiations for the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations were completed within just four days. However, prior to entering into formal negotiations, more than two decades of efforts had been made towards this goal. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on October 1, 1949, China had consistently advocated the normalization of diplomatic relations with Japan. Particularly in the early 1950s, after formulating the overall policy goal of "normalizing Sino-Japanese relations," this objective

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[6] Kokubun, Ryosei. "Changes in the '1972 System' and the path to develop coordinated relationships", op. cit. Ito, Go. "Transformation of the "1972 System" in U.S.-China Relations." *Kokusai mondai* [International affairs] 559, 2007, pp. 14–27.

remained steadfast. Nevertheless, the restoration of diplomatic ties between China and Japan was effectively frozen due to the Cold War dynamics and the Japan-U.S. security arrangements.

China consistently advocated for diplomatic relations with Japan and put forward several sets of three principles for developing Sino-Japanese relations. Eventually, before the formal negotiations, China proposed "Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations." During this period, there were no official governmental relations between China and Japan, but Japanese parliamentarians played a role in communication and liaison. The Chinese draft of the Sino-Japanese Joint Communique was transmitted to the Japanese government in July 1972 through "Takeiri Memo" by parliamentarian Yoshikatsu Takeiri, while Japan's amendments to it were brought by parliamentarian Yoshimi Furui to China two weeks before Prime Minister Tanaka's visit in September.

2.1 China's Consistent Advocacy of Diplomatic Normalization with Japan

In May 1949, Chiang Kai-shek led the Nationalist government to Taiwan, bringing the "Republic of China" to Taipei, the proclamation of the PRC was made by Mao Zedong in October of the same year. By then, the Cold War had already spread across East Asia. In June 1950, the Korean War broke out, and in October, China dispatched the People's Volunteer Army across the Yalu River, formally entering the war in Korea. In this context, the United States hastened its reconciliation with Japan. Japan quickly signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty with the Allied Powers in September 1951, bringing the Allied occupation of Japan to an end. On the same day, Japan signed the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty with the United States. The Yoshida Cabinet at the time established a post-war national development path of seeking Japan's economic revival and political autonomy within the "Pax Americana"[7]. The emergence of the Cold War order in East Asia severely constrained postwar Sino-Japanese relations.

Neither the PRC nor the Taiwan authorities participated in the San Francisco Peace Conference in September 1951. The PRC government declared its non-recognition of the San Francisco Treaty. Under U.S. pressure, Japan chose the Taiwan authorities as the representatives of China and signed the Treaty of Peace between Japan and the Republic of China in Taiwan on the same day

[7] Soeya, Yoshihide. *Nihon gaikou to tyugoku 1945–1972* [Japanese Diplomacy and China: 1945–1972], Keio University Press, 1995, p. 65.

when the San Francisco Treaty took effect on April 28, 1952[8]. From then until the Sino-Japanese Joint Communique in 1972, the PRC had no formal diplomatic relations with Japan.

Unable to establish formal diplomatic relations with Japan, China chose instead to promote economic exchanges and people-to-people contacts as a means of gradually advancing political relations, promoting normalization using unofficial channels to facilitate official normalization, and advancing relations. In response to Japan's practice of "separating politics from economics," China consistently advocated the principle of "indivisibility of politics and economics" and put forward several sets of "three principles" for developing Sino-Japanese relations. These include the "Three Political Principles" of 1958, namely, not antagonizing China, not creating "two Chinas," and not obstructing the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations; the "Three Trade Principles" of 1960, namely, government agreements, private contracts, and individual favors[9]; and the "Four Conditions for Trade with Japan" of 1970, namely, China would not engage in business with companies that assist South Korea in attacking North Korea or Taiwan in attacking the mainland; that have significant investments in South Korea or Taiwan; that advocate U.S. aggression against Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia; or that are subsidiaries of U.S. companies in Japan[10]. These principles were policy adjustments made to address problems arising from economic exchanges between the two countries, but fundamentally aimed at two objectives: to promote economic relations and personnel exchanges with Japan and to achieve the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations.

2.2 Proposal of "the Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations"

By 1971, significant changes occurred in China's international environment, marking a turning point in Sino-Japanese relations. On June 28, 1971, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai met with a delegation led by the chairman of the

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[8] Ishii, Akira. "Taiwan or Beijing?" Watanabe, Akio, ed., *Sengo Nihon no taigai seisaku* [Postwar Japanese foreign policy], Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1995, pp. 62–85.

[9] Editorial Group of *Zhou Enlai yu Waiguo Shounao ji Zhengyao Huitanlu*, ed., *Zhou Enlai yu Waiguo Shounao ji Zhengyao Huitanlu* [Records of Zhou Enlai's Conversations with Foreign Heads of State and Dignitaries], Beijing: Taihai Chubanshe, 2012, p. 184.

[10] Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenxian Yanjiushi, ed., *Zhou Enlai Nianpu, 1949–1976* [The chronicle of Zhou Enlai, 1949–1976] (hereafter *Zhou Nianpu*), Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1997, p. 362.

Japanese Komeito Party, Yoshikatsu Takeiri. Subsequently, a joint statement was signed with the China-Japan Friendship Association delegation, including the first item: the "Five Principles for Restoring Sino-Japanese Relations." These principles were as follows: First, there is only one China, and the government of the PRC is the sole legitimate government representing the Chinese people; resolutely opposing conspiracy to create "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan." Second, Taiwan is a province of China and an integral part of Chinese territory; the Taiwan issue is China's internal affair, and China resolutely opposes any theory of Taiwan's "undetermined status." Third, Treaty of Peace between Japan and the Republic of China (Japan-ROC Peace Treaty) is illegal and must be abolished. Fourth, the United States must withdraw all its armed forces from Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait region. Fifth, the lawful rights of the PRC to its seat in all organizations of the United Nations and its status as a permanent member of the Security Council must be restored[11].

This statement was followed by Assistant to the U.S. President for National Security Affairs Henry Kissinger's secret visit to China, which began on July 9, and President Richard Nixon's televised announcement on July 15, indicating his upcoming visit to Beijing. This caused a huge shock in Japan--the "Nixon Shock." On September 30, Zhou Enlai met with Fujiyama Aiichiro and his delegation from the Japanese Diet Members' League for the Promotion of Restoration of Diplomatic Relations with China. Subsequently, a Joint Communique was signed with the China-Japan Friendship Association delegation, confirming the four basic principles for restoring diplomatic relations. These principles omitted the fourth principle of the previous five, as a certain understanding had been reached between China and the United States on the issue of U.S. withdrawal following Kissinger's visit. On October 26, the 26th session of the United Nations General Assembly voted to restore the legitimate seat of the PRC at the United Nations, rendering the fifth principle of the previous five meaningless.

In February 1972, Nixon's trip to China achieved Sino-American rapprochement, leading to the rapid escalation of the "Nixon Shock" in Japan. On April 12, Zhou Enlai met with a delegation led by Ikkou Kasuga of the Japanese Minshato Party (the Democratic Socialist Party of Japan). The following day, a joint statement was issued with the China-Japan Friendship Association delegation, explicitly proposing the Three Principles for Restoring

[11] *Renmin ribao*, 3 July, 1971.

Sino-Japanese Relations. These principles encompassed the first three items of the previous five principles and were respectively referred to as the "Issue of Legitimate Representation of China," the "Status of Taiwan," and the "Japan-ROC Peace Treaty." First, the government of the PRC is the sole legitimate government representing the Chinese people. Second, Taiwan is an inseparable part of the territory of the PRC. Third, the Japan-ROC Peace Treaty is illegal, null, and void and must be abolished[12]. Thus, the Three Principles for the Restoring Sino-Japanese Relations were formally established, becoming China's prerequisites for the normalization negotiations with Japan.

