

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Japanese conservative camp's bridging method for China–Japan relations under the separation of politics and the economic policy: investigation of the case of the Kenzo Matsumura Group, 1959–1972

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Abstract

From the signing of the Treaty of San Francisco to the resumption of diplomatic relations between China and Japan, Japan has always adopted a political and economic separation policy that maintains diplomacy with Taiwan and economic and cultural relations with China. Within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, to break the existing deadlock, Kenzo Matsumura of the Japanese House of Representatives and others formed a foreign policy group in 1959. This group spoke highly of China's importance to Japan's development on the grounds of national interests rather than ideology and national sentiments, played a bridging role in the political communication between China and Japan, and created a precedent for the nontraditional improvement of international relations in Japan.

Key words: Political and economic separation policy; Sino–Japanese relations; the Kenzo Matsumura Group; The Liberal Democratic Party's China Channel; Treaty of San Francisco

Genesis of the issue

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, consistent with international principles, such as peaceful coexistence, the Chinese government pursued normalization of the China–Japan relationship. However, under pressure from the United States, the cabinet of Japan's Shigeru Yoshida recognized the Taiwanese authority as the legitimate Chinese government, legally closing the avenue to resume diplomatic relations with China. The conservative governments after Yoshida followed this policy direction, placing the United States' request to isolate China at the centre of the China–Japan relationship. In practice, the Japanese government maintained political and diplomatic relations with Taiwan while developing economic and cultural relations with China. Nonetheless, because of the longstanding historical, cultural and economic connections between China and Japan, in postwar Japan, pro-China activity and even advocacy for resuming the official diplomatic relationship between China and Japan has continued.

Regarding the influences that helped shape Japan's China policies, the roles of certain members of the Japanese legislature (the National Diet) within the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) are noteworthy. Since the late 1950s, these LDP legislators continually advanced economic and cultural exchanges with China through an incremental and accumulative approach, despite the restraint of the Treaty of San Francisco (also known as the Treaty of Peace with Japan). Their efforts eventually built a bridge for the communication of political directions and mutual understanding between the top leaders of the

two countries. In this paper, we refer to this group of conservative elites with similar opinions on China policies as the Kenzo Matsumura Group (the Matsumura Group, hereafter). This group, led by Kenzo Matsumura, consisted of LDP legislators (most of whom were also cabinet members), such as Tatsunosuke Takasaki, Yoshimi Furui, Yūtarō Takeyama, Seiichi Tagawa and Aiichirō Fujiyama, as well as entrepreneurs, such as Kaheita Okazaki. In contrast to other factions within Japanese political parties, under the influence of Kenzo Matsumura, this group a collection of politicians and entrepreneurs, committed to interacting with China since the late 1950s – continued to help build the China–Japan relationship after Kenzo Matsumura’s death in 1971.

Over the years, although the academic community has conducted research on the efforts of Matsumura and his peers in advancing the ties between China and Japan in the absence of a formal diplomatic relationship, there has been no consensus regarding the group’s impact on the China–Japan relationship.

One school of thought holds that the group made little contribution to China–Japan relations. This school promulgates two typical views. The first view claims that in postwar Japan, diplomacy with China was not an independent issue unto itself. This issue was more evident in the period before the resumption of the diplomatic relationship between the two countries, a time when Japan was completely subject to the United States’ diplomatic pressure and its Far East policies (Hellmann 1974). This view, although overemphasizing the United States’ influence on Japan, also exaggerates China’s impact by claiming that the trade between the two countries before the resumption of diplomatic relations was merely the result of China’s policies regarding Japan (Brown 1972; Lee 1969). Thus, Japan’s China policies are considered incidental to the political and diplomatic strategies of China and the United States. The second view attributes Japan’s China policies to Japan’s new mercantilism in the Cold War environment. This view holds that the LDP government pursued a pro-Taiwan policy to please the United States, but through the activities of a taskforce comprising pro-China legislators, it still tried to conduct trade with China to accrue economic benefits (Johnson 1986). Asserting that the United States dominated Japan’s diplomatic policies, the first view therefore completely denies the significance of the contributions made by the Matsumura Group towards trailblazing a new China–Japan relationship. The second view does not differentiate between the Matsumura Group and the LDP; it treats the Matsumura Group as a tool for the LDP to execute its new-mercantilist policies. Thus, although the perspective and the theme of the research supporting this view may differ, this school of thought seems to relatively underestimate the role that the Matsumura Group played in forming diplomatic relations with Japan.

A second school of thought proposes a dichotomy between the Matsumura Group and the mainstream LDP, which looked to the United States for diplomatic policies during the postwar era. This view gives the Matsumura Group the most credit in promoting China–Japan ties and resuming the diplomatic relationship between the two countries (Furukawa 1988). Although this view highly values the Matsumura Group’s historical contributions, its claim that the Matsumura Group and the mainstream LDP were in complete opposition to each other does not reflect historical facts. If, as suggested by this view, the Matsumura Group was in complete opposition to the mainstream LDP, it would be difficult to understand why, in their activities to promote relations with China, Matsumura and the other members of the group insisted on not collaborating with the opposition parties but acted as members of the governing party and as conservative politicians. This view also cannot explain the evident government support behind the economic and cultural exchanges with China, which were mainly initiated by the Matsumura Group.

A third school of thought attributes the Matsumura Group’s contributions to their pro-China sentiment. This view recognizes the group’s role in improving the ties between the two countries and resuming their diplomatic relationship, but it denies that the group’s efforts stemmed from a conscious political will to promote the China–Japan relationship. Rather, the group’s activities are viewed as mere responses to the international environment. In explaining the opposing positions of the LDP government and the Matsumura Group, this view simply holds that the group’s motivation was the so-called Pan-Asianism or pro-China sentiment (Soeya 1995a). However, these explanations are not

based on empirical studies of the group members' views on international politics, and they fail to note the state-interest-centred perspective that was demonstrated in the Matsumura Group's views of external affairs. Therefore, the claim that Matsumura and his peers were merely "pro-China" is unconvincing.

