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Article:

Levy, K and Rose, C (2019) Are China and Japan rivals in Latin America? A rivalry perception analysis. *The Pacific Review*, 32 (5). pp. 898-921. ISSN 0951-2748

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2019.1570316>

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Are China and Japan rivals in Latin America? A rivalry perception analysis

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Word count: 11,663 (including references)

December 18, 2018

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Abstract

This article investigates whether the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Japan perceive each other as rivals in Latin America (LA)¹, and what impact such a perception might have on their foreign policy decision making. We take LA as a case study because China's and Japan's recent (re-)engagement there began almost simultaneously in the early 2000s, and has developed against the background of domestic leadership transitions, growing demands for energy and markets, as well as international political agendas in which LA might play a key role.

Developing the work of Thompson (2001, 1995) and Vasquez (1993, 1996) on rivalry, in combination with perception theory (Jervis, 1976), the article suggests three indicators by which to measure the extent to which China and Japan might perceive each other as rivals. Drawing on content analysis of a range of Chinese- and Japanese-language official writing, news reports and academic analysis, the article argues that, despite some media representation of China and Japan as competitors for resources and power in LA, in fact mutual perceptions concerning rivalry have not affected LA policy decisions of these two countries.

Keywords: China; Japan; Latin America; perception; rivalry; foreign policy

1. Introduction

Between July 14 and 23, 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, and Cuba. The tour not only resulted in the signing of 'over 150 contracts and framework agreements with the four countries visited involving a total amount of approximately \$70 billion' (Swaine, 2014, p. 1), but also included the China-Latin America Summit in Brazil, with more than eleven Latin American presidents attending, on which the establishment of the 'Forum of China and the Community of Latin

¹ Both the Chinese and Japanese governments tend to refer to the region as Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), but for the purposes of this article we focus mainly on Latin America (LA).

American and Caribbean States (CELAC)' was announced (FMPRC, 2014). The forum follows the example of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum (FOCAC) in which China and African countries meet on a regular basis ("Comparing China's," 2014).

Just two days after President Xi Jinping's departure, Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzō arrived in the region, and visited Mexico, Colombia, Trinidad and Tobago, Chile and Brazil. Describing Latin America as an 'indispensable partner' and seeking to open up a new chapter in Japan-Latin America relations, Abe signed a series of agreements on energy, construction and earthquake minimisation. The primary aim was to strengthen economic links, and Abe was accompanied by a 250-strong delegation of Japan Business Federation (Keidanren) representatives. The visit also provided the opportunity for Abe to try to garner support for Japan's candidacy for a UN non-permanent seat from October 2015, as well as a chance to air his values-based diplomacy.

The proximity of the two visits prompted a flurry of interest in the international media, which described Latin America (LA) as the 'battleground for long-time rivals Japan and China to compete for global influence' (Lee, 2014). China and Japan were also seen to be competing for energy resources in the region, along with Russia (Reuters, 2014; Ford, 2014). Others however considered that economic competition with China was not the primary motivator of Abe's visit, but placed greater emphasis on the strategic aspect relating to UN support, and the references in Abe's speeches to Japan's values-based diplomacy and the importance of respect for the rule of law (Farnsworth, 2014). There was also a sense of déjà vu around the media coverage of the Abe and Xi visits which was reminiscent of the treatment of the visits to LA in 2004 of then President Hu Jintao followed by then Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō.

The view from the international media pits China and Japan against one another in the region. To what extent, however, is this reflected in the official discourses? Do Chinese and Japanese policy makers perceive each other as direct rivals for power in the region, and to what extent does it inform their foreign policy decision making? This article addresses these questions by applying the conceptual framework of rivalry perception analysis to the case study of China and Japan in LA, and by focusing on the ways in which Chinese and Japanese academic, official and media sources have presented and assessed each other's actions in LA. In particular, the analysis asks three questions relating to whether China and Japan brand each other as rivals, whether they are in 'extreme' competition in LA, and whether they are positional rivals in LA, that is, seeking to exert more power than the other in the region.

The next section outlines the concept of rivalry perception analysis and explains how it will be applied to the case of Chinese and Japanese relations with LA. The article then provides a brief overview of China's and Japan's history of relations with LA, before moving on to the empirical study of a range of Chinese- and Japanese-language sources to consider the ways in which the two countries are perceiving each other's actions. We argue that although both sides have closely monitored each other's activities in the region, there is little evidence to suggest that their rivalry has been a key driving factor in Chinese and Japanese foreign policy decisions vis-à-vis LA.

2. The rivalry perception approach in IR theory

This article addresses the question of whether Japan and China perceive each other as rivals in their engagement in Latin America and what the impact of the actual perception is. This analysis is therefore based on two different strands of theoretical reasoning, i.e. the role of perceptions, and the perception of the other as rival in International Relations (IR).

Proponents of IR perception analysis have shown that perceptions and misperceptions are of relevance in international relations because they can be a key cause of action or conflicts. Robert Jervis, for example, has described the role of different kinds of misperceptions as key cause for wars (Jervis, 1976, 1988). The perception of the other as rival has certain consequences, too. According to Vasquez, rivalry

between political collectivities is typically characterized by a sustained mutually contingent hostile interaction. [...] Mutually contingent [emphasis in the original] can be taken to mean that each side's foreign policy actions are apprehended primarily in light of the foreign policy of the other side, and not simply as a result of internal factors or bureaucratic inertia. Hostile interaction [emphasis in the original] is taken here to mean that a major motivation behind actions is psychological hostility, i.e. more emphasis is placed on hurting or denying something to the other side than on gaining something positive for oneself. What distinguishes a rivalry from normal conflict is that issues are approached and ultimately defined not in terms of one's own value satisfaction, but in terms of what the gaining or loss of a stake will mean to one's competitor (Vasquez, 1993, p. 76).