The Nixon Shock of 1971 accelerated Japan's move toward rapprochement with the People's Republic of China. When U.S. President Richard Nixon announced his plan to visit China, the move fundamentally transformed the diplomatic landscape of the Cold War and prompted the Japanese government—whose China policy had long been closely aligned with that of the United States—to reassess its approach toward Beijing. One immediate consequence was the political shift within Japan that culminated in the establishment of a new administration led by Kakuei Tanaka, who advocated the prompt normalization of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. At the same time, calls for normalization with China intensified domestically, extending from political circles and social organizations to the broader public.

Economic factors also reinforced this policy shift. After surpassing West Germany in 1968 to become the world's second-largest economy, Japan's rapid growth stimulated strong interest in expanding economic relations with China. Similar economic motivations also encouraged countries in South America and other parts of the Third World to renew diplomatic engagement with Beijing.

2.3 Exchange of Draft Proposals for the China-Japan Joint Communique

As no official diplomatic channel existed between the two governments, however, prior to the formal negotiations, drafts of the Joint Communique were exchanged between the two sides through Japanese parliamentarians. In fact, the "Takeiri Memo" (the details are described below) is the first draft proposed by the Chinese side to the Japanese, while the Japanese revised draft was delivered to the Chinese side by the parliamentarian Yoshimi Furui during his visit to Beijing.

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[12] Tian, Huan, ed., *Zhanhou zhongri guanxi Wenxianji (1971–1995)* [Collection of Documents on Sino-Japanese Relations in the postwar period], Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe, 1997, p. 81.

Chairman of the Komeito Party, Yoshikatsu Takeiri, arrived in Beijing on July 25, 1972. In the following three days, Zhou Enlai conducted three consecutive discussions with Takeiri. The third meeting was essentially the process of agreeing upon the Takeiri Memo[13]. Zhou Enlai and Takeiri confirmed that the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations would be announced in the form of a Joint Communique during Prime Minister Tanaka's visit to Beijing. They then summarized the contents of the Joint Communique into eight points, covering historical issues (Articles 1 and 7), the Taiwan issue (Article 2), and bilateral relations (Articles 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8). To be specific, regarding historical issues, it included the issue of ending the state of war in the Article and China's renunciation of war reparation claims in Article 7. Concerning the Taiwan issue, the focus was on Japan's response to the Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations. Regarding bilateral relations, it covered the establishment of diplomatic relations, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, anti-hegemony clauses, peace treaties, practical agreements, etc. Zhou Enlai confirmed the Chinese proposals for the Joint Communique to Takeiri, who recorded them item by item to create the Takeiri Memo. It was handed over to Foreign Minister Ohira on August 4, the day after returning to Japan. These notes, especially the points regarding China's non-involvement in the U.S.-Japan security system and the absence of compensation demands, directly led to Prime Minister Tanaka's determination to visit China. On the 5th, Tanaka, along with Ohira, met with Takeiri and immediately expressed his intention to "go to China."

Subsequently, the Japanese MOFA deliberated on the Chinese draft and proposed modifications. The Japanese revised draft was brought to China by Yoshimi Furui, who arrived in Beijing on September 9. Upon his arrival, Furui first explained to Liao Chengzhi, the chairman of the China-Japan Friendship Association, that: 1) The governments of both countries confirm that the state of war has ended. 2) Japan recognizes the Government of the PRC as the sole legitimate Government of China. 3) China reiterates that Taiwan is an inalienable part of the territory of the PRC, and Japan fully understands and respects this stand of the Government of the PRC. 4) China renounces its right to claim war reparation from Japan. 5) The two governments will establish diplomatic relations and exchange ambassadors starting from a certain month and day in 1972 and exchange ambassadors as speedily as possible. The abolition of the Japan-ROC Peace Treaty is not included in the Joint

[13] *Kaiji bunsho* (Disclosure of administrative documents) (hereafter *Kaiji bunsho*), Tokyo: Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1/01-298/1.

Communique but will be announced by Japan through a foreign minister's statement or declaration[14].

Here, it can be confirmed that China and Japan reached a consensus on several points: first, part of the contents of the second article of the Chinese draft, namely the first of Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations, which Japan recognizes the Government of the PRC is the sole legitimate government of China. Second, Articles 3, 5, 6, and 8 of the Chinese draft regarding bilateral relations, such as the establishment of diplomatic relations and the exchange of ambassadors. Third, the Article 7 of the Chinese draft, in which China renounces its right to claim war reparation.

The differences between China and Japan lie in: first, the Article 1 of the Chinese draft regarding "historical issues," where China advocated for the end of the state of war "from the date of this communique," while Japan "confirmed that the state of war has ended," advocating that the state of war ended when the Japan-ROC Peace Treaty was signed on April 28, 1952. Second, concerning the "Taiwan issue," part of the second article of the Chinese draft, where the Chinese draft included "fully understanding the Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations," whereas Japan proposed to change the second principle of the Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations to "China reiterates" and "Japan fully understands and respects" China's stand. These two points were left for negotiation during Tanaka's visit to China.

On September 12, Zhou Enlai met with Furui and expressed China's views on the Japanese draft. Premier Zhou hoped that Japan would demonstrate a comprehensive attitude towards the Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations. Regarding the fourth point concerning the abolition of the "Japan-ROC Peace Treaty" issue, the Chinese government could agree to the Japanese government's idea of Japan taking unilateral measures, but China wanted to know when, where, and in what form Japan would express this position. On this point, Furui explicitly stated that Japan would announce the abolition of the "Japan-ROC Peace Treaty" concurrently with the Joint Communique but did not provide specific details. Thus, China and Japan, without official relations, managed to exchange drafts of the Joint Communique.

Two weeks later, on September 25, 1972, Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, accompanied by Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ohira and Chief Cabinet Secretary Susumu Nikaido, arrived in Beijing, commencing the four-day formal

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[14] Tagawa, Seiichi. *Nityu Kousho Hiroku: Tagawa nikki 14nen no syogen* [Secret Records of Japan-China Negotiations: Tagawa Diary - 14 Years of Testimony], Mainichi Shimbun, 1973, p. 359.

negotiations for the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations. On September 29, the China-Japan Joint Communique was issued, announcing the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the two countries. During this period, there were four summit meetings, three formal plus one informal, between the two foreign ministers. In the afternoon of September 25, the inaugural summit meeting convened, marking a pivotal moment as the parties delineated pertinent issues, identified focal points, and underscored their shared commitment to the normalization of diplomatic relations. In the morning of September 26, the initial foreign ministers meeting took place, where both sides exchanged drafts of the Joint Communique. The Japanese side also provided another document titled "Key Points for Explanation to China on the China-Japan Joint Communique" at the meeting, which was explained by Takashima Masuo, Director-General of the MOFA Treaty Bureau. In the afternoon of the same day, the second summit meeting took place, followed by the second meeting of foreign ministers. In the morning of September 27, there was an informal meeting between the two foreign ministers, and they visited the Great Wall together. In the afternoon, the third summit meeting took place, followed by Mao Zedong's meeting with Tanaka, Ohira and Nikaido. From that night until the early hours of the next day, the third formal meeting of foreign ministers, regarded as the "final and most important meeting," concluded the negotiation and confirmation of the text of the Joint Communique. In the morning of September 28, the fourth summit meeting occurred, followed by a banquet in the evening. On the morning of September 29, the China-Japan Joint Communique was signed, followed by a visit to Shanghai in the afternoon. On the morning of September 30, Prime Minister Tanaka's delegation returned to Japan.

