RETRACING THE TRIANGLE: CHINA'S STRATEGIC PERCEPTIONS OF JAPAN IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

Danielle F. S. Cohen

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Subscription is US $35.00 per year for 4 issues (regardless of the price of individual issues) in the United States and $40.00 for Canada or overseas. Checks should be addressed to MSCAS.

Tel.: (410) 706-3870
Fax: (410) 706-1516

Price for single copy of this issue: US $13.00

ISSN 0730-0107
ISBN 1-932330-11-9

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Danielle F. S. Cohen*

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INTRODUCTION

On April 16, 2005, people throughout the world watched as an estimated 10,000 Chinese gathered in Beijing to protest Japan’s approval of several new history textbooks and Kofi Annan’s proposal to give Japan a permanent seat on an expanded United Nations (UN) Security Council. While the tension in Sino-Japanese relations was not new — recent months had already seen controversies over issues such as an errant Chinese submarine found in Japanese waters and property rights to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands — the protests drew international attention to the collapse of Sino-Japanese relations in a way earlier events had not.

With the collapse of the Cold War system, the China-U.S.-Japan strategic triangle has become the world’s most important and most influential triangle. Any crisis regarding Korea or Taiwan, let alone China itself, is sure to both impact and be impacted by this triangle. With so much attention focused on China’s rise, it is easy to forget that China is still the weakest of the three powers and that Sino-Japanese relations are the weakest of the three bilateral relations that comprise the strategic triangle.

This paper will analyze Chinese strategic perceptions of Japan in the context of China-U.S.-Japan triangular relations. If realist predictions were true, China would always pursue improved relations with Japan in order to limit the power of the United States, the strongest power in the triangle. Instead, realist thinking comes in waves. The default configuration of these three powers is a scalene triangle, in which the U.S. and Japan, due to their strong security alliance, are closer to each other than either is to China. As the April protests demonstrate, the inability of either China or Japan to fully come to terms with the history of Japanese aggression against China prevents Sino-Japanese relations from improving. This history, which pushes the two countries apart, is a constant. A U.S.-centered shock, whether passive or aggressive, however, inspires a wave of realist thought by making China feel insecure. Chinese analysts respond in typical realist fashion, by advocating the construction of a more equilateral triangle through improved relations with Japan. Eventually, however, this wave of realist thought recedes and only the ever-present history issue remains. Figure 1 depicts this pattern.

(2)
Figure 1. Trends in China's Expressions of Interest in Improved Sino-Japanese Relations

U.S. Shock  
Beginning of Cycle #1


U.S. Shock  
Beginning of Cycle #2

U.S. Shock  
Beginning of Cycle #3

Note: Figure not drawn to scale.

Chapter 1 presents the theoretical framework of analysis utilized in this paper. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 discuss three cycles of this pattern since the close of the Cold War. Chapter 6 first compares the characteristics of these three cycles, before assessing the current configuration of the triangle and the policy implications of the pattern identified in this paper.
CHAPTER 1

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It has become traditional to say there are three major theoretical approaches to international relations. The first approach is liberalism, whose most relevant strand for the analysis of Sino-Japanese relations focuses "on economic interdependence between states, arising out of the expansion of capitalism and international trade." This strand of liberalism believes "deepened interdependence increases the mutual costs of war." Sino-Japanese economic integration is increasing rapidly. China surpassed the United States in 2004 to become Japan's largest trade partner. Trade between the two countries, including Hong Kong, totaled $213 billion in 2004. Since the two countries' economies are increasingly integrated, liberal theory would predict that the two countries would not risk war with each other because the economic costs would be too great. Yet, given mutual distrust and repeated tensions over historical and territorial issues, such a prediction is flawed.

A second approach to international relations is constructivism. According to Peter Katzenstein and Rudra Sil, "Constructivism is based on the fundamental view that ideational structures mediate how actors perceive, construct, and reproduce the institutional and material structures they inhabit as well as their own roles and identities within them." In the context of Sino-Japanese relations, constructivist theory argues that China and Japan perceive their relations in the context of their shared historical experience. Certainly historical conceptions are an important limitation on the ability of Japan and China to cooperate, as shown by the repeated outbursts of tension over Japanese visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, the textbook issue, and disputes over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Yet,


(4)
given that the history issue is a constant force pushing against improved Sino-Japanese relations, a constructivist approach cannot fully explain the ebb and flow of Sino-Japanese relations.

The final approach to international relations is realism, which holds that states exist in a world of anarchy, and will sometimes use force to settle their grievances and ensure their survival. The theory of balance of power, or equilibrium, is a mainstay of realist thought. As Hans Morgenthau argues, “Whenever the equilibrium is disturbed either by an outside force or by a change in one or the other elements composing the system, the system shows a tendency to re-establish either the original or a new equilibrium.” From the individual state’s perspective, “a state should never possess such strength that neighboring states would be incapable of defending their rights against it.” Consequently, states balance in order “to curb a potential hegemon before it becomes too strong.” When assessing whether states will decide to balance, the most important element is often the way actors perceive reality, even if these perceptions are not always accurate. As Robert Jervis argues, “It is often impossible to explain crucial decisions and policies without reference to the decision-makers’ beliefs about the world and their images of others.”

China has traditionally been held to be a realist power. While Thomas Christensen notes that China’s treatment of Japan shows “significant divergences from that baseline,” Chinese policy is still based on a realist core. As a result, Chinese thinkers themselves often utilize triangle theory, a subset of realism, to analyze the China-U.S.-Japan three-actor system. Nevertheless, realism alone cannot fully account for China’s policy toward Japan because China

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9. Interestingly, this tendency may have decreased over the past decade. Personal discussion with Thomas Christensen, March 24, 2005.
does not consistently pursue improved relations with Japan in order to balance against the United States.\textsuperscript{11} Rather, combining the waves of realist thought that promote improved Sino-Japanese relations with the ever-present impact of history that separates Japan and China will present the most accurate description of Chinese policy toward Japan.

**Triangle Theory**

Triangle theory is a subset of realist theory. There are at least two major sets of literature on triangular relations. The first, characterized by the work of Lowell Dittmer, refers to the quality of each of the three bilateral relationships within the triangle.\textsuperscript{12} Others, such as Randall Schweller, focus on the degree of relative power of the three poles of the triangle and make predictions about the stability of the triangle.\textsuperscript{13} Because this paper is concerned with the nature of the bilateral relationships within the China-U.S.-Japan triangle rather than its stability or durability, it will take Dittmer's analysis as its framework.\textsuperscript{14} Dittmer's triangle theory derives from the balance of power idea.\textsuperscript{15} The choice of each actor to strengthen or weaken relations with another actor is based on its perceptions of the power, or, to use Walt's more expansive terminology, threat,

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\textsuperscript{11} Chinese analysts recognize that the United States is the dominant pole in the current unipolar world, while arguing that the United States will decline and the international world order will shift to a multipolar system. Michael Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment*, Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2000, p. 306.


\textsuperscript{14} This paper does not discuss the "reciprocal relations" approach, an extension of Dittmer's theory, because it is concerned only with China's decision to balance. That approach can be found in Joshua S. Goldstein and John R. Freeman, *Three-Way Street: Strategic Reciprocity in World Politics*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990 and Ming Zhang and Ronald N. Montaperto, *A Triad of Another Kind: The United States, China, and Japan*, 1st ed., New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.

\textsuperscript{15} While balance of power is often discussed in terms of the international system, this principle also applies to the regional context. During the Cold War, the international system was bipolar, with the Soviet Union and the United States as the two major powers. At the regional level, however, triangular configurations such as the U.S.-China-USSR triangle and the China-U.S.-Japan triangle also existed. Therefore, it can make sense to talk about regional triangles, even when the international system is characterized by a different configuration. Dittmer, *Sino-Soviet Normalization, supra note 11*, p. 147; Go Tsuyoshi ITO, *Alliance in Anxiety: Détente and the Sino-American-Japanese Triangle*, New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 4.
of the other two powers. Dittmer’s triangles add a layer of subtlety to the traditional balance of power analysis by recognizing that balancing can occur without the formation of explicit alliances. When relations between countries A and B are poor, for example, A may strengthen bilateral relations with a third power, C, without explicitly forming an alliance with C or renouncing an already existing alliance with B.

The analytical framework for this paper starts from Lowell Dittmer’s definition of strategic triangles. Dittmer assumes that states are rational actors and that each pair of actors can be said to have “positive” relations (“amity”) or “negative” relations (“enmity”). He recognizes that such an analysis is a “simplification,” but charges that it is not “inaccurate.” In essence, Dittmer’s “amity” means that positive tendencies in the relationship outweigh the negative, while “enmity” means that negative tendencies outweigh the positive.\(^{16}\)

Based on these two assumptions, Dittmer finds that there are four possible triangular configurations. First, in the case of a *ménage à trois*, relationships between all three actors are positive. Second, in the *romantic triangle*, the relationships between the one “pivot” and each of the two “wings” are positive, but the “wings” have a negative relationship. Third, in the *stable marriage*, the two “spouses” have a positive relationship, but each has a negative relationship with a third “pariah.” Finally, in the unit-veto triangle, each actor has a negative relationship with the other two actors. Figure 2 depicts these four configurations.\(^{17}\)

**Figure 2. Dittmer’s Four Types of Triangles**


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16. Dittmer, pp. 147-152.
17. According to Dittmer, while all four configurations are possible, the romantic triangle and the stable marriage are the most common. Dittmer, *Sino-Soviet Normalization*, supra note 11, pp. 152-154.
Based on the realist assumption that "all players wish to maximize their national interests," Dittmer predicts the rank each actor will give to each position in the triangle:

Each player will prefer at a maximum to have positive relationships with both other players, and minimally to have a positive relationship with at least one other player. . . Hence a rational player's ranking of role preferences would be: (1) "pivot" in a romantic triangle; (2) "wing" in a ménage à trois; (3) "spouse" in a stable marriage; (4) "wing" in a romantic triangle; (5) "wing" in a unit-veto triangle; and (6) "pariah" in a stable marriage.\(^{18}\)

In short, the actors involved do not equally covet all positions in the triangle.

