
The General Situation of the China-Japan Relations and the Imperative for a Composite Strategy

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Summary

Largely from early winter of 2002 until the late spring of 2005, China's top leaders made several major initiatives, aimed to mitigate the tension and improve the relationship with Japan. However, these attempts all failed mainly because of the Japanese government headed by Koizumi, which repeatedly took unilateral actions on the various bilateral disputes, and particularly with his repeated visit as prime minister to Yasukuni Shrine in defiance of China's fundamental official position and national sentiment. This combined with the agitated state of China's domestic public opinion led the Chinese government turned to a "new" policy toward Japan in late May 2005 that has been characterized since then by a protracted hardliner posture, insisting relentlessly uncompromising position over all major disputes with Japan. In a "semi-Cold War" stalemate of the serious China-Japan political confrontation, the hard test of will and strength between the two countries is starting to move in a direction generally favorable to China.

The deep-rooted fundamental causes of the Sino-Japanese tensions are closely related to China's rise. China has been rising steadily with a very impressive speed in her national strength and international influence, while Japan has been more and more determined to obtain a status of a political great power with "normal" military rights. In other words, Japan has increasingly inclined to have a "precautionary" rise under the primary background of the rise of China. Such a situation of "double rise" of two neighboring powers is by its own nature full of uncertainties with powerful incentives for generating instability, and the undesirable opinions and behavior within Japan on the emotion-charged historical issues add further psychological dynamics to such power dynamics. Meanwhile, the growth of popular nationalism in China and the strong rightist and nationalistic trends of the political cultural in Japan make the situation even worse.

China should have (and seems begin to have) a kind of composite strategy toward Japan, consisting of three major closely interconnected components. First, it is urgently required to create through high-level talks with the Japanese government several fundamental rules of behavior, aimed to mitigate the tensions, strive for stability, and control the dangerous confrontational dynamics. Second, if the Japanese government would insist on its hardliner approach toward China, then there would be no other option for China except to insist a tough posture and hard policies, with the final purpose of "overcoming" Japan psychologically. Third, the "thesis of differentiating" which had been relentlessly implemented by Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai must be held firmly and practiced by best efforts as one of the major working guiding principles of China in her relations with Japan, for first of all contributing to preventing the Japanese public establish fixedly in their minds a mage of China as a country becoming more and more powerful while strongly antagonistic toward Japan, thereby altering their fundamental notions on national security.

Key words: The China-Japan relations, political confrontation and strategic rivalry, national antagonism
"double" transformation of power structure, composite strategy

The Worst in Three Decades:

Political Confrontation, Strategic Rivalry, and Potentiality for Conflict

After The political relations between China and Japan in 2005 were undoubtedly the worst in the three decades since early 1972,¹ when these two countries began to normalize their diplomatic relations after about 40 years of the protracted war, both hot and cold. Moreover, a series of the most recent developments have made the situation in a large extent even worse. Shortly after his party's landslide victory in Japan's general election in the last September, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine again, where 14 leading war criminals are enshrined along with two million other Japanese veterans, making his visit to this place five times altogether as prime minister in despite of China's anger and strong protests.² He then appointed several leading conservative figures to top positions in a new cabinet, who have characterized themselves first of all by their remarkable hardliner attitude toward China, their almost explicit revisionist viewpoints on Japan's aggressive past before 1945, and their consistent advocacy for revision of the pacifist Constitution in the direction of pursuing Japan's "normal" military rights. Among them Foreign Minister Taro Aso has become notorious so quickly by his frequent and excessively provocative statements on almost all sensitive issues in China-Japan relations, especially those on history, Taiwan, "China's military threat", and East China Sea dispute.³ Also noxious in the Chinese eyes are the following two strategic events: First, there was a security agreement reached toward the end of the last October between Japan and the U.S., strengthening further their military alliance against North Korea and in fact China and making a more efficient U.S. forward-deployed base structure, while broadening Japan's defense roles that included not-so-implicitly her participation in some possible military intervention about Taiwan;⁴ Second, the U.S. Navy formally

¹ Shi Yinhong, "The China-U.S. and China-Japan Relations in 2005: Constructing Equilibrium vs. Falling into Stalemate" (In Chinese), *China Newsweek*, December 22, 2005. Japanese public opinion reflected this state of affairs: According to a Japanese government poll conducted in October 2005, Japan's opinion of China is at its lowest level in more than 25 years since the government started polling on the topic in 1978, showing less than one in three people felt friendly towards China. "Japanese Feel Unfriendly to PRC," Agence France Presse, December 26, 2005.

² "Japanese PM Visits Tokyo War Shrine," Associated Press, October 15, 2005. The international implications of the visit were immediately apparent. South Korea's Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon summoned Japanese Ambassador Shotaro Oshima to protest shortly after the visit. China's ambassador to Japan condemned the visit at almost the same time as "serious provocation" and a planned China-Japan Foreign Ministers meeting was thereby canceled, rendering in fact China's Foreign Minister refused to meet his Japanese counterpart as long as about one year until May 2006. Cf. "Koizumi Suddenly Visits Yasukuni Shrine Again" (In Chinese), Phoenix TV News Network (Hong Kong), October 17, 2005.

