
Comparative analysis of political and economic relations of Japan and Australia towards China

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Abstract:

Japan and Australia are both Allies of the United States and members of the Quad alliance of Japan, US, Australia and India. Both countries contain China politically and are economically interdependent with China. On the surface, the political and economic relations between the two countries towards China are generally similar, but in fact, they are quite different. Using the method of unification of history and logic and empirical analysis, This paper analyzes the differences between Japan and Australia in their relations with China from political and economic aspects. The conclusion is that in the context of "strategic competition" between China and US, based on its strategic needs of "political power", Japan adheres to the foreign strategy of taking the Japan-US alliance as the Pivot. Economically, China and Japan are in a high degree of symmetrical interdependence, and the two economies can operate relatively independently from the influence of political relations. It is difficult for China and Japan to fundamentally improve their political relations at this stage. Australia adheres to the strategy of "Middle Power", and the Labor government emphasizes maintaining its independence and adhering to multilateralism in the "Australia-US alliance". Economically, Australia is in an asymmetrical interdependence with China, which will promote the development of the political relationship between China and Australia. Therefore, after India, China should give priority to the development of relations with Australia, which is of great significance to the division of the Quad and the dissolution of the synergy of the Quad.

Keywords:

Political Power; Middle Power; Containment and decoupling; Interdependent

1. Introduction

Japan and Australia are the northern and southern anchors of the United States in East Asia, and can be regarded as the right-hand men of the United States. As early as 2006, Japan began implementing a "values based" diplomacy and planned to launch the "Quad Alliance" (QUAD) in the Indo Pacific region, which objectively formed a strategic encirclement of China.[1] After Trump's visit to Japan in 2017 officially recognized the Quad alliance, cooperation among the four countries has shown a trend towards institutionalization and high-end development. After the outbreak of the Russo Ukrainian War, the leaders of the four countries urgently held a summit to "reaffirm their commitment to a free and open Indo Pacific region, including re-



spect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, and freedom from military, economic, and political coercion. External analysis suggests that the United States intends to use this emergency summit to send a signal to China that its focus is still on the Indo Pacific region and will not deviate from its goals due to the Russia Ukraine situation. The Quad alliance in the Indo Pacific region has the posture of an Asian version of NATO. [2]The author once discussed the cohesion of the Quad alliance and believed that India has a certain degree of independence and is the weakest link in the alliance. [3]India's performance in the Russo Ukrainian War was exactly the same. It was not afraid of the pressure of American hegemony, and instead did not compromise with the United States. Instead, it purchased a large amount of Russian oil and pursued a policy of "India first" and "self-reliance".[4] Apart from India, Japan and Australia, members of the Quad, appear to have similar political and economic relations with China on the surface, but they are politically closely aligned with the United States in containing China and economically interdependent with China. However, in reality, they are vastly different. This article analyzes the differences in their relations with China from both political and economic perspectives, and argues that after India, relative to Japan, priority should be given to developing relations with Australia. This is of great significance for dividing the Quad alliance and dissolving the Quad's joint forces.

2.Comparative analysis of the internal factors of Japan and Australia's political containment of China

Japan and Australia, as allies of the United States and members of the "Quad Alliance", claim to share the same values and are obsessed with their subjective construction of the "China threat". They often make unfriendly and even interfering in China's internal affairs, damaging China's international reputation, and jointly target China. This is the apparent similarity in their relationship with China, but the underlying strategic demands for political containment of China are fundamentally different. Due to geopolitical security reasons, both countries have chosen to form an alliance with the United States, a major power outside the region. However, the specific practices of forming an alliance with the United States are also different due to the different strategic positioning of each country. Japan positions itself as a "political power" and implements a foreign security strategy centered around the Japan US alliance. Australia has formed an alliance with the United States, with its national identity positioned as a "middle power". The Australian government, especially under the leadership of the Labour Party, places greater emphasis on Australia's independence within the alliance and hopes to better achieve the national interests of a "middle power" through multilateral means. Due to the different specific practices of the US alliance between the two countries, in the context of the "strategic competition" between China and the United States, if the development space of Japan's relationship with China is relatively compressed, then Australia still has certain development space in its relationship with China.