Regarding the evaluation of Kenzo Matsumura's role in the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations, this thesis differs from the abovementioned research as follows. First, the creation of the academic concept of the "Matsumura Group" is used to affirm the activities of the members of the group in China. Second, this thesis fully appraises the important pioneering role played by the group as a conservative political force in the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations. Third, for a long time, when the group led by Matsumura carried out activities against China, communication with China had been limited by the policy of the government of the LDP. Before 1966, the group had the ideal objective of resuming diplomatic relations with China, but it always adhered to the policy of the separation of politics and economy. This approach was due to recognizing the reality of the Cold War from the standpoint of conservative politicians, and they persuaded Chinese leaders to accept it and agree to develop Sino-Japanese relations with the progressive and accumulative method. After the Cultural Revolution in China in 1966, political tolerance for the separation of politics and the economy was unprecedentedly reduced. According to the judgement of the group led by Matsumura, it was difficult to maintain the memorandum trade system without changing the attitude. Then, the group orally accepted the principle that the politics and economy of China were inseparable, but it did not take any corresponding action or specific measures. Therefore, we concluded that the Matsumura group might compromise with China to maintain the memorandum trade system, which was the necessary platform for developing Sino-Japanese relations. Of course, its political stand was different from that of the mainstream school of the LDP. However, the group led by Matsumura and the government led by Sato both agreed that maintaining the memorandum trade system met the national interests of Japan. After 1969, public opinion in Japan supporting the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Japan sharply increased (Matsumura *et al* 1964) devoted themselves to the campaign promoting normal Sino-Japanese relations with many politicians of the LDP. At that time, like these conservative politicians, Matsumura supported the Japan-US alliance and agreed to re-establishing diplomatic relations between China and Japan. They believed that the mainstream school of the LDP continued to adhere to the separation of politics and economy, which was an external policy falling behind the times. As China joined the United Nations and the United States changed its policy towards China in 1971 (Matsumura *et al* 1964) believed that the separation of politics and economy had previously been good for Japan but now did not meet the requirements of the era or international situation. If they continued to adhere to this policy, it would not be good for Japan or the United States. Matsumura argued and criticized the mainstream school of the LDP from the standpoint of how to better serve national interests. At the end of his life, he expected that Prime Minister Sato could visit China before the leader of the United States did in order to normalize Sino-Japanese relations. Based on national interests, the leader of the conservative party should help re-establish diplomatic relations between China and Japan, rather than the renovation forces. In this regard, Matsumura and the mainstream school of the LDP had the same attitude towards China (Asahi Shimbun 1966a).

Fourth, the ultimate goal of the Matsumura Group's long-term commitment to exchanges with China has always been to maximize Japan's national interests. Therefore, in its close communication with China, nationalism, rather than ideology or pure racism, dominated. Therefore, in the process of exchanges with China and various negotiations, Matsumura Group often refuted China's criticism of Japanese leaders while adhering to principles. In this regard, Matsumura received the nickname "a representative of the Liberal Democratic Party in the true sense" (Tagawa 1973a), from China's first Premier Zhou Enlai; in addition, to make contact with China, the Matsumura Group insisted on no cooperation with the Opposition, the pro-reform forces. Since the adjustment to its China policy in 1966, the Group also publicly announced that China had its own problems, which the Japanese side should highlight in a down-to-earth manner. However, the separation of politics and the economy

could not ease bilateral relations under the new situation. Japan had to propose a China policy catering to the requirements of the times, with the purpose of realizing world peace, and presented the main opposition against China's accession to the UN, following the United States, which went against public opinion and international trends and might "sow seeds of future trouble for Japan" (Asahi Shimbun 1971h; Matsumura 1966). It was precisely under this situation that Matsumura, who was lying on a hospital bed in 1971, called on then Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Satō to "go to China for re-negotiations" (Asahi Shimbun 1971e), upon hearing news of the US President's upcoming visit to China. Matsumura, a politician, was eager to see the adjustment to China policy, and his commitment to national interests was clearly seen.

Therefore, to examine the Matsumura Group's activities in China, this paper mainly uses the Japanese government's archives, media reports, biographies, diaries, meeting records and other first-hand material that has not previously been highly valued. Within the context of East Asian international politics and Japan's diplomatic history after the war, this study examines the Matsumura Group's activities regarding China and its efforts to normalize Sino-Japanese relations.

Background and international political conditions in the formation of the Matsumura Group

The Matsumura Group's involvement in economic and cultural exchanges with China in the late 1950s came after the signing of the *Treaty of Peace with Japan*, as the Japanese government chose Taiwan as a target to make peace with and signed the *Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty* (or *Treaty of Taipei*). This action placed China and Japan, which had historically maintained relations, in an abnormal situation of having no diplomatic relationship. However, the Japanese government's decision to choose Taiwan for political and diplomatic purposes did not mean that the LDP government completely ignored the importance of mainland China's market. Rather, during the postwar era, the strategic option chosen by successive Japanese governments was to develop economic and cultural relations with mainland China while maintaining a diplomatic relationship with Taiwan. The policy of the separation of politics and economics was long upheld by Japanese governments, which treated the *Treaty of Peace with Japan* and the *Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty* as their bottom line for their China policy because this separation policy enabled Japan to kill three birds with one stone, given the political conditions of the time.

First, in addition to satisfying the market need created by domestic economic development, the separation eased the pressure on the LDP government from some members of the public and the opposition parties to resume a diplomatic relationship with China. According to a survey conducted by the Councillor's Office of the Cabinet Secretary in March 1957, the top two issues, as ranked by respondents, were the normalization of the China-Japan relationship (36%) and the expansion of trade with China (20%) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 1957). Under these circumstances, the separation of politics and the economy helped balance the demands of these interest groups (Wang 2004). Second, the separation limited the China-Japan relations to trade, thereby avoiding conflicts with the Treaty of San Francisco. This condition allowed Japan to continue to interact with mainland China under the framework of international law. Third, by design, the separation policy would only address economic and cultural interactions with China and did not affect politics. This arrangement enabled Japan to dodge the request from mainland China to resume a formal diplomatic relationship while also enabling the country to avoid diplomatic entanglements with Taiwan. However, there were limits on the policy's effect of artificially separating politics and the economy.

First, the intrinsic conflicts within the separation policy hampered the development of foreign relations. Until the early 1970s, the Japanese government upheld the separation policy in relations with China. As such, all economic and cultural interactions with China were conducted by nongovernmental organizations. Limiting economic and cultural exchanges with China to the nongovernmental sector may have pleased the United States and Taiwan, but because of the Cold War, the Japanese government had to step in and interfere with trade with China, implementing measures, such as restricting the export of goods that were of strategic value to China and regulating Chinese trade

delegations to Japan. These measures constituted political activities at the nongovernmental level, not only making separation a misnomer but also erecting functional barriers to interactions with China. For instance, the roots of the difficult negotiations surrounding the fourth Sino–Japanese nongovernmental trade agreement and the escalating conflicts between the two countries after the Nagasaki flag event in 1958 could all be traced to these functional barriers. Therefore, although the inclusion of political elements in nonpolitical interactions between China and Japan could be leveraged by the United States and Taiwan to pressure Japan, it did not help Japan appropriately address trade issues and emergent incidents.