³ Norimitsu Onishi, "Koizumi Shuffles His Cabinet, Narrowing Field of Successor," *The New York Times*, November 1, 2005; "Abe Raises A Thesis of Uncertainty of Responsibility for Aggressive Wars and Refutes the Far East International Military Tribunal" (in Chinese), China News Agency Network, February 11, 2006; "The Japanese Foreign Minister Becomes the First Advocate of the 'China Threat' Thesis in the Koizumi Cabinet" (in Chinese), *People's Daily* (overseas edition), December 23, 2005; "Amede from Japan's Foreign Minister for His Prettification of Colonial Education in Taiwan" (in Chinese), China News Agency Network, February 8, 2006. Cf. Norimitsu Onishi, "A 'Now What' Shadows Japan Leader's Victory," *The New York Times*, September 13, 2005; Anthony Faiola, "Japan-Taiwan Ties Blossom as Regional Rivalry Grows," *The Washington Post*, March 24, 2006.

⁴ James Auer, "Japan's Major Step toward 'Normalcy,'" *Straits Times*, November 8, 2005. "For its part, Japan stated that its defence roles included not only defence of territory but also 'new threats and diverse contingences such as ballistic-missile attacks, attacks by guerilla and special forces and invasion of remote islands'. The event of "invasion of remote islands" undoubtedly mainly refers to Taiwan. Cf. Anthony Faiola, "Revised Constitution Strengthens Japan's Military," *The Washington Post*, November 22, 2005.

declared in early last December that the United States would base a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier in Japan for the first time starting in 2008, after Japan dropped long-standing resistance to the move.⁵

In consideration of all the above developments, together with their easily predictable repercussions in China, Beijing's understandable determined refusal to make any concession on any major dispute with Japan, and the mutual popular disgust or antagonism against each other that steadily increasing among the two nations' public, few people seriously doubt that China-Japan political relations may either deteriorate even further, or continue to be kept in a confrontational stalemate for a long time.⁶ Meanwhile, many countries besides China and Japan, especially their East Asian neighbors, the United States, and major European countries, have so dramatically raised their concern on the China-Japan political and strategic tensions that the U.S. government even began to attempt some "mediation" on the China-Japan confrontation, with as its emphasis quite limited and cautious admonition expressed to Koizumi and his associates.⁷ The at least ambiguously imaginable prospect of future military confrontation or even armed conflict between China and Japan has already become a serious topic referred to or discussed by various media in those countries.⁸

Anti-Japanese Demonstration and Turing-Point of China's Policy Direction

Largely from early winter of 2002 when the Chinese Communist Party held its 16th National Congress that launched a new generation of leadership headed by President Hu Jintao, until the late spring of 2005 when the anti-Japanese demonstrations broke out in China's several biggest cities had shaped a somewhat new domestic context for policy toward Japan, China's top leaders who held broad strategic consideration as well as constructive intention made several major initiatives, by both words and deeds, aimed to mitigate the tension and improve the relationship with Japan.⁹ However, these attempts successively made during two and half years all failed,

⁵ "U.S. Nuclear Carrier to be Based in Japan," Reuter, October 28, 2005.

⁶ This is the widespread general estimate of the published professional opinion in China, so widespread that it is really very difficult to find a substantially different one. The general estimation of the foreign opinions, both journalist and professional, are fundamentally the same. For a few sample of the latter, see Robert Marquand, "Nationalism Drives China, Japan Apart," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 29, 2005; Howard W. French, "Japan and China Take A Collision Course," *International Herald Tribune*, December 29, 2005; Brad Glosserman, "Testing Times for Japan, China," *Japan Times*, December 31, 2005; Tom Plate, "Asian Leaders Acting Badly: The Makings of Nightmares," *ibid.*, April 24, 2006.

⁷ "U.S. Tells Japan, China to 'Move on' in Spat over History," Agence France Presse, June 28, 2006; "U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Urges Japan to Improve Relations with China and ROK" (in Chinese), China New Agency Network, September 30, 2005; "Koizumi Indicates His Visit to Yakusuni Shrine Cannot Be Prevented, Even by U.S." (in Chinese), *Ibid.*, January 22, 2006; "Under Secretary of State Zoellick Says He Has Willingness to Do Some Mediation for Improving China-Japan Relations" (in Chinese), New China News Agency Network, January 25, 2006. Cf. Michael Vatikiotis, "China-Japan Rift Hurts America, Too," *International Herald Tribune*, October 25, 2005. See also Eric Teo Chu Cheow, "Feuding Risks for East Asia," *Japan Times*, April 22, 2005, for the various major concern of the South East Asian countries over the serious tensions between China and Japan.

⁸ For example, see French, "Japan and China Take A Collision Course"; Plate, "Asian Leaders Acting Badly". Also see several earlier warnings: Michael Vatikiotis, "Heading Off A Japan-China Conflict," *International Herald Tribune*, March 3, 2005; Chalmers Johnson, "The Real 'China Threat'," *Asia Times*, March 19, 2005; Yu Bin, "The Fault-lines That Could Shake Asia," *Ibid.*, January 6, 2005.

⁹ The early developments in this respect in the first half of 2003 is referred heavily in Shun Suling, et. al., "New Thinking Is Required for China-Japan Relations" (in Chinese), *Current Affairs Reports* (Official Magazine of CCP's Central Committee's Department of Propaganda), July 2003. For major developments after that, see "Hu

mainly because of the Japanese government headed by Koizumi. It not only in general had made no substantial positive responses to those initiatives, but instead repeatedly took unilateral actions on the various bilateral disputes, for the direct purpose of changing the status quo according to its own unilateral revisionist position. Among these actions, Japan's unprecedented public interference on the particularly sensitive Taiwan issue in the U.S.-Japan joint statement of February 2005 on security which incorporated that issue into U.S.-Japan "joint strategic objectives", and Prime Minister Koizumi's repeated visit to Yasukuni Shrine in defiance of China's fundamental official position and national sentiment, are the most prominent ones in causing Beijing's escalating angry toward the Japanese government and her strong feeling of frustration in dealing with Japan.¹⁰ These unilateral actions had repeatedly hurt China's interests and self-respect, damaged the basic stability of the China-Japan political relations, and constituted the chief immediate cause for the extraordinarily serious deterioration of the situation.