There is no world government in the real world, and the geopolitical environment largely constrains and influences a country's security strategy. Some countries hope to strengthen themselves through alliances by leveraging third-party forces (often allied with major powers outside the region due to the concept of distant communication and close attack) to achieve their more "secure" goals. Some seek to fundamentally change their own geography and establish their own country, pursuing radical national security, while others only pursue defensive relative security to defend their homeland. Japan and Australia during their rise in history

were two types of countries, respectively. As an island nation floating on the edge of the mainland, Japan faces both pressure and temptation from the mainland. Its geopolitical security anxiety is not about defending the island, but rather about attacking and landing on the East Asian continent at the right time to obtain so-called absolute security. This is also confirmed by modern history. After its rise, Japan regarded external expansion, landing and conquering the mainland as its primary goal in pursuing absolute security, forming alliances with major powers outside the region (such as Britain, Russia, Germany, the United States, etc.), and implementing befriending distant states while attacking those nearby as its basic foreign strategy.[5] In China's view, Japan is a "small country", but in fact, since ancient times, Japan's comprehensive national strength factors such as population, land area, and its creative ability (total economic output) have held an advantageous position in East Asia and even the international community. These "advantages" have contributed to the emergence of Japan's aggressive national strategy, which is also the historical origin and confidence of Japan's pursuit of a "political power" after World War II. Compared to Japan's covetousness of the East Asian continent, Australia itself is a continent, but it is also more like a large island, far away from the Western world with similar values. This geographical and psychological "loneliness" helplessness, coupled with a rare population of only 25 million but having to defend a huge area of over 7 million square kilometers, has given rise to its serious security anxiety, leading Australia to always seek alliances with foreign powers in its national security strategy to enhance its own security. In the 1980s, Kim Christian Beazley, the defense minister of the Hawke Cabinet, made it clear that "with the military advantage gained from the Australia US alliance, Australia can hold onto 20% of the land with 1% of the Earth's population; without the Australia US alliance, Australians cannot live independently, so the Australia US military alliance must always hold on." [6] From the perspective of focusing on defending territory and adhering to the "Australia US alliance," Australia's security strategy can be described as a defensive security strategy.

Geopolitical security anxiety determines the path of alliances, while the self positioning of national identity directly affects the degree of specific alliances. If the former is an objective factor, then the self positioning of national identity is a subjective construction. The traditional Western theories of international politics and international relations hold that the geopolitical role of any country in the global system is a functional result of its "hard power" and "soft power". The "hard power" and "soft power" of each country also determine their position in the global system and regional subsystems. [7] After the post-war economic rise, Japan positioned itself as a "political power". In 1968, the Gross National Product (GNP) surpassed that of the Federal Republic of Germany and jumped to the second place in the Western world; In 1980, Japan surpassed the Soviet Union and became the world's second largest economy. In July 1983, then Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone emphasized in a campaign speech: "To strengthen Japan's voice in world politics, we must not only increase its weight as an economic power, but also as a political power." The strategy of Japan's political power was thus launched. However, constrained by the Cold War pattern, the strategy of "political power" was not able to transition from the conceptual stage to the practical stage until the disintegration of the bipolar pattern (its demands included becoming a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, participating in leading the reconstruction of the international order, amending the Japanese Constitution, etc.), and the functions of the original Japan US alliance began to transform accordingly. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, the alliance not only did not disintegrate, but also "upgraded" to "the foundation for maintaining peace and prosperity in the Asia Pacific region in the 21st century" in 1996.[8] In the 21st century, during the



tenure of Junichiro Koizumi, the alliance's goal was further elevated to a "global scale partnership". In October 2013, Abe made it clear during a meeting with reporters from The New York Times that "I realize that Japan has the potential to become a leader in the Asia Pacific security field, in addition to the economic sector." [9] In 2017, Trump's visit to Japan successfully facilitated the alliance of four countries in the United States, Japan, Australia, and the Indo Pacific region. [10] The 2022 edition of Japan's "Diplomatic Blue Book" states that "in the context of increasingly severe and uncertain regional security environment, the Japan US alliance is more important than ever" and "strengthens solidarity with partners who share universal values, leading the international community to confront attempts to unilaterally change the status quo through force. Japan fundamentally believes in strength based realism politics. In today's era of highly integrated national interests and globalization, "Japan is still stuck in the Westphalian system stage, still keen on playing with traditional geopolitics that has lasted for a hundred years, and still using Cold War thinking to think about national politics." [11] Under the guise of the "China threat," Japan is arming itself, expanding its international network of allies with the Japan US alliance as the core, encircling China and jointly suppressing China, and plotting to become a "political power" and even regional leader. Of course, how far Japan's own path towards becoming a "political power" can go is entirely within the control of the United States, and the United States will not allow Japan to exceed its own limits and become a truly independent "political power".

