

Briefing Memo

The purpose of this column is to respond to reader interests in security issues and at the same time to promote a greater understanding of NIDS.

A “briefing” provides background information, among others. We hope these columns will help everyone to better understand the complex of issues involved in security affairs. Please note that the views in this column do not represent the official opinion of NIDS.

**Japan-China Relations at a Crossroad
—From Contention to Cooperation—**

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1. Introduction

After a series of anti-Japanese demonstrations broke out in April 2005 in Beijing, Shanghai, and other large Chinese cities, the so-called “Cold Politically while Warm Economically,” Japan-China relationship has deteriorated even further. While both Japan and China have made efforts to bring the situation under control, there are few prospects in sight for improvement of the relationship. Japan-China relations are beset by the appearance of various issues, including visits by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to the Yasukuni Shrine, history textbooks, Japan’s bid for permanent membership on the UN Security Council, and resource development in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the East China Sea and, as argued below, neither country is fully ready for a “structural transformation” of the relationship, either in terms of emotions or policy. Confronted with the rapid rise of China as a great power and the correspondingly aggressive development of Chinese diplomacy, Japan has been unable to adapt emotionally to the appearance of China as a “great power,” while China has also been unable to respond adequately to developments in Japan’s security policy, apparently responding to the Yasukuni issue with increased distrust of Japan.

Based on an awareness of these kinds of issues, the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) joined with the Chinese Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) to implement the Japan-China Defense Studies Exchange on July 6 and 7, 2005. The main objective of the exchange was to, first, study the structure of the deteriorating Japan-China relationship, and then to formulate a prescription based on that study that could break through the current situation. Another objective was to review US policy trends that will have decisive effects on Japan-China relations and on trends in East Asia. Participants on the Chinese side included Professor Fu Mengzu, Director of the Institute for American Studies at CICIR, and Professor Ma Junwei, Deputy Director of the Institute of Japanese Studies, also at CICIR.

Here follows an analysis of the current state of Sino-Japanese relations, and of the direction for a possible breakthrough in the situation, with reference to China's policy trends after the anti-Japanese demonstrations, and to the discussions at the Japan-China Defense Studies Exchange.

2. Deteriorating Japan-China Relations—Outbreaks of Anti-Japanese Demonstrations—

One of the triggers that spurred anti-Japanese demonstrations in China was the appearance as a serious policy issue in the course of United Nations reforms of the bid for Japan to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. The High-Level Panel set up in November 2004 to study issues for the UN Secretary-General presented a report in the following month of December regarding how the United Nations should be reformed in response to the international situation. In this report, two specific proposals for reform of the Security Council were proposed, calling for expansion in the number of both the permanent and non-permanent seats. Active diplomatic efforts began toward implementation of the first of these reform objectives, that of bringing Japan, Germany, Brazil, and India into the Security Council as permanent members.

The Chinese government did not initially reveal a clear stance regarding Japan's bid for a permanent Security Council seat. Li Zhaoxing, China's Minister of Foreign Affairs, expressed support for "necessary and rational reforms" of the UN during his speech at the UN General Assembly session of September 2004, revealing his agreement with an expansion of the Security Council. Li stated that "China is in favor of expanding the Security Council and giving priority to greater representation of the developing countries," which hinted at a negative stance toward Japan's bid to become a permanent member of the Security Council. However, Kong Quan, a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said "China understands Japan's expectation to play a greater role in international affairs," a comment that showed China did not openly oppose Japan's bid to become a permanent Security Council member .

In contrast to this stance taken by the Chinese government, "public opinion" in China was clearly opposed to Japan's bid for a permanent Security Council seat. When UN Secretary General Kofi Annan announced that Japan was a serious candidate for permanent Security Council membership in the report on UN reform released on March 20, anti-Japanese and patriotic nationalist groups went on the Internet to call for people to sign petitions opposing Japan's bid for a permanent Security Council seat, gathering more than 10 million signatures by the end of March. In response to this situation, Liu Jianchao, a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said "We have taken a note of netizens' online signing against Japan's bid for the permanent membership of UN Security Council," adding that "Japan should take a responsible attitude toward history, so as to win the trust from the people of China and other countries in Asia." While the Internet signature-gathering campaign arose spontaneously from "public opinion," it also in some sense reflected the intentions of the Chinese government. The Internet was used in China to collect signatures in opposition to Japan's bid for a permanent Security Council seat, and also by organizations of overseas Chinese based in the United States. *Renminwang* (People's Daily Online), the Internet version of the Chinese Communist Party newspaper *People's Daily*, reported the story under the headline "More than 400,000 People in the World Signed for Protesting against Japan's Bid for the Permanent Membership," and then listed the

URLs of six websites where signatures could be added (on March 22, 2005).

