Reassurance from Security to Status Dilemma: on Japan’s Volatile Reconciliation with China

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Abstract

Answering how two states with primordially defensive intentions could be involved into aggressive status competition even if they were more secure, this paper formulates a causal theory of status dilemma from anarchical system to state’s temporal and social comparisons that drive humiliation, and thereby to status dissonance toward vicious circle. Applied in the case of faded Sino-Japanese reconciliation since the 1990s, status dilemma helps explain how Japan and China are inadvertently humiliated by each other’s status-seeking, i.e. China’s aspiration of national rejuvenation and becoming a great maritime power, Japan’s pursuit of normal national status. In addition, by clarifying the relationship between status dilemma and security dilemma, the paper reveals how reassurance as a solution to security dilemma may fail to ameliorate status dilemma, which helps interpret how decades’ generous assistance signaling benign intention from Japan to China was ended up with mutually disappointing.

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