Vasquez also stresses the role of competition in a rivalrous relationship thus:

Competition is the engine that drives the rivalry and, in political interactions (as opposed to purely commercial transactions), produces hostility at some level. As conflict recurs, contenders become more concerned with hurting or denying their competitor than with their own immediate value satisfaction, and with this, hostility deepens and goes beyond that associated with normal conflict (Vasquez, 1996, p. 532).

While Goertz and Diehl have defined interstate rivalry by the number of armed conflicts that exist between them (Goertz & Diehl, 1995), Thompson identifies rivalries 'in terms of decision maker perceptions' and he also distinguishes two types of rivalry, spatial and positional rivalries. The first, spatial rivalry, points at rivalries over the control of certain territories, e.g. border conflicts or territorial conflicts over certain islands

(Thompson, 1995, p. 204). Neither China nor Japan have ever expressed interest nor made the impression of being interested in occupying and/or possessing territory in the LA region. Therefore, we are not going to look further into the question whether China and Japan engage themselves in spatial rivalry in LA.

However, positional rivalry, the second type, might be applicable to the cases at hand. According to Thompson, '[p]ositional rivalries involve conflicts about relative positions at or near the apex of a power hierarchy.' They point to situations in which one power in a leading position is challenged by a second power, which is almost as strong (Thompson, 1995, p. 205). Although Thompson continues to describe positional rivalries as being able to 'take on life or death qualities' and that it is these conflicts 'which define or shape the agenda(s) of world politics', because they center around systemic structures (Thompson, 1995, pp. 205-206), for the purpose of this study we argue that positional rivalry is concerned with regional leadership, i.e. having the power to exert considerable economic and or/political influence in a certain region, and that this is an issue that could be at stake for China and Japan in LA.

Another important aspect of rivalry is the reciprocal relation between two rivals, i.e., they both need to consider each other as rivals:

Rivals must brand each other as such and behave accordingly. The principal behavioral consequences, according to Vasquez (1993[...]), are 'that issues are approached and ultimately defined not in terms of one's own value satisfaction, but in terms of what the gaining or loss of a stake will mean to one's competitor' (p. 76) (cited in Thompson, 1995, p. 200).

Perceiving someone as a rival leads to certain (emotional) reactions which can develop into hardly controllable path dependencies. Rivals want to overcome each other and might even act in a non-rational way, because they might 'alter preference structures such that inflicting harm on an enemy is desired above material gain or security'

(Mitton, 2016, p. 74).

Non-rational actors and unpredictable foreign policy behaviour can be dangerous and lead to conflicts - as Jervis puts it: 'wars can occur if aggressors underestimate the willingness of status quo powers to fight [...]; on the other hand, wars can also result if two states exaggerate each other's hostility when their differences are in fact bridgeable [...]' (Jervis, 1988, p. 685). To find out whether China and Japan conceive of each other as rivals or not can therefore indicate how the two countries are likely to behave in LA in the future. If a perception of rivalry exists between the two countries, the mildest outcome might be that China and Japan would not just pursue certain individual interests in securing energy resources and certain political goals (such as support for a UN security seat in the case of Japan and the many votes of developing and emerging countries in the UN assembly in the case of China), but instead try to outdo each other, maybe put obstacles in each other's way and, at least, harm trade and economic relations with LA and miss or destroy commercial opportunities. The other extreme, though not very likely, would, according to perception analysis, be the possibility of an armed conflict over the access to resources in LA.

In order to answer our main research question regarding the extent to which China and Japan perceive each other as rivals in Latin America, we looked at Chinese and Japanese official discourse, academic writings and news reporting on each other's engagement in LA. In particular, we focussed on the following indicators:

- Do the two countries brand each other as rivals in LA?
- Are they in extreme competition with one another in LA, in which 'each side's foreign policy actions are apprehended primarily in light of the foreign policy of the other side, and not simply as a result of [factual considerations]' (see above, Vasquez, 1993, p. 76)?

- Do they both perceive each other to be pursuing regional leadership in LA, i.e. trying to reach a position in which they can exert more influence on economic and political decisions than the other one?

The perception in the various source-types consulted can be understood as reflective of the perception of the leadership of both China and Japan, although for very different reasons. In China, foreign policy decision-making happens on different levels. The increasing influence of academic writing by experts at universities and think tanks on policy-making has been analysed, among others, by Li (2009) and Ngeow (2015).

Following these studies, academic writing in China can be considered an expression of the influential elite having certain impact on the political decision-making of the political elite. Wang and Wang describe the relationship between media reporting and foreign policy in China as bidirectional (2014, p. 216). Analysing the academic writing therefore means to analyse factors that are likely to have an impact on foreign policy-making. Journalistic writing on foreign policy on the other hand can be a by-product of foreign policy decision-making, either reflecting what political elites think on foreign policy issues or what they want the readers to think that they think on foreign policy.

For Japan, the official discourse can be gleaned from a reading of government publications (the annual diplomatic Bluebooks, for example) and from leadership speeches. While the work of academics and think tanks might seek to inform and affect the public discourse as well as policy direction, it is difficult to assess the extent to which they have direct input into policy-making in Japan. Recent studies suggest that, for example, through their representation on external advisory policy boards scholars and think tanks 'can help facilitate the deliberation and formulation of foreign and security policy in Japan' (Abb & Koellner, 2015, p. 603), but they are still generally regarded as reactive, rather than agenda-setting. Nonetheless, their outputs provide us

with a flavour of how Japanese researchers regard the issues facing the government, and may well reflect the ‘world views of their political leaders’ (Abb & Koellner, 2005, p. 611). The media in Japan offers diverse views across the political spectrum, and does not perform the same function as the Chinese press in terms of being the ‘official mouthpiece’ of government. However, it is nonetheless useful to consider a sample of Japanese media representations of China’s engagement with the LA to identify any dominant themes relating to issues around rivalry and threat perception, given the generally high level of awareness in Japan about China’s overall rise.