Sometimes, certain roles are not available to certain actors. One defining characteristic of the China-U.S.-Japan security triangle is the U.S.-Japan security alliance. Since U.S.-Japan relations will therefore always be positive, two of the six options Dittmer lists are not realistic possibilities for China.\(^ {19}\) The first choice preference of serving as the "pivot" in a romantic triangle would require China to have positive relations with both Japan and the United States, but Japan and the United States to no longer have positive relations with each other. Likewise, the third choice preference of serving as a "spouse" in a stable marriage would also require Japan and the United States to have negative relations. Since the second choice preference, serving as a "wing" in a ménage à trois, is the highest-ranking possibility for China, it is unsurprising that Chinese analysts advocate the development of an equilateral or balanced triangle.\(^ {20}\) At the same time, the history issue counteracts this preference because the Chinese are reluctant to either destroy the U.S.-Japan alliance, for fear that Japan would pose a greater threat if unchecked by the United States, or to improve relations with Japan, given its inability to come to terms with history.\(^ {21}\)

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19. An alliance would not exist if relations between the two actors involved were not more positive than negative. It is true, however, that relations can be "better" or "worse." Since Dittmer's binary framework does not allow for relations to be "more positive" or "less positive," that nuance will be depicted in terms of how "close" or "far" the two actors are to each other, as discussed below.
20. The ménage à trois scenario is the same as a "balanced" or "equilateral" triangle.
This paper will offer one major modification to Dittmer’s triangle theory. According to Dittmer’s analysis, all triangles are equilateral triangles and the bilateral relations that create the sides are either positive or negative. This simplification limits attempts to provide a nuanced description of the sides of a triangle. This paper will argue that, in the case of the China-U.S.-Japan security triangle, Dittmer’s triangles are not always equilateral; in fact, they tend to be scalene. The length of each side of the triangle is determined by the tightness of the integration of the two actors involved. A relationship such as the U.S.-Japan alliance, for example, is always positive, but the two countries may be nearer or farther depending on how integrated and successful, or “strong,” their relationship is at any particular moment. The default position of the China-U.S.-Japan security triangle is one in which the U.S. and Japan are closer to each other than either is to China, as depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The Scalene China-U.S.-Japan Triangle

The China-U.S.-Japan strategic triangle of the post-Cold War era would resemble Dittmer’s “romantic triangle” if the quality of Sino-U.S. relations were constant. The U.S. would be the “pivot” because it has “positive” relations with both China and Japan. Yet,


22. In the early 1990s, for example, when trade tensions were rampant, the U.S.-Japan relationship was less integrated and the two sides were “farther apart.” In 1996-1997, by contrast, the two countries revitalized their alliance and the relationship became “closer.”
while the relationship of the post-Tiananmen period could be called negative, resulting in a configuration more like the “stable marriage,” the relationship since has been differing degrees of “positive.” The variability of the Sino-U.S. relationship in particular, combined with the fact that the U.S.-Japan relationship is always more “positive” than the Sino-U.S. relationship, makes the romantic triangle an ineffective model of this three-actor system. A more nuanced model, such as the one suggested in this paper, shows the degree of “positiveness” of each bilateral relationship.

Chinese analysts advocate a more balanced triangle by promoting the strengthening of Sino-Japanese relations and shortening of that side of the triangle when faced with a U.S. shock. A country that finds itself as the far pole in a scalene triangle configuration can build a more equilateral triangle by: first, accommodating one pole of the triangle; second, accommodating one pole of the triangle, while ensuring that pole also accommodates it; or third, ensuring that another pole accommodates it.\(^{23}\)

Actors in the triangle will base their decision to strengthen or weaken relationships with another actor in the system on four factors. First, as predicted by the balance of power literature, an actor may seek closer relations with another actor in response to the increased power of that actor or the third actor. Second, an actor may alter its relations with another actor in the system because of its perceptions of the threat from a third party.\(^{24}\) Perceptions themselves are a third factor in decision-making.\(^{25}\) Finally, domestic factors such as ideologies may constrain the realm of possible decisions.\(^{26}\)

While Chinese analysts in all three periods advocate a more balanced triangle, two major factors impact the ways in which they believe they can achieve this goal. First, Chinese analysts are susceptible to misperceptions of the strategic triangle, particularly because of “wishful thinking.” Chinese analysts may advocate strengthened Sino-Japanese relations, for example, but expect that Japan will be willing to fully accommodate China. Consequently,

\(^{23}\) In this context, “accommodation” means that one actor is willing to put forth the effort necessary to improve relations with another actor. By contrast, a lack of accommodation means that a state desires strengthened bilateral relations, but expects the other actor to put forth the effort to achieve this result.


\(^{25}\) Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, supra note 8, p. 28.

\(^{26}\) Zhang and Montaperto, *A Triad of another Kind*, supra note 13, pp. 5-6.

Chinese analysts fail to offer the concessions, such as a compromise on the history issue or a reduction of the China "threat," that would be necessary for any realistic attempt to strengthen Sino-Japanese relations.

The second factor is the strength of the U.S.-Japan security alliance. Chinese analysts' perceptions of this alliance are contradictory. On the one hand, a looser U.S.-Japan security alliance removes a major constraint on the possible configurations of the China-U.S.-Japan triangle and provides China with more flexibility in its attempts to reconstruct the triangle. On the other hand, Chinese analysts fear a U.S.-Japan security alliance that is too loose or disappears because they believe that a Japan unchecked by the United States could quickly remilitarize.27 This debate is often summed up in the "bottle cap" and "egg shell" analogy. Thomas Christensen writes: "The U.S. presence in Japan can be seen either as a 'bottle cap' keeping the Japanese military genie in the bottle, or as an 'egg shell' fostering the growth of Japanese military power under U.S. protection until one day it hatches onto the regional scene."28 Alastair Iain Johnston continues:

In short, the most accurate way of describing the Chinese leadership's preferences about the U.S.-Japan alliance at this moment is that it return to its pre-1996 form and function, not that it disappear entirely. Chinese analysts usually are careful to state that they oppose the strengthening or reinforcement of the U.S.-Japan alliance, not the alliance's existence per se.29

Along these lines, Chinese analysts express uncertainty about whether Japan will remilitarize. According to Michael Pillsbury, "Chinese analysts differ in whether they consider Japanese culture and society to be inherently militarist, or whether it is only conservatives in the government and some right-wing segments of society that want to lead the country back down the 'road to militarism.'"30 These factors impact both the specific methods of rebalancing the triangle that Chinese analysts advocate and how realistic these recommendations are.

CHAPTER 2


The first wave of realism occurred as the Cold War drew to a close. U.S.-Japan relations, given the two countries’ long-standing alliance, were stronger than China’s relationship with either power. China felt insecure because of its international isolation after the Tiananmen Square incident and because of doubts about whether the United States, which it saw as a declining power, could effectively moderate the rise of Japan. Chinese analysts responded to this insecurity by advocating stronger Sino-Japanese relations in an attempt to rebalance the emerging China-U.S.-Japan “virtual” triangle. The momentum of this period turned when the Japanese emperor visited China in October 1992.\(^1\) China had pressed Japan to allow the visit, the first ever of a Japanese emperor to China. The Japanese agreed in the hope that the two countries could finally resolve the history issue. However, although bilateral relations did not immediately worsen after the Emperor’s visit, the momentum was lost. Relations began to cool in 1994-1995, due in large part to Japanese concern about Chinese nuclear tests, before reaching a new nadir in 1996.\(^2\) As the wave of realism receded, the history issue remained.

Chinese analysts’ strategic perceptions of Japan occurred in the context of changes in the other two bilateral relationships within the strategic triangle. The U.S.-Japan relationship of the early 1990s was characterized by tension arising from the two countries’ changing economic conditions. Japan’s economic growth had been stable, especially since 1986, while the American economy had been waver ing. The result was a trade imbalance that grew increasingly serious. Tensions that had originated in a trade dispute over farm

\(^1\) TANAKA Akihiko, “Relations with Japan,” in Chugoku Souran (China Overview), 1994, p. 148.

products expanded into finance and investment, and later spread even further into politics.³

Meanwhile, Sino-U.S. relations were also tense. The U.S. responded to the Tiananmen Square incident by sanctioning China, though both President Bush and Chinese leader DENG Xiaoping made attempts to “insulate” the bilateral relationship from the damaging effects of these sanctions. Following the collapse of the Eastern European and Soviet Communist regimes, America perceived a weakened China from which it could extract more concessions on human rights and democracy. In May 1993, President Clinton announced a plan to link the extension of most-favored-nation (MFN) status, a designation necessary for the growth of economic trade, with Chinese improvements on human rights. Conflicts proliferated during 1993, including alleged transfers of missile technology from China to Pakistan, the search of a Chinese ship mistakenly thought to be carrying a “chemical weapons ‘precursor,’” and American protests over China’s October nuclear test. Clinton reversed his linkage policy in May 1994 because of his desire to improve trade relations with China, as well as the importance of Chinese support at the UN for international security issues of U.S. concern.⁴ Tensions within the U.S.-Japan and Sino-U.S. sides of the strategic triangle served as a background to Chinese perceptions of Japan at the end of the Cold War.

The Shock: The End of the Cold War

Two critical events occurred at the turn of the 1990s, which, combined, led China to pursue strengthened Sino-Japanese relations. China’s use of lethal force in response to peaceful student democratization protests in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989 resulted in China’s ostracism from the international community. China received economic sanctions from several major Western countries, most notably the United States and Japan, which led to feelings of isolation. At the same time, the Cold War system disb-


integrated. The Berlin Wall fell in November 1989 and nationalist movements grew in Eastern European countries, finally culminating in the fall of the Soviet Union (USSR) in December 1991. The end of the Cold War meant the destruction of the bilateral world order based on military strength and centered around the two superpowers, the U.S. and the USSR. The combination of the destruction of the bipolar world order and the Western sanctions of China led the Chinese to reassess their worldview.

These changes produced contradictory Chinese images of the United States. On the one hand, the Chinese viewed the United States as an influential country, capable of implementing economic sanctions against China, as well as serving as the sole surviving superpower after December 1991. Yet, even before the Soviet Union fell, Chinese analysts had already begun to see America as a weakening power. Chinese fears of an American isolationist foreign policy only increased with the official disintegration of the USSR. At the same time, Chinese analysts were well aware of Japan’s ongoing rise. Chinese perceptions of a weaker, less involved United States created fears that the United States might be unable or unwilling to cushion the blow to China from Japan’s rise. This, combined with concerns about its international isolation following Tiananmen, made the Chinese feel insecure. China responded to this insecurity by seeking strengthened relations with Japan.5

Chinese analysts noted a changing international environment even before the USSR officially fell. Dominant in their analysis was the idea that the basis for the international order had shifted from the political and military factors so dominant during the Cold War to economics.6 The Chinese predicted that countries with strong economies would be leaders in the new world order, while countries with weaker economies would fall behind.

Some Chinese analysts believed that American influence would wane, particularly due to the new emphasis on economics

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5. One might sensibly ask why Chinese analysts attempted to build relations with Japan if Japan was seen as a rising power and a potential threat. One reason is that Japan was the most accommodating of all major Western-allied powers following the Tiananmen Square incident. It was the first power to lift sanctions and advocated engagement rather than isolation. The other reason is that even though the U.S. was seen as a declining power, it was still a superpower. Japan, by contrast, was only in the process of becoming a great power.

and the objectively weaker American economy. The belief that overall American power was weakening relative to the other great powers persisted, even after the December 1991 disintegration of the USSR left the United States as the sole surviving superpower. Yet, despite this belief, some analysts believed that America would continue to play a dominant role in East Asia.

Some Chinese analysts argued that the international emphasis on economics would strengthen the Japanese belief in their right to be a global leader because of their strong economy. One Chinese analyst noted a statement by former Japanese Prime Minister Kaifu that Japan's contribution to world affairs was limited when military power was the decisive factor [because Japan lacked military power] but that now Japan could use its economic power to establish a new world order. Chinese analysts saw a Japan that now viewed itself as one of the three dominant powers in the international system. The new Japan felt that it was in a position of strength, and hoped to be not just a regional power, but also a world power. LUO Weilong, a researcher at the Institute of Japanese Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), argued that as a result of "Japan's rise," Japan now wanted to be a pole in a new multipolar world and a leader of the new world order. Luo pointed to a 1989 statement by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressing Japan's desire, given its prominence in economics and technology, to "more actively participate in international cooperation to establish a new world order." Likewise, Shanghai Institute of International Studies (SIIS) analyst CHEN Jiehua referred with concern to a February 1990 speech by Prime Minister Kaifu, who stated that Japan would "actively participate and structure the new international order." The Chinese believed,

11. Such views, both Chinese and Japanese, predate the actual disintegration of the USSR.
specifically, that the new world order the Japanese intended to construct would have the United States, Japan, and Europe as the dominant powers because the Japanese saw these powers as the three economic great powers of the post-Cold War era.\textsuperscript{14} In short, at the beginning of the 1990s, Chinese analysts saw Japan as a confident power that considered itself to be an international pole, and believed, based on this position, that it had the right to shape the new international world order.