Under the strategy of becoming a "political power", after the disintegration of the bipolar pattern, Japan "relies on the United States for security and China for economy", which can be described as a "two faced bet". But in 2010, with China and Japan surpassing Japan in economic aggregate and the implementation of the US "Asia Pacific Rebalance" strategy, marked by Japan's "nationalization" of the Diaoyu Islands in 2012, Sino Japanese relations entered a period of strategic competition. In 2017, the United States regarded China as a strategic competitor, and the Trump and Biden administrations "contained and decoupled" China. The strategic competition between China and the United States became long-term, and Japan saw this as an "opportunity period" to move towards becoming a political power. [12] The two administrations of Suga and Kishida have adopted a positive response, cooperation, and even proactive promotion towards the Biden administration's containment policy towards China. Their foreign policy has shifted significantly from a "two faced bet" to "following the US China" and even "assisting the US China". Japan's goal of becoming a "political power" determines the nature of Sino-Japan relations, which is competitiveness. [13]

Unlike Japan's positioning as a 'political power', Australia positions itself as a 'medium power'. As early as the United Nations General Assembly held in 1945 after World War II, Australian Labour Party Foreign Minister Ewart recognized that Australia's abundant resources and geographical location across two oceans could enable it to play a role as a "middle power" in building the international order. Taking advantage of the unique international situation and historical opportunities after the war, Australia regained its diplomatic and military power from Britain, and for the first time declared to the world that Australia's foreign policy will take a more independent path of a "middle power". The self-identity of Australia as a middle power has always been one of the most important factors affecting Australia's diplomatic performance and behavior. [14] The Australia US alliance, on the one hand, is required for Australia's geopolitical security, and on the other hand, it is also based on identity considerations. Establishing and strengthening the alliance with the United States is an important strategy for Australia to achieve its strategy of becoming a middle power. Australian scholar Hugh White believes that 'great powers are those that shape the international order, while middle

powers are those that can shape the way the international system operates in specific circumstances'; Medium sized powers can protect their own interests by shaping the operation of the international system, even in the face of challenges to the interests of a major power.[15] Australia is a type of 'middle power', with different ruling parties shaping different alliance policy practices. The Labour Party emphasizes the independence of Australia within the alliance and hopes to achieve national interests through multilateral means, which is a balanced alliance policy. The Conservative Party, on the other hand, tends to focus more on the alliance of strong countries, serving as a deputy sheriff, as a way of survival for a medium-sized power, which is a policy of following. In the 1950s and 1960s, constrained by the Cold War pattern and during the long-term rule of the Conservative Party, the diplomacy of middle power countries was more limited to following the alliance diplomacy of the United States step by step. In 1972, Whitlam, the leader of the Labor Party and known as the "father of China Australia relations," came to power, emphasizing Australia's intermediary role in the US Soviet confrontation and emphasizing the "independence" of defense policy,[16] believing that this was more in line with Australia's interests as a middle power. In the 1980s to mid-1990s (1983-1996), the Hawke and Keating administrations of the Labour Party insisted on the Australia US alliance while elevating the status of their relations with Asian countries, highlighting the importance of strengthening Asia Pacific cooperation. The Labour Party's Keating government emphasizes that a medium-sized power needs to have a certain level of international credibility, including an independent policy stance from major powers and consistency in words and actions.[17] The Conservative Howard (1996-2007) government, which started in the late 1990s, essentially followed the tradition of alliance diplomacy established by the Conservative Party. In 2007, Labor leader Kevin Rudd became Prime Minister. Rudd criticized his predecessor Howard for following the United States too closely and proposed a remarkable concept of "creative middle power diplomacy," with the core idea of "leading the way, not trailing behind." [18] Starting from the second decade of the 21st century, the Obama administration launched the "Asia Pacific Rebalance" strategy, and the Trump administration clearly regarded China as a "strategic competitor," [19] while Australia was seen as the "southern anchor" in its Asia Pacific security structure, greatly enhancing Australia's strategic position. The Conservative led Australian government has shifted more towards the traditional strategy of following allies. Looking at Australia's diplomatic tradition after World War II, although both parties emphasized "middle power" diplomacy and adhered to the alliance strategy with the United States, Australia under the leadership of the Labor Party tended to adopt a balanced alliance strategy, emphasizing its independence within the alliance and committed to better realizing national interests through multilateralism. The Conservative Party, on the other hand, is a follower strategy that focuses solely on establishing and maintaining close alliances with hegemonic powers.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, China Australia relations were constrained by the Cold War until 1972 when Labour Party leader Whitlam came to power, opposing excessive reliance on Britain and the United States for defense and emphasizing the "independence" of defense policies, allowing the two countries to establish diplomatic relations. With the development of China's reform and opening up, Australia's position in the international system has steadily risen. As a "medium-sized power", Australia actively shapes the operation of the international system and demonstrates more independence. In terms of relations with China, "China Australia relations have long been at the forefront of China's relations with developed countries. In July 1973, China and Australia signed an intergovernmental trade agreement, granting each other most favored nation treatment. On the tenth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations



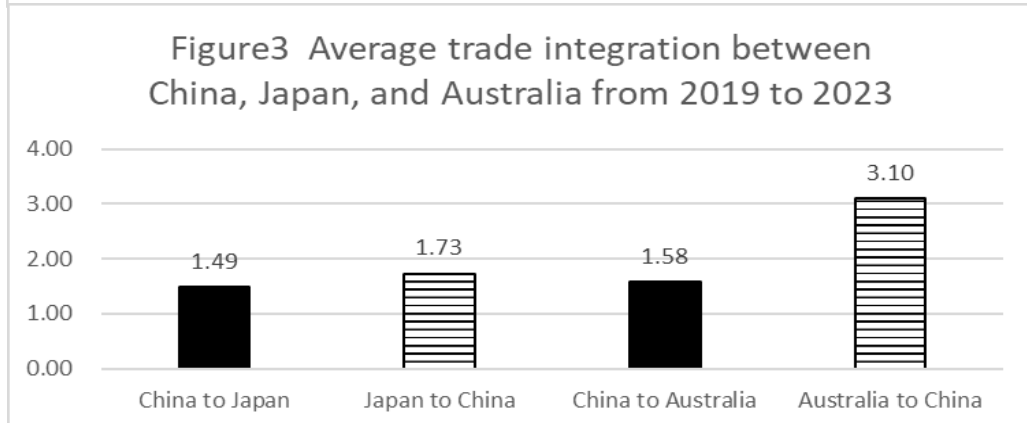
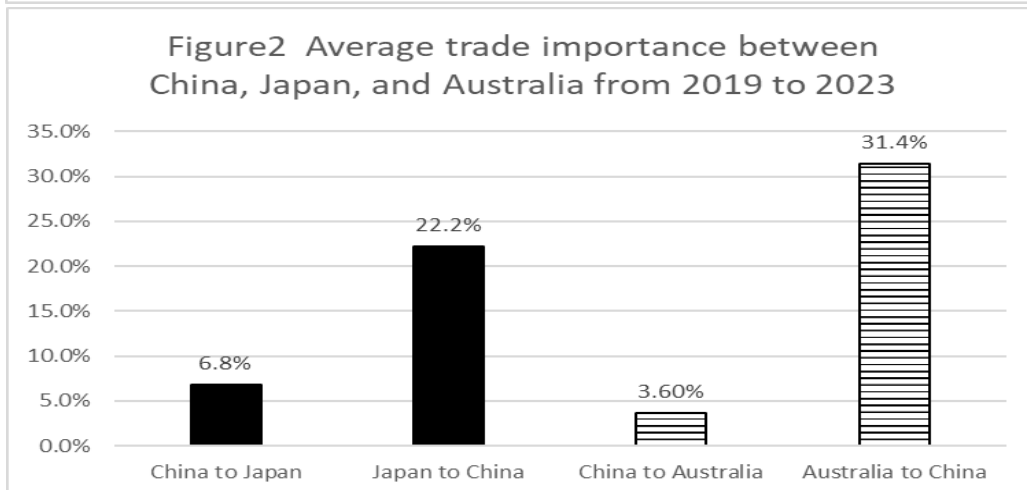
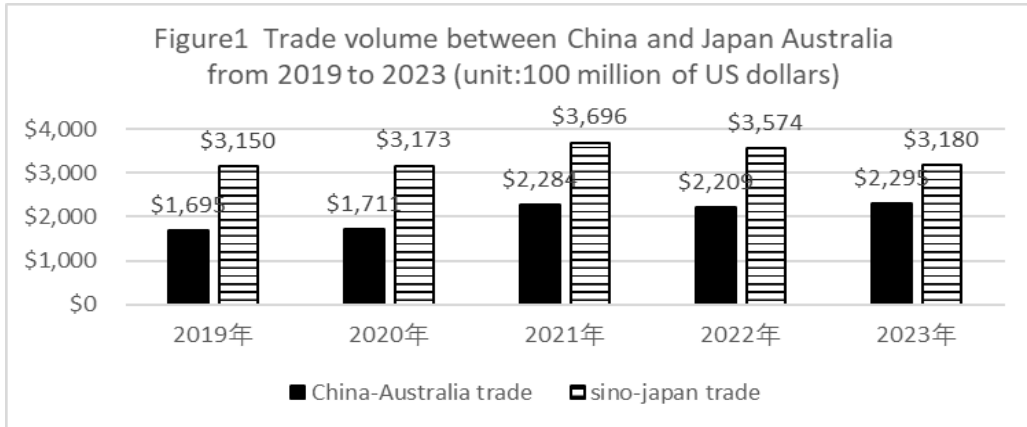
between the two countries in 1982, Deng Xiaoping met with Australian Prime Minister Fraser, which served as an opportunity to launch an economic and technological cooperation that could be regarded as a model of cooperation with Western countries. This also became an important driving force for the development of economic and trade relations between the two countries thereafter.[20] In September 1999, Jiang Zemin, as the head of state, visited Australia for the first time and established an annual regular meeting mechanism with Australian leaders and foreign ministers of the two countries, setting the general direction for the long-term stable development of China Australia relations in the 21st century. In October 2003, Hu Jintao visited Australia and signed the China Australia Trade and Economic Framework.[21] In 2014, Xi Jinping successfully visited Australia, and the leaders of the two countries jointly announced the upgrade of China Australia relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership. However, in 2017, the United States identified China as a strategic competitor, especially after the outbreak of the COVID-19 in 2020, the Australian Conservative Party Morrison government followed the American government, constantly slandered China's reputation and challenged China's bottom line, which caused serious difficulties in China Australia relations. Until May 2022, when Labour Party leader Albanese returned to power, China Australia relations saw a turning point. As Foreign Minister Wang Yi said, "China Australia relations have long been at the forefront of China's relations with developed countries... There is no historical grudge or fundamental conflict of interests between China and Australia, and they should and can become mutually needed partners.[22]