Decisively influenced by this cause and accompanied with the unbearable angry on the part of the Chinese government as well as her unprecedented highly permissive attitude thereby resulted, mass medias in China, especially those semi-official and unofficial ones, reported constantly in several months Japan's hardliner behavior towards China and the rightist/nationalistic trends in

Jingtao Meets the Japanese Guests at the 25th Anniversary of the China-Japan Peace Treaty" (in Chinese), China New Agency Network, August 10, 2003; Satoshi Koreeda, "Japan, China to Go Tandem in Talks," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, August 10, 2003; "Wu Bangguo Makes Speech in Japan to Talk About Three Major Kinds of Effort for the Future China-Japan Relations" (in Chinese), New China News Agency Network, September 8, 2003; "Wu Bangguo Says New Generation of China's Collective Leadership Pursues Friendly Policy toward Japan" (in Chinese), China News Agency Network, September 10, 2003; "Hu Jingtao Meets the Head of the Lower House of the Japanese Diet and Says Promoting China-Japan Relations Is A Major Task" (in Chinese), *ibid.*, September 22, 2004; "Koizumi Says (at his meeting with Hu Jingtao in Chile) Japan and China Will Never Fight Against Each Other" (in Chinese), *United Morning Post* (Singapore), November 24, 2004; "Wen Jiabao Raises Three Proposals to Improve China-Japan Relations" (in Chinese), *Kyodo News*, March 14, 2005; "Hu Jingtao Raises Five Points, Hoping to Reverse As Soon As Possible the Difficult Situation of China-Japan Relations", (in Chinese), China News Agency Network, April 23, 2005; Ellen Nakashima, "Koizumi, Hu Meet to Address Tensions," *The Washington Post*, April 24, 2005.

¹⁰ For the U.S.-Japan joint statement of February 2005 on security and the reaction from China, see Joel Brinkley, "U.S. and Japan Declare Concern over North Korea," *The New York Times*, February 20, 2005 (The "joint statement described 'encouraging the peaceful resolution of issues concerning the Taiwan Strait' as a 'common strategic objective.' An American official said that was the first time the Japanese government had publicly stated its concern about tensions between Taiwan and China." "Both the Japanese and American officials did express concern about the expansion and modernization of the Chinese military"); Jim Yardley and Keith Bradsher, "China Accuses U.S. and Japan of Interfering on Taiwan," *Ibid.*, February 21, 2001; "The Chinese Communists Oppose U.S.-Japan Security Pact Touching on Taiwan", (in Chinese), *China Times* (Taiwan), February 20, 2005. Koizumi's insistence on visiting Yasukuni Shrine and his refusing China's persuasion and protests have been so well known that direct reference seems to be not required here. For other major unilateral actions of the Japanese government on the disputes with China, see among others Yoichi Funabashi, "Use Dialogue to Draw Line with China," *Asahi Shimbun*, October 13, 2004; "Kong Quan (Spokesman of China's Foreign Affairs Ministry): Attempts by Japan to strengthen Its Control over Jiaoyu Island Is Illegal and Void" (in Chinese), New China News Agency Network, March 31, 2004; "China Protests against Japan's Exploration of Maritime Resources at East China Sea" (in Chinese), *ibid.*, July 8, 2004; "East China Sea Data Vital To Defend Rights" (Editorial), *Yomiuri Shimbun*, October 27, 2004; "Graduation Time?: Aid Cut," *Asahi Shimbun*, December 24, 2004; "China Strongly Protests the Issuing of Visa to Lee Teng-hui by the Japanese Government" (in Chinese), The Foreign Ministry of China Website, December 22, 2004; John Taylor, "China Angered by Japan's Search for Gas in China Sea," Australia National Radio, April 14, 2005; "The Japanese Government Grants Right of Experimental Extraction of Gas to Empire Petroleum Corporation", *China Daily Website*, July 14, 2005. Cf. "Japan and China Face off over Energy," *Asia Times*, July 2, 2005; Norimitsu Onishi and Howard W. French, "Japan's Rivalry with China Is Stirring A Crowded Sea," *The New York Times*, September 11, 2005.

Japan's domestic politics and political culture, with so high frequency, strong intensity and great prominence that never seen in China in at least three decades.¹¹ The never absent anti-Japanese feelings among the Chinese public then dramatically increased and the issue of the Japanese bid for a permanent seat in U.N. Security Council emerged quickly as a perfect rally point for massive "patriotic action" against Japan called by some NGOs that depended in a great degree on internet and cell-phone communication for mobilizing people, especially with an endorsement in principle of their patriotism and in particular of their opposition against Japan's bid from China's Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesman.¹² In this popular agitated atmosphere anti-Japanese demonstrations broke out in several biggest Chinese cities, creating much surprise to the Chinese government.¹³ After that, although the Chinese government had taken with remarkable success highly determined measures to prevent this kind of demonstrations broke out again,¹⁴ but the harmful actions on the part of the Japanese side and the state of domestic opinion in China combined to play their strong roles, leading

¹¹ This description is based on my definite personal observation and almost unmistakable impression. I discussed it in a speech: "China's Mass Media, Elite and Public Opinions, and Their Foreign Policy Implications," presented at the symposium on "American Public Opinions, Media and Policy-making" held in Beijing on May 11, 2005 by Washington Observer and World Security Institute China Program.