Chinese analysts believed Japan's new-found influence would provide it with the confidence to finally shift from being an economic great power to being a political, or even military, great power.\textsuperscript{15} CHEN Jiehua argued that such a shift was "already moving from the stage of preparing public opinion to implementa-
\textsuperscript{16} Chinese analysts' belief that Japan was pursuing political great power status was logically consistent with their belief that Japan was intent on formulating the international world order, which would be the task of the global political great powers.

Chinese analysts had varying reactions to Japan's expected shift from economic great power to political great power. CASS analyst ZHONG Yang argued that it was "inevitable \textit{(bukebimian)}" given the international situation, though he cautioned that the effect of this shift remained unknown.\textsuperscript{17} LUO Weilong's perspective had slightly more positive connotations; he argued that such a shift was "natural \textit{(biran)}."\textsuperscript{18} Chinese Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) analyst LIU Jiangyong provided only lukewarm support. He argued:

\begin{quote}
China welcomes Japan's role as a 'political great power,' but since the United States still has great influence over Japan's diplomacy it is not easy for Japan to become an independent 'political great power'. . . . If 'political great power' means that Japan will use strength as support for
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{CHEN Jiehua, "Discussing Japanese Conception of a New World Order," \textit{Riben Xuekan} (Japan Studies), No. 1 (1991), p. 57.}
\footnote{CHEN Jiehua, "Discussing Japanese Conception," supra note 14, p. 67.}
\footnote{ZHONG Yang, "Sino-Japanese Relations," supra note 15, pp. 15-16.}
\footnote{LUO Weilong, "Japan in a World," supra note 12, p. 20.}
\end{footnotes}
its diplomacy it will cause tensions in Japan’s foreign relations.\textsuperscript{19}

These perspectives shared serious concerns about Japan becoming a political great power, though at least some of the analysts realized they could not prevent this shift.

Chinese views of the rising influence of Japan and the declining, though still present, influence of the United States altered their perceptions of the U.S.-Japan security alliance. Given the alliance’s origins as an attempt to check Soviet, and for a time, Chinese, Communist influence in East Asia, it would be logical to think that the alliance would weaken once the USSR fell in 1991. Indeed, the U.S.-Japan relationship of the early 1990s was characterized by trade tensions. Yet, although Chinese analysts noted the strain the economic tensions placed on the alliance, they still believed the alliance would continue, albeit perhaps in an altered form. CHEN Jiehua argued that the Japanese saw preserving the alliance as an “important guarantee of economic interests, military security, and expanding economic influence.”\textsuperscript{20} The alliance was also useful for keeping Asian peace and security, and as a tool for negotiating with the USSR.\textsuperscript{21} Therefore, analyst LI Hanmei argued that, despite problems, “The U.S.-Japan alliance will still be the ‘axis’ of Japanese foreign policy in the 1990s.” Capturing the mixture of conflict and cooperation, Li predicted that the U.S.-Japan alliance in the 1990s would be characterized by “competitive companion relations” in which “conflicts will unceasingly increase, but the two countries’ interdependence will deepen and the Japan-U.S. alliance relations will continue.”\textsuperscript{22} Despite tensions in the U.S.-Japan alliance, Chinese analysts were convinced it would remain viable.

Nevertheless, Chinese analysts recognized that the U.S.-Japan alliance would adapt to meet the new circumstances.\textsuperscript{23} First, given the lack of a common enemy, the basis for the relationship would change from “dealing with the enemy” to “international coopera-

\textsuperscript{19} LIU Jiayong, “Sino-Japanese Relations,” \textit{supra} note 8, p. 28.

\textsuperscript{20} CHEN Jiehua, “Discussing Japanese Conception,” \textit{supra} note 14, p. 58. Likewise, LUO Weilong argued that Japan wanted to preserve the alliance because the alliance promotes shared interests and gives Japan more political and economic leverage. LUO Weilong, “Japan in a World,” \textit{supra} note 12, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{21} LUO Weilong, “Japan in a World,” \textit{supra} note 12, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{22} LI Hanmei, “Current Japan-U.S. Relations,” \textit{supra} note 3, pp. 147, 152.

tion."24 Second, given Japan’s relatively increasing power and America’s relatively declining power, one analyst argued that the relationship would shift from a “controlling relationship” to a “co-operative relationship.”25 Likewise, LI Genan argued that given Japan’s desire for a larger voice in international affairs, it wanted to lead with the U.S.26 Such views accorded to Japan a more powerful and more independent role in the alliance.

Although many analysts expected changes in the U.S.-Japan relationship, they differed in their analysis of whether the changes indicated that the alliance was expanding to cover new areas, or whether it was covering new areas instead of the traditional security areas. Some analysts charged that the two countries might seek greater cooperation and leadership on Asian financial issues, population control, and drug control.27 Yet, analyst YANG Yunzhong argued that the security aspects of the alliance were obsolete: “The days when Japan-U.S. relations were based on a system of Japan-U.S. security cooperation are already past; the formation of new bilateral relations led by interests in economics and technology is beginning.”28 History has shown the former view to be correct. The U.S.-Japan relationship did expand in this era to include non-security issues because of changes in the international world order and of the relative strength of the two countries. The United States, however, maintained the dominant position, and security issues, given concerns about Korea and Taiwan that arose soon after this debate, continued to be a major component of the U.S.-Japan relationship.

In short, Chinese analysts foresaw a new world order in which U.S. dominance would gradually decline, while Japanese influence would sharply rise. Chinese analysts believed that the nature of the U.S.-Japan relationship would consequently change to reflect these trends. Japan would have increasing power within the relationship, and therefore more independence in its foreign policy. The Chinese perception of a United States that might not check Japan’s rise created Chinese insecurity.

The Response: Balancing the “Virtual” Triangle

The China-U.S.-Japan strategic triangle was just coming into focus during this period. Though the triangle had existed since the 1950s, the U.S.-China-USSR triangle remained dominant in Chinese thinking until the fall of the USSR in December 1991. Still, Japanese attempts to develop a more influential foreign policy predate the fall of the USSR. Consequentially, Chinese thinking at the turn of the 1990s began to utilize the framework of a U.S.-Japan-China strategic triangle. The insecurity produced both by China’s isolation by the United States and others, and by fears that the United States would not moderate Japan’s rise, led to a wave of realism among Chinese analysts. Chinese analysts advocated stronger Sino-Japan relations, even as the ever-present force of history continued to pull China and Japan apart.

During the early 1990s, the Chinese seldom spoke explicitly about an East Asian triangle. While this could be because the China of this era lacked the confidence to believe it could be a major East Asian power in comparison with Japan and the United States, or because China had been marginalized by both the Tiananmen sanctions and its diminishing strategic importance to the United States due to the deterioration of the Soviet threat, such explanations seem unlikely. A better explanation is that China recognized both itself and the United States as great powers, but was reluctant to acknowledge that Japan was now an overall great power, as well as a regional political great power. The Chinese did not feel that Japan was entitled to serve as a pole of this triangle. Ironically, the Chinese did talk about a Japan-U.S.-Europe triangle on the global level, thereby recognizing Japanese attempts to become a global great power. While Chinese analysts were hesitant to mention the existence of a China-U.S.-Japan strategic triangle, their responses to their U.S.-induced insecurity indicate their implicit recognition of such an emerging triangle. Chinese analysts attempted to balance this “virtual” triangle by promoting strengthened relations with Japan. They believed that Japan would be more open to improved Sino-Japanese relations because of the regional focus of Japan’s new foreign policy.

30. Thomas Christensen notes that in some of his interviews in China at this time, participants did suggest the possibility that the United States and China might cooperate against Japan in the future. Discussion with Christensen, Princeton University, March 23, 2005.
Chinese analysts noted several positive signs regarding Japanese willingness to improve relations with China. Unlike the Americans, the Japanese opposed the isolation of China following the Tiananmen Square incident. They quickly re instituted their development assistance to China and sent Prime Minister Kaifu on an official state visit in 1991. Chinese analysts noted with obvious pleasure the statement by Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa on the occasion of JIANG Zemin’s April 1992 visit to Japan that Japanese relations with China were of equal importance to Japanese relations with the United States. Analyst LIU Deyou noted this remark as an indication that the Japanese “further valued developing relations with China.” Likewise, LIU Jiangyong argued that nearly identical remarks by Prime Minister Hosokawa meant that Japan would now develop its China and U.S. policies independently, whereas in the past it had developed its China policy “within the framework” of its U.S. policy.

Chinese analysts realized that Japan was interested in closer economic relations. LUO Weilong argued as early as November 1990 that Japan was working hard to improve relations with China and other Asian countries. Along these lines, LI Genan argued that Japan’s new emphasis on relations with China was part of a large “New Asianism” strategy. He believed that “New Asianism” was premised on the need to return to Asia and cultivate closer ties with China and other Asian countries as a way to improve Japan’s competitiveness with Europe and the U.S., and help Japan become a political great power. As part of this strategy, Japan had become increasingly active in regional security, economic, political, and military affairs. By building “companion relations” with its Asian neighbors and leading a new Asian system, Japan believed that it could improve its “economic competitiveness” and “interna-

tional political standing,” and “take a step toward becoming an ‘international political great power.’” Consequently, Japan was reaching out to its Asian neighbors, including China. China believed that it could use Japan’s supposed “need” for China as leverage to encourage Japan to accommodate the Chinese position.40

Chinese analysts responded to an increased Japanese interest in China and the East Asian region with regionalist sentiment of their own. ZHANG Xiangshan argued that “expanding Asian regional economic cooperation” was one common goal of China and Japan.41 Moreover, LIU Jiayong argued that among the goals for Sino-Japanese relations should be “promoting equal and mutually beneficial Sino-Japanese trade cooperation” and “promoting Sino-Japanese bilateral trade cooperation to contribute to the Asian economy.” LIU Jiayong believed that “Sino-Japanese relations will further develop in the process of multilateral regional cooperation,” through forums like Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Since Liu felt that “friendly Sino-Japanese relations are the basis of stable Asian relations,” he believed that “defending Asian stability is in accordance with China and Japan’s common interests.”42 Such statements of regional interest demonstrate Chinese analysts’ interest in improved regional relations.

This support for stronger economic relations with Japan was consistent with the international trend towards economic regionalism in the 1990s. Chinese experts argued that this international trend, combined with the quick development of the East Asian economy, would produce “regional economic integration based on complementariness” during the 1990s.43 These sentiments were consistent with increases in Sino-Japanese trade. 1993 was a year of “three firsts” for Sino-Japanese trade: a record trade volume, re-

39. LI Genan, “New Asianism and Globalism,” supra note 8, pp. 47, 69. China would oppose this kind of policy because it would give Japan too much power.
41. Interestingly, he referred to “our two big Asian nations” (wo men yazhou de liang ge daguo), a reference to the common Asian identity that carries unusually personal connotations, and seems a bit more genuine than the more ordinary talk of “mutual cooperation” and “friendliness.” ZHANG Xiangshan, “Various Problems in Sino-Japan Relations,” Riben Xuekan (Japan Studies), No. 1 (1991), p. 13.
cord Japanese technology exports to China, and record Japanese business investment in China. Given Japan’s already substantial trade with Hong Kong, which would revert to Chinese rule in 1997, Sino-Japanese economic ties were bound to increase. As a result, LIU Jiangyong predicted the two countries’ economies would become more reliant on each other.\(^{44}\) China was particularly willing to pursue these closer economic ties with Japan because of its need for Japanese investment, technology, and management for its modernization and reform efforts.\(^{45}\)

Though the Chinese response to the changing world order and U.S. role was not phrased in terms of a triangle, the Chinese responded as if the relationships fit a triangle. Chinese analysts advocated a strengthened Sino-Japan bilateral relationship. They expressed a desire to reshape the China-U.S.-Japan triangle both by taking advantage of Japan’s perceived willingness to accommodate China and by advocating closer relations, particularly economic, with Japan.