3. *Agreement on Historical Issues—Renunciation of War Reparation and Expression of Deep Reproach*

For China, the "Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations" constituted the fundamental precondition for normalization with Japan, and resolving the Taiwan issue became the central prerequisite for the restoration of relations. This required Japan to sever diplomatic relations with the Taiwan authorities, presenting a concrete diplomatic negotiation issue. Regarding historical issues, the initial draft proposed by the Chinese side (the "Takeiri Memo") mentioned two issues: the cessation of the state of war and China's declaration of renouncing war reparations. Before formal negotiations, the two sides differed on the cessation of the state of war: China advocated ending the state of war from the date of the Joint Communique, while Japan asserted that the state of war had ended with the signing of the Treaty of Taipei in 1952. As for the renunciation of war reparations, China

had already declared its intention to renounce its right to claim war reparation, stating that "a simple thank you from Japan would suffice"[15].

During the formal negotiations, the first "encounter" occurred over the issue of Japan's statement on its responsibility for the war. It was about Japan's stance on the responsibility for its invasion of China. Regarding the issue of stating responsibility for the war, there was no confirmation of an agreement from existing records, suggesting that it was not a pre-set agenda item but an unavoidable issue.

3.1 Statement of War Responsibility—Prime Minister Tanaka's "Trouble" Remark

In the evening of September 25, upon their arrival in Beijing, Prime Minister Tanaka and his delegation attended a banquet hosted by Zhou Enlai at the Great Hall of the People, where Tanaka's "trouble" remark triggered the first major disagreement[16]. In his toast, Zhou pointed out: "Since 1894, over the past half century, due to the aggression of Japanese militarists, the Chinese people have suffered greatly, and the Japanese people have also suffered"[17]. This statement was in line with China's previous basic stance, laying the groundwork with a mention of "two thousand years of friendly exchanges and cultural interactions," emphasizing the importance of "learning from past mistakes to guide the future"[18]. Following Zhou's speech, Tanaka expressed regret: "Unfortunately, over the past few decades, Sino-Japanese relations have experienced unfortunate circumstances. During this period, my country has caused considerable trouble for the Chinese people, and I deeply reflect on this"[19]. Although Tanaka expressed regret for the "unfortunate" events in the past, his use

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[15] Zhou, Bin. *Wo wei zhongguo lingdaoren dangfanyi: Jianzheng zhongri waijiao mixin* [I was a translator for Chinese leaders: Witness the diplomatic secret and hardship of China and Japan], Hong Kong: Dashan Wenhua Chubanshe, 2013, pp. 87–105.

[16] Diplomat Jiang Peizhu, who personally participated in the negotiations described the struggle that unfolded when Japan invaded China as a result of the "encounter with fierce warfare." See Jiang, Peizhu. "A difficult memory of the Sino-Japanese dialogue", *Shijie zhishi* [World Knowledge], No.22, 2009, p. 53.

[17] *Zhou Nianpu*, 25 Sep. 1972. *Renmin ribao*, 26 Sep. 1972, p. 3.

[18] Liu, Deyou. Fengyu Ji Xingshuang: Zhanhou zhongri guanxi qinliji [How many years of wind and rain: A Personal Account of Post-War Sino-Japanese Relations], Beijing Sanlian Shudian, 2018, p. 420.

[19] Zhongyang Wenxian Yanjiushi, ed., *Zhou Enlai zhuan* [Biography of Zhou Enlai] (hereafter *Zhou Zhuan*), Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1998, p. 1117. *Renmin ribao*, 26 Sep. 1972, p. 3.

of the term "trouble" (ご迷惑をおかけした) in Japanese to describe the harm caused to the Chinese people by Japan's invasion led to indignation among the Chinese attendees. According to Foreign Minister Ji Pengfei's recollection, "all Chinese present were angry," and Vice Foreign Minister Han Nianlong recalled, it "caused considerable resentment among the masses"[20]. This was perceived by the Chinese as a trivialization of the harm caused, which was unacceptable.

The following afternoon, during the second summit meeting on September 26, Zhou Enlai objected to Tanaka's use of the word "trouble" and strongly criticized Tanaka's expression. Zhou enumerated the brutal facts of the Japanese invasion of China, emphasizing the immense sacrifices and profound suffering it brought to the Chinese people. He emphasized that Tanaka's statement would arouse strong resentment among the Chinese people because the term "trouble" is only used for minor matters in China[21]. Tanaka explained that in Japanese, "ご迷惑をおかけした" expressed a sincere apology, with the implication of a pledge not to repeat the offense and a request for forgiveness. The discussion then turned to the differences in historical views, and finally, Zhou quoted an ancient saying, "Seek common ground while reserving differences," to calm the situation regarding the "trouble" remark. In the evening of September 27, Chairman Mao Zedong met with Tanaka, Ohira and Nikaido, opening with the question, "How did you resolve the 'trouble' issue?" Mao stated, "Just saying 'trouble' doesn't satisfy the youth. In China, this phrase is used when one splashes water on a girl's skirt."[22]. Tanaka responded, "We are prepared to adapt to Chinese customs"[23].

During the initial Foreign Ministers Meeting in the morning of September 26th, the preamble of the Chinese draft presented the following statement concerning Japan's stance on war responsibility in the Joint Communique: "The Government of Japan deeply reflects on the war damage caused to the

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[20] Zhang, Xiangshan. *Zhongri guanxi guankui yu jianzheng* [A glimpse and witness of Sino-Japanese relations]. Beijing: Dangdai Shijie Chubanshe, 1998, p. 37. Ji, Pengfei. "'When drinking water, remember the well digger': A record of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Japan." An, Jianshe ed., *Zhouenlai de zuihou suiyue* [Zhou Enlai's Last Years], Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1995, p. 289. NHK Shuzaihan.. *Shuonrai no Ketsudan: Nittyu kokou seijoka wa koushite jitsugen shita* [Zhou Enlai's decision: This is how the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China was achieved], NHK syuban, 1993, p. 149.

[21] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/1. *Zhou Nianpu*, 26 Sep. 1972.

[22] Takeuchi, Minoru ed., *Nittyu kokkou kihon bunken syu* (Gekan) [Basic Documents on Japanese-Chinese Relations (Volume 2)], Tokyo: Sousousha,1993, p. 202.

[23] *Zhou Zhuan*, p. 1117. *Zhou Nianpu*, 27 Sep. 1972.

Chinese people by Japanese militarism in the past"[24]. The next day, on the way to visit the Great Wall in the morning of September 27, Masayoshi Ohira, in response to this statement, requested the removal of "militarism." Concerns about the issue of Emperor Showa (Hirohito) being involved also became a major domestic issue[25]. Foreign Minister Ji Pengfei explained that China's view of distinguishing "a small group of militarists in Japan" from "the majority of ordinary Japanese citizens" was actually intended as a goodwill gesture toward Japan[26].

At the third Foreign Ministers Meeting in the evening of September 27, Ji Pengfei pointed out, regarding the second paragraph of the preamble in the Japanese draft, "Japan expresses its deep reflection on the pain and damage caused to the Chinese people by the war in the past," proposing to remove the word "pain" and change it to "Japan deeply reflects on the serious damage caused to the Chinese people by the war in the past." Ohira suggested replacing it with "Japan expresses its deep reflection on the serious damage caused to the Chinese people by the war in the past." then Ji Pengfei proposed the wording that "the Japanese side deeply reflects on the responsibility for the serious damage caused to the Chinese people by the war in the past." Here, Japan advocated using the phrase "express reflection," while China advocated using "deeply reflect on the serious damage," a verb-object construction. Hashimoto Hiroshi, head of the Japanese delegation, said that "deeply reflecting on responsibility" felt unnatural, and raised doubts about the term "responsibility," to which Ji Pengfei responded that it meant "reflecting on the responsibility for causing damage." Ohira confirmed once again that the term "responsibility" did not entail specific, substantive responsibilities such as compensation, but merely represented a recognition of the responsibility associated with the facts of causing damage. Ji Pengfei confirmed this, replying, "That's correct."[27].