Before considering the ways in which China and Japan have viewed each other’s actions in LA since the early 2000s, the next section provides a brief overview of Chinese and Japanese relations with Latin America.

3. China and Japan in Latin America

China's relations with LA can be traced back to the 16th century (Xu, 2010), however, China's current intensive engagement in LA only took off at the beginning of the 2000s. By exploring the southern hemisphere, China is pursuing several interests. Firstly, it needs to diversify energy and other resources for its booming industry and production. Secondly, China is also looking for new consumer markets for its products. Thirdly, China is actively pursuing a leading role among the developing and emerging countries. Due to their large number alone, these countries form an influential force in international politics if they speak with one voice, e.g. in the UN general assembly. A fourth aspect of special interest for China in LA is the fact that 11 out of the 20 countries that currently recognize Taiwan on the diplomatic level (as of 2017) are

located in Latin America and the Caribbean.² Fifthly, the PRC shares some ideological traits with a number of LA countries that have turned socialist in the early 2000s, like Venezuela in 1998, Ecuador in 2006, or social democratic, e.g. Chile in 2000, Brazil in 2002 and Argentina in 2003.

The LA countries themselves see opportunities in selling their goods and energy resources to China. They hope to participate in China's rise. Some of the left-wing countries also might have hoped that China would support their ideological battle with the USA, but China is rather keeping a distance from such endeavours (Watson & Zweig, 2016, p. 253; Brand et al., 2015). Most LA countries have experienced economic and financial difficulties and had to learn the hard way about the complex and fatal nature of indebtedness and the credits from World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which are bound to certain conditions like the opening up of their markets, reducing public employment and pensions. Thus, China's arrival was very welcome in the region, with its interest in LA's resources and products, offering credit with no strings attached – except the demand to recognize the one China policy –, building infrastructure, and possibly functioning as a successful development model of an authoritative, caring, and still economically extremely successful country.

Of course, Sino-LA relations take different forms depending on the economic and geopolitical features of each country. In most cases natural and energy resources are the key issue, sometimes in a complementary way as has been the case for Brazil or leading to partial dependencies of other countries' economies from China as in the cases

² It should, however, be noted that the scramble among Mainland China and Taiwan for diplomatic relations to Latin American and Caribbean countries, and other parts of the world, paused during the presidency of Ma Ying-jeou in Taiwan from 2008 to 2016 because he pursued a policy of rapprochement toward the mainland.

of Argentina (Lopez & Ramos, 2009, pp. 87-91) and Chile (Barton, 2009). Less resource rich countries with similar economic structures like China, e.g. Caribbean countries and Mexico, where the economy is dominated by the assembling industry, also called maquiladoras, have a more competitive relation with China (Gallagher & Dussel Peters, 2013, p. 16). These relational patterns emerged in the era of Hu Jintao (2003-2013) and mostly continued after Xi Jinping became President of the PRC in 2013. Resources are still the overall theme of China's engagement in LA. Beyond the government-level perspective on resource, market and business challenges and opportunities, it is not uncommon that China's engagement in LAC encounters resentment by the people in the respective countries (Armony and Velásquez, 2015). All in all, the relations between the PRC and LA can be described as strategic, more or less stable, and characterized by multiple and mutual core interests on both sides.

Japan's relations with some of the countries in LA date back over 100 years when commercial and diplomatic links were first established (for example with Peru, Mexico, Brazil and Chile) and Brazil and Peru became destinations for Japanese immigrants seeking employment (Rose, 2010). In the post-World War Two period, Japan's interests in LAC centred on trade and investment, in line with its national strategy of economic revitalisation and development. Accordingly, Japan became LA's most important Asian partner up to the 1980s, and Japan prides itself on its strong human and historical ties with the region, not least due to the 'blood ties' formed by the 2.13 million descendants of Japanese migrants in LA (MoFA, 2016). The 1980s and 1990s were characterised by debt crises in Latin America and political upheavals. The economic downturn in Japan in the 1990s meant that Japanese investment shifted to the more favourable environments of South East Asia and China, and the economy turned towards a domestic-demand oriented model (Horisaka, 2005, p. 154). As a result Japan-

LA suffered a certain amount of neglect – what Tsunekawa labels ‘the lost 15 years’ (2007).

From the early 2000s, Latin America began to come back into view for the Japanese government and companies seeking a market for goods and services, in return for foodstuffs, natural resources, and energy resources. The first clear formulation of Japan’s new policy towards Latin America, the ‘Framework for a New Partnership between Japan and Central and South America’, was enunciated by Prime Minister Koizumi during his visits to the region in 2004 (Rose, 2010). Building on the momentum of Koizumi’s initiatives, Foreign Minister Aso Tarō noted in 2007 the opportunities that Latin America offered Japan in terms of markets, a manufacturing base, and resources (Aso, 2007). Aso identified three areas in which Japan and Latin America could cooperate in the future, namely ‘the strengthening of economic relations, support for efforts to resolve the regional issues of poverty and gaps in society, and joint engagement in addressing issues in international society’ (Aso, 2007). These three areas of cooperation became embedded into MoFA policy in subsequent years. However, from 2007 to 2012 there was, in fact, relatively little development of the new partnership, beyond the completion of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and ongoing assistance in sustainable development. As had been the case in the 1990s, economic and political disruptions in both Japan and LA contributed to this relative neglect.