The Countertrend: The Persistence of the History Issue

While China did attempt to strengthen its relationship with Japan in response to its feelings of insecurity, this tendency was limited by the continued presence of the history issue. The Chinese were concerned by Japanese nationalist elements, the history issue, and their belief that the Japanese were about to engage in a new round of cultural imperialism.

Chinese analysts believed that there were two main trends in Japanese thought on the history issue. The first view consisted of “learning lessons from history,” “deep thought about the aggressive past,” and “support for moving towards peaceful development.” These analysts, however, still recognized a small minority of Japanese thinkers who were “militaristic,” “nationalistic,” and had failed to “deal with historical lessons.”\(^{46}\) A common, rather more optimistic, argument was that Japan and China had a long history and that the Japanese aggression of the beginning of the 20th cen-


tury was just an aberration in that history.\textsuperscript{47} Despite such comments, the history issue continued to be relevant.

Although some analysts recognized that many Japanese had come to terms with their historical aggression, they expressed great concern about renewed Japanese nationalism and attempts to export its culture. YANG Yunzhong warned of a “new nationalism” that was emerging in Japan. He charged that remnants of the militaristic nationalism of the 1930s and 1940s still existed in Japan, despite its subsequent political transformation, and that the economic growth of the 1980s had given more strength to these nationalist undercurrents. Among the signs of nationalism in Japan, he saw an increased sense of Japanese superiority, a stronger nationalistic education, and a strengthened nationalist consciousness among youth, along with the increased possession and pursuit of military arms.\textsuperscript{48} The fear that Japan might attempt to become a military great power in addition to an economic and political great power was common. Along these lines, LI Genan argued, “After Japan became an economic great power, its nationalism and great power-ism ideology revived” because of an increase in Japanese confidence. Li argued that Japan’s renewed interest in Asia was in part sparked by its increased nationalism.\textsuperscript{49}

Similarly, some analysts argued that Japan was trying to export its culture. While they never explicitly stated it as such, it is clear the Chinese would regard this as a form of cultural imperialism. YANG Yunzhong charged that Japan would, in the near future, “attempt to forcefully give its value judgments to other countries and establish a so-called ‘Japanese culture sphere,’” creating conflicts with other countries in the process.\textsuperscript{50} While Chinese analysts encouraged China to pursue closer relations with the Japanese, this tendency was limited to some extent by continued suspicions about Japanese nationalism and the denial by some Japanese of their responsibility for the historical aggression.

\textsuperscript{47} ZHANG Xiangshan, “Various Problems,” supra note 41, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{48} YANG Yunzhong, “New Changes,” supra note 7, pp. 70-71.
\textsuperscript{50} YANG Yunzhong, “New Changes,” supra note 7, p. 73. LI Genan also expressed concerns about a Japanese cultural sphere. LI Genan, “Japan from ‘Leaving Asia,’” supra note 39, p. 57.
Conclusion

Although Chinese analysts did not talk explicitly about a triangular relationship during the early 1990s, their responses to their U.S.-induced insecurity reflected triangular thinking. Chinese analysts responded to their sense of insecurity by attempting to strengthen the Sino-Japanese side of the emerging China-U.S.-Japan strategic triangle. Such attempts ultimately failed, however, and the wave of realism receded leaving only the ever-present history issue behind.

Chinese attempts to strengthen relations with Japan were driven not only by their U.S.-driven insecurities, but also by concerns about the direction of the U.S.-Japan security alliance. Chinese analysts recognized the tensions in the U.S.-Japan relationship. They worried that a looser relationship would give Japan more freedom to pursue a potentially aggressive foreign policy and the United States less power to check such a trend. Given Japan's opposition to the isolation policy after Tiananmen and the Chinese belief that Japan needed closer economic ties with China, Chinese analysts expected that the Japanese would be willing to accommodate the Chinese in order to improve relations. The Japanese emphasis on economic relations and the decision to send the Emperor to visit China seemed to support this view. While Chinese analysts wanted to take advantage of Japan's interest in positive relations, they also feared that improved relations could lead to a romantic triangle with Japan as a pivot, given tense Sino-U.S. relations. In short, two factors, aside from the weight of history, led to the failure to improve Sino-Japanese relations. First, despite Chinese concerns about a more independent Japan, they were hesitant to improve relations too much for fear of giving Japan too much leverage. Second, their belief that the Japanese would fully accommodate them was unrealistic. Logically, any actual improvement in Sino-Japanese relations would require accommodations and concessions by both sides. The wave of triangular thought receded, with the status quo scalene triangle still firmly in place.
CHAPTER 3


The second wave of realist thinking began as a response to the revitalization of the U.S.-Japan alliance. On April 17, 1996, American President William J. Clinton and Japanese Prime Minister HASHIMOTO Ryutaro signed the Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security: Alliance for the 21st Century. The Joint Declaration was followed in September 1997 by the announcement of the revised U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines, which came into effect in May 1999. The strengthening of the alliance renewed Chinese awareness of the scalene nature of the China-U.S.-Japan security alliance by making it clear that the United States and Japan were much closer to each other than either was to China. As a result, Chinese feelings of insecurity increased. Chinese analysts perceived the upgrading of the alliance as an American-led effort. They responded to their feelings of insecurity by advocating improved relations with Japan in order to create a more balanced security triangle. While Chinese analysts spoke of their desire for strengthened Sino-Japanese relations, they unrealistically expected Japan to fully accommodate their position. Following the shock of Chinese President JIANG Zemin’s failure to obtain Japanese concessions on the history issue at the November 1998 Jiang-Obuchi Summit, this wave of realism receded, leaving the ever-present history issue in its wake.

Faced with poor Sino-Japanese relations and a deteriorating Sino-U.S. relationship in 1999, Chinese analysts responded with a desperate effort to improve Sino-Japanese relations through “Smile Diplomacy.” Smile Diplomacy was predicated on the belief that if China simply acted in a friendly manner toward Japan and ignored the problems in their relationship, bilateral relations would improve. Smile Diplomacy lacked substance, however, and never developed into a full-fledged debate. It is best seen as a coda to the second wave of realist thinking. When Smile Diplomacy deteriorated in early 2001, the system reverted to the default scalene triangle configuration.

Chinese perceptions of Japan occurred in the context of developments in U.S.-Japan and Sino-U.S. relations. Developments in U.S.-Japan relations during this period were dominated by the up-
grading of the U.S.-Japan alliance. Following the Joint Declaration and the revised Defense Guidelines, the United States and Japan issued a memorandum of understanding on August 16, 1999, which declared that the U.S. Department of Defense and Japan’s Defense Agency would conduct joint technology research on a mobile sea-based upper-tier Theater Missile Defense system.¹ U.S.-Japan relations during this period were characterized by close security cooperation.

Sino-U.S. relations were complicated during this period. Tensions grew in 1995-1996 over the Taiwan issue. The Chinese condemned the United States’ decision to allow Taiwanese President LEE Teng-hui to speak at Cornell University as a violation of the “One China” policy. Meanwhile, the United States opposed the 1995-1996 Chinese missile tests as unwarranted aggression against Taiwan. The tension reached its peak in March 1996 when the United States sent two aircraft carrier battle groups to the area surrounding Taiwan in response to a third set of Chinese missile tests, in which all three missiles landed within thirty-five miles of Taiwan. Following this crisis, both Clinton and Jiang made a concerted effort to improve relations. Such efforts culminated in the October 1997 “Joint Statement,” in which the two leaders agreed “to build toward a constructive strategic partnership.” This positive sentiment built further during Clinton’s visit to China in June 1998 for an official summit. Developments in 1999, however, caused the deterioration of Sino-U.S. relations. The United States raised concerns about human rights violations regarding China’s treatment of the Falun Gong sect, while China became worried by America’s leading role in organizing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bombing of Kosovo. The accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by NATO forces in May 1999 outraged Chinese citizens and resulted in a popular movement of anti-American Chinese nationalism. In short, the optimism in Sino-U.S. relations of 1997-1998 was bookended by two foreign relations disasters.²


The Shock: The Revitalization of the U.S.-Japan Alliance

Chinese analysts interpreted the revitalization of the U.S.-Japan alliance from 1996-1997 as an American-led attempt to contain China, producing feelings of insecurity. Chinese analysts suspected that, despite Japanese claims to the contrary, China, not North Korea, was the target of the 1996 Joint Declaration. Discussion about possible revision of the U.S.-Japan alliance began in the fall of 1994 because of the U.S. desire to have a new framework in place in case of another crisis involving the Korean peninsula. In November 1995, U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry and Japanese Prime Minister MURUYAMA Tomiichi discussed the basic outlines of the revised framework. At that point, China had already conducted two waves of missile tests, in July and August 1995, in the waters near Taiwan. President Clinton had expected to travel to Tokyo in November 1995 to finalize the accords, but was delayed by the Congressional budgetary crisis. He rescheduled his trip for April 1996. In these five months, conditions deteriorated. China launched a third set of missile tests near Taiwan in March 1996, resulting in the U.S. dispatch of ships to the region. Since the Taiwan Strait Crisis had ended only a month before the Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration was signed, China saw the agreement as a rebuke for its actions and believed that Japan and the United States were trying to contain it.

The wording of the Declaration did little to diminish Chinese fears. While previously the alliance had been interpreted as pertaining only to Japan and its immediate vicinity, the new document referred to the need for Japan and the United States to protect “peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.” To China, the declaration had been expanded to cover a “vaguely defined, but clearly much larger” region. Banning Garrett and Bonnie Glaser suggest

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4. Lampton, Same Bed Different Dreams, supra note 2, pp. 237-238; “Taiwan Strait: 21 July 1995 to 23 March 1996.”


that China's fears were legitimate. The Joint Declaration, they argue, changed the role of the alliance from protecting Japan to "respond[ing] to threats to security throughout the region," consistent with Japan's drive for political influence. China saw this more proactive Japanese diplomacy as threatening their own regional influence.

The 1997 revised Japan-U.S. Defense Guidelines formalizing the 1996 Declaration drew even louder complaints from the Chinese, who were convinced that they were the intended target. "Situations in the areas surrounding Japan," had been substituted for the controversial phrase "Asia-Pacific," but this did little to comfort China. The "surrounding situations" wording was interpreted by the Japanese to mean that Japan's sphere of military action was no longer defined by geographic means, but by so-called "situational" concerns. China concluded these new guidelines included Taiwan and the South China Sea, triggering nationalistic fears that Japan would intervene to prevent China from uniting with what it saw as a renegade province. China already believed that Japan had a special reason to support Taiwan independence because Taiwan had been a former Japanese colony, and the seeming inclusion of Taiwan in Japan's new security sphere of interest only increased fears that Japan might act on this perceived nostalgia. Chief Cabinet Secretary KAJIYAMA Seiroku's comments that Japan might come to America's aid if it intervened in a Taiwan-China conflict only increased China's apprehensions. The Guidelines also added "operation cooperation...missions for Japan's SDF [Self Defense Forces] in times of regional conflict," which increased Chinese fears that Japan would not only involve itself in a greater number of situations, but that it would also involve itself more fully. Thus, the Guidelines cemented China's belief that the alliance was essentially anti-Chinese in nature.

