

The Relationship Between the Communist Party of China and the Japanese Communist Party During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression

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It is important to clarify the historical facts and summarize the characteristics of the communication and cooperation between the CPC and the JCP during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, as it holds historical and contemporary relevance. The research findings indicate that the Comintern played a crucial role as the key intermediary in facilitating the establishment of connections between the CPC and the JCP and in driving the deepening of their relationship. During their exchanges, both parties adhered to a flexible and multi-layered friendship based on the unified values of patriotism and internationalism. Their efforts played a significant role in the establishment of an international anti-fascist front in the East.

Keywords: the Communist Party of China, the Japanese Communist Party, the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, political party relation

Introduction

From their very inception, the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) established close relations. Existing research in academia has examined the anti-war activities conducted by members of the JCP in China. However, many crucial historical facts regarding personnel exchanges, information transmission, and modes of cooperation between the two parties during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression have not been fully clarified.

Building upon existing research, this article aims to comprehensively examine the history of communication between the CPC and the JCP from the Mukden Incident to the end of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, within the context of international communist movements. By analyzing the collaborative and antagonistic practices of both parties against Japanese imperialism, the article seeks to summarize the characteristics and experiences of their exchanges.

The History of Exchanges Between the CPC and the JCP During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression

After 1921, both the CPC and the JCP were established. In terms of the scope and manner of interparty

Funding: This article is supported by Youth Fund for Humanities and Social Sciences Research of the Ministry of Education "Research on the Translation, Sharing, and Evolution of Marxist Terminology in the Early Translation of the Communist Manifesto between China and Japan" (《共产党宣言》在中日两国早期译介过程中马克思主义术语的译出、共享与演变研究, 20YJC740035).

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relations, the history of exchanges between the CPC and the JCP during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression can be roughly divided into two phases, with 1935 marking the dividing point.

Exchanges Between the CPC and the JCP After the Mukden Incident

After the Mukden Incident, the CPC and the JCP jointly issued the “The Declaration by the CPC and the JCP on the Japanese Occupation of the Northeast of China”. In this declaration, they emphasized that Japanese imperialism is the common enemy of the Chinese and Japanese working masses (The Central Committee of the CPC & The Central Committee of the JCP, 1931). Following this, both parties collaborated on a series of movements to resist Japanese militaristic aggression in China. They established close connections in terms of party member exchanges, information dissemination, and organizational cooperation.

Based on the communication channels, exchanges between the CPC and the JCP can be primarily categorized into three main types.

The first type involves the connections between CPC members residing in Japan and the JCP. In this category, the CPC Tokyo branch played a role in conveying information during the joint anti-imperialist struggle of the two parties. Due to the severe suppression of communist movements by the Japanese government, the CPC Tokyo branch was forced to disband and underwent several reconstructions. Even during the periods when the CPC Tokyo branch was dissolved, CPC members in Japan continued to actively maintain contact with JCP members and engage in cooperation.

The second type encompasses exchanges between the JCP members in China and the CPC. After the Mukden Incident, the JCP actively organized efforts to disrupt the Japanese military in the northeastern region of China, rallying the working and peasant masses and staunchly resisting imperialist aggression against China. Notably, in 1933, the JCP established the “Manchurian Red Rescue Association” in Shenyang and formed the “Manchurian Labor Combination Agreement” in places like Dalian.

The third type involves exchanges and cooperation between members of the CPC’s delegation to the Comintern and the JCP’s delegation to the Comintern. In particular, the JCP Central Committee member Nosaka Sanzo became the representative of the JCP to the Comintern in 1931. He established contacts with the member of the Communist Party of China like Ren Bishi and Kang Sheng, who were also working within the Comintern. Consequently, the Comintern served as an important platform for the CPC and JCP to establish contact and engage in exchanges.

Regarding information transmission, there were both direct exchanges of information and indirect acquisition of information between the CPC and the JCP. On one hand, the CPC and JCP established secret liaison stations in each other’s countries. For instance, as of July 1930, the two parties were communicating through the Jiangnan Bookstore in Shanghai and the Proletarian Science Institute in Tokyo. On the other hand, they used party newspapers and news agencies for communication. For example, on October 5, 1932, the central organ of the JCP, “Akahata Newspaper”, sent a letter to the central organ of the CPC, “Red Flag Weekly”. The letter was translated and published in “Red Flag Weekly” by the China Workers’ and Peasants’ News Agency. The Red China News Agency also obtained information about JCP activities through telegraphic reports from Tokyo. For instance, on March 12, 1933, “Red China” published a report titled “Tokyo News: Japanese Communist Party Actively Restoring Organization” based on information received by the Red China News Agency. Furthermore, the CPC also acquired information about the activities of the JCP through foreign news media. For instance, in the 12th issue of “Red China” on April 6, 1932, there was a report titled “Japanese

Communist Party Highly Active”, which tracked the activities and development of the JCP based on information from “Nagasaki Daily News” and “Tokyo Current News” (Red China News Agency, 1932).