Second, at face value, the phrase “separation of politics and the economy” would mean an absolute mutual exclusion of political and economic relations between the two countries; this exclusion, however, was not a true reflection of the China–Japan relationship at the time. In the 1950s, the total trade between China and Japan accounted for less than 3% of Japan’s international trade; it was even less than Japan’s trade volume with Taiwan or Thailand, while the bilateral trade between Japan and the United States accounted for 30% of Japan’s international trade (Ministry of Economic Planning 1997). It follows that the true purpose of Japan’s policy of the separation of politics and the economy was to maintain an avenue for interacting with China and to use this arrangement as a foundation to further develop their bilateral relationship. At least during the period when Shinsuke Kishi’s cabinet was in office, the separation of politics and the economy, rather than establishing diplomatic relations, was the goal of Japan’s China policy. The latter was true at when the Nobusuke Kishi cabinet was in office. Hence, this approach did not affect Japan’s ability to address certain situations. After the Nagasaki flag event, the economic and cultural relations between China and Japan were disrupted, and Japan’s governing party and the Prime Minister did not take any actions for a considerable time (Asahi Shimbun 1958; Wait and See Approach Confirmed Again/Prime Minister *et al.* 1958), reflecting the inconsistency between the essence of the policy on paper and its practical impact. At that time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the then Nobusuke Kishi cabinet even put forward a plan to improve relations with China, including political relations. The premise was that the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, India and other countries should persuade Taiwan and China to separate Taiwan from China, enabling China to join the United Nations as an independent country. After these situations became established facts, as long as China also recognized this reality, relevant countries, including Japan, could recognize the Chinese Communist regime and further recognize China’s status in the United Nations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 1959). Despite this proposition, both sides of the Taiwan Strait had clearly adopted a one-China position, and the United States was also cautious regarding such a policy. Therefore, this proposition not only reflects the irrationality of the separation policy, but also shows that due to a lack of channels for communication between leaders of China and Japan, Japanese leaders did not learn that both China and Taiwan would resolutely take a stance of opposing territory separation and thus formulated a policy in response with no practical value.

A case was filed for a policy that offered no value. To improve the communication channels and share concerns with China in a timely manner, Japan needed the appropriate political players to act as a communication conduit between China’s Communist government and the LDP government. It was against this backdrop that the Matsumura Group emerged as a main player in developing relations with China. The following common characteristics in the development of the group’s main members’ opinions regarding external affairs were the major elements that helped this group take shape.

Most group members had visited or worked in China before Japan’s surrender at the end of World War II, which helped them develop a belief in the importance of China’s market and resources. In 1883, in Fukumitsu, Nishitonami District, in Toyama Prefecture, Matsumura was born into a farmer’s family that had a strong interest in Chinese culture. His interest in China could be traced back even to his teenage years. In 1904, Matsumura, a second-year university student at Waseda University whose second language was Chinese, and Atsune Aoyagi, a lecturer of Chinese at Waseda University who later became an advisor to President Shih-Kai Yuan, visited Wuhan and Shanghai for scholastic purposes. Matsumura later summarized the experience of his over 1-month visit in his 30,000-word

document *Travel in China* (Kimura 1989b). As a young adult who was passionate about China's history and ancient civilization, Matsumura once again realized the value of China's abundant resources. The view towards China that Matsumura developed in his early years would have a fundamental influence on his activities related to external affairs (Kimura 1989a). Matsumura visited China as a member of the Toyama Prefecture Council in 1923 and as a member of the National Diet in 1928. The places he visited included Shandong, Tianjin, Beijing and Northeast China. In summarizing his thoughts on the visits, he proposed that "for the Eastern and Western civilizations to develop in harmony and bear fruitful results, China and Japan must work together." However, the relationship of "working together" proposed by Matsumura was conditioned on Japan's dominance over China (Kimura 1999a). For this reason, as part of a delegation of Japan's top leaders after the Pacific War began, he visited Northeast China twice (Kimura 1999b) and served as the eighth chairman in the Yokusan Seijikai and as the Secretary General in the Dai Nippon Seijikai of the highest national militarist institution.

Tatsunosuke Takasaki, former cabinet minister and member of the House of Representatives, spent most of his life developing his businesses. From 1941, Takasaki was in charge of the Manchurian Industrial Development Company in Northeast China, and in growing the business, he experienced first-hand the interdependence of the two countries' economies. In August 1945, Takasaki witnessed Japan's unconditional surrender in Northeast China and later helped the Communist Party's army and the Kuomintang government revived the local industries. In 1946, he was the liaison for the Japanese in Northeast China and Japan's representative responsible for repatriating the Japanese in this region (Editing Committee for Collection of Works of Tatsunosuke Takasaki 1965a). Kaheita Okazaki, an elite in finance, also had contact with China in his early life because of his business activities. He was a member of the board of directors of the Huaxing Commercial Bank during the Sino-Japanese War (Nikkei Inc. 1980b). He later entered diplomacy and worked at Japan's embassy under the Wang Jingwei regime. After Japan's surrender, Okazaki worked as a diplomat in Shanghai to help the Chinese government repatriate the Japanese in China (Okazaki 1971). Aiichirō Fujiyama, who was the *de facto* leader of the Matsumura Group after Matsumura passed away in 1971 and who was also a former Minister of Foreign Affairs and member of the House of Representatives, visited Chinese cities, such as Shanghai, Nanjing, Hankou, Qingdao, Tianjin and Beijing, even when he was studying at Keio University. He would later have more opportunities to interact with the Chinese through participating in his family business. In 1937, he visited China as a member of a Japanese trade delegation and met the then-leader of the Kuomintang government, Chiang Kai-shek. With greater economic cooperation occurring between the two countries, the entrepreneur would increasingly see how urgent it was for Japan to break the restraints of the existing system and resolve the China-Japan relationship issue (Nikkei Inc. 1980a).

The main members of the Matsumura Group recognized that the PRC was important to Japan's economic development and national security in the postwar period and proposed developing relations with the PRC from the "Asian position." Matsumura consistently insisted that Japan's development could not disregard neighbouring China, a country with a strong national consciousness that was in the process of a resurrection. He claimed the following:

[E]xcluding China from world peace is impossible. Japan sides with countries that uphold liberalism but is also a member of Asia; China is a Communist country but also a nation in Asia. There is no reason for the two close neighbours not to live together peacefully. For Asia's prosperity, world peace, and even the benefits of humankind, it is imperative to develop the China-Japan relationship (Endo 1975).

Yoshimi Furui, a member of the House of Representatives, believed that postwar Japan should work with liberal countries for its development and prosperity but should not "forget the Asian countries" and that "Asia is the parent of Japan. Japan would not maintain its sovereignty, security, and prosperity without Asia" (Iyasu 1987). Tatsunosuke Takasaki, a member of the cabinets of Ichirō Hatoyama and Nobusuke Kishi and a strong proponent for developing relations with China, insisted on such a

view towards China after he joined the Matsumura Group: according to his view, Japan differed from the United States or the Soviet Union in that it severely lacked natural resources; to survive and thrive, Japan had to peacefully coexist with all countries. It therefore followed that “Japanese politicians must master the skills to work peacefully with both the United States-led countries and the group of countries led by China and the Soviet Union” (People’s Daily 1960). In January 1959, in his campaign against Nobusuke Kishi for LDP leadership, Matsumura issued a policy statement that proposed the following:

We are a member of the free countries but also a member of Asia, with the same common sentiment and daily lives. We should help each other to reach prosperity. This is our destiny as a nation. The relationship with China under the Communist Party should not be limited to economic activities. As two countries that have shared a common writing system and culture for 2,000 years, we should achieve prosperity together. Although I do not have specific policies for the China–Japan diplomatic relationship right now, as long as both countries respect each other’s political systems and support each other’s economic and cultural prosperity, then economic and cultural exchanges will no doubt grow between the two countries (Asahi Shimbun 1959d).