In summary, the alliance strategy based on geopolitical security has completely different implementation methods due to different national strategic positioning. Japan insists on pursuing a "political power" and cannot accept the continued growth of China in Northeast Asia. It uses the "China threat theory" as a cover and the "Japan US alliance" as the "axis" to expand its international alliance network, in order to achieve its strategic goal of strengthening itself, containing China, and becoming a regional leader. Against the backdrop of the United States positioning China as a "strategic competitor," Japan's "political power" strategy makes it difficult for China Japan relations to fundamentally improve. Australia adheres to the strategy of being a "medium power". Although it has formed an alliance with the United States, the attitudes of the two parties towards the US alliance are different. The Labor government relatively emphasizes the independence and multilateralism preference of the alliance between China and Australia. In reality, there are no border disputes or historical legacy issues between China and Australia, which leaves some room for buffering or growth in China Australia relations. In general, the differences in the internal reasons for Japan and Australia's political containment of China have led to vastly different development spaces for their relations with China.

3.Comparative Analysis of Japan and Australia's Economic Dependence on China

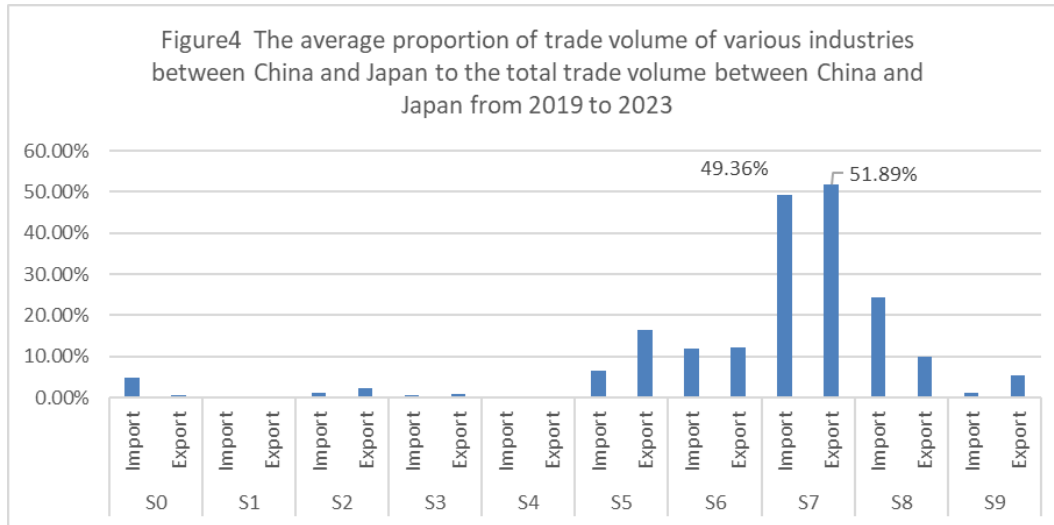
As members of the "Quad Alliance", Japan and Australia politically contain China, and economically, although they intend to participate in the restructuring of the industrial chain, the reality is more dependent on it. From a trend perspective, in the past five years, despite many disruptions such as the pandemic, the trade volume between Japan and Australia and China has remained high, and the importance of trade with China still ranks first among the trading partners of Australia and Japan (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).[23] Especially in the context of ongoing political tensions between the two countries, Australia demonstrates strong resil-