The return to power of the LDP and Abe as prime minister in 2012, however, marked a revitalisation of policy. Japan’s renewed LA policy was enunciated in Foreign Minister Kishida’s speech in Mexico in 2013, and elevated the importance of common values and rules in Japan’s strategy. The two pillars of Japan’s renewed approach were to establish a ‘new cooperative relationship for achieving development’ and ‘to join

hands globally and to orient our views towards creating a better international community based on common rules (Kishida, 2013, p. 2). Against the background of these renewed goals, Abe conducted his LA tour in 2014 and announced his three guiding principles for the future of Japan-LA relations, that is ‘progress together, lead together, and inspire together’ (Abe, 2014). More recently, with uncertainties about the US role in LA and China’s burgeoning Belt and Road Initiative, the Japanese government has enunciated its ‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy’ which includes plans to further engage LA through such initiatives as disaster risk reduction, climate change countermeasures, and infrastructure system export (Farnsworth 2017; MoFA 2017).

As in the case of China and LA, Japan’s interests in the region range from the economic, through to the political, but also cultural, and much emphasis is placed on the role of Nikkeijin (Japanese diaspora and their descendants) and the strength of people-to-people exchange.³ Japan’s most important relationships in the region have traditionally been with Brazil and Mexico with whom Japan has enjoyed fairly extensive commercial links, followed by Argentina, Chile, Venezuela and Panama where specific industries are of importance (e.g., foodstuffs, minerals, and the maritime industry), and smaller nations who are recipients of Japanese aid (Horisaka, 2005, p. 151). Relations, however, have tended to be hampered by changes in economic and political climates, challenging the MoFA view of 2007 which described them as ‘unwavering and reliable’ (2007, p. 70).

³ Many Brazilian Nikkeijin return-migrated to Japan in the late 1980s in the wake of the Brazilian economic crisis, but faced difficulties in integrating into Japanese society. See Tsuda 1999.

4. Rivalry perceptions analysis

As noted above, both the Chinese and Japanese governments stepped up their activities in LA in the early 21st century. While China's high-level visits outnumbered those of the Japanese leadership, it is nonetheless striking that both governments launched major initiatives and made high-profile visits in 2004 and 2014, prompting speculation in the international media that they were jostling for resources and influence in LA. This section considers the three key indicators outlined above to explore Chinese and Japanese mutual perceptions as presented in the press, academic research and official documents. We confined ourselves to the period of the early 2000s until 2015, a period that includes the renewal of older ties with LA of both countries through visits of the incumbent presidents of Japan and China to LA in 2004 and it also covers a transition to new leaders in the early 2010s – from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping in China and from a series of short-lived prime ministers from 2006 to relatively stability under Abe Shinzō in Japan since 2012.

4.1 Do the two countries brand each other as rivals in LA?

In order to answer this question we examined the sources for evidence of the two countries seeing the other as rival. Did they compare themselves with the other? Did they describe the other as competitor? Did they describe the other in a negative way in order to express their own strengths in comparison?

In the case of China⁴, the various news reports on Koizumi's trip in 2004 and Abe's trip in 2014 shared a few themes, such as the Japanese premier imitating the

⁴ For this analysis of the Chinese academic journals and newspaper articles we applied a mixed quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The original sources for the analysis were searched systematically in online data bases for Chinese academic articles (China

Chinese president by travelling to LA shortly afterwards, and Japan's bid to gain a permanent seat in the UN Security council (Sina Finance, 13 September 2004). The majority of the newspaper articles do not mention any form of competition let alone rivalry between the two in LA. The 13 articles which do brand Japan as a strong competitor in LA are organs with a nationalistic bias, like Global Times, Jiexun Net, Observer, Macao News, Strong Country Net, Wen Wei Po Hong Kong, Military Camp Net, Gaizhou News Network with two rather liberal exceptions, i.e. Caixin Net and Southern Weekend. In these articles, Abe's trip to LA is interpreted as an act of competition to block China's interests (Strong Country Net, 28 July 2014, Jiexun Net, 25 July 2014) or to contain China in the region in order to strengthen his domestic power position (Global Times, 25 July 2014; Observer, 27 July 2014). Japan's technological superiority over China (Southern Weekend, 14 August 2014) and its attraction for some countries in LA (拉攏外交 'winning over diplomacy') is acknowledged (Wen Wei Po, 29 July 2014). However, in the end all these measures are described as doomed to fail (Macao News, 27 July 2014), because the scope of Japan's engagement in LA (Caixin, 4 August 2014) and actual strength (Global Times, 25 July 2014) are deemed to be so much smaller than China's. The same thing applies to

Academic Journals Full-text Database, CNKI). 22 articles published between 1984 and 2015 were retrieved using the title keywords 日本拉美 [Japan Latin America] for the search. For the press analysis newspaper reports on Koizumi's trip to LAC in 2004 and Abe's trip to LA in 2014 were collected via google news search and Apabi (中国报纸资源全文数据库), a Chinese Newspaper Data base, with the title key words 日本拉美,小泉拉美 [Koizumi Latin America/America], 安倍拉美 [Abe Latin America]. Altogether 172 articles were retrieved. Out of these 172 articles a sample of 50 articles was selected which included only articles which discussed the subject in more detail. A list of the articles used in the analysis is available on request from the authors. To distinguish the press clippings from other secondary sources we include the full date in the in-text-citation.

Japan's plans to gain a permanent seat in the UN Security Council which, according to the reports, will never happen as long as China is a member with veto power in that council (Southern Weekend, 14 August 2014).

There is some indirect branding as (potential) rival, when foreign journalists are cited to highlight the fact that Japan does not have the capacity to be a real competitor in the LA (Global Times, 28 July 2014) or Japan itself is portrayed as seeing China as its rival in LA (Southern Weekend, 14 August 2014). The Southern Weekend, less known for its nationalistic tone, also points out the two country's competition in the economic realm and in the field of energy resources (Southern Weekend, 14 August 2014). One article also mentions a competition over popularity in LA (Military Camp Net, 21 October 2014).