In 1959, Matsumura received an invitation from Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai to organize a delegation to visit China. This event can be understood as a sign of the official formation of the group, and Matsumura and others were beginning exchanges with China under relatively good international political conditions. This view is supported mainly by the following reasons.

A group of likeminded politicians with shared views on foreign affairs began gathering under the umbrella of Matsumura and started conducting exchanges with China. What prompted the final decision to visit China in the summer of 1959 was the dramatic decline in bilateral trade. After the discontinuation of trade between China and Japan in 1958, the total imports and exports of the two countries accounted for only approximately 16% of those in 1956 (Tooru 1973), and the Kishi government was still criticizing China (Asahi Shimbun 1959a). To ensure that the LDP government would have an avenue to interact with China after the ultimate conclusion of the Kishi government, Matsumura believed it was the right time to visit China (Tagawa 1972). Between 18 October and 2 December 1959, Matsumura led a group of House of Representatives members, all of whom, including Yūtarō Takeyama, Ichitarō Ide, Yoshimi Furui and Seiichi Tagawa, would become important members of the Matsumura Group, on visits to many places in China, including Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Wuhan, Hangzhou, Xi’an, Luoyang, Lanzhou, Chengdu, Chongqing and Kunming. During the visits, they travelled over 15,000 km. In meeting with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, Matsumura proposed that going forward, in terms of the communication mechanism between the two countries, he would be responsible for political exchanges and that Takasaki would be in charge of economic exchanges (Editing Committee for Collection of Works of Tatsunosuke Takasaki 1965b).

The Matsumura Group’s activities were well received by the Chinese government. During their visit to China, Matsumura and his entourage were treated as “state guests” (Tagawa 1972). The Chinese authorities assigned twelve people, including Sun Pinghua, Wang Xiaoyun, Jin Sucheng and Wu Xuewen, to accompany the visitors on their entire itinerary. Chinese national leaders Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, Chen Yi and Wang Zhen, along with the local leaders of the provinces or the cities visited, held meetings with the visiting members. Of particular note are the four meetings with Zhou Enlai, during which the two parties frankly expressed their thoughts, including completely opposing positions. The results included both consensuses and differences of opinion (Asahi Shimbun 1959e, 1959f; Liu 1997; Tagawa 1972). Nonetheless, these gatherings marked an important step towards enhancing mutual understanding. As asserted by Premier Zhou at the farewell banquet, visits to China by influential Japanese, such as Matsumura, would further enhance exchanges between the two countries (Tian 1996). This assertion was also an indication that China completely approved Matsumura’s visit.

Matsumura's visit to China was also recognized and affirmed by the LDP government. On 14 October 1959, 4 days before leaving for China, Matsumura visited Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi and expressed his hope that "the government would seriously consider if the visit to China could bring positive results to China–Japan relations" (Asahi Shimbun 1959c). Although Matsumura and the group were not a formal diplomatic delegation sent by the governing party or the government, the group's visit and the government's objectives were not completely unrelated. On 15 December 1959, Matsumura once again visited Nobusuke Kishi at the Prime Minister's official residence and had a 2-h discussion. Shojiro Kawashima, the LDP Secretary, also provided positive comments before Matsumura's visits to China: although Matsumura did not represent the governing party, as a member of the House of Representatives tasked with certain political responsibilities, his visit to China during a difficult time in the China–Japan relationship "would show the Chinese Communist Party the characteristics of the Japanese people and Japan's political situation, which will benefit both countries" (Asahi Shimbun 1959b). Encouraged by these events, Matsumura sponsored the initiative of the "China Studies Association." The organization absorbed some members of the Takeo Miki-Kenzo Matsumura Group and Tanzan Ishibashi Group within the LDP to participate in the joint meeting to agree on how to open up the situation with China. Most of the members agreed to develop relations with China based on the principle of separation of politics and economy, in which the Japan–US New Security Treaty was critical (Asahi Shimbun 1960).

The Matsumura Group's activities and impact

From the first visit to China in 1959, which unfurled the banner of the Matsumura Group, to the resumption of the China–Japan diplomatic relationship in the early 1970s, the group's activities relating to China mainly occurred in two areas: communication and interactions with China in various fields and public relations activities in Japan to influence public opinion and related political activities. The major achievements of these activities were as follows.

Japan and China developed a 5-year, long-term, comprehensive trade arrangement (called the LT trade arrangement after the first letters in the names of Liao Chengzhi and Tatsunosuke Takasaki, the signatories of the agreement between China and Japan). Under an incremental but cumulative approach to developing the bilateral relationship, this arrangement specified the trade conditions between the two countries as well as the varieties and quantities of the commodities to be traded; it also promised that entire industrial production lines would be exported by Japan to China with favourable trade terms, such as deferred payments or a barter trade arrangement (Tian 1996b). In the years that followed, Sino–Japanese trade grew rapidly thanks to the LT trade arrangement: in 1962, the countries conducted trade amounting to US\$840 million, increasing to US\$4,690 million in 1965. China's trade dependence on Japan also grew from 3.15% in 1962 to 12.69% in 1965 (Kajima Institute of International Peace 1970). This change indicated that by the 1960s, trade with Japan conducted under this arrangement had become an important component of total Sino–Japanese trade and even of China's total international trade. This agreement made a significant contribution to China's imports and exports and its national economy (Liao 1996). After 1968, following negotiations between the Matsumura Group and the Chinese government, the LT trade arrangement was changed to a 1-year term trade arrangement (called the MT trade arrangement for the initial letters of the phrase "memorandum trade"). Although the scale of the trade under this new system declined somewhat due to political influences in the two countries, the MT trade arrangement remained one of the two pillars of Sino–Japanese trade, of which the other pillar was the "friendship trade" arrangement maintained by nongovernment organizations of the two countries; both arrangements were critical to promoting economic exchange between the two countries (Japan–China Economic Association 1975).