Exchanges Between the CPC and the JCP During the Yan'an Period

Under the influence of the Comintern, the CPC actively promoted the establishment of an international anti-fascist united front and regarded the JCP as a significant partner in their joint anti-imperialist struggle. However, as the war situation evolved and militarism became more rampant, the Japanese Imperial government escalated its harsh repression of progressive anti-war forces, which led to a difficult situation for the JCP. Between 1935 and 1945, the JCP virtually shifted entirely to clandestine activities, and organized nationwide activities were essentially suspended. In this context, the organizational connections between the CPC and the JCP became extremely challenging.

During the Yan'an period, the CPC experienced a phase of growth and development, becoming more politically mature and increasingly powerful in terms of organization. With the outbreak of the full-scale Anti-Japanese War in 1937, some members of the JCP chose to come to China to continue their anti-war activities. In March 1940, Nosaka Sanzo, in accordance with the decision of the Comintern, arrived in Yan'an with the assistance of figures like Zhou Enlai and Ren Bishi. During his time in Yan'an from 1940 to 1945, Nosaka Sanzo, in collaboration with the CPC Central Committee, co-established the Japanese POW Education School. He also led anti-war organizations for Japanese nationals in China and made significant contributions to anti-war propaganda activities and the communist education and rehabilitation of Japanese prisoners of war. Furthermore, he played a pivotal role in the formation of the Anti-Fascist United Front among Japanese nationals in China.

Furthermore, Nosaka Sanzo's research and investigations into the internal situation, social conditions, and the Japanese working-class anti-war movement during his time in Yan'an played a role in deepening the understanding of Japan among the CPC members during the wartime period, and it contributed to the expansion of the CPC's research on Japan. Sanko Nozaka organized the “Japan Studies Group” and edited “Fact sheet about Japan” to help the CPC gain a basic understanding of Japan's national conditions. In March 1943, after reading Nosaka Sanzo's article “Japan Workers and Peasants School Commemorates March 15th”, Mao Zedong sent a special letter to Sanko Nozaka, expressing his hope that Nosaka Sanzo could systematically introduce the history of the Japanese revolution to educate the CPC members. In summary, the CPC attached great importance to the knowledge and ideological research provided by Nosaka Sanzo, influencing the CPC's understanding of the “Japanese people” during the Yan'an period.

Characteristics of Exchanges Between the CPC and the JCP During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression Period

During the period of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the collaboration between the CPC and the JCP not only deepened the mutual understanding between the two parties but also played a constructive role in establishing the international anti-fascist united front. The exchange between the CPC and the JCP condensed the essence of the CPC's foreign relations during the wartime, demonstrating the distinctive characteristics of the CPC's foreign exchanges in that period.

Intermediary in Exchange: The Comintern as a Key Intermediary

The Comintern played a crucial role as the key intermediary in facilitating contact between the CPC and the JCP and in promoting the deepening of their relationship. Both China and Japan were important targets of the

Comintern's Eastern strategy. The strategic guidelines proposed by the Comintern regarding the revolutions in China and Japan clearly outlined the common revolutionary tasks of the CPC and the JCP, providing a goal and direction for their exchanges and cooperation.

However, the policies of the Comintern, with the Soviet Union's party at its core, often prioritized the interests of the Soviet Union. There existed a hierarchical relationship of leadership and subordination between the Soviet Communist Party and other communist parties, which contradicted the principle of equality. Additionally, the directives and resolutions of the Comintern, including those affecting the CPC and the JCP, sometimes made errors due to a lack of alignment with the specific conditions of individual countries. This led the CPC and the JCP to gradually establish the principle of independence and autonomy based on their own revolutionary experiences and lessons learned. Under the guidance of the principle of independence and autonomy, exchanges between the CPC and the JCP evolved from being under the unified guidance and control of the Comintern to a relatively independent and proactive engagement between the two parties.