Out of the 22 Chinese academic journals of the analysis, only three mention competition between the two countries. An article in a Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) journal identifies competition between the two countries with Japan trying to balance China in international relations and also in the LA by spreading the 'China threat' theory and the idea that many countries in LA share Japan's values-based foreign policy (Gao, 2015). On the other hand, an analysis of the Latin American press reporting of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Island conflict in a Chinese Communication Study Journal observes that China's communication strategy has failed since its perspective of the conflict is not shared by the authors of the analysed articles while Japan's strategy of restrained communication is more successful in winning over popular support in LA (Zhu Z., 2014). In the third research article, also published by the CASS, competition in LA with Japan is mentioned, but not emphasized over other competitors outside of LA, like the US and Europe, and Mexico and Brazil within LA (Li S. [Shujuan], 2012).

All in all, the majority of the Chinese articles do not brand Japan as a strong competitor in LA. The few that do identify a competition mostly reach the conclusion that Japan cannot win since the basis of Sino-LA cooperation is already too strong.

In the case of Japan, it should be noted that there is a relative paucity of coverage of China's engagement with LA in the press, academic literature, and official discourse. This might be more a function of the low-key position of LA in Japan's overall foreign policy goals (despite attempts by Koizumi and Abe to elevate its status), and the relatively scant analysis and reporting on Japan's own engagement in the region.⁵ Nonetheless, there are a number of recurring themes touching on China's economic and political goals in LA. The analysis of the sources also showed a shift in perception from the first period (up to 2010), when there was a heightened awareness and some concern about China's activities in the region, to the second period (from 2010), when there was a more sanguine interpretation of China's economic engagement with LA, but greater concern about its broader ambitions.

The annual diplomatic bluebooks produced by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs provide us with a snapshot of the official view on all aspects of Japan's foreign policy, and signal changes in the official view. Thus the rise of China, especially in East Asia, has prompted significant changes in tone in the Bluebooks over the years as China has been described as representing an increasing threat to security and stability. In the case of China's relations with LA, however, there is relatively sparse information about the expansion of China's activities, and this has tended to be restricted to neutral

⁵ A search of the Japanese journal articles database (Zasshi Kiji Sakuin) from 2000 to 2015 for the terms China and South America (中国・南米); China and Latin America (中国・ラテンアメリカ), and China and Central/South America (中国・中南米) recovered 64, 19, and 28 articles respectively. These include academic journal articles as well as current affairs journals.

observations on changing trade patterns and, for example, the percentage of LA's mineral and agricultural exports to China. There are just two exceptions to this. The 2006 Bluebook notes that while LA's main trading partners are the US and the EU, the volume of trade with East Asia is increasing. Breaking this down further, it observes that Japan's overall trade with LA has decreased, while China's has increased, and South Korea's has remained largely the same. It is noted that China's overall trade amount was equal to that of Japan's (around \$40 billion) (2006, p. 77). The 2007 Bluebook goes further, noting China's aim to secure resources and market share in LA, and referred to the 'strengthening of China's advance' (進出 shinshutsu), the frequent 'coming and going of important people', the implementation of economic cooperation agreements, and the 'striking' (顯著 kencho) increase in China's overall trade with Latin America since 2004 which 'surpassed Japan's overall trade volume' (2007, p. 70). The tone of these two descriptions infers some concern about China's activities in LA but falls short of designating China as a direct rival in the region.

Similarly, academic analysis of China in LA noted the increase in activity. For example, Nishijima considers China's increased presence in Latin America as potentially having a considerable impact on Japan's own relationship with the region. Charting China's movements in the region, he notes in particular China's energy diplomacy with the resource-rich region, but also its attempts to expand its political influence, particularly on the issue of Taiwan (2005, pp. 54-55). Kai also comments on the pace at which China had moved into Latin American markets and the implications for China's actions both for the US and Japan because of China's 'insatiable appetite' for oil, and the rapid increase in China's trade with and investment in the region (2006, p. 15). Direct references to China as a rival to Japan in LA are rare. For example, only one think-tank report referred to China as Japan's 'new rival', and this was in the

context of a spate of Chinese buyouts of Western firms operating in LA in the 2010s, with the advice that Japanese companies take this new situation into account when developing their own business plans in LA (Ninomiya, 2012, p. 63).

Press reporting preceding and during Koizumi's and Hu Jintao's 2004 visit to LA highlighted similar themes, focusing mainly on China's energy diplomacy in the region, and its attempt to use countries like Brazil and Argentina to apply influence on those countries in LAC that have diplomatic relations with Taiwan (see for example: Nihon Keizai Shinbun, 16 February 2004; Sankei Shinbun, 23 November 2004; Asahi Shinbun, 11 November 2004; and Nihon Keizai Shinbun, 12 November 2004). In general, China's actions in the region are mentioned with little or no direct reference to the implications for Japan, with a few exceptions. For example, Nihon Keizai Shinbun cites the stagnation of Japan's relations with LA since the 1990s, and the fivefold increase in Brazil's exports to China in the interim, in addition to plans for large-scale Chinese investment and aid packages as reasons for concern, and further quotes a 'worried' MoFA source stating that 'China and Japan are rivals' (16 September 2004). Japanese press reports on the 2014 visits continue to stress China's pro-active, indeed hardline, approach to the region (Asahi Shinbun, 23 July 2014 and 24 July 2014; Sankei Shinbun, 11 September 2014). 'Friendly competition' is seen to be at play in one report (Asahi Shinbun, 25 July 2014), while another likens Sino-Japanese competition for influence in LA to 'a game of Othello being played out in America's backyard' (Sankei Shinbun, 2 August 2014).

Overall, while some of the Japanese sources hint at the potential for rivalry and competition between China and Japan in LA, the majority focus more on the details of, and reasons for, China's increased presence in the region, rather than ways in which China's rise might impact directly on Japan's own interests.

4.2 Are China and Japan in extreme competition?

This indicator refers to when ‘each side's foreign policy actions are apprehended primarily in light of the foreign policy of the other side, and not simply as a result of [factual considerations]’ (Vasquez, 1993, p. 76). Do they take decisions in LA-policy only because the other one is doing something different? Do they take decisions in LA-Policy with the sole intention of harming the other or obstructing the other's successful policy implementation in LA?