The visits facilitated the establishment of trade liaison offices in the two countries and the exchange of journalists. During the third and fourth nongovernmental negotiations, the delegates from the two countries reached agreements regarding establishing trade offices in each other's countries. The

cabinets led at that time by Hatoyama and Kishi also supported these agreements in principle (Ishikawa, Nakajima and Ikei 1970; Nobusuke 1983). The diplomatic department of the Hatoyama cabinet even expressly indicated that the trade office in China would be the “foundation of the Japanese embassy in China” in the future (Director of 2nd Branch, Asia Bureau 1956). However, due to interference from the United States and Taiwan and the deteriorating relationship between China and Japan after 1958, this initiative did not materialize. The agreement to establish trade liaison offices in 1964 following negotiations between China and the Matsumura Group specified that the offices would have the authority to oversee a multitude of international affairs (People’s Daily 1964a), an indication that the offices would not only be trade liaisons but also play a larger role in facilitating the development of bilateral relations between the two countries. This decision was a prominent and constructive step in the development of the China–Japan relationship. In the same year, the Matsumura Group reached an agreement with China for the exchange of journalists, realizing both countries’ hopes to deploy journalists from the major media in each other’s countries (People’s Daily 1964b). Following the agreement, seven Chinese journalists from media organizations, such as the People’s Daily and Xinhua News Agency, and 14 Japanese journalists from media organizations, such as Asahi Shimbun and Kyodo News, were deployed to Japan and China, respectively (Asahi Shimbun 1964b). As this was the first time Japan had sent journalists to a socialist country, the event received prominent praise in Japan (Asahi Shimbun 1964a).

The direct meetings with Chinese leaders during the group’s visit to China provided an avenue for the governing parties and the governments in the two countries to communicate regarding political issues. By 1972, when China and Japan officially resumed diplomatic relations, Matsumura had led five group visits to China and had conducted more than 10 extensive meetings with Zhou Enlai and other Chinese leaders. Aiichirō Fujiyama, who succeeded Matsumura as the group’s leader, led two groups in visits to China and met with Zhou Enlai several times. Other members of the group, such as Tatsunosuke Takasaki, Yoshimi Furui, and Seiichi Tagawa, also visited China and met with Chinese leaders multiple times individually or in groups. The night before the normalization of the China–Japan relationship, Yoshimi Furui even met with Zhou Enlai, which greatly helped the negotiations in terms of resuming the diplomatic relationship (Furui 1978; Tagawa 1973b).

The Matsumura Group’s efforts in Japan to foster an environment conducive to the normalization of the China–Japan relationship can be summarized as follows. First, through frequent public speeches and writings, the group members used their special positions and influence as LDP members of the legislature to launch public opinion campaigns that supported the development of China–Japan relations. In the 1970s, making sensible judgements about the international situation and realizing the strong desire among Japanese people to accelerate the normalization of the China–Japan relationship, Aiichirō Fujiyama and his peers formed the Association of Legislators for Resuming China–Japan Relations. The association had largely agreed with China on the restoration of diplomatic relations in principle, such as recognizing that the government of the People’s Republic of China as the sole legal government representing the entirety of China and Taiwan as an inalienable part of China; that the Japan–RC Treaty is illegal and invalid; and that the People’s Republic of China retains its lawful rights to restore its position in all UN agencies. However, it did not employ the concept of the Japan–US alliance and the specific handling of Taiwan’s ownership. The association also held large-scale lectures in various parts of Japan to help Japanese people understand China and develop the normalization of China–Japan relations into a national event (Asahi Shimbun 1971b).

Second, as long-term LDP members who were outside of the party’s mainstream, Matsumura and his peers always maintained a goal of improving the government’s policies towards China. At that time, they even imposed the pressure of public opinion to normalize Japan–China relations on the mainstream party in administration to adjust its posture towards China in time and appropriately change their former stance of following the United States in diplomacy, according to the changes of the times and national interests. For example, the group’s active visit to China during the Nobusuke Kishi cabinet relieved the deadlock in the relations between the two countries and encouraged the Japanese government to acquiesce; during the Ikeda cabinet, the trade benchmark set by the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs was exceeded, and China was offered favourable terms in the negotiation. Persuading the government to ratify trade agreements, overcoming the government's negative posture towards MT trade, and excluding various pressures to maintain the existence of the trade system during the Sato cabinet are all persuasive cases. Matsumura also used his position as an advisor to the LDP's Asia–Africa Study Association and Foreign Affairs Research Association to convince members of the LDP, particularly the members of the legislature within the LDP, to uphold the Matsumura Group's China policies (Asahi Shimbun 1965; Matsumura 1999b). This effort helped inculcate different views on China policies in the LDP.

Third, the group organized nonpartisan political activities to advance the normalization of the China–Japan relationship. For a long time, the Matsumura Group maintained that they would not work with political groups outside the governing party. With public opinion in Japan showing increasing support for the normalization of the China–Japan relationship, the Matsumura Group adjusted its strategy and turned to nonpartisan efforts to promote normalization. After the news release of the visit to China by United States President Nixon, Prime Minister Eisaku Satō verbally indicated his willingness to improve the China–Japan relationship and even his intent to “support mainland China [in] joining the United Nations” (Asahi Shimbun 1971c). However, a temporary session of parliament during which the China issue was the main agenda item did not result in any policy initiatives to move ahead on the relationship with China. Thus, the Association of Legislators for Resuming the China–Japan Relationship, which mainly comprised of members of the Matsumura Group, tasked the secretary of the Association, Seiichi Tagawa, with drafting the “Resolution on Resuming Diplomatic Relations between Japan and the People's Republic of China,” an attempt to force the LDP to fundamentally change its China policies through a legislative approach. The main suggestions in the Tagawa resolution included promptly resuming the relationship with China, resolving all the outstanding issues between the two countries, and recognizing China at the United Nations' convention (Asahi Shimbun 1971g). In Japan's political circles, this proposal was a policy statement with considerable foresight and political courage. Therefore, this move affected more than two situations, greatly impacting the understanding of the current political situation by the Matsumura Group, rather than simply representing the courage of an individual politician. First, since 1970, more than 60% of the people in Japan have agreed to normalize Japan–China relations. Second, as an increasing number of countries recognized China in the world, the UN passed a resolution to admit China in October 1971. Therefore, as Aiichiro Fujiyama, the new leader of the Group and head of the Japan–China Parliamentary Union for the Restoration of China–Japan Diplomatic Relations, said, if the LDP government continued to be passive and inactive and blindly follow the United States, it might suffer the consequences and gave the United States the opportunity to resume diplomatic relations with China ahead of Japan. At this point, it would be “harmful to Japan's national interests” (Asahi Shimbun 1970a). Although due to internal differences, the effort did not materialize, it set a precedent, i.e. to force the governing party to adjust its major foreign policies, members of the governing party conducted political activities outside of the party, a dramatic political action. In 1971, when the Eisaku Satō government once again indicated that it would side with the United States in refusing to expel Taiwan from the United Nations (Asahi Shimbun 1971f), Aiichirō Fujiyama and the group members, under the Association of Legislators for Resuming China–Japan Relations, issued a joint statement with China, namely, the “Four Principles for Resuming China–Japan Relations” (Asahi Shimbun 1971d), to counteract the LDP's China policy. In the meantime, Aiichirō Fujiyama asked Eisaku Satō to resign, as his cabinet was no longer a good fit for resuming the China–Japan relationship (Asahi Shimbun 1971a). This event, in which a member of the governing party and the legislature made an open request on both the domestic and international stages for the party leader to resign as the head of government, was unprecedented in the LDP's history.