Moreover, the disclosure on April 5, 2005 that a history textbook prepared by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform had passed certification by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, set off an explosion of anti-Japanese feeling. The China Chain Store & Franchise Association, China's largest retail store association, denounced the proposals of a call for a boycott of Japanese goods in China as a protest against textbooks, and requested members to pull Asahi beer and Ajinomoto food additives from their shelves (this appeared on the association website on April 7). The declaration severely criticized Japan, stating that "some Japanese people and Japanese corporations make no attempt to acknowledge the major crimes once committed by Japan against humanity and are attempting to delete from history textbooks coverage concerning the massacre of Nanjing, the military comfort women issue, and Army Unit 731. We Chinese and Chinese ethnic corporations cannot forget history. We support the boycott of Japanese products."

The Communist Party's Propaganda Department banned all mention of the campaign to boycott Japanese products (Hong Kong *Mingbao*, April 5, 2005). In addition, Liu Jianchao, the spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that "we don't want to see the politicization of the trade and economic issue between the two countries," adding, however, that "we hope all circles in Japan can take a responsible attitude toward history," thus putting the onus of the problem on the Japanese side. This government response was taken as tolerance of the anti-Japanese movements, and despite the media restrictions, anti-Japanese demonstrations arose in serial succession, fed by Internet communication. In some cases, the situation intensified to the point that people chanting "Patriotism is Not a Sin" were throwing stones at the Japanese Embassy and consulates.

3. Structural Changes to Japan-China Relations Adaptation and Non-Adaptation

In examining the sources for the deterioration in Japan-China relations as symbolized by the serial outbreak of anti-Japanese demonstrations, Professor Ma Junwei lists: (1) a tendency toward stagnation in the political relationship between Japan and China; (2) a mental balance between the two countries; and (3) Japan's policy toward China. In other words, Asia has entered a period of "two great powers in coexistence," in which Japan aims to become a political great power while China is also rising rapidly to great power status. But with the cancellation of mutual visits between the heads of the two countries, both sides have paranoid fears about the other's strategic intentions. As a result, while in objective terms Asia can be considered to have entered a period of "two great powers in coexistence," Japan and China have not yet arrived at a point where they can build a relationship suited to that situation. What is preventing a new Japan-China relationship from being built is the inability of both countries to escape from the mental state formed during past conditions. In these conditions, said Ma Junwei, the main characteristic of Japan's policy toward China is "containment," a comment that hints at the existence of Chinese wariness of Japan. This reference to containment policy was, first of all, in reaction to Japanese top leaders' public clarification of their opposition to a plan by the European Union (EU) to lift its ban on weapons exports to China, and Japan's efforts to persuade the EU to reconsider the idea of lifting the weapons export ban. Another point of issue was the Japan-US

Security Consultative Committee (“2+2”) joint statement of February 2005, in which Taiwan was specifically named as a common strategic objective in the region.

Ma’s assertion that the Japan-China relationship has transitioned into “two great powers in coexistence,” is governmentally recognized by both sides. This shared recognition was already confirmed in the “Japan-China Joint Declaration on Building a Partnership of Friendship and Cooperation for Peace and Development,” announced at the time of the November 1998 visit to Japan by then-President Jiang Zemin. The Joint Declaration confirmed that “both sides shared the view that under the current situation cooperation between the two countries is growing in importance, and that further strengthening and developing the friendly and cooperative relations between the two countries not only serve the fundamental interests of their peoples, but also positively contribute to the peace and development of the Asia-Pacific region and the world as a whole,” and announced the establishment of a “partnership of friendship and cooperation” based on “deep recognition” of “our two countries’ roles and responsibilities for peace and development” in the region. In other words, where the framework for the Japan-China relationship had in the past been based on being a “good neighbor and friendship,” with the range of influence limited to just the bilateral relations, the Joint Declaration expanded the range of influence to “the region and the world,” and presented comprehensive themes of “peace and development” as areas for cooperation. In addition, 33 articles on areas for cooperation in transforming the structure of the Japan-China relationship were agreed upon, including even “strengthened consultation toward realization of UN reform,” one of the issues that is now a point of contention between the two countries.