This revitalization of the alliance made the Chinese feel insecure because they perceived it as an American-led attempt to contain China. According to Garrett and Glaser, the Chinese did realize that efforts to revise the guidelines dated back to the Nye initiative and the Nye Report of February 1995, both of which pre-dated the Chinese missiles tests near Taiwan. Nevertheless, they remained convinced that China was the target and purpose of the revitalization of the alliance. As Garrett and Glaser argue, “China feared that Japan was “[redefining its] threat environment to focus on China’s growing economic and military power and on potential conflicts involving China.” Such fears were encapsulated in the views of CICIR analyst Lu Zhongwei:

The April 17, 1996 announcement by Japan and the U.S. of the “Declaration on Security” and the September 1997 New “Defense Guidelines” established by the two countries set the tone for Japanese-U.S. strategic cooperation at the turn of the century. Everyone knows where its spearhead (maotou) lies because in the entire world there does not exist a military alliance without a target.

China believed that the U.S. might utilize Japanese bases in a future crisis, and that Japan might involve itself in future conflicts involving Taiwan and the South China Sea. In addition, as the only nuclear power in East Asia at the time, China understood a reference in the Declaration to the threat from “heavy concentrations of military force, including nuclear arsenals” as referring to itself.

Many observers agree that the Declaration fueled a downward shift in Chinese support for the U.S.-Japan alliance. Chinese analysts still supported the existence of the U.S.-Japan alliance because they felt that such an arrangement allowed for American oversight over Japanese attempts to remilitarize. Chinese analysts did,
however, express concern about the changes to the alliance. To use the common analogy, since the 1996 Joint Declaration, “fears about the ‘egg shell’ function of the US–Japan alliance have increased markedly, while faith in the ‘bottle cap’ function has declined.”

To the Chinese, the changes “improve Japanese defense technologies, introduce new weapons systems, and . . . encourage an expansion of Japanese roles in joint operations,” indicating that the alliance is performing more of an “eggshell” role. In addition, given its increased apprehension about true Japanese intentions, China feared that Japan might also claim a right to self-defense.

The Chinese did not believe that the containment of China was the only goal of the revitalization of the U.S.-Japan security alliance. One analyst argued that revitalizing the alliance would help the United States to protect its global and regional leadership position, while allowing it to maintain its influence over Japan. Another analyst argued that the United States was improving relations with Japan because it feared a Sino-Japanese alliance oriented against the United States. On the other hand, Chinese analysts felt that the Japanese supported the revitalization of the alliance because it would strengthen Japan’s regional and global positioning and allow it to move more quickly toward becoming a political and military great power. Of course, analysts believed that another major purpose of the revitalization was to keep Taiwan separated from China.

Chinese discussions reveal perceptions about the nature of the U.S.-Japan side of the strategic triangle. Chinese analysts seemed to find little room for leverage in U.S.-Japan relations, noting that the relationship had recently improved. Analyst SONG Yimin argued that the Japanese were not willing to “separate” themselves from the United States. Likewise, LU Zhongwei argued that when forced to make a strategic choice between China and the United

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States, Japan would inevitably choose the United States because it regarded it as the “axis” of its foreign policy; hence, Sino-Japanese relations would always conflict with the U.S.-Japan relationship.28 Although the upgrading of Japan’s role in the alliance frightened the Chinese, they would also have opposed a disintegration of the alliance because they relied on the United States to keep Japan’s supposed aggressive tendencies in check.

The Response: Creating a “Balanced” Triangle

Chinese intellectuals responded to the revitalization of the U.S.-Japan security alliance by advocating attempts to strengthen Sino-Japanese relations in order to construct a “balanced” or “equilateral” triangle.29 This response occurred in the context of increased attention to the role of regionalism, though the large-scale shift toward regionalist thought would occur a few years later. In a 1997 Xiandai Guojì Guanxi article, Peking University professor ZHU Feng argued that China should support regionalism (quyu-uzhuyi) in the East Asian region because “strengthening East Asian regional economic and security cooperation will stabilize the regional situation, bring about the achievement of China’s own economic and military interests, and strengthen important regional tools.”30 This attempt to strengthen Sino-Japanese relations, however, would ultimately prove unable to overcome the ever-present force of history that continued to pull Japan and China apart.

Chinese analysts recognized that the 1996-1997 strengthening of the U.S.-Japan alliance created an imbalance in the triangle by further strengthening the Japan-U.S. side. Writing in early 1998, analyst SONG Yimin argued, “In the past two years, Sino-Japanese relations have moved backwards, Japan-U.S. relations have obviously improved, and Sino-U.S. relations have tended toward stability.”31 In other words, following the 1996 revitalization of the alliance, the scalene nature of the triangle became obvious, with Japan and the United States closer than before and China and Japan moving even farther apart.

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31. SONG Yimin, “Present Trends,” supra note 24, p. 23
Faced with an unbalanced triangle, Chinese analysts advocated the strengthening of Sino-Japanese relations in order to create a more balanced triangle. During this period, the Chinese "looked to equal, bilateral relations among the great powers as the core of a balanced international system favorable for China's rise."32 Lu Zhongwei suggested that the solution to tensions in trilateral relations was to strengthen all sides of the triangle. He believed that the flurry of official visits between the three countries in 1996-1997 represented a renewed effort to balance this triangle: The goal of these visits was "the promotion of equality and balance (junheng) or general improvement (tisheng) of trilateral relations." Lu saw these visits as the first step in establishing a "neighborhood friendly, cooperative framework." In particular, Lu placed great importance on Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto's visit to China in September 1997.33

Despite the talk of strengthening Sino-Japanese relations, Chinese analysts were not willing to advocate improving relations by accommodating the Japanese. Fudan University professor Wu Xinbo blamed the development of unbalanced trilateral relations on the failure of the United States and Japan to see China's rise as an opportunity rather than a threat. He forecast, rather optimistically, a more balanced triangle at a time when triangular thinking was already falling out of fashion, but expected it to come about through changes in American and Japanese policy.34 Likewise, Song Yimin, while pessimistic about the development of Sino-Japanese relations, expected that the Japanese would be willing to accommodate the Chinese because of their fear that the stable Sino-U.S. relationship could eclipse Sino-Japanese relations.35 Just as Chinese analysts expected Japan to carry the burden of improving Sino-Japanese relations, concrete Chinese actions showed few signs of willingness to accommodate the Japanese. The Chinese reacted angrily to the 1996 Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration and participated in another inflammation of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute, while President Jiang Zemin went to the 1998 summit in Japan with the intention of wringing concessions on the history issue from the Jap-

anese. Although Chinese analysts advocated stronger Sino-Japanese relations and a more balanced China-U.S.-Japan strategic triangle, they unrealistically expected to achieve these goals through Japanese accommodation of Chinese interests.

The Countertrend: The Persistence of History

At the same time that Chinese analysts reacted to the tightened U.S.-Japan alliance by advocating stronger Sino-Japanese relations, China's ever-present concern with the history issue cut against this trend. The history issue was just one manifestation of Chinese nationalism, which also manifested itself in debates about Taiwan and territorial disputes about the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Amidst the reemergence of a "victimization view of history," the belief that the Japanese had been the "most harmful" of the Western powers to Chinese interests and continuing doubts about whether Japan had fully come to terms with its wartime aggression continued to plague the Chinese. After the failure of the Jiang-Obuchi summit, the wave of realism receded, and left these history issues fully exposed.

The failure of the November 26, 1998 Jiang-Obuchi summit in Tokyo revived Chinese nationalist sentiments and brought discussions of a more balanced strategic triangle to a halt. Prior to the November summit, the Chinese were optimistic about their ability to wrest an apology from the Japanese. In October 1998, Japan had expressed its "deep remorse" and "heartfelt apology" over its wartime aggression in written apologies to the South Korean government. In a visit to Beijing earlier in the year, U.S. President Clinton had expressed the "three nos" policy on Taiwan, which validated the Chinese position. Given these two precedents, the Chinese were confident they could convince the Japanese to offer both a similar apology for wartime aggression to the Chinese and a "three nos" policy. In an interview with the Japanese Asahi

two weeks prior to the summit, JIANG Zemin made clear his intentions of focusing on the twin issues of history and Taiwan. He unrealistically suggested that Sino-Japanese ties could be even closer than Sino-U.S. ties, even though analysts argue that by this point Jiang had already realized that the summit would not succeed. While Jiang’s remarks during that interview were portrayed as reasoned and conciliatory in the Asahi Shimbun article, a Reuters article described Jiang’s remarks in the period leading up to the summit in harsher terms: “Beijing has made its demands on Tokyo crystal clear: come clean on your wartime past and stay out of China’s dispute with Taiwan... With a steady drum beat of tough talk, China has shown it wants to call the tune at [the] summit.” Such tough talk proved fruitless.

JIANG Zemin arrived in Japan expecting major Japanese concessions on the history and Taiwan issues, which made the failure to obtain such concessions all the more disheartening to China. Japanese Prime Minister OBUCHI Keizo refused to offer China the written expression of apology that he had offered the South Koreans. Instead, the Chinese were forced to accept a verbal apology from the Japanese, who offered only “deep remorse” in the summit’s written statement. The Japanese also refused to issue a written agreement to the “three nos” policy. The result was a joint declaration released five hours after the summit, stripped of much of its content, and containing the signature of neither leader. The Chinese were bitterly disappointed. Yet, even if the Chinese had received the concessions they wanted, the value of the nationalism is so important to the Chinese leadership that they are unlikely to have dropped the history issue permanently. Furthermore, the revival of the “victimization” mentality among the Chinese people makes it unlikely they would react kindly to government attempts


to ignore Japan’s history of aggression. The failure of the Jiang-Obuchi Summit and the chill it placed on Chinese strategic thinking on Japan is testimony to the power of nationalist issues such as history and Taiwan in China.

The anticipation and subsequent failure of the Jiang-Obuchi summit served only to stir up anti-Japanese nationalist emotions among the Chinese people, while also alienating the Japanese. The Chinese government has a tendency to ignore the role of public sentiment when developing its foreign policy. It then finds itself cornered by the nationalist feelings it has unwittingly provoked. By playing the history card repeatedly, the Chinese government arouses nationalist sentiment. Such results occur because nationalism in China is largely a “bottom-up” process, resulting from the preexisting “passions” of the common people. The nationalist fever that swept China in 1996-1997, evident in the China Can Say No phenomenon and the protests over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, occurred because of popular anger at the Japanese, not because of a government attempt to manipulate the masses through nationalistic propaganda. The growth of nationalist emotions following the very public Chinese failure at the November summit caused discussion about a more balanced triangle to cool.

Conclusion

The Chinese perceived the revitalization of the U.S.-Japan alliance as a U.S.-led attempt to contain China, leading to increased Chinese insecurity. They supported the existence of the alliance because they felt it allowed the United States to serve as a check on Japanese attempts to remilitarize, but worried that the upgrading of Japan’s role in the alliance would allow it to remilitarize within the context of the alliance. Chinese analysts responded to their insecurities by advocating improved Sino-Japanese relations in the context of a more balanced China-U.S.-Japan triangular relationship. These efforts proved unable to overcome the weight of history. The

46. Peter Gries argues that the “victimization” mentality concerning World War II is one reason for the failure of the Jiang-Obuchi summit. Having just shifted from a “victor” mentality to a “victim” mentality, Chinese memories of Japanese aggression are too “fresh” to be quickly and easily resolved. Gries also notes that China and Japan disagree about their relative status and therefore cannot agree on the proper form for an apology. Gries, China’s New Nationalism, supra note 38, pp. 91-92.
48. Gries, China’s New Nationalism, supra note 38, pp. 87, 125.
failure of the Jiang-Obuchi summit brought this wave of realism to an end and exposed the continued importance of the history issue.