Ultimately, the text dictated by Ohira was included in the "Sino-Japanese Joint Communique": "The Japanese side is keenly conscious of the responsibility for the serious damage that Japan caused in the past to the Chinese people

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[24] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/2.

[25] Please refer to the testimony of Morita Hajime, secretary to Foreign Minister Ohira, in the special program "History of Japan-China Interactions" broadcast on August 14, 2006 by NHK.

[26] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/2.

[27] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/2.

through war, and deeply reproaches itself." Here, there was no explicit mention of "which war," which blurred the understanding of the nature of the war; "feeling responsibility" without specifying how to bear this responsibility and merely expressing "deep reproach," thereby shifting the issue from post-war compensation to a problem of "historical understanding."

3.2 Renunciation of War Reparations —"Request" Rather than "Right"

Originally, this was a matter of "Japan just needs to say thank you to China," but in reality, proved far more complicated. During the first Foreign Ministers Meeting on September 26th, regarding Article 7 of the Chinese draft, which stated, "For the friendship between the people of China and Japan, renounce its right to claim war reparations from Japan," the Japanese proposed the following wording: "The PRC declares: For the friendship between China and Japan, it will not make any demands for reparation for the war between the two countries."[28] Two major points of contention arose: firstly, whether it was renouncing the "claim" for reparation or the "right" to claim war reparation; secondly, Japan added the phrase "any demands for reparation for the war between the two countries."

Takashima Masuo explained the issue of compensation during the first Foreign Ministers Meeting, stating that the Japanese government offered a "frank evaluation" to China's decision not to seek compensation, while also pointing out that Japan couldn't agree with the statement implying the nullification of the Japan-ROC Peace Treaty, suggesting the adoption of Japan's proposal with non-legal language. He argued that since the issue of reparation was legally settled in the Japan-ROC Peace Treaty, Japan couldn't accept China's abandonment of claims twice[29]. This showed that they would not even accept or pay any attention to China's waiver of the right to claim compensation[30], which angered the Chinese negotiators.

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[28] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/2.

[29] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/2.

[30] Ji, Pengfei. "'When drinking water, remember the well digger'", op. cit., p. 289. Zhang, Xiangshan. "Review of the China-Japan Re-establishment of Diplomatic Relations Negotiations." *Riben xuekan* [Japanese studies], no. 1, 1998, p. 39. Lu, Weizhao. "Tanaka's visit to China and the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations." *Xinzhongguo waijiao Fengyun* [China's diplomatic situation], vol.3, Beijing: Shijiezhishi Chubanshe, 1994, p. 137.

During the second Summit Meeting in the afternoon of the 26th, Zhou Enlai firmly rejected Takashima's assertions. Zhou sternly pointed out "his surprise" at the notion that "since Jiang Jieshi had already given up reparation, China had no need to do so," explicitly stating that he couldn't accept Japan's position and even deeming "it an insult"[31]. At the same time, Zhou differentiated between the formalities of the statements made by Tanaka and Ohira, expressing admiration for their statement that "the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations should be resolved politically rather than legally"[32].

In response, Prime Minister Tanaka expressed his gratitude, stating that he was "very pleased" to hear Zhou's remarks about renouncing compensation and expressing his gratitude for China's attitude of transcending past enmities. However, Tanaka used a somewhat ambiguous tone by adding, "There are still issues within the Japanese government or ruling party." Zhou, in turn, remarked that there were also dissenting voices in China regarding the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations, emphasizing the need to educate the people. It's evident that Zhou himself was agitated[33].

After the meeting, Tanaka instructed MOFA officials to consider the wording of the statement in the Joint Communique. During the third Foreign Ministers Meeting on the night of the 27th, Ji Pengfei proposed China's revised wording after careful consideration: "The Government of the People's Republic of China declares that in the interest of the friendship between the Chinese and the Japanese peoples, it renounces its right to claim war reparation from Japan." Ohira expressed his agreement, considering it a "gesture of goodwill" from China[34]. Thus, China changed the abandonment of the "right" to claim war reparations to the abandonment of the "request" itself, removing the word "right" from the phrase. Additionally, the Japanese proposal's use of the word "any" in Article 7 was also omitted.

3.3 Declaration of Ending the State of War

Regarding the issue of ending the state of war, the disagreement between China and Japan before formal negotiations centered on the timing of the state of war ended. The Japanese side argued that the signing of the "Japan-ROC Peace Treaty" in 1952 indicated the end of the state of war, while the Chinese

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[31] *Kaiji Bunsho*, 1/01-42/2.
[32] *Zhou Nianpu*, 1997, pp. 553–554.
[33] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/1.
[34] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/2.

side insisted it ended on the day of the announcement of the Sino-Japanese Joint Communique. This matter involved the question of whether the "Japan-ROC Peace Treaty" was valid before 1972.

During the first Summit Meeting in the afternoon of the 25th, Zhou Enlai acknowledged that the issue of ending the state of war was "trouble" for Japan but essentially considered it a matter of wording. He suggested delegating this issue to the two Foreign Ministers to find a solution[35]. However, in reality, the differences between the two sides were significant and closely linked to the Taiwan issue. It became the most time-consuming issue among the three historical problems in the formal negotiations, and the final resolution was deliberately ambiguous.

At the welcoming banquet on the evening of the 25th, Zhou Enlai stated in his welcoming toast that "although the state of war between the two countries has not been declared ended"[36]. However, the MOFA translated this as "despite the fact that the state of war between China and Japan has not been publicly announced." This translation differed significantly from Zhou's original meaning, but even today, Japanese documents still use this translation[37]. Clearly, the Japanese translation emphasized more that "the state of war between China and Japan had ended long ago but had not been publicly declared." However, Zhou's original intent was to emphasize that the state of war had not ended yet.

During the first Foreign Ministers Meeting in the morning of the 26th, Article 1 of the Japanese draft addressed the issue of the "end of the state of war" between the two countries, stating: "The governments of Japan and the PRC hereby confirm that the state of war between Japan and China has ended." In response, Takashima explained that this issue arose due to the fundamental differences between the two sides regarding the "Japan-ROC Peace Treaty." Japan couldn't take the position that the treaty was invalid, so it couldn't agree to a statement implying that "the state of war between the two countries still legally existed, and the agreement to end the state of war was only reached through this Joint Communique." To accommodate both sides' positions, the time of ending the state of war was not explicitly stated, only "confirmed the fact of the end." Ji Pengfei immediately responded, stating, "The Chinese government

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[35] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/2.

[36] *Renmin ribao*, 26 Sep. 1972.

[37] Nittyu kokou kaifuku sokushin Giin Renmei ed., *Nittyu kokkou kaifuku kankei shiryo syu* [Collection of documents related to the restoration of diplomatic relations between Japan and China], Nittyu kokou shiryo iinkai, 1972, p. 1.

cannot let the Chinese people understand this point (that the signing of the Japan-ROC Peace Treaty ended the state of war between China and Japan), so it cannot agree. Moreover, it doesn't align with historical facts." "It's necessary to make it clear to the Chinese people when the state of war ended"[38], indicating that China couldn't accept the Japanese draft.