4. Conclusion Need New ‘Action Plan’

A breakthrough in current Japan-China relations will have to begin with confirmation of the 1998 agreement. The April 28, 2005 edition of the *People’s Daily* reprinted the entire text of the 1998 Joint Declaration, and then added commentary by Chinese Ambassador to Japan Wang Yi under the title, “The China-Japan Joint Declaration Established an Action Guideline for the New Century.” Ambassador Wang Yi stated that the 1998 Joint Declaration included three significant points. First, both countries “confirmed for the first time” that the Japan-China relationship is “one of the most important bilateral relationships.” Second, the two countries “attained a new and important joint recognition for correctly facing and handling history and the Taiwan issue.” And finally, they confirmed that “the range of the Sino-Japanese relationship clearly exceeds the two countries” and “bears a serious responsibility in terms of maintaining peace and promoting development” in the region and the world. Moreover, except for the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s web page, the entire text of the Joint Declaration had never before been reported in a major news media outlet. The fact that the entire text of the Joint Declaration was carried in the *People’s Daily*, and that the entire text was reprinted as propaganda material confirming the importance of the Japan-China relationship after the outbreak of the anti-Japanese demonstrations, can perhaps be viewed as revealing the intentions of the Chinese leadership to improve the relationship.

Despite these efforts, however, it is difficult to achieve a consensus among China’s leaders about China’s Japan policy. On May 23, Vice-Premier Wu Yi while on a visit to Japan suddenly cancelled a

meeting with Prime Minister Koizumi and returned to China due to “urgent,” but unspecified matters. This abrupt action indicated the probable existence of contrasting views within the Hu Jintao administration regarding how the relationship with Japan should be handled, and how much importance should be placed on it. While this point could probably bear more examination in another paper, I would like to finish with a few comments about policy issues concerning Japan-China relations.

First, as was already discussed above, the Japan-China relationship is in a period of structural transition from being a “good neighbor and friendship” to “partnership.” The two countries’ relationship was constrained by the historical legacy of the Cold War structure and past wars, and the Japan-China relationship has probably had very little effect on basic strategic trends in their region of the world. The influence of the relationship between the two countries was limited to the bilateral relationship, and for that reason it was characterized as being a “good neighbor and friendship.” But with China today rising so fast, and with Japan also seeking an expanded role in international society, the Japan-China relationship has an influence on the region, and probably all of East Asia, and that influence is not limited to the economic sphere, but also extends to the political and security spheres as well. Modification of the basic framework into the “partnership” announced in the 1998 Joint Declaration would be a confirmation that the relationship between the two countries had undergone a structural transformation. However, the anti-Japanese demonstrations showed that a structural change in the relationship has not yet taken hold at the level of public opinion in China. As a result, one issue that the two countries should be taking up is to try, while maintaining the general concept of structural transition, to handle and resolve the existing issues between Japan and China, and to again attempt to persuade public opinion in both countries with broad-based arguments in favor of structural transformation.

In thinking about what direction to take, the Action Plan prepared in 1998 should be confirmed and executed, after which preparation of a new Action Plan may be required. This is because improving the position of both countries in international society is not the only factor promoting a structural transformation of the Japan-China relationship, with another being the fact that we are confronted with structural changes in international society. In East Asia, regional cooperation based on the ASEAN + 3 framework has been moving forward, and a basic agreement for the creation of an “East Asian Community” is already in place. One step toward this regional community will be the formal launching of an East Asia Summit set to be held by the end of 2005. Moreover, transformation in US security strategy in progress since the events of September 11, 2001 is being used as an opportunity to strengthen the alliance relationship in terms of a global strategic framework, with focus on the realignment of US forces stationed abroad. And UN reform has also become a topic for discussion. In the midst of this structural transformation of international society, relations between Japan and China must not be restricted only to bilateral issues. Both Japan and China need to work at breaking through the present deadlock, and to achieve Japanese-Chinese cooperation that can be responsive to the structural modification of international society. This is the reason why preparation of a new Action Plan is needed.

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(Draft completed on August 1, 2005)

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