Chinese analysts' attempts to construct a more balanced triangle failed because the Chinese ideally expected the Japanese to fully accommodate the Chinese position. Convinced of their victimization at the hands of Japanese aggressors, Chinese analysts expected the Japanese would be willing to make the sacrifices necessary to strengthen the relationship because of their historical war guilt. The Japanese had no incentive to beg for Chinese forgiveness. Their security position was strong, given the revitalization of their relationship with the United States. Chinese realist thought during this period failed to overcome the counterforce of history because it unrealistically expected the Japanese to fully accommodate the Chinese position on history without requiring any Chinese concessions.

Smile Diplomacy, 1999-2000

Following the failure of the 1998 Jiang-Obuchi summit, the wave of realism among Chinese analysts receded, leaving only the history issue behind. Chinese relations with the United States soon deteriorated as well. The Chinese opposed NATO's intervention in Kosovo in March 1999, which it interpreted as a sign of American and European disrespect for state sovereignty. The bombing of China's embassy in Belgrade infuriated the Chinese and resulted in anti-United States nationalist protests.49 Desperate for a solution, the Chinese began a policy of "smile diplomacy" as a last-ditch effort to improve ties with Japan. The belief was that if China "smiled" and pretended things were going well with Japan, they might actually go well. This policy lacked content, and consequently never sparked a debate, despite its short-lived promotion by Chinese leaders and academics. Given the lack of substance, Smile Diplomacy serves not as its own cycle of Chinese political thought, but rather as a sort of coda to the attempts at realism from 1996-1998.

CASS analyst FENG Zhaokui's January 2000 article, "How to Behave as Neighbours – Reflections on Sino-Japanese Relations at the Turn of the Century" was the first to introduce the new smile diplomacy. Feng's new policy suggestions clearly reflected the triangular thinking that had dominated the 1997-1998 period:

In terms of Great Power relations. . .[China should] decrease the imbalance in China-Japan-U.S. relations. . .

49. Ibid., p. 17; Lampton, Same Bed Different Dreams, supra note 2, pp. 57, 59.
[China] must also avoid Sino-Japanese relations becoming the weakest link of the aforementioned great power relations, and must avoid making Japan move closer to America or making the Japanese-U.S. alliance tighter because of mistakes in our policy toward Japan.

Like earlier analysts, Feng held the balanced triangle as an ideal. Feng’s new approach was less about content, however, and more an attempt to change the attitudes of the Japanese government and public by adopting a friendly posture. As Feng argued, “Developing Sino-Japanese relations . . . will influence factors in Japanese domestic politics, and be beneficial for striving for and supporting the strength of peace and friendliness toward China within Japan.” Feng believed that Chinese assistance during a time of Japanese economic trouble was “the best way to win the people’s hearts.” In a call to great leadership, he argued that China should follow Deng’s advice and “truly let Chinese-Japanese relations ‘move towards a new stage (tuixiang xinde jieduan).’”

Unlike the discussions over triangular relations in other periods, the smile diplomacy policy did not provoke a debate. The academic writings simply repeatedly the vague notion of being “friendly” to Japan, even as the public opposed such a view. As a typical example, LU Zhongwei argued that friendly Sino-Japanese relations could be achieved through the “4 Cs:” “communication,” “confidence,” “cooperation,” and “common interests” – hardly a substantive clarification of the policy. Actions by Chinese leaders reinforced the notion of Smile Diplomacy without giving it any more definition. Much attention was given to Jiang’s decision to attend the China-Japan Cultural and Sightseeing Exchange Conference, at which China hosted Japanese visitors. Speaking at the event, Chinese Vice Premier QIAN Qichen advocated continued exchanges of citizens between Japan and China in order to promote “good-neighborliness” and “cooperation.”

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Rongji’s October 2000 “friendship visit” to Japan also reflected the sentiment of Smile Diplomacy.\textsuperscript{54} None of these actions, however, lent much nuance to the Smile Diplomacy position.

Perhaps the only substantial component of the Smile Diplomacy movement was its recognition of the necessity of good Sino-Japanese relations in order to achieve China’s primary goal of economic development. Feng believed that China should “use basic national security interests to determine what kind of policy direction we should adopt regarding Japan.”\textsuperscript{55} As Feng stated in late 2000, the basic goal of Chinese policy was to achieve “peace and development.”\textsuperscript{56} Feng realized that better relations with Japan “benefit the establishment of our economy.”\textsuperscript{57} Implicit in Feng’s inclusion of economic interests as a strategic objective is the recognition that security goes beyond national strength and power to include economic integration.

Given the importance of economic development, Smile Diplomacy advocated setting aside historical issues for the time being. Whereas the New Thinking position, as advocated by MA Licheng, was that the history issue had been resolved and China and Japan should move on, Feng acknowledged the continued challenge of history, but argued that it should be overlooked for now. Feng believed it would take a long time to resolve and that, ultimately, China’s economic development was far more important.\textsuperscript{58} In this spirit, analyst WANG Jianxin utilized the familiar argument that “Sino-Japanese friendship is in accordance with history,” and that the war years were just an aberration.\textsuperscript{59} The Chinese were willing to temporarily brush aside historical issues because of the greater importance of economics.

Smile diplomacy not only demonstrated the importance of regional and economic interests in Chinese security calculations, but also the importance of Chinese anti-Japanese nationalism. Feng worried that excessive reliance on emotionalism would cause China to reject Japan in ways that hurt its national interests. He was con-

\textsuperscript{54} Rozman, “China’s Changing Images,” supra note 29, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{57} FENG Zhaokui, “How to Behave as Neighbours,” supra note 52, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid; FENG Zhaokui, “Strategic Thinking,” supra note 58, pp. 11-16.
cerned by the recent unwillingness of Chinese citizens to follow the official Chinese position of separating the Japanese military officers directly responsible for Japan’s wartime aggression from the common Japanese people, resulting in increasingly negative feelings toward Japan.60 Likewise, YANG Bojiang’s argument that the Chinese must “use rational thinking (lixing siwei)” to address Sino-Japanese relations at the turn of the century implicitly recognized that thinking about the relationship tended to be emotional.61 Along these lines, LU Zhongwei advocated the “increase of trust and elimination of doubts (zengxinshiyi)” as a response to the lack of trust caused by emotionalism and nationalism on both sides. He argued that the Chinese media needed to “seek reality from the facts (shishiqushi)” in its reports about Japan, while also arguing that both sides needed to take a more nuanced view of the other. Lu worried that the history issue, if left unchecked, would spark nationalism that would destroy the stability and development of the bilateral relationship.62 In this way, smile diplomacy was caused by concerns about nationalism and its negative effects on the bilateral relationship.

Smile Diplomacy was a desperate attempt to improve Sino-Japanese relations after the failure of the Jiang-Obuchi summit, and the evident failure of realist thinking to counteract the history issue. Smile Diplomacy lacked substance, however, and the attempt to simply ignore the history issue unsurprisingly failed to improve relations. Smile Diplomacy retreated in early 2001 in the face of increased Chinese nationalist outcries over textbooks and discrimination by Japanese companies.63 As usual, the configuration of the three powers reverted to the scalene triangle, with the United States and Japan closer than China was to either power.

CHAPTER 4
THE CONCILIATORY TRIANGLE AND THE NEW THINKING DEBATE, 2002-2004

A third repetition of the cycle occurred with the New Thinking debate from late 2002-early 2004. As this debate emerged, the China-U.S.-Japan triangle was again scalene. The New Thinking debate was a response to Chinese feelings of uncertainty about their security, which arose from the more assertive, unilateralist policy of the Bush administration. New Thinking attempted to re-conceptualize the China-U.S.-Japan strategic triangle in a more balanced manner by advocating stronger Sino-Japanese relations. Unlike earlier analysts, the supporters of New Thinking clearly recognized the role of history in preventing stronger Sino-Japanese relations and explicitly attempted to overcome the history issue in order to achieve stronger relations. Supporters of New Thinking failed, however, to convince the majority of academics and Chinese citizens of the need to overcome the history issue and accommodate the Japanese position. New Thinking failed, as had the other attempts to improve Sino-Japanese relations.

The New Thinking movement differed significantly from analytical discussions in the earlier two periods. Unlike previous movements toward strengthened Sino-Japanese relations, New Thinking was never a mainstream view. Rather, New Thinking sparked an unprecedented debate in Chinese foreign policy, in which two analysts, MA Licheng and SHI Yinhong, offered variations on a common theme that were supported, opposed, and qualified by other Chinese scholars, and nearly universally attacked by the Chinese people. The New Thinking debate began with an article by Renmin Ribao journalist MA Licheng in the November 2002 issue of Zhanliie yu Guanli (Strategy and Management). MA advocated stronger relations with Japan as a way to strengthen China's eco-

1. New Thinking in this paper refers specifically to Chinese New Thinking on Japan. In other contexts, the term “New Thinking” may refer to a wider debate about the nature of Chinese foreign policy as a whole.

(40)
onomic growth and development. Ma’s article was soon followed by an article by SHI Yinhong, a professor at People's University, in the March issue of Zhuanlie yu Guanli. Arguing from a more traditional security perspective, Shi believed that China should strengthen relations with Japan in order to balance against threats from the United States. Neither Ma nor Shi was a Japan expert, which left their arguments open to criticism from those who argued they did not suit the realities of the situation.

As in the previous two time periods, Chinese strategic perceptions of Japan occurred in the context of developments in Sino-U.S. and U.S.-Japan relations. U.S.-Japan relations were strong throughout this period. The Bush administration was pleased with Japan’s assistance following the September 11th attacks, telling the Japanese Diet, “Our alliance has never been stronger.” Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro KOIZUMI committed Japan to the American-led war on terror and sent Japanese SDF abroad to provide logistical support to American forces. While some analysts argue that Koizumi seized the war on terror as an opportunity to create a precedent for a more active Japanese role in regional and international security, such policies did not significantly alter the basic structure of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

Meanwhile, Sino-U.S. relations strengthened as a result of the war on terror. Such an outcome did not seem obvious in 2001. Sino-U.S. tensions ran high over the crash of an American spy plane and a Chinese fighter jet over the South China sea on April 1, 2001. China demanded an American apology for the death of the Chinese pilot before agreeing to release the crew of the American EP-3 surveillance plane, who had landed safely on Hainan Island. The Taiwan issue provided another source of tension because the Chinese believed that the United States had shifted the balance of its support toward Taiwan. Furthermore, the United States’ unilateralist policies stifled the regionalism the Chinese believed was necessary.


for greater economic growth and development.\textsuperscript{7} The attacks of September 11th further strengthened America’s assertive and unilateralist policies. Surprisingly, however, Sino-U.S. relations did not deteriorate after September 11th. Rather, the war on terror distracted government officials who had warned of a “China threat.” Sino-U.S. relations improved dramatically as the United States came to rely on China for support in the war on terror and in resolving the Korean nuclear crisis that began in 2002.\textsuperscript{8} Having started rather weakly, Sino-U.S. relations improved considerably throughout this period.