Matsumura Group members have participated in exchanges with China for the main purpose of normalizing Japan–China relations. In 1959, after Matsumura and his attendants returned from their first visit to China, he mentioned the following while reporting to the then Prime Minister: “Japan may have to recognize China earlier than expected” (Asahi Shimbun 1959g). This statement

shows that Matsumura originally aimed to resume bilateral diplomatic relations and now considered its high time to do so. However, under the constraints of the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the US strategy, as well as the lack of corresponding public opinion support in Japan, the resumption of diplomatic relations between China and Japan could not be accomplished at that time. Therefore, until the Cultural Revolution in China starting in 1966, the Matsumura Group had never explicitly mentioned this goal and refused to discuss the normalization of relations in direct contact with the Chinese side (Matsumura 1959, 1960). Instead, it had been conducting communication based on the principle of politics-economy separation and even tried to make Chinese leaders accept this principle (People's Daily 1962). This effort was also why the Matsumura Group had regarded the memorandum trading system based on the principle as the foundation of the development of China–Japan relations. That is, for a long time, the normalization of relations was the ideal goal of the Matsumura Group's activities in China, and the separation of politics and economy was the principle and policy framework for its realistic communication. After the Cultural Revolution, the Matsumura Group believed that politics-economy separation could no longer solve the problems emerging in China–Japan relations, and the LDP government was passive and inactive. Therefore, the Group advocated accepting the inseparability of politics and economic principles as proposed by China. The change in understanding mainly lies in maintaining the memorandum trade system, as supported by the Eisaku Satō cabinet, so the understanding was more of a political slogan for propaganda and not implemented as soon as possible. In 1969, and particularly after 1971, the UN admitted China, the United States changed its China policy in turn, and the activities promoting the China–Japan resumption of diplomatic relations in Japan and abroad flourished. In this context, the Matsumura Group became fully involved in related activities with the aim of ensuring the dominant position of conservative forces in domestic resumption events and the normalization of relations ahead of the United States and severely criticized the Chinese policy of the Eisaku Satō cabinet. Nevertheless, the Matsumura Group insisted on the Japan–US alliance, noted that the government's policy towards China lagged behind and violated public opinion, and criticized the government for only aiming to safeguard Japan's national interests. Moreover, although Matsumura and his attendants denied the Taiwanese authority as a representative of the Chinese government, they did not clearly indicate that Western countries should also deny it. Therefore, although by the early 1970s, more than 100 LDP members had participated in the movement to promote the resumption of China–Japan diplomatic relations and many members of the Eisaku Satō cabinet had spoken highly and been in favour of normalization, the Matsumura Group had maintained a political stance nearly identical to that of the mainstream of the LDP until the eve of the normalization.

Therefore, in the long run, the Matsumura Group's activities to enhance the economic and cultural ties with China were not so much at risk of offending the conservative politicians' camp, as they were politically necessary to help achieve an LDP objective – to satisfy Japan's need for opening up new markets and securing the country through maintaining communication with mainland China. Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda referred to his interactions with the United States as Japan's "Face" to the United States but also entrusted Matsumura and his peers to interact with China, and he summarized these activities as the Japanese government's "Face" towards China (*ibid.*). This vivid description indicated the multiple intertwining features of the LDP government's policies concerning its relationships with the United States, China and Taiwan. It also indicated that the Matsumura Group's exchanges with China were used to balance Japan's relations with the United States and Taiwan. For this reason, the negotiation plans for the LT trade arrangement were carefully studied and developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Opinion on China–Japan Trade and Exchange of Memorandum between Liao Chengzhi, and Tatsunosuke Takasaki (1962), and the negotiations and eventual implementation of the MT trade arrangement were supported by the Eisaku Satō cabinet, despite the cabinet's hardline stance towards China. Nevertheless, during his meetings with Zhou Enlai, Matsumura often expressly denied that the Japanese government was "hostile to China" and defended the China policies of the Japanese prime ministers, including Nobusuke Kishi and Eisaku Satō (*ibid.*). Another prominent member of the group, Yoshimi Furui, also claimed on multiple

occasions that China's criticism of Japan was mainly due to a "misunderstanding" (Asahi Shimbun 1970b). The fact that the Matsumura Group and the LDP government held the same stance on major issues related to China enabled the group to represent Japan's top leadership when communicating with China on major political issues.

The Matsumura Group's role as a communication channel was fulfilled mainly through the group members' meetings and discussions with Chinese leaders. In those interactions, the members of the Matsumura Group had dual identities: the first was as individuals without official authorization or as a delegation from the governing party or the government, and the second was as members of the legislature from the governing party. This political identity indicated their close ties to the LDP and enabled them to achieve policy goals even though there was no official diplomatic relationship between Japan and China. The uniqueness of this identity was the reason the Matsumura Group could hold China policy positions that were different from those of the LDP government.

For the LT and MT trade arrangements, the Matsumura Group could use its unique identity to break with the LDP government's bottom line for the LT and MT trade arrangements, consistent with international conditions. This ability ensured that the trade systems generated economic benefits and political gains for both countries. For instance, in 1962, out of concern that the United States and Taiwan might be opposed to exporting complete sets of equipment to China, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not include these complete equipment sets in the trade items during the negotiations for the LT trade agreement (Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Opinion on China-Japan Trade and Exchange of Memorandum between Liao Chengzhi, Tatsunosuke Takasaki 1962). The actual trade agreements reached, however, did not have these restrictions. Based on a thorough understanding of China's demands, the Matsumura Group broke with the limitations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and specified in the signed agreements that from 1963 to 1965, Japan would export complete sets of equipment worth £1 million each year (*ibid.*). During the negotiations for the MT trade arrangement after 1968, significant members of the Matsumura Group, such as Yoshimi Furui and Aiichirō Fujiyama, indicated that they understood and identified with China's positions (Furui 1969), despite the LDP's warnings and threats of punishment (Asahi Shimbun 1969), thereby ensuring the extension of MT trade.