¹² Yu Zhe-yuan, "China's Official Authorities Supports the Massive Internet-users' Signature Campaign of Opposing the Japanese Bid for the Permanent Membership (of the U.N. Security Council)" (in Chinese), *United Morning Post* (Singapore), March 29, 2005; Joseph Khan, "If 22 million Chinese Prevail at U.N., Japan Won't," *The New York Times*, April 1, 2005. The later article speculated that "by allowing millions of people to sign their names to a petition against Japan, Beijing's new leadership seems determined to show that recent Japanese actions have so inflamed popular sentiment that China has no choice but to adopt a tougher diplomatic line. Officials may also see the petition as leverage to force concessions from Japan as the price of admission to the Security Council. It could also serve as cover for a veto, which would be one of the most bold assertions of Chinese authority in many years."

¹³ For the reports describing these demonstrations, see "Anti-Japanese Protests Spread (From Chengdu) to Shenzhen," *South China Morning Post*, April 4, 2005; "Large-scale Anti-Japanese Demonstration Break out in Beijing" (in Chinese), *Kyodo News*, April 9, 2005; "China Rocked by Second Day of Anti-Japanese Rallies," *Agence France Presse*, April 10, 2005; "Riot Police Guard Japan Embassy As Uneasy Quiet Descends over Beijing," *ibid.*, April 11, 2005; "Thousands Protests against Japan As China Says Relations at 'Crossroads,'" *ibid.*, April 16, 2005; "New Protests in China ahead of Japanese Foreign Minister's Visit," *ibid.*, April 17, 2005. For the comments on the Chinese government's immediate difficult responses to these demonstrations, see "Anti-Japanese Feelings Put China's Leaders in A Fix," *The New Zealand Herald* (reprinted from Reuters), April 7, 2005; Richard McGregor, "Beijing in Dilemma over Protesters," *Financial Times*, April 12, 2005; Joseph Khan, "China Pushing and Scripting Japan Protesters," *The New York Times*, April 15, 2005; Howard W. French and Joseph Khan, "Thousands Rally in Shanghai, Attacking Japanese Consulate," *ibid.*, April 16, 2005. See also some broader comments as Paul Mooney, "Internet Fans Chinese Nationalism," *The Korea Herald* (reprinted from *YaleGlobal*), April 6, 2005; Cindy Sui, "Nationalisms Blamed for Crisis in Ties," *The Standard*, April 11, 2005; Hannah Beech, "Smoldering Hatreds," *Time*, Asia, April 18, 2005. For some Chinese scholars' worrisome reaction to the increasing public agitation and the demonstrations, together with related policy discussion, see "Wu Jianming (President of Foreign Affairs College, Beijing) Says Irrational Nationalism Is Undesirable" (in Chinese), *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong), April 2, 2005; "Scholar Appeals to Tactfully Guiding Anti-Japanese Feelings" (in Chinese), *ibid.*, (Hong Kong), April 6, 2005; Liu Shilu, "Rational Thinking on China-Japan Relations" (in Chinese), *ibid.*, April 11, 2005; Shi Yinhong, "China Should Strive to Win the Hearts and Minds of the Japanese Public," *ibid.*, April 15, 2005; Shi Yinhong, "To Prevent Japanese Public from Believing China Is Hostile" (in Chinese), *Ming Pao* (Hong Kong), April 15, 2005; Shi Yinhong, "The Structural and Situational Causes of the Deterioration of China-Japan Relations" (in Chinese), *ibid.*, April 21, 2005. There was a prominent exception: one relatively well-known expert on the Japanese affairs at Tsinghua University declared on the day of the demonstration in Beijing that it was an "expression of the normal public opinion" and "there is absolutely no reason to worry that China's anti-Japanese emotions would go out of control." See "Anti-Japanese Demonstration in Beijing; Scholar Says It is an Expression of the Normal Public Opinion" (in Chinese), *Ta Kung Pao*, April 9, 2005.

¹⁴ A few pieces of this determined and almost massive effort were known to outside world. See Antoaneta Bezlova, "Beijing Blacks out Anti-Japan Protests," *Asia Times*, April 12, 2005; Joseph Khan, "State-run Chinese Paper Lashes Anti-Japanese Protests as 'Evil Plot,'" *The New York Times*, April 27, 2005.

China's deputy premier Wu Yi under highest authorization to cancel abruptly her arranged meeting in Tokyo with Koizumi who at that time still expressed his intention to revisit Yasukuni Shrine as prime minister in the future.¹⁵ This event in late May 2005 was a critical turning point, upon which the Chinese government turned to a "new" policy toward Japan that has been characterized since then by a really protracted hardliner posture, insisting relentlessly uncompromising position over all major disputes with Japan, especially that on Yasukuni Shrine.¹⁶

The Fundamental Causes of Confrontation:

Power Dynamics, Psychological Forces, and Alternation of Behavior

In recent years, China-Japan relations in their fundamental structure or basis has already had the following three most important changes, and these changes at large are still aggravating. The first is a "double" transformation of power structure between China and Japan: China has been rising steadily with a very impressive speed in her national strength and international influence, while Japan is in a particular sense also rising, even quite rapidly. The later development refers to the fact that Japan has more and more determined to obtain a "normal" international status, which means the status of a political great power with "normal" military rights, and seems to set her mind as it were to struggle for it and make it as a *fait accompli* in disregard of the discontent and worry about her present and future held by China and Korea, without undertaking really serious efforts to strive to assure these neighbors. Japan's rise in this particular sense that resulted from the increasing change of her political will and the emergence of something like initial strategic aspiration has its primary incentive: a deeply embedded mentality of worry and resistance against China's rise. In other words, Japan has more and more inclined to have her own "preemptive" or "precautionary" rise under the primary background of the rise of China. In conventional international politics, such a situation of "double rise" of two neighboring powers is generally by its own nature full of dynamics and fundamental uncertainties, with powerful incentive for generating instability.¹⁷