**The Shock: America’s Rising Unilateralism**

Chinese strategic thinking at the beginning of the 21st century was deeply affected by the Bush Administration’s new foreign policy direction. Even before September 11th, the Bush Administration’s foreign policy was characterized by a more assertive and unilateralist approach. In East Asia, Bush was determined to maintain the U.S. position as the dominant regional influence. He saw China as a “competitor” for regional dominance, and therefore opposed the regionalist tendencies in East Asia that threatened to shift Asia’s focus away from the United States. Bush’s unilateralist tendencies strengthened after the attacks of September 11th. As terror became Bush’s first priority, regionalist interactions in East Asia “virtually ground to a halt.”\textsuperscript{9} While East Asian regionalism did eventually recover, New Thinking arose in a context in which the Chinese viewed the United States as a threat to their regionalist strategy.

The threat to China from America’s new foreign policy was two-fold. First, China believed regionalism would improve its economic position and allow it to construct multilateral organizations in which it could maximize its bargaining position. Good relations with Japan were particularly critical for such a policy to succeed.\textsuperscript{10} Second, America’s assertive policies lent credence to the argument that the United States was a danger to China’s traditional security interests. China worried that Bush’s “pre-emptive” and “unilateral-


\textsuperscript{9} Rozman, *Northeast Asia’s Stunted Regionalism*, supra note 7, pp. 289, 292-293.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., pp. 312, 319.
"principles of foreign policy could be used against China's sovereignty claims to Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan. Faced with poor Sino-U.S. relations in 2001, China also worried that strong U.S.-Japan relations might lead to the containment of China. Bush's new foreign policy provided a shock to China's sense of security, both by undermining its economic strategy and by reinvigorating fears of American aggressive intentions against China.

MA Licheng's New Thinking responded to the shock of the American opposition to East Asian regionalism. His article was written at a time when a region-wide backlash against America's anti-regionalism policy was emerging. Ma argued that China needed a stable regional environment so that it could focus on its internal challenges and economic development. In keeping with the principles of China's reform-era security strategy, he argued, "The important purpose of Chinese diplomacy is to achieve a peaceful international environment over the next thirty to fifty years." Ma believed that good relations with China's neighbors, particularly Japan, would be necessary to achieve this policy. America's opposition to East Asian regionalism damaged this approach.

While Ma responded to the anti-regionalist aspect of America's new policy, Shi responded to the assertive, unilateralist approach of the new policy. Shi argued:

In the past two to three years, and especially since the "September 11th" incident, America's great power dominance and hegemonic tendencies in world politics have reached unprecedented levels, and its precautions against China's rise and its hindrance of trends toward China's possession of a powerful nation's military strength and international political influence are also unprecedented.

Shi believed that these trends in American foreign policy limited China's ability to leverage its position in its relations with the United States, and caused the Chinese people to criticize the gov-

11. With the perspective of a few years, Swaine correctly argues that these frightening aspects of America's post-September 11th policy have been outweighed by a generally improved Sino-U.S. relationship due to the two countries' cooperation on terrorism and other security issues. While some positive signs of cooperation had already appeared by the time the New Thinking debate began, it was by no means obvious that Sino-U.S. relations would reach the height they have reached since September 11th. Swaine, "China," supra note 8, p. 76.
12. Rozman, Northeast Asia's Stunted Regionalism, supra note 7, p. 319.
13. Ibid., 290.
ernment for being too weak toward the United States.\textsuperscript{15} Shi’s sense of security was also undermined by his belief that Japan posed a potential threat to China, due to the growth of Japanese military strength, rightist forces in Japan, and the US-Japan security alliance.\textsuperscript{16} Shi believed that China was faced with many enemies, including the United States, Taiwan, and even possibly India. He argued that China could not “endure” having Japan as an enemy as well.\textsuperscript{17} Shi’s embrace of New Thinking arose from his belief that America’s new unilateralist foreign policy posed a serious threat to Chinese security.

**The Response: Improving Sino-Japanese Relations**

New Thinking advocated improved Sino-Japanese relations as a response to Chinese insecurity. Both Ma and Shi believed that improved relations with Japan were essential, though their reasoning differed. Ma believed that the attainment of a peaceful environment that allowed for economic growth and development required a friendly neighbor policy, which in turn required improved Sino-Japanese relations. Ma argued China and Japan should cooperate together to promote economic “flourishing (fanrong)” within East and Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{18}

Ma’s New Thinking had two major components. First, China’s diplomacy should not be too strict toward Japan. Referring to China’s victory over Japan in World War II, Ma argued, “If the winning country in a war [China] adopts a lenient position toward the loser, it can produce a reconciliatory environment, and it is better for the winning country’s own security than a sterner strategy.” Ma believed that China could afford to be conciliatory because of its increased importance in the international scene, and because Japan had already reflected on its actions during World War II and had given China loans. Ma’s thinking expressed great understanding for the Japanese position. He argued:

Recently, Japan has always walked in front of China, with only the United States always leading Japan. Consequently, Japan always admires the United States, but looks down on China. But now for the first time, China will ex-
ceed Japan in every aspect – this is hard for Japan to accept. This is not strange.

Ma argued that the Chinese should be more understanding of the psychological shift China’s rise would require of the Japanese. Second, Ma believed that China should not overreact to Japan’s desire to become a political and military great power. Rather, China’s foreign policy should be “forward-looking,” focusing on the “economic system and market.” If both China and Japan could overcome their nationalism and “narrow thinking” and work towards regionalism, there would be benefits for both parties.19

Shi also advocated stronger Sino-Japanese ties, but for more security-driven reasons. Shi believed that stronger Sino-Japanese relations would best allow China to protect itself against the United States. In order to pursue closer Sino-Japanese relations, Shi argued that China must welcome East Asian cooperation on security and political issues, as well as economic stability and “flourishing.” While Shi recognized that Sino-Japanese relations had been tense in recent years, he also believed that there were several factors, including concerns about the United States and security in East Asia that made Sino-Japanese “rapprochement (jiejin)” possible. Shi believed that China could strengthen Sino-Japanese relations by addressing the history and Japanese remilitarization issues, supporting Japanese attempts to be on the UN security council, recognizing Japan’s economic assistance to China, and promoting regionalism.20

Shi argued that strengthening ties with Japan would improve China’s position against the United States for two reasons. First, Shi argued:

Japan’s understanding of security and strategic issues basically follows that of the United States. Increasing dialogs [sic] with Japan on security and strategic issues will be conducive to helping Japan understand that, apart from the logic of U.S. security, there are other reasons and concepts of security in the world. This may help Japan discover that besides the security strategy of a military alliance with the United States, there is another safer strategy, namely the security strategy of cooperation.21

19. Ibid., pp. 43, 45, 47.
20. SHI Yinhong, “China and Japan Rapprochement,” supra note 4, pp. 73-74.
Shi believed that through closer relations with Japan, China could potentially separate Japan from the United States and weaken their military alliance. One reason that Shi’s New Thinking arguments never attracted mainstream support is because such a view is unpopular. Chinese analysts still believe, on balance, that a U.S.-Japan alliance that does not strengthen Japan’s military position is better than no alliance at all. 22

Shi’s second reason for pursuing strengthened relations with Japan was more ambiguous. One logical interpretation of Shi’s original argument that stronger ties with Japan would improve China’s position versus the United States is that China could not only separate Japan from the United States but also use Japan to challenge the United States. In later articles, however, perhaps because of the skepticism expressed on this particular point, Shi took care to specify that the United States was only one reason to improve relations with Japan. In a September 2003 interview, Shi said, “Over the long term, we must centralize and respond to the America problem. Of course, we do not want to have general confrontation or conflict with America. This is not to say that we strive to improve Sino-Japanese relations mainly to deal with America.” Yet in the same interview, Shi again argued that China must prepare for the development of the U.S.-Japan military alliance, which was itself a threat posed to China by the United States. 23 Given Shi’s early emphasis on the importance of strengthening relations with Japan to counteract America’s aggressive foreign policy, this later statement seems like backpedaling.

Shi’s belief that China could use stronger ties with Japan to balance against the United States met with sharp criticism, even though some who believed Shi’s reasoning was faulty nevertheless agreed with the basic premise of the need for strengthened Sino-Japanese relations. 24 One such analyst was PANG Zhongying, who acknowledged that China and Japan must learn to coexist in East


Asia. Pang nevertheless argued that Shi’s approach to Sino-Japanese was unrealistic because U.S.-Japan relations were strong, which left little room for Chinese leverage. Likewise, CASS analyst Ling Xingguang argued that the new threat of terrorism made such a shift even more unlikely, given the rise of untraditional threats. Other critics disagreed both with Shi’s reasoning and with the New Thinking movement as a whole. LIN Zhibo argued that Japan would not agree to counterbalance the United States because “Japanese society is imbued with a strong psychology of worshipping and fawning on the U.S.,” or, in more neutral terms, because it values its alliance with the United States. Furthermore, he believed that the United States would prevent such a shift from occurring because it sees China as a common threat of both America and Japan. Critics of New Thinking, both those who accepted the premise that stronger Sino-Japanese relations were necessary and those who did not, rejected Shi’s thinking as unrealistic.

Harnessing the Counterforce: The History Issue

The New Thinking position differed from the analytical trends of the prior two periods in its treatment of the history issue. In the prior two cycles, analysts advocated a more balanced triangle, only to find that the ever-present burdens of history ultimately made such a policy impossible. Supporters of New Thinking, by contrast, recognized the role of nationalism and emotions in Chinese policy toward Japan, and tried explicitly to overcome that nationalism. As in other periods, however, nationalist emotions proved to be too strong, and the New Thinking movement, like other attempts to rebalance the strategic triangle, receded.

New Thinking was fundamentally an attempt to strengthen Sino-Japanese relations by limiting the excessively nationalistic feelings of the Chinese people. Again, the reasoning of Ma and Shi differed slightly. Ma believed that the history issue had already been resolved because senior Japanese leaders had reflected on Ja-

Japan's wartime aggression. Ma's New Thinking arose from his perceptions of several recent Japan-related incidents that he regarded as emotional overreactions: the emotional response by the Chinese public and press to a photograph of actress ZHAO Wei wearing a dress that included a depiction of the Japanese imperial flag; the outrage over actor JIANG Wen's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine in Japan; the posting of a sign saying "No Japanese allowed" in a Shenzhen bar; and an article published early that year arguing that Japan could invade East and South Asia within thirty days and that its first attack would be on China. Ma charged that the media was "instigating" an even greater emotional response by sensationalizing the events in order to sell more papers. He believed that China was experiencing a reemergence of nationalism that was both arrogant and xenophobic, which led it to react too emotionally to Japan. Ma believed emotional feelings prevented progress in Sino-Japanese relations.²⁸

Shi's reasons for opposing excessive popular nationalism differed slightly from Ma's reasons. Shi agreed with the fundamental premise that Chinese nationalism impeded progress in Sino-Japanese relations. Unlike Ma, Shi opposed this nationalism not because he believed such emotions were unwarranted, but rather because he believed they interfered with a pragmatic foreign policy. Shi believed that negative feelings between the Japanese and Chinese created a "danger for the guarantee of China's long-term security" by preventing China from pursuing a strategic foreign policy based on its rational national interests. Consequently, he urged the Chinese people to base their judgments on reality and to refrain from "[holding] an emotional attitude" toward Sino-Japanese relations.²⁹ In order to counteract this irrational thinking, Shi urged government officials, scholars, and others to work together to improve public opinion of Japan.³⁰

Though Ma's and Shi's New Thinking provoked an intense debate, most analysts agreed with their assessment of the need to replace emotional, nationalist foreign policy with rational, strategic foreign policy. FENG Zhaokui placed New Thinking toward Japan


in the context of a more general discussion about the need to liberalize foreign policy. He argued that since the late 1990s, China’s foreign policy as a whole had tried to base itself on reality. As a subset of China’s foreign policy, policy toward Japan shared the goals of pragmatism and the creation of a diplomacy that serves China’s interests. Analyst ZHOU Guiyin also argued from the general premise that nationalism and the intense emotions it provoked were detrimental to China’s national interests. He maintained that the long-term stability of the multipolar world order and the establishment of an East Asian security structure required China to “objectively” and “rationally” consider Japan. Likewise, LING Xingguang, an analyst who disagreed with the specifics of Ma’s New Thinking, nevertheless agreed that China needed to “promote rational responses” and “overcome narrow nationalist emotions.” Throughout the New Thinking debate, there was widespread agreement about the need for China to abandon nationalistic, emotional responses to problems with Japan.

