

**Richard C. Bush, *The Perils of Proximity: China-Japan Security Relations*,  
Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010,  
451 p., ISBN: 9780815704744 (hbk.)**

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Can China and Japan get along with each other? What are the implications of a downturn in China-Japan relations? What can we do to prevent these two great powers in Asia from a head on collision? These are all pertinent questions related to the stability of the region. The world today is full of turbulences. No one wishes to see a break out of a major conflict in our neighborhood.

Dr. Richard Bush, director of the Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies (CNAPS) at the Brookings Institution in Washington DC, tackles these challenging questions in his book and gives us a series of convincing scenarios. His credentials as a diplomat-scholar give the reader all the reason to trust his analysis on details of the specific events in China and Japan. Not only is he an area specialist on East Asia as he served almost five years as the chairman of the American Institute in Taiwan but also has the ability to switch to a bird's-eye view, which transcends national borders and domestic interests. In short, he approaches the issue from three different perspectives: the realist perspective, the area-specialist perspective, and the diplomatic policy proposal perspective.

First, he explains the downturn in Sino-Japanese relations from the defensive realist perspective (p. 24). He finds that China and Japan fall in a security dilemma (p. 24), in which two actors have significant reasons to cooperate but whose relationship becomes dominated by mutual fear. Second, he adds some historical perspective. His view through the lens of history is indispensable because China and Japan view their security interactions through the lens of their historical experience (p. 29). Then, he brings in a third cut, that is, the analysis of the interactions on specific issues, such as, Taiwan, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, sea-lane defense, and the various defense guidelines and doctrines (p. 33). Such an analysis is indispensable for policy makers to initiate a new, and hopefully, better policy.

General readers can appreciate his well-balanced analysis through a combination of the three major approaches in a single volume. I recommend this book to three groups of people. The first group constitutes the decision makers in China, the United States, and Japan. Those who have only limited time can begin reading from chapter 6, "Points of Proximity and Friction." Readers will learn quickly that in the East China Sea "there is some definite danger that strategic mistrust, military operations, and points of friction might lead to a clash" (p. 86). If you believe that such a clash is unlikely to happen, continue on to chapter 7, "Features of China's and Japan's Military Institutions." Bush concludes, after a comprehensive survey of the norms and operating procedures of the military institutions of China and Japan, that "neither China nor Japan is as pacific in its conduct of military

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operations as each would like outsiders to believe or outsiders might expect” (p. 122). Can the leadership of China and Japan respond well enough to prevent an escalation of any clash? Bush gives a negative answer. He observes, “Under pressure from the public, it [the leadership] would conclude that it had to react in a vigorous fashion” (p. 192).

If you suspect that Bush pays too much attention to negative outcomes, then proceed to chapter 12, “The Chinese and Japanese Systems under Stress.” Here, Bush’s words were prophetic. Although he had written this book sometime in 2009, he correctly predicted the course of events that happened near the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in September 2010. He forecast that the most likely site of a clash between China and Japan was around the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands (p. 224). If such a clash happens, decision makers in each capital would receive a picture that downplayed the responsibility of its units and played up that of the other side (p. 226). Thus, their task, the prevention of a clash from escalating into a full-blown crisis, becomes more difficult because they must avoid the appearance of capitulation. A mutual retreat from the brink is also difficult, because, as Bush states, “engineering a retreat from the brink would require great skill” (p. 226).

Japanese decision makers are likely to find that the last chapter, chapter 14, “What to Do?” summarizes the arguments of the book. Here, Bush offers eleven concrete items for US-Japan joint action. According to him, the US-Japan alliance’s strategic task is the “creation of circumstances that allow all the countries of East Asia to coexist and avoid the tragedy of competing for power” (p. 313). For US decision makers, Bush prepares chapter 13, “Implications for the United States.” These two chapters tell us that Bush represents the dynamic activities of think tanks in Washington DC. We should keep in mind that his bird’s-eye view has the sharpness of an American eagle, not the blurry vision of a dove or the narrowness of a hawk.

The second group, to which I would like to recommend this book, constitutes area specialists. To some, Bush’s explanations about the impact of history and the geopolitics of East Asia may look familiar. Some area specialists may question his choices of citations. As is usually the case, the Chinese sources do not have the depth and variance of the Japanese sources. Additionally, you may doubt the precision of Bush’s classification of the ideological orientation of Japanese newspapers (p. 221).

Despite these limitations, this book will offer area specialists fresh insight into China, Japan, and their relations. In the past, the oil and gas fields in the East China Sea, for example, were matters of legal rights that should be discussed in an international forum. That is no longer the case. When Chinese exploration began in 2003, the matter became a foreign policy issue. By mid-2005, a military dimension had emerged as well (p. 76). Bush also indicates, the “straits are strategically important” (p. 81). Japan chose to reduce the extent of its territorial waters in five straits. Why? According to Bush, Japan had taken this unusual step for the convenience of US Navy vessels carrying nuclear weapons that used those straits (p. 82). Such an insight would not be made through ordinary area studies.

The third group, to which I would like to recommend this book, constitutes security specialists. Bush goes beyond the conventional analysis of a security dilemma and the strategic context of China-Japan relations. He points out, “there is an intriguing contrast between civil-military relations in China and those in Japan” (p. 105). Not only the skill and capacity of their military forces,

but also the structure of the Chinese and Japanese governments do matter. Domestic politics also matter. A hard-edged, anti-Japanese or anti-Chinese nationalism does influence policy outcomes. Security specialists can learn a lot about Chinese and Japanese politics as well as the decision making processes in both countries in the chapters from 8 to 11.

Bush's bird's-eye approach inspires my imagination beyond my area of specialization. Allow me to address three bold questions to conclude this review. The first concerns overall Sino-Japanese relations: what kind of role, if any, does the economy play in this "perils of proximity" structure? Does mutual economic dependency, or in more fashionable terms, economic integration, help any country or all of us? The second question is about China's defense posture: we know that traditionally threats to mainland China came from two directions, from the west and from the east. This book is about the threats in the east. What about the threats from the west? The last question is about Japan: in this book, Japan is treated as an independent actor. Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) receive the same status as their counterparts in China and in the US. But Bush indicates, "alliance policy *was* defense policy" (italics in the original) (p. 99). What if it still *is*?

I can predict Bush's response to these questions. He might smile and say, "Why don't you tackle these questions yourself?" I would like to invite all the readers who read this review to this exciting and essential field of inquiry.