The analysis of Chinese press clippings, academic journals and policy papers shows that Japan’s engagement in LA has no effect on Chinese LA policy in the sense of extreme competition. First of all, there is neither direct nor indirect reference to Japan in the central strategic papers of the PRC concerning LA, i.e. ‘China’s Policy Paper on Latin America and the Caribbean’ (中国对拉丁美洲和加勒比政策文件) of 2008 and ‘China’s Policy Paper on Latin America and the Caribbean’ (中国对拉美和加勒比政策文件) of 2016.

There are 16 out of the 50 newspaper articles and two of the 22 academic journal articles which can be interpreted as China apprehending its foreign policy actions primarily in light of the foreign policy of Japan. However, none of these articles states this issue directly, instead the usual line of argument is that Japan formulates part of its foreign policy and diplomacy with the intention of containing China in the region.

All press articles containing evidence for this indicator were published in 2014, none in 2004. In a Global Times article, unspecified ‘Japanese media’ are cited stating that: ‘containing China’s strategic interests in the Caribbean is also one [of Abe’s] goal[s]’ during his LA visit. In the same article, citing Japanese media again, Abe’s trip is called the ‘“blocking China” tour’ (‘阻击中国’之旅). A Japanese scholar is quoted as saying that Abe’s government perceives China to be unlawfully grabbing resources

everywhere in the world and expanding its influence, and that Japan is going to be marginalized if it does not resist China (25 July 2014). The fact that Abe Shinzō's state visits followed hard on Xi Jinping's visits in various instances, i.e. Europe, Southeast Asia, Africa, Russia, and LA, is also described as a strategy of Japan containing China in different parts of the world. And, again, 'Japanese media' are quoted as describing Japan's intention to contain China with its LAC foreign policy (Jiexun Net, 25 July 2014 and five others). Some authors see cooperation between Japan and the USA in containing China (Global Times, 28 July 2014), and others cite the Japanese foreign minister who stated that 'checks and balances' are needed to restrain China in LAC (Observer, 27 July 2014). In one article, the British Financial Times is cited to interpret Japanese diplomacy in LA as a means to 'make [Xi Jinping] feel unsafe' (Military Camp Net 21, October 2014). However, Global Times quotes the German TV channel Deutsche Welle's website to note that Japan's attempts to keep China in check in LA are fruitless (29 July 2014a).

Some articles mention a planned Brazilian-Japanese joint statement which stressed the shared value system and respect for the rule of law, which should be used to check China in the LA region. Somewhat triumphantly, it is reported that Brazil was obviously not willing to support this statement since it never was published. From the Chinese point of view, this can be understood as further evidence for Japan directing its foreign policy in LA against China (Observer, 27 July 2014 and six others). Some Chinese experts on Sino-LA relations are quoted to claim that the news on the joint statement is just a Japanese scam (Global Times, 28 July 2014). Another line of argument in the context of Japan using its foreign policy in LA not only for securing resources and diplomatic relations in the western hemisphere, but also to harm China's ambitions there describes Japan as using the 'China threat' theory to disrupt Sino-LA

relations. In other words, Japan tries to convince the countries of China's 'hegemonic' intentions (Beijing Youth Daily, 2 August 2014).

The Southern Weekend pointed out the additional aspect that Japan, by engaging itself in the LA, provides more business opportunities for the countries in the region and by doing so automatically weakens China's influence (14 August 2014).

That Japan's chances to get a permanent seat in the UN Security Council are very low because its supporters in LA have become fewer and fewer due to China's increasing influence in the region is probably the only aspect that would give some foundation to the interpretation that China itself is using its diplomacy in the region to curb Japan's influence in the region (Global Times, 4 August 2014).

In the academic journals we have also observed that Chinese authors do not apprehend Chinese foreign policy in LA primarily in light of the other country's foreign policy, but in both cases the Chinese authors have quoted Japanese authors describing Japanese foreign policy in LA as directly aimed at harming China's diplomatic relations with that region (Gao, 2015; Xu, 2014). Gao Hong's article also refers to the use of the 'China threat theory', Japan's aim is to contain China and also the above-mentioned rumour about the Japanese-Brazilian joint statement condemning Chinese policy concerning the islands in the South and East China Sea (2015, p. 36, pp. 39-40)

The analysis of the Chinese materials has shown clearly that we cannot find evidence of China shaping its foreign policy mainly in the light of Japan's foreign policy in LA. However, we note that in a minor share of the 22 articles Japan is accused of acting in exactly such a way. Nonetheless, the reports describe China as strong enough and sufficiently in the lead in LA that there is no need to spend a lot of energy in containing Japan.

Japanese academic and media coverage of China and Japan in LA suggests that China's advance into the region in the early 2000s was one factor in prompting Japan's own re-engagement with the region, but rarely goes as far as indicating that Japan took foreign policy decisions primarily in light of China's foreign policy in the region. Kai describes Koizumi's diplomacy towards Latin America since 2002 as Japan's direct response to China's own initiatives since the late 1990s (2006, p. 15). Japan's moves to sign FTAs with LA countries (for example, Mexico and Chile) were seen as part of a global rush towards negotiating such agreements at the time (Nihon Keizai Shinbun, 16 September 2014), and for some observers were deemed essential if Japan was not to be outdone by China as well as South Korea (Okamoto, 2006, p. 23).