ience in their interdependence in economic and trade cooperation. From the perspective of export integration,[24] Japan and Australia's exports to China far exceed the world average level (1.73 times and 3.10 times the world average, respectively. Relatively speaking, as a major exporting country, China's export integration to Japan and Australia also exceeds 1). Overall, the trade relations between China and Japan, as well as China and Australia, have reached a close state of mutual dependence. Japan and Australia are relatively more dependent on China, especially with Australia's high degree of integration with China reaching 3.10. This indicates that compared to other countries in the world, Australia's own exports are more directed towards China, and China plays an absolutely important role in Australia's exports.



In terms of quantity, compared to Japan, Australia is relatively more dependent on China. So, what about

structural analysis?



Data source: Calculated based on data from the United Nations Commodity Trade Database <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>

From Figure 4, it can be seen that Sino Japanese trade is mainly concentrated in SITC5-8 manufactured goods trade, especially in the capital and technology intensive SITC7 category, namely machinery, accounting for 50.6% of the total. Moreover, imports and exports within the same industry are highly similar, making it a typical intra industry trade. The degree of correlation between imports and exports within the industry is high, which is confirmed by the data in Table 1, Table 2, and Figure 5. 90% of Japan's imports and exports to Japan are between parent companies, and the import and export trade volume accounts for 30% to 60% of China's imports and exports to Japan. There is also a considerable amount of imports and exports to third countries, indicating that the production and operation of Japanese multinational corporations in China not only have a significant impact on trade between China and Japan, but also on trade with third countries. The highly intertwined and closely related structure of Sino Japanese trade cooperation, where imports and exports are highly correlated, implies that restricting imports to Japan would greatly affect exports to Japan and even to third countries, resulting in mutual harm. Here, the law of mutual benefit and win-win market economy plays a dominant role, and this highly symmetrical interdependence cannot generate power.[25] Despite political turmoil, the economy remains steadfast, which is also the so-called "ballast stone" effect of economic cooperation on the political relationship between the two countries, and the inherent reason for the cold politics and hot economy.

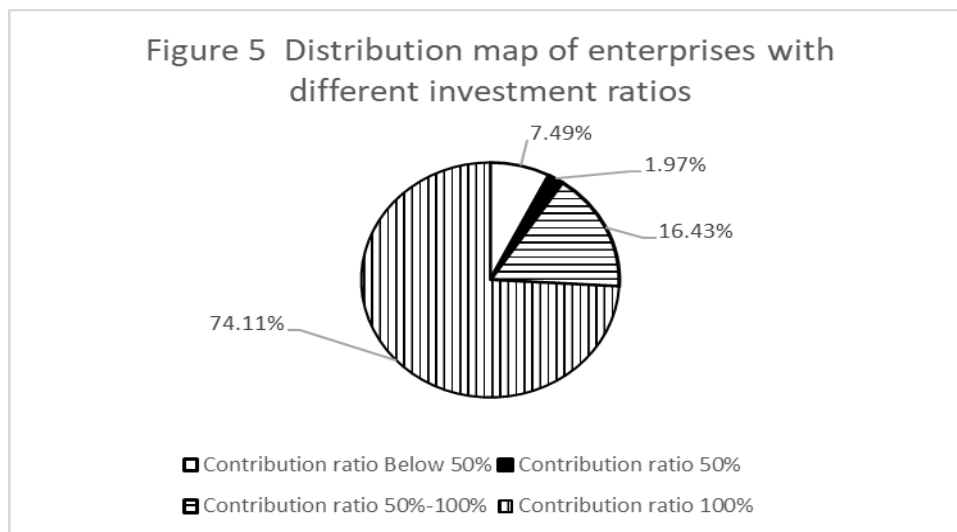
Table 1: Sales destinations of Japanese enterprises in China and their proportion in export trade with Japan in 2022 (billion yen)

	Total sales	Exports to Japan		Local China	Export to third countries	China's exports to Japan
		Exports to Japan	To the parent company			
amount	61,450	8,290	7,463	37,267	15,893	24,850
Proportion	100%	13.5%	12.1%	60.6%	25.9%	33.4%



