

## **How Did Japan Decide to Severe the Diplomatic Relations with Taiwan? The Normalization of Sino-Japanese Relations and the Taiwan Issue, 1971-1972**

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In the Sino-Japanese relationship today, the Taiwan issue remains a potential point of dispute. Taiwan's international legal status continues to be uncertain while the People's Republic of China (PRC) maintains that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. The Government of Japan (GOJ) recognizes that the Taiwan Strait is an important factor in the peace and security of Japan under the US-Japanese alliance regime.

The origin of the modern Japan-Taiwan relations dates back to the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations on September 29, 1972. As a result of the Sino-Japanese normalization, the GOJ put an end to diplomatic relations it had previously held with the Republic of China (ROC), yet could maintain practical relations with Taiwan.

No issue has presented more difficulties than the Taiwan issue between Japan and the PRC in the postwar period. For Japanese leaders, the biggest issue within Sino-Japanese negotiations has been how to develop a modus vivendi with the PRC over Taiwan without provoking damaging practical relations between Japan and Taiwan.

Although many studies have already examined the process underpinning the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations, many of them emphasized the "political leadership" of Premier Tanaka Kakuei (田中角榮). However, Tanaka's initiative aimed at Sino-Japanese normalization and breakup of diplomatic relations with Taiwan has been exaggerated by journalists and his former aide. More recent studies on the Sino-Japanese normalization process, drawing on interviews and newly declassified documents, provide a fresh perspective on policy changes concerning the Taiwan issue and the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in the Sino-Japanese normalization negotiations.

This presentation focuses on the period following arguably the most significant "Nixon shock" (Kissinger's dramatic visit to China) in July 1971 and examines how Japan's policy

on the Taiwan issue changed from the viewpoint of the MOFA. Some previous studies have discussed the Sino-Japanese normalization process and critically pointed out that the GOJ paid little attention to the security of Taiwan and the balance of power in Asia; therefore criticizing the 'rush toward Beijing' following US-China rapprochement. However, newly declassified primary documents fail to support this argument. These documents show how the GOJ attempted to maintain working relations with Taiwan even after the realization of Sino-Japanese normalization and they carefully avoided deciding the legal status of Taiwan which could have led to a claim over Taiwan by the PRC. The purpose of this presentation is to show how the GOJ attempted to establish a modus vivendi over the Taiwan issue with the PRC during Sino-Japanese normalization.