At the second Foreign Ministers Meeting in the afternoon of the 26th, the Japanese proposed two amendments: the first proposal stated, "The Government of the PRC hereby declares: The state of war between China and Japan has ended." Regarding this, Ohira explained, "the PRC as the subject of this sentence declares, that is the characteristic of this article. Thus, a precedent where the state of war was unilaterally declared ended by the victorious country was adopted when the Allied Powers ended the state of war with Germany." The second proposal stated, "The Governments of Japan and the PRC hereby announce that comprehensive peaceful relations will exist between Japan and China in the future." Regarding this, Ohira explained that this proposal didn't specify when the state of war ended because of the differences between the two sides on this issue. Therefore, it adopted an "outlook for the future" approach to deal with it. Ji Pengfei expressed that they would reconsider Japan's proposals. The next morning, during the trip to and from the Great Wall, Ji Pengfei mentioned to Ohira that this was the most troubling issue for the Chinese side[39].

During the third Foreign Ministers Meeting at the night of the 27th, Ji Pengfei presented the formulation he and Zhou Enlai had spent a long time considering together. They proposed adding the phrase "ending the state of war" in the preamble of the Joint Communique, behind the sentence "the people of both countries earnestly desire to end the abnormal state existing between the two countries." They implied that the "abnormal state" referred to the "state of war." Simultaneously, in the first article of the Joint Communique's main text, they included the phrase "from the date of this declaration, the extremely abnormal state existing between the PRC and Japan is declared to have ended." Ji Pengfei explained that by using this formulation, there would be no time constraints on the end of the state of war, providing room for both China and Japan to interpret differently[40].

In response, Foreign Minister Ohira "expressed gratitude." Regarding the phrasing of the three terms in the preamble, he suggested that the preceding two terms (the end of the state of war and the normalization of Sino-Japanese

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[38] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/2.
[39] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/2.
[40] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/2.

relations) were related to the last term (the realization of the wishes of the people of both countries). Consequently, Ji Pengfei proposed changing the Chinese wording to "the realization of the wishes of the people of both countries will open a new chapter in the history of relations between the two countries"[41]. Ohira questioned the use of "extremely" in the first article and suggested changing it to "former," "all," or "whole," followed by "abnormal state," and finally suggested changing it to "hitherto," which China accepted. Thus, the first article became "The abnormal state of affairs that has hitherto existed between Japan and the PRC is terminated on the date on which this Joint Communique is issued."

These negotiations suggest that the formulation of the preamble was basically proposed by the Chinese side, and the phrasing in the main text did not use the term "state of war" but rather "abnormal state," clearly accommodating the Japanese side. However, the end period of this state was expressed as "from the date of this declaration," which was insisted upon by the Chinese side.

4. *Principles on the Taiwan Issue—"One China" and Practical Relations*

The Taiwan issue, as the historical issue, was one that China and Japan couldn't avoid when restoring diplomatic relations. For China, resolving the Taiwan issue was imperative, required Japan not only to recognize the PRC but also to sever "diplomatic relations" with the "Republic of China" and acknowledge Taiwan as an integral part of the PRC. Before formal negotiations began, China had presented Japan with the "Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations," and during formal negotiations, the primary focus was on how Japan would accept these three principles.

Regarding the Taiwan issue, previous studies have largely centered on negotiations concerning the "Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations." However, there is another issue of profound importance that has often been overlooked: the matter of Japan maintaining practical relations with Taiwan.

4.1 Negotiation on the Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations

Negotiations on the Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations: Japan's basic position on the Taiwan issue was formally presented during the first Foreign Ministers Meeting on the morning of 26 September.

[41] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/2.

The explanation emphasized three points: First, according to the San Francisco Peace Treaty, Japan had renounced all rights to Taiwan and could not unilaterally determine Taiwan's current legal status. However, considering the original intentions of the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Declaration, Taiwan should be returned to China. Second, Japan fully respected China's consistent position of "One China" and had no intention of turning Taiwan into Japanese territory or supporting Taiwan's independence. Therefore, Japan also did not recognize Taiwan as possessing any legal status outside of the PRC's sovereignty. Third, based on the second point, Japan believed that Taiwan was currently under the rule of a different regime from the PRC government, and any resulting issues should be resolved by the Chinese themselves as an internal matter. On the other hand, Japan did not deny the policy of other countries maintaining diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and military confrontation between the U.S. and China should be avoided, as it was the desire of all Japanese nationals. Therefore, the Taiwan issue should ultimately be resolved peacefully. In summary, Japan had returned Taiwan to China, regarding the Taiwan issue as China's internal affair, and hoping for a peaceful resolution.

In formal negotiations, the main points of contention between China and Japan revolved around four specific aspects concerning how to incorporate the "Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations." First, there was the issue of how to phrase the Three Principles comprehensively. The Chinese draft presented during the first Foreign Ministers Meeting in the morning of September 26th included a statement in the preamble, stating that "the Government of Japan fully understands the 'Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations' proposed by the Government of the PRC and recognizes the Government of the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China." In response, the Japanese side expressed a desire to find a way to mention this issue in the preamble, advocating for the three principles to be written separately in the main text. During the car ride to and from the Great Wall on the second day, Ji Pengfei remained adamant about incorporating the Three Principles into the preamble and delineating their specifics. However, Foreign Minister Ohira continued to refer only to "principles" without elaborating on their content, stating, "Please understand the circumstances in Japan"[42]. At the third Foreign Ministers Meeting that evening, Ji Pengfei proposed the following statement: "The Japanese side reiterates its position of seeking to realize the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations based on a full understanding of the 'Three

[42] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/2.

Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations' proposed by the Government of the PRC. The Chinese side welcomes this." He stated that this was written according to the Japanese draft. Eventually, the second paragraph of the preamble of the Sino-Japanese Joint Communique incorporated the Three Principles, using the wording proposed by Ji Pengfei during the meeting.

Second, there was the issue of the first principle of the Three Principles. As mentioned earlier, Japan had already agreed to this principle before formal negotiations. There were no issues with incorporating this principle into Article 2 of the main text, which stated, "The Government of Japan recognizes the Government of the PRC as the sole legitimate Government of China." In other words, there were no problems concerning the recognition issue.

However, in the Chinese draft presented during the first Foreign Ministers Meeting in the morning of September 26th, both the first and second principles were included in Article 2. The Japanese delegation voiced their disagreement and proposed a separation of the two principles, suggesting that the first principle be included in Article 2 and the second principle in Article 3, along with modifications to the wording. The major divergence between China and Japan manifested in this second principle concerning the "status of Taiwan."

Third, concerning the second principle of the Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations. China's position was clear, insisting that "Taiwan is an inalienable part of the territory" of the PRC. In response, Japan was unwilling to explicitly acknowledge this principle in the declaration but instead expressed "fully understands and respects" this stand of the PRC, "and it firmly maintains its stand under Article 8 of the Potsdam Proclamation."[43]

During the second Foreign Ministers Meeting, Ji Pengfei asked Ohira why Japan insisted on the Potsdam Declaration rather than the Cairo Declaration, as proposed in the Chinese draft. Ohira replied that Japan accepted not the Cairo Declaration but the Potsdam Declaration. In fact, the content of Article 8 of the Potsdam Declaration states: "The terms of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out." The Cairo Declaration stipulates: "The purpose of the three nations of China, the United States, and Britain is to restore all the territories Japan has stolen from China, such as Manchuria, Taiwan, and the Pescadores, to China." Therefore, by accepting the Potsdam Declaration, Japan committed to returning Taiwan to China. Combined with the first principle stating, "the Government of Japan recognizes the Government of the PRC as the sole

[43] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/2.

legitimate government of China," Japan essentially promised to return Taiwan to "the PRC."