Moreover, this kind of difficult situation is just happening in the inherently difficult case of China and Japan: in the former there has been a profound and lasting national memory of a period of history characterized by Japan's repeated major aggressions against China with enormous atrocities committed by the Japanese armed forces during the half century from 1895 to 1945, together with the present angry resulted from Japan's gradual backward movement on the issue of history recognition; in the latter, the trend to forget, whitewash, and distort the above history has become increasingly remarkable, rooted in more and more felt psychological need and consciously

¹⁵ Among analyses and speculations about this very important event, see J. Sean Curtin, "China Turns Its Back on Japan," *Asia Times*, May 25, 2005; James Brooke, "Chinese Vice Premier Skips Meeting with Japanese Leader," *The New York Times*, May 23, 2005; "Wu Yi Refuses to Meet Koizumi for the Issue of His Visit to Yasukuni Shrine" (in Chinese), *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong), May 23, 2005.

¹⁶ This proposition on China's "new" policy since that turning point is so self-evident that there is no need to cite the huge amount of published evidences.

¹⁷ Shi Yinhong, "Strategic Emphasis Required for China-Japan Relations" (in Chinese), *China Review* (Hong Kong), October 2004; Shi Yinhong, "The Structural and Situational Causes of the Deterioration of China-Japan Relations"; Shi Yinhong, "Situation of China-Japan Relations and the Major Related Strategic Issues" (in Chinese), *Leaders*, No. 8 (February 2006); Francesco Sisci, "Why Japan's 'So Sorry' Doesn't Wash in China," *Asia Times*, April 30, 2005; Kin-ming Liu, "In East Asia, There Is More than One Way to Rise," *International Herald*

strengthened political requirement. The above-mentioned power dynamics has thus been filled with strong psychological dynamics, making it more difficult to be controlled.¹⁸

The second most important change is the one in national mentality and political culture that has happened and continues to aggravate in both China and Japan. “The Rise of China” which has various dimensions and generates multiple effects, together with some complex domestic social, political, and ideational elements brought about by the transformation of the Chinese economy and society, lead to vigorous growth of popular nationalism in China, and one of its primary targets is Japan.¹⁹ On the other hand, there is a change somewhat “parallel” to that in Japan: compared with the situation largely throughout the half century since the end of World War II when there had been not only a peaceful but also a pacifist Japan—pacifist in national psyche as well as in constitutional sense—with nationalism being discredited, it can be said that the majority of the Japanese public has now become or is becoming more and more rightist and nationalistic. Among the major features of this change are the increasing widespread and deepening feelings of disgust against China and of being threatened by China, accompanied by the more and more obvious backward trend on the issue of recognition and condemning the history of the Japanese armed aggression and colonization.²⁰

In terms of mutual antagonism driven by opposing national mentalities and popular notions in the context of dynamic power structure, what particularly fundamental and significant in China-Japan relations are the mutual images held by China and Japan respectively about what kind of country the other side is. The majority of the Japanese public is developing, or even perhaps has developed in its initial stage, such a new and relatively simple image of China: A China which is becoming more and more powerful while strongly antagonistic toward (or even hating) Japan. On

Tribune, September 21, 2005; Glosserman, “Testing Time for Japan, China”.

¹⁸ On this psychological dynamics concerning the history issues in the context of power dynamics, see Denny Roy, *Stirring Samurai, Disapproving Dragon*, Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, Honolulu, September 2003, Section 6 “History Issues Fester”; “So Hard to Be Friends,” *The Economist*, March 23, 2005; Sisci, “Why Japan’s ‘So Sorry’ Doesn’t Wash in China”; “Q&A: The China-Japan Rift,” Council on Foreign Relations, April 18, 2005; Antoaneta Bezlova, “China Makes Mileage from Japan’s Defeat,” *Asia Times*, September 7, 2005; Martin Fackler, “60 Years after Its Defeat, Japan Still Struggles with Responsibility,” *International Herald Tribune*, August 15, 2005; Norimitsu Onishi, “Ugly Images of Asian Rivals Become Best Sellers in Japan,” *The New York Times*, November 19, 2005.

¹⁹ For the Chinese popular nationalism relating to the Japan problem, see Jim Yardley, “In Soccer Loss, A Glimpse of China’s Rising Ire at Japan,” *The New York Times*, August 9, 2004; “China’s Reckless Nationalism” (Editorial), *International Herald Tribune*, April 13, 2005; Mooney, “Internet Fans Chinese Nationalism”; Sui, “Nationalisms Blamed for Crisis in Ties”; Marquand, “Nationalism Drives China, Japan Apart”.

²⁰ The rise of the Japanese nationalism and the related rightist trend in political culture of Japan has become an increasingly attended topic in the most recent years. For this major development, see “Superficial Realism, Distorted ‘Patriotism’” (in Chinese), Kyodo News, April 8, 2004; Norimitsu Onishi, “Tokyo’s Flag Law: Proud Patriotism, or Indoctrination?” *The New York Times*, December 16, 2004; Kazuko Mori, “Make An Effort to Transcend Nationalism,” *Asahi Shimbun*, December 22, 2004; J. Sean Curtin, “China Hits All-time Low on Japan Pop Charts,” *Asia Times*, December 25, 2004; “Playing with Fire: Japan’s Ruling Party Wants to Inject Patriotism into Schools,” *The Economist*, January 20, 2005; Hisane Masaki, “Where Japan Is Heading,” *Asia Times*, October 25, 2005; Norimitsu Onishi, “Why Japan Seems Content to Be Run by One Party?” *The New York Times*, September 7, 2005; Kenta Tanimichi, “The Youthful Face of Japanese Nationalism,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 2005; Martin Jacques, “As China Rises, So Japanese Nationalism,” *The Guardian*, November 17, 2005; Norimitsu Onishi, “Debate on Japan’s Monarchy Spurs Nationalists’ Fever,” *International Herald Tribune*, March 12, 2006; idem, “Publisher Dismayed by Japanese Nationalism,” *The New York Times*, February 10, 2006; Gregory Clark, “Japan’s Hard Line: Never Given An Inch to China,” *Japan Times*, May 8, 2006.

