

## Study Group on China's Future in Japan

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Subject            Japan and China marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of normalization of bilateral diplomatic relations in 2022. Yet the relationship between the two countries is in a state of unprecedented tension after World War II due to China's expansion of its military power and wolf warrior diplomacy, as well as the rise in the China threat theory in Japan in response to this. Furthermore, the Xi Jinping regime is aiming to realize the "China Dream" of becoming a superpower in the world by 2049. Toward realizing this dream, it has formulated long-term strategies to achieve the "centennial military building goal" by 2027, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army, and to surpass the U.S. to become the world's no. 1 economic power by 2035. In this situation, there is speculation in the U.S. and Taiwan that China may use force to achieve the unification of Taiwan by 2027, and there is heightening diplomatic and military tension in East Asia.

On the other hand, the Xi Jinping regime's zero-Covid policy imposed excessive restrictions on the people's movements amid the pandemic in China, inflicting tremendous damages on the economy. The deteriorating property market, rising unemployment, and the lockdown fueled popular discontent. The Sitong Bridge incident involving the display of anti-government and anti-dictatorship slogans occurred in Beijing in October 2022, shortly before the 20<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the

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Subject Communist Party of China (CPC). In November, the “Blank Paper Revolution” protesting the suppression of free speech and demanding the repeal of the zero-Covid policy raged in major cities in China. Certain participants in the “Blank Paper Revolution” in Shanghai even demanded that Xi Jinping step down. Protest against the CPC’s oppressive rule, dubbed digital authoritarianism, is surging in China.

In the past few years, “run,” the exodus of media officials, intellectuals, and the moneyed class who are fed up with the CPC’s coercive politics and interference in free economic activities, has become a major trend in China. Jack Ma, founder of the Alibaba Group, and many other Chinese people have fled overseas, and quite a number of them have sought refuge in Japan.

Historically, exodus of the Chinese people in the form of fleeing or studying abroad had occurred during periods of turmoil in Mainland China. After the Russo-Japanese War in the final days of the Qing Dynasty, nearly 10,000 Chinese nationals who fled their countries were living and studying in Japan. Those who studied in Japan during this period returned home later and played a role as architects of China’s modernization. Kang Youwei, who contributed to modernization during the final years of the Qing Dynasty, and Sun Yat Sen, leader of the Chinese Xinhai Revolution and first president of the Republic of China, were in exile in Japan. Aside from Sun Yat Sen, other leaders of the Xinhai

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Subject            Revolution – Song Jiaoren, Huang Xing, Zhao Sheng, Zhang Binglin, and Tao Chengzhang – as well as the CPC’s founders Cheng Duxiu and Li Dazhao; participants in the CPC’s first national congress Li Hanjun, Li Da, and Dong Biwu; and Zhou Enlai, who later became China’s premier who assisted Mao Zedong, all fled to or studied in Japan during times of turbulence.

In that sense, it can be said that Japan was the cradle of modern China. Japanese politicians and business leaders actively supported Chinese evacuees and students during periods of unrest in Mainland China. Foreign Minister Shigenobu Okuma assisted Kang Youwei’s exile to Japan, while Hirobumi Ito was a close friend of Sun Yat Sen. Furthermore, Jigoro Kano was involved with the founding of Hongwen Academy, the first school for Chinese students in Japan.

This study group will review the close bilateral relationship between Japan and China from a historical and comprehensive perspective, reexamining the significance of the Chinese living in Japan during the Meiji and Taisho Periods, as well as assessing what the “run” exodus to Japan means for China’s future.

Through this process, the group aims to make observations on how Japan should cope with the Chinese society from now on amid the harsh international environment in order to contribute to the stability of the Japan-China relationship.

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Period                      April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2025

Frequency of              Around 10 times a year  
Meetings