

Representation and Reality: Media Influences on Japanese Attitudes towards China

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Abstract : As China has become more and more influential in the global and geo-political arena, mutual understanding between Japan and China has also become a topic of paramount importance. There have always been tensions between the two countries, but unfortunately, each country tends to blame the other for fanning emotions. This research will investigate portrayals of China and the Chinese people in Japanese media such as newspapers, TV news, TV drama, and cinema over this period, focusing on media sources that have particularly wide viewership or readership. By doing so, it attempts to detect any general trends in the positive or negative character of such portrayals and to see if they correlate with the results of surveys of attitudes among the general population. To the degree that correlations may be found, the question arises as to whether the media portrayals are a reflection of societal attitudes towards the Chinese, on one hand, or may be playing a role in promoting such attitudes, on the other. The relationship here is, without doubt, more complex than a simple one-way relationship of cause and effect, but indications of some direction of causality may be suggested by trends in one occurring before or after the other. Evidence will also be sought of possible longer-term trends in media portrayals of China and the Chinese people in Japan during the post-2012 period, i.e., Abe Shinzo's second term as prime minister, in comparison to earlier periods. Perceptions of Japan's view of China and the Chinese, both inside and outside the scholarly world, tend to be oversimplified and are often incomprehensive. This research calls attention to the role played by the media in promoting or de-promoting Sino-Japanese relations. By analyzing the nature and background of images of China and the Chinese people presented in the Japanese media, especially under the new Abe Regime, this research seeks to promote a more balanced and comprehensive understanding of attitudes in Japanese society towards its gigantic neighbor. Scholars have seen the increasingly fragile Sino-Japanese relationship as inseparable from the real-world political conflicts that have become more frequent in recent years and have sought to draw a correlation between the two. The influence of the media, however, remains a mostly under-explored domain in the academic world. Against this background, this research aims to provide an enriched scholarly understanding of Japan's perception of China by investigating to what extent such perception can be seen to be affected by subjective or selective forms of presentation of China found in the Japanese media, or vice versa.

Keywords : Abe Shinzo, China, Japan, media

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