the other hand, the “image of Japan” being developing or more probably have already been developed by the greater majority of the Chinese public is more complicated: A Japan which is rising while at the same time declining; A Japan traditionally hateful and in the future probably dangerous; A Japan China has to, and probably will be able to, “overcome” or overwhelm in the future. The complexity mainly lies in the double image of Japan as a power rising while declining: Japan’s rising refers to the increasing assertiveness politically and the emerged restless militarily, while her declining refers to relative weakening economically and demographically, together with the relative downturn in comparison with China’s rapid rise. Undoubtedly, these basic images held by China and Japan respectively about the other side as national state prone to create and aggravate the fundamental strategic apprehension or hostility.

Indeed, coexisting with these opposing images there are a pale of mutually similar ones both China and Japan have, that of the other side as one of the most important international economic partner of oneself, resulted from their enormous bilateral trade intercourses and economic interdependence. This kind of mutually similar images are highly beneficial and valuable in the political rivalry and escalating deterioration of political relations between these two countries. However, just as what more and more professional observers have begun to believe and warn, the almost constant deteriorating of political relationship would inevitably damage economic ones. The economic interdependence is far from a sufficiently reliable “safety cushion” for China-Japan relations.

Finally, among the most importance changes happened in the fundamental structure of the relations between the two countries is the very remarkable recent alternation of the pattern of behavior toward China on the part of the Japanese government. Generally speaking, in the previous three decades whenever important political or strategic dispute broke out between China and Japan, the Japanese government often (or even in most cases) finally had to and did choose to make substantial concession *first*, while the opposite was the “traditional” Chinese approach in dealing with such disputes, which has in general been maintained consistently up to now. However, since about 2003-04 and especially obvious since the beginning of 2004, the Japanese government has made its mind to reverse this pattern, largely no longer making substantial concession *first* in any important political or strategic dispute with China, or even refusing to make it at all. This alternation comes from as being pointed out above its urgent desire to become a “normal” and “equal” political power, its mentality of apprehension and precautionary guarding in the face of China’s rise, and the rightist/nationalistic trend in the Japanese political culture and society. It can be said that at least until now a major or even the paramount determination of the Japanese government has been to demonstrate to China at once and with consistency that Japan must be treated as a “equal” political power with the corresponding political and even military rights, in despite of whether China accepts this self-defined status of Japan or not, whether bilateral political and strategic disputes will be created or aggravated by this new assertiveness or not, and how many such disputes will be.²¹ This drastic change, together with the above-mentioned two major ones,

²¹ For the dramatic change of the pattern of policy behavior toward China on the part of the Japanese government, the following articles are very relevant: Shi Yinhong, “The Making and Control of the Crisis of China-Japan Relations” (in Chinese), *Wen Wei Po* (Hong Kong), June 1, 2005; “East China Sea Data Vital To Defend Rights” (Editorial), *Yomiuri Shimbun*, October 27, 2004; “Relations between China and Japan Enter A

contributes much to explain why in a relatively short time-span of about two years so many major political and strategic disputes broken out between China and Japan, and why none of them can be really solved in the predictable future according to any reasonable prediction, while nearly every one of them is at least in some extent deteriorating step by step further.

One might say without too much exaggeration that there is already between China and Japan a kind of political/strategic cold war situation, with some prominent features of a classical Cold War. The political relationship between the two countries seems to have become a “zero-sum” game, whether in terms of its fundamental structure or of those concrete disputes, resulting at an protracted and almost total stalemate because of the consistent refusal of either side to make any substantial concession first to the other. Especially, the problem of visiting Yasukuni Shrine by Japanese prime minister has become the paramount test of strength or the chief battleground, over which either side has confronted the other for months and years, and on which according to their fixed perceptions enormous symbolic and substantial significances are at stake. By the very nature of “zero-sum” game, every major effort by one in the game aimed at a significant “gain” will be surely resisted strongly by the other who is to suffer a significant “loss” if no counteraction is done to neutralize effectively the striving of the former in the first place. The result of the contention and stalemate in this manner will be the increasingly aggravation of mutual suspicion, apprehension and hostility.²²

Imperative for A Composite Strategy:

Three Essential Dimensions and the Strategic Balancing

Between China and Japan, lasting tensions may of course escalate into protracted cold war confrontation or even armed conflict. Due to multiple very profound and significant causes, probably none of the numerous major political and strategic disputes between China and Japan can be solved or passed away in the predictable future. But on the other hand, if the escalating deterioration of the China-Japan political relations not mitigated or stopped, it will surely bring grave dangers to the vital interests of these two nations and to the East Asian stability and security. Therefore, at the present and in a relatively long period of the future, the imperative and practicable task in general is not (or at least not primarily) to solve the major dispute, but to mitigate tensions, to strive for stability, and to control as much as possible the confrontational dynamics in China-Japan relations, which are inherently unstable and potentially dangerous.²³

For this, the two national governments in Beijing and Tokyo are required to set in urgency a most essential rule for dealing with their major disputes and striving for the fundamental stability:

New Phase,” Agence France Presse, December 23, 2004; Curtin, “China Hits All-time Low on Japan Pop Charts” ; James Brooke, “The Dragon for Trade, the Eagle for Safty,” *The New York Times*, February 6, 2005.