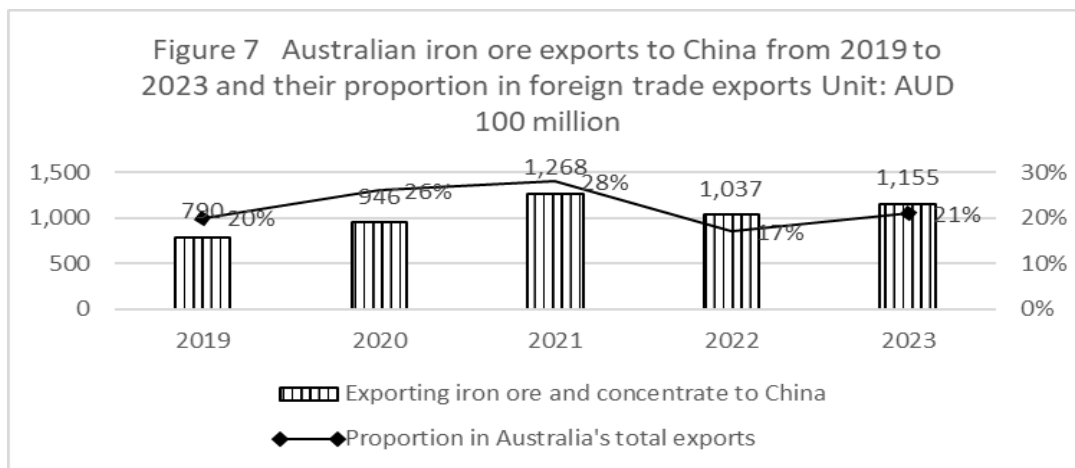
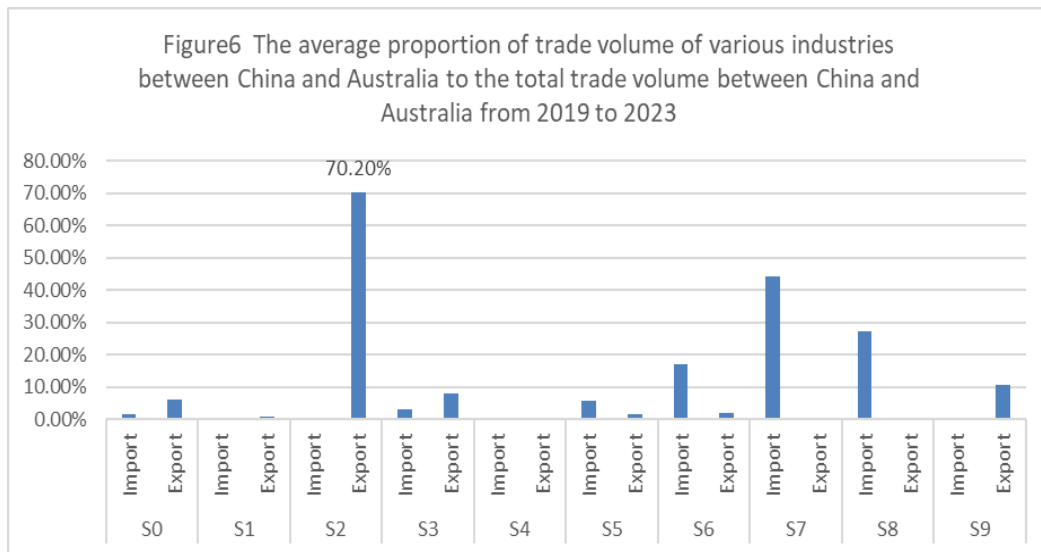
Table 2: Procurement sources of Japanese enterprises in China and their proportion in import trade with Japan in 2021 (billion yen)

	Total procurement	imports to japan		Local China	Import to third countries	China's imports to Japan
			To the parent company			
amount	46,795	11,138	10,181	30,840	4,817	19,004
Proportion	100%	23.8%	21.8%	65.9%	10.3%	58.2%



Data source: Calculated based on data from the Japanese Ministry of Finance <http://www.customs.go.jp/>

Relatively speaking, Australia's trade exports to China are mainly concentrated in the second category, which is single raw material export trade, while imports to China are mainly concentrated in the sixth, seventh, and eighth categories, which are finished product industries. It can be seen that the trade between the two countries is a single export or import within the same industry, which is a typical inter industry trade. This indicates that China Australia trade has strong complementarity, providing huge opportunities for further growth of China Australia trade in the future (see Figure 6). According to annual statistical data, there are three major categories of exports to China with a value of AUD 10 billion (according to Australian statistics, classified according to the SITC method of international trade standards), especially iron ore, which is the only trade item with a value of AUD 10 billion to China, accounting for 22% of Australia's export trade (see Figure 7). For Australia, with such a huge number of buyers, there is only one in the world, and it is not a manufacturing powerhouse that can be refined in a day. It can be said that only China, the world's largest manufacturing powerhouse, has this level of transaction, which is typical and irreplaceable. The huge dependence of iron ore exports to China and the importance of China as such a major buyer to Australia are self-evident. Obviously, Australia is more sensitive and fragile in its export trade with China.