Fourth, concerning the third principle of the Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations. China advocated that the "treaty between Japan and Taiwan is illegal and invalid and should be abolished." In response, Japan was unwilling to acknowledge that this treaty was illegal or invalid before the normalization of diplomatic relations. During the first Summit Meeting on the 25th, Prime Minister Tanaka directly mentioned the "Japan-ROC Peace Treaty," stating that Japan could not agree that the Japan-ROC Peace Treaty "is illegal and invalid," because doing so would "bring shame to the Japanese government, which has deceived the people and the Diet for the past 20 years." However, Japan also realized that not abolishing the treaty was impossible, and Tanaka stated that the "Japan-ROC Peace Treaty had fulfilled its mission (i.e., become ineffective) when Japan-China diplomatic normalization was achieved"and agreed that it "should be abolished"[44].

Indeed, the Chinese draft unveiled during the initial Foreign Ministers Meeting on the 26th omitted direct reference to the third principle concerning the "Japan-ROC Peace Treaty." At the same time, the Japanese government prepared to publicly confirm the termination of this treaty. During the summit on September 28, Zhou Enlai confirmed the press conference scheduled for the following day, as Ohira was set to announce the termination of diplomatic relations between Japan and Taiwan, declaring the "Treaty of Taipei" null and void. At this point, Zhou emphasized the principle of "promises made, promises kept," and both China and Japan were committed to handling the Taiwan issue with integrity. Indeed, after the Joint Communique was released, Foreign Minister Ohira promptly held a press conference at the National Culture Palace Hotel, announcing the termination of diplomatic relations between Japan and Taiwan, effectively rendering the "Treaty of Taipei" invalid.

4.2 Maintenance of Practical Relations between Japan and Taiwan

Regarding the arrangements for relations between Japan and the Taiwan authorities after the severance of diplomatic ties, there are two main points: first, the establishment of civil-level communication mechanisms; second, the retention of personnel and economic exchanges. However, neither of these points is reflected in the "Joint Communique between Japan and China." So, how were these issues negotiated in practice?

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[44] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/1.

During the first summit meeting on September 25, Foreign Minister Ohira mentioned, "Regarding the post-normalization relations between Japan and Taiwan, I hope to address the practical relations between Japan and Taiwan after the severance of diplomatic relations and to clarify the boundaries of what can and cannot be done"[45]. Here, "practical relations" refer to the personnel and economic exchanges between Japan and Taiwan.

The fourth summit meeting on September 28 specifically discussed the Taiwan issue. When Zhou Enlai said, "Regarding the Taiwan issue, I would like to hear the thoughts of the Japanese side," Foreign Minister Ohira responded, "Finally, starting from tomorrow, diplomatic relations between Japan and Taiwan will be terminated." Then he slowly began to read the prepared document. The document consisted of four points: (1) Explicitly ending diplomatic relations between Japan and the current ruling government in Taiwan, while emphasizing the need to address the practical relations between Japan and Taiwan. "The bilateral trade between Japan and Taiwan exceeds 1.2 billion U.S. dollars, with about 180,000 people traveling from our country to Taiwan and about 50,000 people traveling from Taiwan to our country. The Japanese government cannot ignore the fact that there are various exchanges between Japan and Taiwan at present, nor can it ignore the fact that Japanese nationals sympathize with Taiwan."

(2) Emphasizing that the Japanese government would not adopt a "two Chinas" stance in the future, completely opposes the "Taiwan independence movement," and has no ambitions toward Taiwan. At the same time, emphasizing that after the normalization of diplomatic relations, "we hope to temporarily retain various issues in Japan-Taiwan relations." These "various issues" include four points: First, the government must make efforts to protect Japanese expatriates in Taiwan (currently, there are 3900 Japanese nationals stranded in Taiwan, and many Japanese nationals are traveling in Taiwan). Second, Japan adopts a free and democratic system, and regarding personnel exchanges, trade, and various civil exchanges between Taiwan and Japan, "the government can only allow them to take place within the scope of not harming normal Sino-Japanese relations and cannot suppress them." Third, the government should tolerate economic exchanges between Japan and Taiwan at the civil level, just like the second point. Fourth, as long as personnel and trade exchanges between Japan and Taiwan continue, the government would have to tolerate air and sea exchanges between Japan and Taiwan, just like the second and third points.

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[45] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/1.

(3) The issue of maintaining communication mechanisms: it states, "After the complete withdrawal of embassies and consulates, the Japanese side considers that it will still need some time to establish civil-level offices and communication venues with Taiwan in some form."

(4) It is stated that the aforementioned content will be explained publicly in the parliament and to journalists, and hopes that China will be informed in advance[46]. Here, the discussion is about the form of maintaining Japan-Taiwan relations after the diplomatic relations between Japan and Taiwan are severed by Japan, meaning the so-called diplomatic relations between Japan and the Taiwan authorities are severed, but civil forms of economic and cultural relations are retained, and civil-level communication organizations are established between each other.

So, what was China's attitude towards this? According to records in the MOFA's diplomatic archives, Hashimoto Hiroshi, head of the China Division, noted that "Premier Zhou and other Chinese officials seemed to expect that Foreign Minister Ohira or Prime Minister Tanaka might raise questions about Japan-Taiwan relations, and listened to Ohira's speech with serious expressions. However, after Ohira's speech ended, they all appeared visibly relieved. Although they did not affirm Ohira's speech directly, they nodded in relief because they had an understanding." This does not necessarily mean that China agreed, but it confirms that China did not strongly oppose Japan's demands.

Zhou Enlai then confirmed whether Japan was considering establishing a "Memorandum Trade Office"[47] type of institution, to which both Ohira and Tanaka expressed that they were considering it[48]. Zhou then discussed the personnel selection issues for the Japanese embassy and consulates after the establishment of the Japanese embassy, inquired about Japan's considerations for personnel selection, and confirmed the communication channels between Japan and China. Zhou also confirmed the press conference scheduled for the next day, and finally, both sides discussed possible reactions from Taiwan, with Ohira stating, "Regarding the Japan-Taiwan issue, if various problems arise in

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[46] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/1.

[47] On November 9, 1962, the China-Japan Comprehensive Trade Memorandum was signed in Beijing. It was signed by Takasaki Tatsunosuke, the former Minister of International Trade and Industry of Japan, and Liao Chengzhi, then Deputy Minister of the CCP Central Committee International Liaison Department. The memorandum stipulated that the two countries would send trade representatives to each other and set up offices in each other's capitals. This was the "Memorandum Trade Office".

[48] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/10-42/1.

the future, we will contact China." Both sides expressed their intention to promote the development of Sino-Japanese relations in the future, thus ending the final summit meeting of the Sino-Japanese normalization negotiations[49]. Taken together, Zhou Enlai's responses during the meeting suggest that the Chinese leadership appeared to acquiesce in Japan's proposal; at the very least, Zhou refrained from expressing explicit opposition. Whether this reflected a settled policy of the Chinese leadership, however, requires further examination in light of additional archival evidence.