Principles of Exchange: Adhere to Patriotism and Internationalism

The unity of patriotism and internationalism is a key set of values that both the CPC and the JCP adhered to in their exchanges. Internationalism is a fundamental principle in Marxist theory on interparty relationships. In the international context of proletarian revolution, the working class in both China and Japan constitutes an important part of the world's proletariat, and the revolutions in these two countries are integral to the world revolution. Therefore, the CPC and the JCP are naturally expected to uphold the principle of internationalism in the course of their own revolutionary endeavors.

After the Japanese imperialists launched a War of Aggression against China, the contradiction between China and Japan became the primary contradiction (Documentation Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 2011a). Faced with the reality of hostilities between China and Japan, the CPC maintained a "two-fold" strategy during its exchanges with the JCP. This strategy emphasized the distinction between the Japanese people and Japanese militarists, asserting that Japanese imperialism hurt not only the people of the world but also its own people (Documentation Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 2011b). It recognized that the Japanese people and the world were both victims of Japanese imperialism and militarism. The JCP advocated that Japan's revolution can contribute to the victory of the international proletarian revolution (The Central Committee of the JCP, 1962). Therefore, for the CPC, the JCP, and the working classes of both China and Japan, the struggle against Japanese imperialism was a significant manifestation of the close connection between patriotism and internationalism. Common interests and shared ideals closely united the CPC and the JCP. Under the principle of the unity of patriotism and internationalism, both parties mutually supported each other and jointly conducted anti-war movements.

Modes of Exchange: Flexible and Multilayered Communication

During the period of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the CPC and the JCP displayed flexibility and a multilayered approach in their exchanges. In terms of political status, the CPC held a regional governing position during the war, while the JCP remained in an "illegal" state until World War II. As a result, the exchanges between the two parties during this period differed from the diplomatic relations of legally recognized political parties in sovereign states. Their inter-party exchanges were marked by diverse forms of exchange, including high-level dialogues, correspondence, joint statements, attendance at conferences, and mutual support protests.

The most frequent mode of exchange between the CPC and the JCP was the exchange of letters, including communication between the party organizations and correspondence between the party leaders. In terms of party organizational communication and coordination, documents such as the “Letter from the Japanese Communist Party’s ‘Akahata Newspaper’ commemorating No. 100 to the Communist Party’s ‘Red Flag Weekly’” and “Message from the Sixth Expanded Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee of the CPC to the JCP” outlined the determination of both parties to jointly conduct the anti-fascist struggle. In terms of correspondence between party leaders, the exchanges between Mao Zedong and Sankō Nozaka were particularly frequent, focusing on discussions and mutual support for the Chinese and Japanese revolutions. This shared struggle was not only expressed through joint statements to consolidate common ideals and mutual support but also highlighted the active engagement of both parties in on-site assistance. In summary, during the war, the CPC and the JCP achieved a diversified and multilayered mode of exchange.

Topics of Exchange: Establishing an Eastern International Anti-fascist United Front

During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the CPC and the JCP gradually formed an interactive framework centered on the core issue of jointly resisting Japanese imperialism and establishing an Eastern International Anti-fascist United Front. After the Mukden Incident, the CPC emphasized the promotion of an international anti-fascist united front and sought to secure a favorable international environment for the victory of the war of resistance as a key focus of its foreign relations work. In 1929, the Central Committees of the CPC and JCP jointly issued the “Joint Declaration of the CPC and the JCP to the Toiling People of China and Japan”, in which they jointly condemned Japanese imperialism’s aggression against China. Therefore, from the beginning of their exchanges, the CPC and JCP considered joint resistance to Japanese imperialism as a core element.

In February 1938, Mao Zedong proposed the Three United Fronts with Identical Objectives, which included the United Front of China, the United Front of the World, and the United Front of Japan. In June 1941, Mao Zedong emphasized that the current task of communists worldwide is to mobilize people from various countries to organize an international united front to struggle against fascism (Mao, 1991). Under the leadership of the International Anti-fascist United Front, the CPC, JCP, and anti-war Japanese organizations in China led by the JCP supported and cooperated with each other. They carried out coordinated activities with shared goals, which strengthened the anti-Japanese fascist forces.

Experience From the Exchanges Between the CPC and the JCP During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression Period

The experiences accumulated during the exchanges between the CPC and the JCP during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression not only laid a solid theoretical foundation and provided vivid practical guidance for the CPC’s foreign affairs work in the early years of New China but also offer important lessons for building new types of interparty relations and using such relations to promote state relations in the new era.