The inconsistency in China policies between the Matsumura Group and the LDP government was also demonstrated in the fact that the Matsumura Group consciously placed their positions towards China within the LDP's bottom line framework of the China policy. By seeking common ground with China's Japan policy, they successfully conducted the communication functions that this group assumed. When the Hayato Ikeda government was in power, both China and Japan were positively inclined towards developing economic and cultural relations. Therefore, the Matsumura Group essentially promoted exchanges between the two countries within the framework of the separation of politics and the economy. However, after Eisaku Satō became the Prime Minister in 1964, Japan's attitude towards developing relations with China gradually became negative. Due to the Cultural Revolution, China also took an increasingly hardline stance towards Japan. This situation posed a dilemma the Matsumura Group: if they acceded China's positions, then the group would be opposed by the hardline members of the LDP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, thus undercutting the group's political foundation for developing relations with China. If the Matsumura Group expressly opposed China's positions, the bilateral trade system would not be sustained. This outcome would eventually disappoint the Japanese government, which was still expecting to use this communication channel to interact with China. Consequently, the group would lose its platform for communicating with China. In other words, the forced shift of the Matsumura Group's policy directions and positions occurred in a very restrictive policy environment. Hence, after the fourth visit to China in 1966, in an effort to maintain the trade system and political dialogue mechanism between the two countries, the Matsumura Group's members finally used the LDP government's need to continue to maintain communication with China and, for the first time, agreed to shift away from the separation policy and as a new guideline for developing relations with China, adopted China's position that politics and the economy were inseparable (Matsumura 1966). Because of this treatment, the Matsumura Group drew fire from both Japanese public opinion and conservative forces. As mentioned, due to the constraints of both subjective

and objective conditions, the Matsumura Group did not immediately apply the principle of the inseparability of politics and economy to its exchanges with China. However, the most important result from changing the political stance was maintaining the memorandum trading system.

Nonetheless, this approach resulted in substantial progress in the relationship between the two countries and particularly benefitted the maintenance of a communications channel with China, the LDP government.

Therefore, to understand why the Matsumura Group turned to be in favour of China, it may be helpful to compare the Japanese and Chinese governments in terms of the purpose and function of activities in China. The Matsumura Group has a long-term tacit understanding to conduct economic and trade exchanges through the nongovernmental trade system and to continuously enhance mutual understanding and trust. In the end, the normalization of China–Japan relations will be a matter of course, and the evolutionary path of such functionalist relations between countries is the most appropriate in line with Japan’s economic and security interests. Therefore, Yoshimi Furui, who was long responsible for political negotiations with China in the Group, noted that as long as the nongovernmental trade system can be maintained, the separation policy as proposed by Japan and the inseparability principle as proposed by China actually had “no fundamental difference” (Asahi Shimbun 1968). However, for the Japanese government, first, the politics-economy separation policy serves as a political basis for its alliance with the United States and other Western countries and for safeguarding security, and the normalization of relations with China can only create relative value in economics and trade. Second, the politics-economy separation policy helps ensure that Taiwan will always stay in the Western coalition; in contrast, the resumption of diplomatic relations with China will cause Japan to face the problem of the unification of Taiwan and mainland China. For the Chinese government, first, the politics-economy inseparability principle is its focus and goal, by which China can resume normal China–Japan relations and which also serves to facilitate national unification. The separation policy is a makeshift strategy when conditions are not fulfilled. It is precisely because the Matsumura Group successfully integrated the Japanese government’s methodology for gradually developing China–Japan relations based on the principle of politics-economy separation, with the Chinese government’s teleology of achieving the normalization of China–Japan relations, that the Matsumura Group has enabled itself to play an intermediary role in effectively promoting the development of bilateral relations.

The Matsumura Group’s role in Japan’s diplomacy with China against the backdrop of the separation of politics and the economy

The largest contribution of the Matsumura Group’s interactions with China over more than 10 years was the China–Japan relationship enhancement facilitated by these interactions through the policy of the separation of politics and the economy, which marks an achievement that seems to run counter to common sense. On the one hand, the group kept its interactions with China within the framework of the separation of politics and the economy, thereby obtaining the support of the LDP government. On the other hand, the group used its in-depth understanding of China to convince the Chinese government to accept the separation policy, despite the Chinese government’s initial strong opposition, and helped the two sides reach a consensus on developing the China–Japan relationship through an incremental but cumulative approach. More importantly, the Matsumura Group sincerely and clearly reminded China that relying on this path of communication could help normalize Sino–Japanese relations, thereby winning the trust of the Chinese government, which valued political goals in international exchanges. The result achieved through complex political interactions remains highly valued today and is referred to in international politics as the “Japanese Way,” by which the principle of the separation of politics and the economy is used as a buffer to resolve intercountry security issues and promote economic development (Hirakawa 2012). Based on the above analysis and considering the international political process and framework at the time, in the context of the history of Japanese diplomacy, the present paper offers the following comments on the significance of the Matsumura Group’s interactions with China.

First, as a group most committed to improving the China–Japan relationship within Japan’s conservative camp, the Matsumura Group worked diligently to help the LDP government maintain relations with China, which had not been normalized, and served as a communication channel for the top leaders of the two countries. A review of the conservative governments’ development and implementation mechanisms for China policies in postwar Japan indicates that the Hayato Ikeda cabinet, as one of the three major players in developing foreign policies, was apparently more positive and resolute in developing relations with China than the other two players were, i.e. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the business sector. For instance, in 1962, during the Matsumura Group’s negotiations with China on the LT trade system, Japan’s business sector, particularly the steel and fertilizer industries, showed an extremely negative attitude compared to that displayed by the LDP (Soeya 1995b). Some industries even refused to participate in the negotiations. In response to the government’s persuasion, to show their contempt for the trade scale between China and Japan, these industries only sent low-ranking personnel to accompany Tatsunosuke Takasaki on a visit to China (Economic Bureau of Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1962; Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Opinion on China–Japan Trade and Exchange of Memorandum between Liao Chengzhi, Tatsunosuke Takasaki 1962). The guidelines for the LT trade negotiations developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressly excluded the exports of complete sets of equipment to China (*ibid.*). The actual agreements signed (*ibid.*), however, indicated that Takasaki broke this rule on exports, and this result was accepted by the LDP’s Executive Department (Asahi Shimbun 1962). The initiatives taken by the Matsumura Group to help facilitate in the absence of normalized diplomatic relations, the political communication between the top leaders of the two countries played a critical role in improving the relationship between the two countries. For instance, during the Hayato Ikeda government period, the Matsumura Group tried to bridge the gap between the two governments in their understanding of each other by continually explaining to China the LDP government’s views on China and its foreign policies. When Eisaku Satō was the Prime Minister, the group largely sided with China’s positions. To maintain the trade system, the group not only urged the LDP government to change its China policies, but also criticized the political stance of the mainstream members of the governing party and the government alike. After Kakuei Tanaka assumed power as the Prime Minister, until the night before the negotiations, the main members of the Matsumura Group advocated tirelessly for the resumption of the China–Japan relationship. The fact that the LDP was more positive towards Chinese issues than were the business circle and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is inextricably related to the Matsumura Group’s continuous efforts.

Second, the Matsumura Group’s pressuring of the LDP to address the China issue helped ease the mood among the Japanese public, who were discontented at the current state of the China–Japan relationship, and helped consolidate support for the LDP government’s foreign policies. Staged by the Matsumura Group, the long-term public opinion campaigns regarding the China situation and China–Japan relations provided guidelines to help the Japanese public formulate an objective and rational understanding of China, creating social factors conducive to normalizing the China–Japan relationship. These factors were in effect used by the LDP government to resume diplomatic relations with China (NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute 1975),¹ easing the political pressure from Japanese society and in turn alleviating the risks to the government of adhering to its existing foreign policies of heavily relying on the United States and Taiwan.