Some of the press coverage of Koizumi's 2004 visit to the region adopts a similar position, claiming, for example, that the prime minister's 'vision' of strengthening Japan's economic links with LA was 'aimed at countering China's rapid deepening of relations with Brazil and other LA countries' (Nihon Keizai Shinbun, 16 September 2004). On the other hand, some lamented that Japan's response was too little, too late, suggesting that Japan was already losing out to the competition. This was the view of one academic who suggested that a lack of interest shown in Latin America at the highest levels of Japanese government, despite the numerous attempts of the Latin American bureau in MoFA to advise on policy, had resulted in Japan's 'loss of Latin America' to China (Kai, 2006, p. 15). This view continues in the 2010s, when China's 'hardline' aid, energy and infrastructure diplomacy is noted (Asahi Shinbun, 23 July 2014), in addition to new developments such as Chinese acquisitions of LA companies, and the expansion of Hong Kong companies into LA (Uchida, 2011). Hamaguchi considers China to be in an unassailable trading position with many LA countries by the early 2010s, but nonetheless stressed the importance of deploying Japan's 'historical

capital' (i.e., trusting and friendly relations) when competing with China and South Korea (2013, p. 44).

Although these sources perceive China and Japan to be in competition for resources, and call for a sustained policy response from Japan to try and counter China's presence, the official view as presented in Diplomatic Bluebooks suggests that Japan's renewed interest was prompted rather by the positive changes that had taken place in the region, specifically economic liberalization, democratization, and moves towards regional economic integration. This discourse focuses on Japan's own traditional links with the region, framed very much within the narrative of Japan's deep historical and human ties, and the importance of Japan's partnership with the region not only through the strengthening of economic ties (in particular through FDI – in which area Japan remains 'Asia's top investor in LA' MoFA, 2016), but also the shared commitment to maintaining a rules-based international order. The reference to the latter was first mentioned briefly in the 2010 Bluebook, but by 2012 and 2013 had been reformulated and strengthened. Thus, in 2012 and 2013 LA had become 'an important partner for Japan in the international community sharing fundamental values such as democracy and market economy,' and by 2014 it was described as 'an important partner in creating a better international community based on the rule of law'. The emphasis placed on common values is a noticeable addition and can be interpreted as an indirect criticism of what China does not offer to the region, as part of Japan's renewed campaign to stress its values-oriented diplomacy since Abe's return to power in 2012 (see Hughes 2015), but it does not point to evidence of extreme competition.

4.3 Do they both perceive each other to be pursuing regional leadership in LA?

This section aims to establish whether the sources indicate that China and Japan are trying to reach a position in which they can exert more influence on economic and

political decisions than the other one. Do they identify and describe the other country's leadership and power in the region?

Fifteen newspaper articles in the sample from China deal with the subject of Japan trying to reach a position in which it can exert more influence on economic and political decisions in the region than China. In a news piece from 2004, the diplomatic strategy of the then premier Koizumi is summarized as "being interrelated with the long cherished wish of becoming a 'political great nation'" (Sina Finance, 13 September 2004). At that time, Japan had not yet formed a special interest group with Brazil, Germany, India to achieve UN Security Council reform and it seemed that Japan had real chances to win over Brazil and Mexico as supporter states from LA for its endeavour in the UN.

A military interest website considers the two countries to be rivals per se and expands this view to LA (Jiexun Net, 25 July 2014). Other articles see Japan's engagement in LA as part of a larger, worldwide Japanese effort, named 'Foreign Policy that Take a Panoramic Perspective of the World Map (俯瞰地球儀)⁶ (e.g. China Net, 25 July 2014; People's Daily, 5 August 2014), to become more influential in different regions, among them: Russia, East Asia, Africa and LA (Macao News, 27 July 2014). Also, the afore-mentioned observation that Abe's trip followed hard on Xi Jinping's visit is also taken as evidence that Japan wants to reinforce its own influence in the region right after China has shown its presence there (China Daily, 11 August 2014). Japan's effort to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council is to be seen in the same light. Since the number of LA countries' votes in the UN is large, Japan needs to

⁶ This term appears in Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs bluebooks. See, for example,

<https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000177713.pdf>

expand its influence in the region if it wants to increase its influence in the UN (e.g. Global Times, 4 August 2014). A Chinese expert on Japan's foreign policy writes (People's Liberation Army Daily, 5 August 2014) and is quoted to warn that Japan's spreading of the 'China threat theory' has the potential to harm China's image in the world (Beijing Youth Daily, 2 August 2014; People's Daily, 2 August 2014). However, in general, the Chinese newspapers assess these efforts as doomed to fail (Global Times, 29 July 2014a and five others), even though Japan might be able to 'win over' some countries due its technological superiority (Wen Wei Po, 29 July 2014; China Daily, 11 August 2014) and with its presence in the region provides the LA countries with the opportunity to diversify their foreign relations (Southern Weekend, 14 August 2014). One of the reasons why Japan's 'charm offensive' is not going to be successful is, according to the Chinese media, that it still has not taken responsibility for its war crimes during World War II (e.g. People's Daily, 5 August 2014). Citing the British Financial Times again, the Military Camp Net assesses Japan's engagement in LA as belonging to a different 'weight category' (重量级别) than China (Military Camp Net, 21 October 2014). Japan is described in several articles as picking up 'China's left-overs' in the region (Military Camp Net, 21 October 2014).

One academic journal observes that Japan and China struggle about political superiority in LA (Gao, 2015, pp. 39-40). Another one underlines Japan's general ambition to increase its international influence (Xu M., 2014, p. 35).

The findings on China's perception in this section show that Chinese reporting only in a few cases describes China as considering that Japan might be able to exert more power in LA than China itself in the near future. However, in most cases these considerations are coupled with the assessment that China is very much superior to

Japanese in LA. There is one exception, namely Japanese technology which is acknowledged in the Chinese articles as very attractive for LA.

In the first period (up to 2010), the Japanese discourse mainly noted China's attempts to encourage LA countries to change their diplomatic allegiances to China rather than Taiwan. In the second period, there is greater interest in, and sometimes inferred criticism of, China's expanding influence in the region, not necessarily linked to Japan's own interests but rather that of other parties, such as the US or the LA itself.

