

**TAIWAN-JAPAN RELATION (I):
EXPLAINING THE CLOSENESS**

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Executive Summary

1. Relations between Taiwan and Japan are closer under the Abe and Tsai administrations. Their common concern for the China threat is one main reason.
2. The Taiwanese have a special affinity with Japan. This closeness is the outcome of Taiwanese disappointment in China, reinforcing the Taiwanese's memory of the Japanese rule.
3. Japan is also a close partner to Taiwan in the democracy camp after 1945. Taiwan thus supports Japan in various aspects, including even the new security policy under the Abe administration.
4. The closeness to Taiwan, on the other hand, is not evident on Japan's part, until after the 311 earthquake in 2011 when Taiwanese society made huge donations.
5. Notwithstanding this growing friendliness, it does not lead to a Japanese policy shift to view Taiwan as an important partner. Taiwan remains in a minor position in Japan's foreign policy and strategic deployment in the region.
6. The uncertain Sino-Japanese relation and the escalation of negative Japanese impression of China are also push factors.
7. Geopolitically, this Japan-Taiwan closeness is a reaction to regional initiatives under the Chinese leadership, such as the One Belt, One Road, and issues in the East China Sea, Taiwan Strait and South China Sea. Japan may want to tap on this issue-linkage to justify its new security policy.
8. The South China Sea arbitration award may be a game changer as Japan and Taiwan hold different stances on the award, hence undermining this Taiwan-Japan relationship.