Third, the Matsumura Group’s interactions with China never deviated from Japan’s fundamental foreign policy direction, which was to centre its international affairs on the United States. Rather, these interactions were used by the LDP government as leverage against the United States and Taiwan. This strategy was evident in a number of diplomatic events that occurred during the Hayato Ikeda administration. In other words, the Matsumura Group’s interactions with China actually helped Japan manoeuvre in its diplomatic negotiations with the United States. Note that this leverage was at the Matsumura Group’s expense, as they were put into tense domestic and international environments

¹According to surveys conducted by the Prime Minister’s Office and Asahi Shimbun, between 1954 and 1960, 70–75% of the general public supported normalization of the China–Japan diplomatic relationship.

and even an awkward position from the beginning. They were often criticized by China as defenders of the LDP government and other anti-China powers in Japan while also being chided by Japan's hardline groups as being "tolerant of communism" and acting as "traitors." They were even criticized by publications of the Soviet Union's Communist Party as "Exclusive Asianists" (Matsumura *et al.* 1978).

Fourth, by deepening their mutual understanding and trust and by seeking common interests, the Matsumura Group and China's Communist government set a precedent for communication and exchange between countries with different systems and ideologies. This success informed the later LDP governments' practices in developing relations with China. The Matsumura Group's commitment to addressing the Chinese relationship was due to their belief that this issue was of considerable political, diplomatic and national security significance for postwar Japan. Most members of the Matsumura Group were prominent nationalists before World War II, and they remained so after the war. Therefore, when some group members, such as Kenzo Matsumura, Tatsunosuke Takasaki, Yoshimi Furui, and Aiichirō Fujiyama, revisited mainland China after the war, what most impressed them was the completely different ideologies held by China and the Soviet Union. In China, high-spirited nationalism dominated. Admittedly, the Matsumura Group's interpretation of China's situation was to some extent an expediency to help justify their actions when trying to develop relations with China in an adverse environment. However, a review of the entire picture of the Matsumura Group's dealings with China reveals that this interpretation was sincere, not merely a political show. Naturally, on international affairs, the group's Asianist stance, which resonated strongly with the rising nationalism in mainland China, became the group's benchmark for understanding and even recognizing China's positions on foreign affairs.

It was against this backdrop that the Matsumura Group tried to use interactions with China as a strategic tool to affect the LDP's foreign policies that were slanted towards the United States and attempted to create a balanced, well-coordinated diplomatic situation. The main members of the Matsumura Group were all conservative politicians or entrepreneurs; as such, their nationalism-based positions towards China did not include anti-American moods and ideologies, distinguishing these politicians from other conservative politicians. In their dealings with China, the Matsumura Group remained mindful of the need to balance relations with the United States and those with China (Matsumura 1999a). Therefore, in their dealings with China, this group of conservative politicians, whose positions seemed so aligned with those of China, sometimes criticized the *Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan*, attempting to convince the Chinese that the treaty was not aggressive. However, on major issues, they always sided with the LDP government; for example, they agreed with the LDP government that the Japan-US relationship was Japan's fundamental national strategy.

Conclusion

Almost all the members of the group led by Matsumura were clean and simple Japanese conservative politicians focused on national interests. At the end of the 1950s, the development of the economy in Japanese society was at the critical moment before take-off, when Sino-Japanese relations were difficult due to international politics. Therefore, this group of entrepreneurial individuals who long recognized the aspects of physical and safety important for the social and economic development of Japan naturally became fellows who started communications with China. Most of the members in the group led by Matsumura served as members of Congress and cabinet ministers. Matsumura and Fujiyama participated in the election campaign of the president of the LDP. Although they failed in the election, they almost became the top leaders of the state. Such political elites with a strong consciousness of national central governance were engaged in the system of trade with China for a long time, and not for the commerce and trade of the two countries. Therefore, due to the Cold War, bound by the system of the Treaty of San Francisco, the group led by Matsumura promoted the development of political relations between China and Japan, with the goal of functionalism through economic and cultural exchanges. Of course, its objective was to resume diplomatic relations when the situation allowed. Matsumura *et al.* could therefore allow Chinese leaders who always regarded political considerations as the priority to accept the policy of separation of politics and economy in Japan. Therefore,

the essence of the long-term bilateral exchanges between the group led by Matsumura and Chinese leaders before the Cultural Revolution in China had the following content. First, both parties had an idealistic vision of developing peace and re-establishing diplomatic relations between China and Japan. Second, they both adhered to their principles and respected each other. For example, regarding attitudes towards the United States, the group led by Matsumura always advocated the Treaty of Security and Safeguard between Japan and the United States and the alliance relationship. Before 1971, China followed the route of anti-Americanism. After 1971, China coordinated with the United States. Neither party forced each other to change their principles. Third, both parties practised policies that had been jointly confirmed. By implementing the memorandum trade system, they made progressive and accumulative efforts to promote economic and cultural exchanges, political communication and understanding between the two countries.

After the Cultural Revolution in 1966, the group led by Matsumura was forced to change their principle towards China. Matsumura *et al.* did not consider the Cultural Revolution to be a good opportunity for this change in policy; however, they believed that compared with the change in slogan of policy and stance, they should maintain the memorandum trade system, which was the foundation for the development and further normalization of relations between these two countries. Therefore, the group decided to change the policy regarding the separation of politics and economy, but Matsumura only orally admitted that politics and economy were inseparable to test the outside world without the specific policy, especially action. It was valuable that the memorandum trade system be maintained. Behind the result desired by the government led by Sato, we could see the dedicated contribution of Matsumura. Although he and Sato both won in the game against China, Sato consolidated his place in the ruling party, while Matsumura was considered to have “betrayed the country” by public opinion (Asahi Shimbun 1966b). After 1969, many campaigns in Japan advocated the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with China. Matsumura, Sato, *et al.* organized the campaign for re-establishing diplomatic relations so that conservative politicians could lead the campaign, rather than the renovation forces. On the surface, this effort was in opposition to the mainstream school of the LDP. However, considering that re-establishing diplomatic relations between China and Japan was a trend at that time, the efforts of the group led by Matsumura could lay the social foundation for the change in policy towards China by the regime of the LDP and popular support. In 1971, Matsumura expected that Prime Minister Sato would visit China as soon as possible to re-establish diplomatic relations. In addition to the above thinking, this expectation indicated Matsumura’s trust in Prime Minister Sato and the consistency of their political stands. Therefore, if the group led by Matsumura carried out activities against China to benefit the state and people of Japan and always played the role of the “face towards China” of the government of the LDP, we could say that they were a group of conservative patriots with a political vision and spirit of self-sacrifice.

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