5. *Delinkage of Sino–Japanese Relations from the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty*

One of the significant reasons for the prolonged inability of Japan and China to normalize diplomatic relations was the presence of the Cold War framework and the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. When dealing with the normalization of diplomatic relations, the relationship with the United States must also be addressed. In this regard, Japan placed great importance on restoring diplomatic relations with China without undermining the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. One of the main reasons why Prime Minister Tanaka immediately decided to visit China after hearing Takeiri's report was that Zhou Enlai explicitly told Takeiri that the Joint Communique between China and Japan could omit the "Japan-U.S. Security Treaty" and the "Sato-Nixon Joint Communique" and stated that the issue of normalizing relations between the two countries should be resolved politically rather than legally. China had already indicated its willingness not to raise the alliance issue during the negotiations, which was one of the conditions for Tanaka's determination to visit China. At the same time, Tanaka flew to Hawaii for talks with Nixon on August 31, informing Nixon that Japan's establishment of diplomatic relations with China would not undermine the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty.

During the first summit meeting on September 25, Foreign Minister Ohira said, "We hope that normalization of diplomatic relations will contribute to the stability of our domestic politics," thereby raising two issues: the issue of the Japan-ROC Peace Treaty and the issue of Japan's relationship with the United States. Regarding the Japan-U.S. relationship, Ohira emphasized the importance of the Japan-U.S. relationship to Japan and the various relationships the United States has worldwide, stressing that Japan's policies must not

[49] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/10-42/1.

have a negative impact on U.S. policies. He explicitly stated, "Our position is that we hope to achieve normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China without undermining our relationship with the United States." In other words, Japan once again announced that it would only restore diplomatic relations with China on the condition of maintaining the Japan-U.S. security system.

In response, Zhou Enlai confirmed that "the improvement of Sino-Japanese relations is not exclusive" and explicitly stated that it does not involve the Japan-U.S. relationship, which is Japan's issue. This means that China regarded the alliance as a matter for Japan itself and had no intention of interfering. This represented a significant departure from Beijing's long-standing opposition to the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty throughout the 1950s and 1960s. However, Zhou still realized that the Japan-U.S. security system remained closely linked to the Taiwan issue. Therefore, Zhou emphasized that changes in the situation in the Taiwan Strait had changed the effects of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and the U.S.-ROC Mutual Defense Treaty. He also stated that in terms of not allowing Soviet intervention in the Taiwan issue, Japan, the United States, and China have common ground. Regardless of whether it is the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty or the U.S.-ROC Mutual Defense Treaty, China does not want to get involved today. Regarding the Japan-U.S. relationship, it is up to Japan to handle, and China does not interfere in Japan's internal affairs[50].

At the second summit meeting on the afternoon of the 26th, Zhou Enlai mentioned the "Japan-U.S. Security Treaty" again, saying that China did not intend to use force to liberate Taiwan and also did not intend to consider the 1969 Sato-Nixon Joint Communique as an issue. Zhou said, "There is no problem with the Japan-U.S. relationship. Although there are grievances about the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, it can still continue to exist. There is no need to involve the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, and the Japan-U.S. relationship can continue as before." Zhou used the argument that the restoration of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations was not directed at any third country to demonstrate that it was not directed at the United States and that "there is no intention to make it difficult for the United States."

At the third summit meeting on the 27, Zhou Enlai pointed out that the "Japan-U.S. Security Treaty" has its unequal character, but also pointed out, "However, we know that it cannot be abolished immediately. Because if Japan

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[50] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/1.

is not under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, it will lose its voice." China understood the existence of the Japan-U.S. security system from Japan's perspective[51].

Of course, there were differences in opinions between China and Japan regarding the United States during the meetings. Zhou Enlai believed that behind the actions of the United States after World War II, there were expansionist and aggressive ideologies, but Tanaka believed that "the United States has neither territorial ambitions nor aggressive intentions," so improving relations between the United States and China would benefit Asia and world peace[52].

The non-involvement of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations with the Japan-U.S. security system actually implies an acceptance of the existence of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. However, it still does not resolve the issue of U.S. intervention in Far East security under the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. In fact, the Taiwan issue is implicit in this, meaning that the United States wants to protect Taiwan's security, and Japan must acknowledge that Taiwan's security is essential for Japan. This situation has become prominent again in recent years.

6. *Bridging Relations amid Systemic Differences: China and Japan's Path Forward*

The preamble of the "Joint Communique between China and Japan" states that "In spite of the differences in their social systems existing between the two countries, the two countries should, and can, establish relations of peace and friendship." This demonstrates that an agreement reached in the process of the diplomatic normalization is that despite significant differences in their systems, both China and Japan need to transcend these differences to develop their relationship. During the 1980s, the relationship between China and Japan was often referred to as an exemplary friendly relationship that transcended systemic differences. However, in current times, this aspect is often cited as a reason for the discord in Sino-Japanese relations. So, how was this aspect discussed in formal negotiations?

During the second summit meeting on September 26, Prime Minister Tanaka expressed his hope that China would not interfere in Japan's internal affairs. He emphasized that as long as mutual benefit, mutual concession,

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[51] cf. Ogata, Sadako. *Normalization with China: A Comparative Study of U.S. and Japanese Processes*, University of California, 1988; Vogel Ezra F, Yuan Ming & Tanaka Akihiko eds., *The Golden Age of the U.S.-China-Japan Triangle, 1972–1989*, Harvard University Press, 2003.

[52] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/1.

non-interference in internal affairs, and respect for each other's principles were upheld between China and Japan, the voices of opposition within the Liberal Democratic Party against the normalization of diplomatic relations would be quelled. Tanaka candidly stated that there was a fear of China as a major power within Japan. In response, Zhou Enlai pointed out that Japan was already an economic power, while China was still lagging. Japan's steel production closely followed that of the United States, ranking second globally. With China's large population, it only possessed potential strength without actual power. Zhou emphasized that even if China's strength would increase in the future, it would not become a superpower, as China was fully focused on domestic development. Economically, China would not reach Japan's level by the end of the century. From a financial perspective, China would not possess advanced weaponry, nor would it become a military power[53].

Tanaka also explained Japan's security policy to Zhou, highlighting that Japan did not possess nuclear weapons, and defense spending growth was limited to within 1% of the gross national product. Japan adhered to constitutional provisions prohibiting the dispatch of troops overseas and had no intention of changing this stance. Japan also had no aggressive intentions, so "Japan poses no threat." Tanaka hoped that China could guarantee non-interference in Japan's internal affairs and refrain from nurturing revolutionary forces within Japan. He told Zhou, "China does not export revolution, which would be the greatest gift to me." In response, Zhou stated that while thoughts have no borders and are a matter of the people's choice, "revolution cannot be exported"[54].

During the third summit meeting on September 27, Zhou Enlai explicitly expressed China's concern about the resurgence of Japanese militarism based on historical experience. Tanaka emphatically responded that "the revival of militarism is absolutely impossible," citing three reasons: Firstly, he cited postwar parliamentary elections, stating that there had been 11 elections in the House of Representatives and seven unified local elections, with nine elections in the House of Councilors. He emphasized that it was impossible to change the political system through revolution and that the constitution could not be amended without the support of two-thirds of the parliament. Secondly, he pointed out Japan's demographic trends, noting that Japanese couples were having fewer children, which would lead to a dwindling population in 300 years. He stressed that there was no need to fear Japan. When Zhou mentioned the importance of the policies of the ruling party, Tanaka explained

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[53] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/1.

[54] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/01-42/1.

his plan for the restructuring of the Japanese archipelago and stated that "we have not used funds for the revival of militarism." Tanaka said that "mutual trust is important" and hoped that Zhou would not consider Japan's revival of militarism or aggression. In Tanaka's view, this was a matter of mutual trust. Zhou also made it clear to Tanaka that he believed it was natural for Japan to maintain its self-defense forces[55].