Relating to Japan specifically, some of the press reports on Xi Jinping's LA activities in 2014 take a critical view of China's motives. For example, referring to Xi's ten-day visit to Brazil and four other countries in LA in mid-July, Sankei (citing a Chinese source) describes Xi as 'Santa Claus distributing money,' with the aim of raising China's profile in the region through his pledges on infrastructure investment and energy cooperation. But the article also points to China's antagonist position towards Japan, viewing Xi's comments on the (Sino-Japanese) history problem as an attempt to 'restrain Japan' (日本を牽制し) ahead of Prime Minister Abe's impending visit to the region. This refers to Xi's speech at the BRICS summit in Brazil in which he commented on Japan's history of invasion and historical revisionism, in addition to his offer of China's support for Argentina's claims to the Malvinas during his visit in July 2014. A number of reports describe Xi's comments as an attempt to gain LAC support for China's position on thorny issues in Sino-Japanese relations, specifically the history problem and the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands) (Sankei Shinbun, 14 July 2014, 25 July 2014; Asahi Shinbun, 25 July 2014).

More broadly, China's expanding soft power engagement with the region is noted in a number of ways, for example with the establishment of a planned 32 Confucius Institutes, the increase in numbers of Chinese living in LAC, and the

introduction of Spanish-language versions of Renmin Ribao and CCTV broadcasts (Uchida, 2011, p. 11; Hamaguchi, 2013, p. 40). For Uchida these are seen as part of the Chinese government's strategy to strengthen its overseas influence, but are also seen as problematic in that they can sometimes cause friction within recipient countries (2011, p. 11). Other commentaries on China's presence in LA point to growing concerns in LAC countries themselves about China's motives. For example, Zakzak⁷ reported on Li Keqiang's 2015 visit which was met by criticism in some quarters for the plans to discuss the controversial rail link between Brazil and Peru, but also growing mistrust in the region over China's perceived attempt to strengthen its dominance (霸權 haken) (28 May 2015).

A more cautionary tone has also emerged in the Japanese discourse in terms of concerns about the risks to LA of becoming too closely involved with, or overly-dependent on, China. For example, Sawada points to the irony of the trade structure between Brazil and China (where Brazil exports raw materials, and imports industrial goods) which has come to resemble a North-South-type relationship reminiscent of Brazil's relations with Western countries, alongside the problem of Brazilian manufactured goods having to compete with Chinese goods on the domestic market (2015, p. 34). Others recommend that LA countries keep a certain distance from China (Matsui, 2010, p. 1, p. 12). Broadly speaking, the Japanese sources seem less concerned with the impact of China's expanding influence on Japan's own role and influence in the region, than with its impact on other interested parties.

5. Conclusion

In this article we asked whether China and Japan perceive each other as rivals in Latin

⁷ An online news service run by the Fuji/Sankei group.

America. We first combined rivalry and perception approaches from IR in order to form a conceptual framework for our analysis. This framework lead to three indicators for the analysis of the Chinese and Japanese newspaper articles, academic journal articles and policy documents: Did the authors of the documents brand the other country as a rival in LA? Did they consider the relation between Japan and China to be in extreme competition, in which the foreign policy of the one country was at least in part formed in order to harm the other country even if this would counter rational foreign policy? Did they perceive the other as seeking leadership in the LA region?

The analysis of the Chinese- and Japanese-language literature reached similar conclusions, in that although the media in each country tended to take a more negative, even hostile, position on some aspects of the other country's engagement with the region, on the whole the perception analysis demonstrated that the two countries do not view each other as positional rivals in the region (as specified by Thompson, 1995, see above section 2). Given the fierce competition for regional leadership among China and Japan in the East Asian region it is quite remarkable how little this aspect of bilateral relations seems to matter for China and Japan as far as their engagement in LA is concerned.

Although some indicators of rivalry, as we have defined it, were found in the analysis above, their sources constitute only a minor part of all the Chinese reports about Japan in LA. In addition, there are only very few, namely five, Chinese articles that contain all three indicators, half of the sample articles do not contain a single indicator. We therefore conclude that rivalry is not an issue from the point of view of China in LA. This is also true for the policy papers and the academic journal articles. In the case of Japan, the sources show a sustained interest in, and varying degrees of concern about, China's growing presence in the region. However, China is rarely

branded as a direct rival to Japan, nor is there evidence of a perception of extreme competition as per Vasquez's conceptualisation. Similarly, the sources reflect more on the impact of China's influence in the region on those directly affected, than on Japan's own agenda and position there.

In sum, although each side has clearly taken an interest in the other's initiatives since the early 2000s, there is little evidence to suggest that rivalry for resources and the quest for regional influence in LA has driven particular foreign policy decisions designed to out-do or damage the other party. To bring back Vasquez, we do not find, in the case of China and Japan in LA, a mutually contingent, reciprocal hostile interaction where 'contenders become more concerned with hurting or denying their competitor than with their own immediate value satisfaction' (Vasquez, 1996, p. 532). According to Thompson and other rivalry theorists this means that a serious conflict between the two – at least in the LA region – is highly unlikely. Rather the status quo will remain constant for the near future.

We found that the analysis of perception in general and the analysis whether two countries consider each other as rivals in particular is a useful way of analysing the potential for conflict. We discover that a rivalry perception analysis is not only applicable for the overall relationship between two (or more countries), but that this framework can also be applied in certain issue areas (e.g. certain foreign policy areas). With the help of such an issue related analysis it is possible to obtain a finer-grained analysis on the potential of conflict between two countries. We think that a systematic analysis of more countries in more issue areas could provide an accurate mapping of conflict potential on a larger scale and would be helpful for policy-makers also beyond Japan and China.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Anja Ketels for her support in online research and part of the content analysis for the Chinese sources, and Chiho Maruoka for collating some of the Japanese media articles.

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