²² I have found that this characterization of current China-Japan political and strategic relationship as a limited cold war and typical “zero-sum” game is quite convincing to almost all of the numerous foreign scholars, diplomats, and other professional observers I have met and talked on China-Japan relations in recent months.

²³ Shi Yinhong, “The Making and Control of the Crisis of China-Japan Relations”. Cf. French, “Japan and China Take A Collision Course”; Plate, “Asian Leaders Acting Badly”; “China and Japan (Began to) Discuss the Mechanism of Military Crisis Management for Avoiding Accidental Conflict” (in Chinese), China Youth Online,

the rule stipulating that neither country should take any action aimed at changing the status quo unilaterally on any issue over which there is major dispute between them. Besides this first priority in importance, there are four other basic rules that need to be established step by step. These are: To differentiate as firmly as possible four distinct major fields of China-Japan relations, i.e., the history disputes, strategic rivalry (including territorial disputes and various security problems), diplomatic intercourses, and economic interdependence, for the purpose of preventing or “interdicting” as much as possible such development that the grave tension or crisis happened in any one of these fields influences excessively the other fields; To differentiate without reservation the statements and acts of national government from those of private persons or institutions and local governments, taking the former as the only standard for assessing and judging the intentions and policy of the other country, for the purpose of preventing, “interdicting”, or reducing the impact of the private or local anti-Chinese or anti-Japanese actions respectively in Japan and China upon the working relationship between the national governments; To treat the statements and acts of the national government on the other side concretely, mainly in a manner of case by case according to its own merits, not escalating the nature of things in official assessment or governmental public comments without strict limitations; On the basis of reasonable success to control the grave tensions, both sides should realize that it will be helpful to take initiative to offer some limited and appropriate concessions on the existing major disputes, at least for exploring the other’s intentions and creating chances for their possible mitigation or solution.

In short, it is imperative to set the above basic rules of “status quo maintenance”, “fields de-linkage”, “agents de-linkage”, “case by its own merits”, and “initiative in making concession” for controlling the dangerous confrontational dynamics. In order to generate and implement these rules, a kind of much more comprehensive, concentrate, regular, and intensive China-Japan Strategic Dialogue and its institutional mechanisms must be created and developed as soon as possible. Moreover, in view of the existing tensions, especially in the sea areas between China and Japan resulted from serious territorial and natural resources disputes and military activities, together with other potentialities for conflict, including those from the Taiwan problem and the increasing forward existence of U.S.-Japan military alliance, formal regular dialogues on the higher political, functionary institutional, and professional military levels for setting rules and procedures of crisis management are also imperative and relatively urgent. So much in national and international security is at stake in their launching, progress, rule-formation and implementation.

From the perspective of a higher strategic level, it should be perceived that if the Japanese government is repeatedly proved by facts as having no intention to strive seriously for mitigating the tensions and avoiding protracted confrontation according to the first rule mentioned above while China does her best, then there would be at large only one fundamental strategic approach left for her choosing. That is in the general wave of China’s rise to pursue determinately and insistently a tough posture and hard policies toward Japan, including striving for isolating the Japanese government as much as possible in international politics. Such a strategy, one that may largely co-exist in logic and practice with the insistence of seeking to control the dynamics of China-Japan confrontation and conflict, does have its great cost and risks that must not be underestimated.

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However, in the supposed case that the Japanese government determines to engage in a protracted test of strength and will with her, the Chinese government not only would probably be forced to adopt such a strategy, but also might be able to “overcome” Japan accordingly, “overcome” in the sense that Japan finally has to accept in heart and mind China’s rise to a first-rate power status in Asia.

In fact, largely due to the Chinese government’s policy throughout the past year that has been mainly characterized by insisting on hardliner approach toward Japan, the Japanese bid for permanent seat in the U.N. Security Council failed,²⁴ Koizumi’s position of insisting on Yasukuni Shrine visit began to suffer wider international criticism, the shortage of support for Japan in international politics and diplomacy resulted mainly from her insistence on contention with China is becoming rather obvious and grave,²⁵ opinion within Japan (and even within the Liberal Democratic Party) have raised increasingly widespread criticism and doubt against the attitude and policy held by Koizumi and his main advisers on Yasukuni Shrine visit and even on the general political relations with China, the recent public performances of the Japanese government on Taiwan issue and the East China Sea dispute are at least slightly more prudent comparing with those in the previous period, and in the top level of the Japanese government appeared a strong public criticism by a major Cabinet member against the notorious Foreign Minister Aso’s confrontational position toward China.²⁵ Speaking more generally, Japan is feeling more and more strongly the cost of her current attitude and mentality in responding to China’s rise, and sensing more and more keenly the dead-end that might face the general direction of her current foreign policy. It can be said that controlling firmly the confrontational dynamics in China-Japan relations on one hand and striving to finally “overcome” Japan in terms of the fundamental balances of strength, influence, and will on the other should be two major dimensions of China’s current and long-term strategy toward Japan, with the balance, coordination, and reduction of tensions between

²⁴ “China Will Vote Nay to Draft Resolution by Japan, Germany, India, and Brazil for Increasing Permanent Membership of U.N. Security Council” (in Chinese), New China News Agency Network, June 2, 2005; “China for the First Time to Imply Determination of Resorting to Veto Right to Prevent Japan Becoming A Permanent Member of U.N. Security Council” (in Chinese), Phoenix TV News Network (Hong Kong), June 2, 2005. It is well known in the international diplomatic circle that around this time onward China mobilized in an almost emergent manner her diplomatic resources around the world for defeating the Japanese bid. This very intensive effort is quite critical in aborting the Group 4 plan and reflects dramatically China’s great diplomatic potential.