In essence, Tanaka used the different systems of China and Japan to illustrate opposition within Japan to establishing diplomatic relations with China, and then used the nature of Japan's system to assert that Japan "absolutely cannot revive militarism." At the same time, Zhou Enlai emphasized that countries with different systems can coexist peacefully and stressed that China and Japan should develop their relationship based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence[56]. The content of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence is written in Article 6 of the Joint Communique between China and Japan.

The negotiations of 1972 demonstrate that China and Japan did not seek to eliminate their systemic differences. Instead, they established a political framework through which those differences could be managed without preventing bilateral relations. The essence of the 1972 System therefore lay not in consensus on values, but in a shared commitment to prevent systemic disagreement from undermining diplomatic relations.

7. *Conclusion*

This article has re-examined the negotiations leading to the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations through newly available diplomatic records and argues that they established a political framework that extended well beyond the restoration of diplomatic relations itself. This framework, referred to here as the "1972 System," rested on four interrelated political arrangements: historical issues, the Taiwan issues, the Japan-U.S. security system, and the transcendence of systemic differences. Together, these arrangements constituted the political foundation of postwar Sino-Japanese relations.

The first point concerns the arrangement of historical issues, revealing that Sino-Japanese relations cannot evade historical problems. The weight given to Japan's expression of war responsibility can trigger significant resentment from China. Japan's acknowledgment of the "great damage caused to the Chinese people by Japan's past wars and its deep reflection on this responsibility" signifies

[55] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/10-42/1.
[56] *Kaiji bunsho*, 1/10-42/1.

a shift in the historical issues between China and Japan from issues of postwar settlement to issues of historical perception. Regarding war reparations, China announced the renunciation of war reparation claims "for the sake of friendship between the two peoples of China and Japan," without explicitly waiving the right to claim war reparations. The end of the war status declaration became the most significant stumbling block in the negotiations, as it directly implicated the Taiwan issue (how to interpret the "Japan-China Treaty").

The second point concerns the arrangement of the Taiwan issue. The term "Three Principles for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations" is mentioned in the preamble of the Joint Communique, with Japan reaffirming its position of seeking the normalization of diplomatic relations with China based on a full understanding of the principles proposed by the Government of the PRC. China welcomed this stance. The substantive content is scattered throughout other clauses. Firstly, the Government of Japan recognizes the Government of the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China. Secondly, the Japanese Government fully "understands and respects" the position of the Chinese Government's "reiteration that Taiwan is an inalienable part of the territory of the PRC" and "adheres to the position stated in Article 8 of the Potsdam Declaration," reaffirming its commitment to returning Taiwan to China. The normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan is contingent on the severance of diplomatic relations between Japan and Taiwan, as the two are sequential steps in the same process rather than two options that Japan could choose from.

The third point concerns the arrangement of China's relationship with the U.S.-Japan security system. China satisfied Japan's condition of maintaining the U.S.-Japan security system while establishing diplomatic relations by adopting a stance that did not touch upon the U.S.-Japan security system. In doing so, China effectively abandoned its previous policy of "resolutely opposing" the U.S.-Japan security system, while making the cessation of the Taiwan issue a prerequisite for its decision. Therefore, when this prerequisite was exposed as fictional, it was evident that mechanisms for U.S.-Japan security system intervention in the Taiwan issue still existed.

The fourth point advocates for China and Japan to establish peaceful and friendly relations despite having different social systems. This point was repeatedly emphasized during Sino-Japanese summit meetings in the 1970s and 1980s, describing Sino-Japanese relations as a model of friendly relations that transcend systemic differences. After experiencing twists and turns in Sino-Japanese relations over the past 20 years of the 21st century, the issue of how to transcend systemic differences to develop relations still confronts both countries.

Viewed through the lens of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence later emphasized in China's foreign policy, the four defining elements of the 1972

system reveal clear conceptual correspondences: historical issues with peaceful coexistence; the Taiwan issue with respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference; China's acceptance of the continued existence of the Japan-U.S. security framework with non-interference and equality and mutual benefit; and the transcendence of systemic differences with non-interference and peaceful coexistence. The normalization negotiations therefore demonstrate that these principles provided the political foundation for rebuilding Sino-Japanese relations and have continued to shape the broader diplomatic framework between the two countries.

The negotiations also suggest that the durability of the 1972 System lay not in eliminating differences but in establishing political mechanisms through which they could be managed. Historical disputes, the Taiwan question, the Japan-U.S. alliance, and systemic differences were not fully resolved in 1972; rather, they were incorporated into a framework that enabled diplomatic normalization despite continuing disagreements. This capacity to accommodate divergent positions constituted one of the most enduring characteristics of the 1972 System. Although the domestic and international environment has changed profoundly over the past five decades, the basic political understandings reached during the normalization negotiations continue to provide the foundation for Sino-Japanese relations. Rather than asking whether the 1972 System has become obsolete, future scholarship should focus on clarifying its historical significance, examining how its principles have evolved in changing circumstances, and assessing the extent to which they continue to shape contemporary Sino-Japanese relations.

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Abstract

L'istituzione di relazioni diplomatiche formali tra la Repubblica Popolare Cinese e il Giappone nel settembre 1972 segnò un momento cruciale, con il consenso raggiunto durante i negoziati che servì da fondamento per le relazioni sino-giapponesi contemporanee, spesso definite come il "Sistema del 1972". Questo articolo offre una

rivalutazione approfondita del Sistema del 1972, analizzando il processo negoziale per la normalizzazione diplomatica e identificando quattro elementi chiave. Nell'affrontare le questioni storiche, inclusa la rinuncia della Cina alle riparazioni di guerra e la riflessione del Giappone sulle azioni compiute in tempo di guerra, la dichiarazione della cessazione dello stato di guerra si intreccia con la questione di Taiwan. Inoltre, il raggiungimento del consenso sul principio dell'"Unica Cina", pur mantenendo relazioni pratiche con Taiwan, riveste importanti implicazioni. L'integrazione delle relazioni sino-giapponesi nel quadro della sicurezza tra Giappone e Stati Uniti, in particolare riguardo a Taiwan, costituisce un altro aspetto cruciale. Infine, promuovere le relazioni bilaterali nonostante le differenze istituzionali rappresenta un elemento fondamentale del Sistema del 1972. Le attuali sfide nelle relazioni sino-giapponesi derivano proprio dalla divergenza del Giappone da questo quadro consolidato.

PAROLE CHIAVE

Sistema del 1972
Negoziati per la normalizzazione delle relazioni diplomatiche
Relazioni sino-giapponesi
Questione di Taiwan
Questione storica
Quadro di sicurezza Giappone-Stati Uniti

The establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and Japan in September 1972 marked a pivotal moment, with the consensus achieved during negotiations serving as the foundation for contemporary Sino-Japanese relations, often referring to as the "1972 System". This article offers a nuanced reassessment of the 1972 System, delving into the negotiation process for diplomatic normalization and identifying four key elements. In addressing historical grievances, including China's waiver of war reparations and Japan's reflection on wartime actions, the declaration of the termination of the state of war intersects with the Taiwan issue. Furthermore, achieving the consensus on the "One China" principle while maintaining practical ties with Taiwan holds significant implications. The integration of Sino-Japanese relations within the Japan-U.S. security framework, particularly concerning Taiwan, is another crucial aspect. Lastly, fostering bilateral ties amidst institutional disparities is pivotal element of the 1972 System. Current challenges in Sino-Japanese relations stem from Japan's divergence from this established framework.

KEYWORDS

1972 System
Negotiations on the normalization of diplomatic relations
Sino-Japanese relations
Taiwan issue
Historical issue
Japan-U.S. Security Framework