In summary, as the largest trading partner of Japan and Australia, China's trade with China is of absolute importance to both countries. China Japan trade is mainly intra industry trade, and the two countries are in a highly symmetrical interdependent state. Relatively speaking, China Australia trade is mainly inter industry trade, and the two countries are in a highly asymmetric interdependent state. Australia's trade with China is more dependent and sensitive to the trade between the two countries. Robert Keohan and Joseph Nye believe that "a useful starting point for political analysis of international interdependence is to view asymmetric interdependence as a source of power for actors. Different types of interdependence have potential political impacts, but they are subject to different limitations. When existing rules and norms are naturally followed or countries with dissatisfaction must pay an unbearable price to quickly change their policies, sensitive interdependence may provide strong political influence." [26] In asymmetric interdependence, the "sensitivity" of Australia's trade with China will inevitably have some impact on the development of political relations between the two countries.

4. Conclusion: firmly prioritize the development of relations with Australia

Every real country is deeply rooted in history, adopting different foreign strategies based on serious geo-

political security anxieties and national identity positioning. The 'China threat' is not an objective real threat, but a subjective self construction of Japan and Australia. Japan and Australia are located in the Asia Pacific region and are both countries that heavily rely on foreign trade. Globalization should be the inevitable path. China adheres to reform and opening up, and its commitment to globalization is deeply rooted. In this regard, China, Japan, and Australia share a common demand. The subjective construction of the "China threat" by Japan based on its geopolitical security and strategic needs as a "political power" is unavoidable. The trade between the two countries is highly symmetrical and interdependent. Under the rule of market economy laws, politics and economy are to some extent separated, and the economy can operate relatively independently without being affected by political relations. Since the outbreak of the Russo Ukrainian War, Japan has shown a tendency to closely follow the United States, maintain aggressive relations with China, and shift its foreign strategy towards a more aggressive direction.[27] In December 2022, the Kishida Cabinet released a new security strategy, completely abandoning the principle of "dedicated defense" and focusing on policy proposals such as possessing the ability to attack the enemy, and will significantly increase military spending in the next five years.[28] These indicate that at the current stage of strategic competition between China and the United States, Japan's strategy towards China can be described as defensive, and it is quite difficult to fundamentally improve the relationship between the two countries. China needs to have a clear understanding of this and maintain sufficient patience and determination towards Japan's long-term strategic competition with China, in order to grasp the initiative and overall direction of the evolution of bilateral relations.

Australia pursues a medium power security strategy, which is different from Japan's foreign strategy that completely revolves around the axis of the Japan US alliance. In particular, the Labor government emphasizes Australia's independence and adherence to multilateralism in the alliance, and seeks to find space for Australia's medium power diplomacy in major power relations, in order to enhance Australia's strategic position and influence. Economically, Australia is highly asymmetric and interdependent with China, which will give China and Australia a certain degree of room for maneuver or strategic growth in political relations. After a period of strategic confrontation by the Conservative Morrison government in recent years, the Labour Albanese government, which came to power in June 2022, has shown signs of easing tensions with China.[29] On December 21, 2022, four years later, Australian Foreign Minister Huang Yingxian visited China and issued a joint statement between China and Australia. The Australian and New Zealand governments adhere to the One China policy, do not magnify and manage differences between the two countries, and restore and develop communication and exchanges in various fields within the framework of the Australia China comprehensive strategic partnership. Influential international experts in Australia have also pointed out that 'Australia needs to change its identity and values, and it needs confidence and courage to rebuild its relationship with China'.[30] If the main issue addressed by the Australia US alliance is Australia's security, then economic cooperation in the Asia Pacific region, especially with China, is crucial for Australia's economic development. Looking ahead to the future, both politically and economically, prioritizing the development of relations with Australia holds greater potential. We adhere to a global perspective, empathize with their security anxieties, embrace and develop our relationship with Australia with tolerance. Following India, we should prioritize the development of our relationship with Australia, which is of great significance for dividing the Quad alliance and dissolving the synergy among the four countries.



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