²⁵ “After Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi last week paid yet another visit to Yasukuni Shrine—the Tokyo war memorial that honors 2.47 million wartime dead, including 14 class-A war criminals—his country can look forward to a deepening of the remarkable diplomatic isolation that has enveloped it in recent years.... In effect, the country that spent most of the 20th century aspiring to a leadership role in East Asia now finds itself virtually relegated to a corner for bad behavior.” Christian Caryl, “A Very Lonely Japan,” *Newsweek International*, October 31, 2005.

²⁵ “The Japanese Minister for Economics and Industry Demands Continuing Consultation with China, Trying to Hold Back Hardliners’ Opinion within the Government” (in Chinese), Kyodo News, March 17, 2006. See also “The Japanese Minister for Finance Proposes to Remove the Honoring Symbols for the Class-A War Criminals out of Yakusuni Shrine” (in Chinese), China News Agency Network, January 18, 2006. For the at least slightly moderated attitude of the Japanese Government on the East China Sea dispute, see Japan Accepts China’s Principle of Joint Exploitation in the East China Sea Consultation” (in Chinese), New China News Agency Network, January 5, 2006; “China and Japan Jointly Confirm Again Resolving the East China Sea Dispute through Joint Exploitation” (in Chinese), *Oriental Morning Post* (Shanghai), May 19, 2006. For the most recent development of changing opinion within Japan with increasing doubts and criticism against Prime Minister’s visit to Yakusuni Shrine, see Norimitsu Onishi, “Race to Lead Japan May Turn on Asian Ties,” *The New York Times*, June 4, 2006.

them as the chief task of strategic conduct.

Whatever strategy China pursues and however negative the state of the political relations with Japan becomes, the “thesis of differentiating (the people from the small minority of militarists)” which had been raised and relentlessly implemented by Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai in treating the history of the Japanese aggression and conducting PRC’s Japan policy Japan and which is characterized by its political and strategic feature as reasonable, expedient, and moderate must be insisted firmly and practiced with the greatest possible sophistication as one of the primary working guiding principles of China’s policy toward Japan and of almost all her activities in the relations with Japan. This in fact should be the third major dimension of the required composite strategy, whose first and second dimensions this article has just discussed. It is in this dimension that China’s performance in the recent years up to now has left too much to be desired. Both the Chinese government and public must do their best in ways that are reasonable and capable of winning gradually the hearts and minds of the majority of the Japanese public for (to say it prudently) contributing to the cause of preventing them accept the Japanese rightists’ outlook on history and political affairs and establish fixedly in their own minds the new image of China that has been mentioned above, i.e., a China which is becoming more and more powerful while strongly antagonistic toward (or even hating) Japan, and alter thereby a series of their fundamental notions concerning national security. For these purpose, China’s great efforts to strive for mitigating the tensions and controlling the potentially dangerous confrontational dynamics in her relations with Japan are also quite important and capable of generate substantial effect. Moreover, this third dimension of the composite strategy also relates in an essential and long-term manner with the cause of “overcoming” Japan in the sense that Japan finally has to accept psychologically China’s rise to a first-rate power status in Asia.

As to the Japanese public opinion about China and their attitude and perception on a series of major related issues, China is certainly not in a position of being able surely to realize what she wants without major discount. However, this does not mean at all that there is no need to try very seriously with great care for its realization to an extent as great as possible. China should try in this manner and do her best. This kind of efforts, just as the vigorous opposition of China against the harmful actions of the Japanese rightist forces and the Japanese government, is indeed an important factor in participating the shaping of Japan’s national orientation and her future state of affairs, and a demonstration of being highly responsible for China’s security environment and vital interests. Moreover, It itself is an major aspect of the struggle against the Japanese rightists, for it closely relates to the imperative of preventing those people to obtain the evidences of “China’s threat” to facilitate their endeavor of capturing as much Japanese public as possible. It also closely relates to the winning of international opinions, making them sympathize with China’s just attitude toward Japan. This will be particularly important if China has to pursue insistently tough posture toward Japan, including trying to isolate the Japanese government as much as possible in international politics. Empathic understanding of both the Japanese public and the international “audiences” is indispensable for any wise major policy and behavior on the part of China toward Japan, and the sense of proportion based on sophistication in political actions and moderation in moral judgment a

precondition for strategic success.²⁶

²⁶ The above two paragraphs largely represent one of the consistent and most fundamental advocacies of mine since early 2003, especially since Anti-Japanese demonstrations broke out in China in April 2005. However, what has been said here about the inner connections among the three dimensions of the “composite strategy” is resulted from my quite recent thinking. See the following of my published articles (all in Chinese): “The China-Japan Rapprochement and ‘Diplomatic Revolution,’” *Strategy and Management*, No. 2, 2003; “Strategic Emphasis Required for China-Japan Relations”; “China Should Strive to Win the Hearts and Minds of the Japanese Public”; “To Prevent Japanese Public from Believing China Is Hostile”; “The Structural and Situational Causes of the Deterioration of China-Japan Relations” “The China-U.S. and China-Japan Relations in 2005: Constructing Equilibrium vs. Falling into Stalemate”; “Situation of China-Japan Relations and the Major Related Strategic Issues”; “An Analysis on China-Japan Relations and China’s Strategy toward Japan,” *Contemporary International Relations*, No. 4, 2006.