Following the Principles of Interparty Engagement to Build a New Type of Political Party Relationship

Whether during the revolutionary war years or the period of peaceful construction, the CPC has always adhered to independent exploration and the pursuit of its own path. Mao Zedong, while summarizing the experiences and lessons of the international communist movement, advocated, on the basis of respecting the leadership of the Comintern, the importance of emphasizing the independence of the party’s own development.

During the Yan'an period, the CPC's capacity for independent action gradually increased, and it started to practice a form of "semi-independent diplomacy"¹. The exchanges between the CPC and the JCP during the War were carried out on the basis of independence and autonomy.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the CPC continued to uphold the position of independence and autonomy as the fundamental principle for international engagements. In the new era, the CPC has proposed to build a new type of party-to-party relationship characterized by "seeking common ground while reserving differences, mutual respect, and mutual learning", systematically advancing the theory of party diplomacy. Within a wider context of the once-in-a-century changes taking place in the world, the two parties engaged in exchanges should adhere to the core principle of independence and autonomy in interparty engagement, advocate seeking common ground while preserving differences, promote cooperation, and drive the establishment of new types of political party relationships at all levels of both parties.

Respecting the Differences Between Both Parties to Serve the Overall Diplomatic Agenda

The party's foreign affairs work is an integral part of the country's overall diplomacy. During the war, the CPC and the JCP, based on common goals, established international alliances that made significant contributions to China's victory in the war. The collaboration and mutual support between the CPC and the JCP in resisting Japanese imperialist aggression against China not only demonstrated the practice of internationalism but also safeguarded national and ethnic interests.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the CPC transformed into the governing party, and its primary purpose in foreign exchanges shifted towards creating a favorable external environment for national development. Consequently, the CPC, after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, flexibly applied the principle of internationalism, actively established friendly relations with various political parties worldwide while engaging with communist and workers' parties. At this new historical starting point, the party's foreign affairs work should continuously innovate and perfect the theory of Chinese-style party diplomacy, continuing to develop alongside political parties worldwide while adhering to the primacy of national interests.

Improving the Mechanisms of Interparty Diplomacy to Promote Practical Party Cooperation

To ensure the sustainable development of exchanges between the Communist Party of China and political parties from around the world, it is essential to continually optimize the operational mechanisms of party diplomacy and innovate the ways in which parties engage with each other. During the war, the CPC and the JCP established a diverse and multi-layered framework for cooperation, representing a significant model of party exchanges in the CPC's pre-founding era. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, while the CPC continued to employ traditional means of engagement such as exchanging party delegations, holding bilateral conferences, and sharing information and materials, it also actively explored new avenues of party diplomacy, leading to significant institutional development. On the one hand, the CPC actively constructed bilateral-level mechanisms for party exchanges to promote the stable development of bilateral relations and political trust. On the other hand, it endeavored to establish multilateral-level platforms for party exchanges to facilitate multilateral cooperation among political parties worldwide.

In the future, the party diplomacy of the CPC needs to continually innovate its methods of engagement and enhance the stability and influence of party diplomacy by improving a comprehensive, wide-ranging, and multi-

¹ On August 18, 1944, the Central Committee of the CPC issued instructions regarding diplomatic work, referring to the CPC's foreign diplomacy at the time as "semi-independent diplomacy".

level international network of party exchanges. Leveraging the flexibility and complementary role of party diplomacy, it should continue to advance practical party cooperation.

Conclusion

After the outbreak of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the CPC and the JCP jointly resisted Japanese imperialist aggression on the basis of internationalist principles, strengthening the international anti-fascist united front and setting an example for cooperation among proletarian parties. Within a wider context of the once-in-a-century changes taking place in the world, political parties from various countries should work together to promote global harmony and development. Looking towards the future, in their foreign exchanges, political parties from different countries should continue to uphold mutual respect and support for the choices of social systems and development models made by different peoples of various countries. They should maintain the approach of seeking common ground while reserving differences, transcending differences in ideology and values, and rationally addressing their disagreements. They should promote mutual learning and mutual reference, oppose the use of interparty relationships to target other political parties, and also oppose using interparty relationships for ideological influence. Political parties from all countries should consciously shoulder international responsibilities, and through political party channels, constructively participate in resolving international hotspots and global issues. They should be contributors and builders of the concept of a community with a shared future for humanity and work towards building a new global order of fairness and justice.

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