Opposition to Ma’s and Shi’s calls to abandon emotional thinking ran along two lines. First, some analysts argued that supporters of New Thinking neglected the impact of Japanese nationalism on Sino-Japanese relations. FENG Zhaokui, while agreeing that the Chinese were too nationalistic, also argued that the Japanese had an “excessive, emotional nationalism.” By contrast, LIN Zhibo denied that Chinese nationalism was to blame for the poor quality of Sino-Japanese relations. As he argued, “The so-called fever of extreme and narrow nationalism does not exist in China... the intrinsic quality and characteristic of the Chinese culture is ‘treasuring peace.’” Second, analysts objected to the willingness of the

35. Note: FENG Zhaokui misidentified as FENG Zhaokui in this translation.
New Thinking movement to set aside history issues. LIN Zhibo argued that Japan must "show sincere remorse for the war of aggression" for the conciliatory environment necessary for regional integration to arise.\(^{37}\) He attacked the New Thinking argument that overcoming history was necessary for a "pragmatic" foreign policy by arguing that "pragmatism" had come to mean a situation "in which principles can be abandoned for the sake of tangible benefit."\(^{38}\) Critics of New Thinking argued that the policy was too conciliatory, though some did recognize the need for less emotional Sino-Japanese relations.

**Did New Thinking Represent a Shift in Official Policy?**

New Thinking never became a mainstream view and, therefore, did not represent a shift in official policy. Nevertheless, Ma and Shi were careful to refer to traditional policy phrases, as well as the key phrases of the 16th Party Congress, in order to give their arguments more legitimacy.\(^{39}\) Feng defined New Thinking as a philosophy that "uses the spirit of the 16th Party Congress to lead the new reality of relations with Japan, and answer questions about relations with Japan." He argued that New Thinking was based on three platforms of the 16th Party Congress: the possibility of a "peaceful international environment and friendly regional environment;" "the centralization of power and establishment of comprehensive societal well-being;" and "the strengthening of neighborly friendship and support for improving relations with neighbors and regarding them as companions (yulingweishan, yilingweiban)."\(^{40}\) Ma and Shi were careful to note the connections between their ideas and those of the 16th Party Congress. Ma's articles referenced the 16th Party Congress's emphasis on "renewal" and quoted the 16th Party Congress exhortation to "improve relations with neighbors and regard neighbors as companions."\(^{41}\) Likewise, Shi expressed support for HU Jintao's exhortation to "look at the long-term, and prepare a plan for the big picture state of affairs (fangy-

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37. Ibid.

38. LIN Zhibo, "Further Questioning," supra note 27.

39. The 16th Party Congress was particularly important because HU Jintao became General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, the first step in his accession as leader of China. Hu became President of China in March 2003. The shift of official power from JIANIG Zemin to HU Jintao was completed in March 2005 when Hu became the official head of the military.


anzhangyuan, chounoudaju)."42 Such references lent legitimacy to the New Thinking arguments.

Whereas Chinese language articles referred to connections between the agenda of the 16th Party Congress and the New Thinking movement in order to give New Thinking more legitimacy than it actually had, Japanese language articles incorrectly portrayed New Thinking as an actual shift in official Chinese policy. A casual Japanese observer, aware of the excitement over the leadership change in China, would read Ma’s startling new position on China and assume that it was linked to the rise of HU Jintao. The chronology of the origins of New Thinking made the assumption that it represented a shift in official thinking possible. HU Jintao began his ascent to power at the 16th Party Congress in 2002; Ma’s Zhainüe yu Guanli article, which first presented New Thinking ideology, was published that same month. The Japanese translation was published in weekly segments, beginning with the January 28, 2003 edition of Sekai Shuho [World Affairs Weekly].

Japanese coverage of the New Thinking debate incorrectly implied that New Thinking represented a shift in official policy. The forward to the Japanese translation of Ma’s article explicitly stated that Ma’s November article “is being noted as something that divines HU Jintao’s new systematic policy toward Japan.”43 Accompanying this first installment of Ma’s article was an analytical article by MO Bangfu, a Chinese journalist living in Japan, entitled, “Ma’s Essay Suggests A Transformation in Chinese Leaders’ Policy Toward Japan.” Mo implied that Ma’s article might have official status because of the influence of his 1998 book, Jiaofeng [Crossing Swords]. Mo wrote:

Why did Ma publish this . . . article immediately after the 16th Party Congress? When he published Jiaofeng it was said that he had powerful reformers within the party who supported him. Who is supporting him this time? 1998’s Jiaofeng became Chinese mainstream thinking. Will this

essay’s viewpoint become the way in which China views Japan.\textsuperscript{44}

By citing Ma’s connections to the party and the influence of his previous work, Mo implied that New Thinking represented a shift in official thought that would soon become mainstream. In short, Ma’s article was clearly presented in Japanese as an indication of official Chinese policy.

Misrepresentations of New Thinking as official policy were present not only in Japanese journals, but also in mainstream Japanese newspapers. On December 14, 2002, \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun} ran an article entitled, “People’s Daily Slams Anti-Japan Rhetoric.” “People’s Daily” in this context actually meant MA Licheng’s November 2002 \textit{Zhanliu yu Guanli} article. While Ma was certainly an influential \textit{Renmin Ribao} writer, the article in question was not even published in that paper and did not necessarily have the paper’s support. The article cited Ma’s essays as “a move apparently reflecting the importance the new leadership of China places on friendly relations with Japan.”\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Yomiuri Shimbun} incorrectly implied to the Japanese public that Ma’s article represented an official party position.

Some suspect that New Thinking was a trial balloon that popped. In a February 2005 article, Professor JIANG Wenran argues that China allowed an “unprecedented” debate about Chinese foreign policy toward Japan because HU Jintao and WEN Jiabao were attempting to develop their own strategy toward the country. A debate of the magnitude of New Thinking is particularly unusual in China, where the Chinese government tightly controls the press and journals.\textsuperscript{46} JIANG Wenran argues that the government allowed the New Thinking debate to continue because it was seriously contem-


\textsuperscript{46} In fact \textit{Zhanliu yu Guanli} was shut down by the government in September 2004 because it was upsetting the North Koreans. JIANG Wenran, “China’s ‘New Thinking’ on Japan,” The Jamestown Foundation, \textit{China Brief}, Vol. 5 (February 1, 2005), <http://www.jamestown.org/ publications_details.php?volume_id=408&issue_id=3217&article_id=2369181>
plating New Thinking as an official approach: "While not openly endorsing the new thinking, the new Chinese leadership quietly experimented with some of its ideas in its Japan policy." According to JIANG Wenran's analysis, when Japan failed to respond with its own New Thinking, however, the Chinese government rethought its position.\textsuperscript{47} While JIANG Wenran's argument proposes a tantalizing conspiracy view, the unwillingness of the Chinese to drop the history issue, HU Jintao's concerns about appearing too soft on Japan, sharply deteriorating Sino-Japanese relations, and the quick and sharp criticism of Ma and Shi all suggest that New Thinking was an academic flight of fancy rather than an official policy proposal.\textsuperscript{48} Chinese officials have denied that New Thinking was an official Chinese position.\textsuperscript{49}

\textbf{Conclusion}

The new, assertive foreign policy of the Bush administration made Chinese analysts feel insecure. The New Thinking movement, though neither official nor accepted by a majority of analysts, attempted to address these concerns by advocating stronger relations with Japan. Some analysts, like Ma, worried that America's policies would harm the regionalist cooperation so vital to China's economic growth. Other analysts, like Shi, worried that given the strong U.S.-Japan ties and weak Sino-U.S. ties of 2001, the United States would utilize its alliance with Japan to contain China. Both Shi and Ma responded to this U.S.-induced insecurity by advocating stronger relations with Japan. Furthermore, both Shi and Ma recognized the history issue as a force that hindered stronger Sino-Japanese relations and tried explicitly to overcome it by advocating Chinese accommodation of Japan. Such a position proved impossible, given the continued importance of the history issue among the Chinese people. Having begun with the publication of Ma's article in November 2002, the New Thinking debate was already petering out by the end of 2003.

New Thinking failed because the majority of Chinese people were unwilling to overcome their anger over Japan's historical aggression in order to accommodate the Japanese position. As LI Zhibo argued, "Japan has not examined itself on the war as Ger-

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Discussion with Thomas Christensen, February 23, 2005.
many has, so what reason do the Chinese people have for forgetting that period of history?" 50 This view was supported by the outrage of the Chinese public, who used Internet forums to express their displeasure. 51 The lack of Japanese New Thinking in response to China's strategy further weakened the Chinese position. The majority of Chinese saw no reason for China to improve Sino-Japanese relations by fully accommodating the Japanese position. In his August 2003 critique of New Thinking, LIN Zhibo argued, "The true essence of the so-called new thinking on relations with Japan is to demand that China seek Sino-Japanese friendship with unilateral tolerance and magnanimity and compromise and concession." Lin argued that Japanese should bear some responsibility for improved relations because mutual relations benefited both parties. 52 CAS analyst JIN Xide expressed similar concerns. He worried that the New Thinking position would "[send] the wrong message to Japanese hard-liners." 53 The New Thinking belief that the Chinese people could be convinced to strengthen Sino-Japanese relations by accommodating Japan was unrealistic, given the continued significance of the history issue.

Moreover, strengthened Sino-U.S. relations following September 11th made SHI Yinhong's strand of New Thinking obsolete. The threat of terror distracted American officials from the threat of China. The United States came to rely increasingly on China's assistance, particularly with regard to the recurrence of the Korean nuclear problem in 2002. 54 As FENG Zhaokui argued, Sino-U.S. relations benefited from China's "quick response" after September 11th, its willingness to participate in a "worldwide rejection of terrorism," and its cooperation with the United States against terror. 55 Improved Sino-U.S. relations made it more unlikely that the U.S.-Japan security alliance would be used against China, thereby removing the foundation for Shi's argument. 56 Given the security brought by stronger ties with the United States, the Chinese had no real incentive to fully accommodate Japan in order to improve relations. Unrealistically conciliatory and ultimately unnecessary given healthy Sino-U.S. relations, the New Thinking debate faded away.

50. LIN Zhibo, "Further Questioning," supra note 27.
52. LIN Zhibo, "Further Questioning," supra note 27.
53. JIN Xide, quoted in Yoichi Funabashi, supra note 35.
54. Swaine, "China," supra note 8, p. 76.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

China's realism toward Japan comes in waves and is heavily influenced by the continued existence of the history issue. U.S.-centered shocks to China's sense of security cause it to seek stronger Sino-Japanese relations in an attempt to form a more balanced strategic triangle. These attempts inevitably fail because the forces of history continue to prevent significant Sino-Japanese reconciliation.

Chinese Policy toward Japan

While this pattern remained constant throughout each of the three periods, the mechanism by which the Chinese attempted to strengthen the triangle varied. In the first two periods, Chinese analysts advocated a more balanced triangle, but were unwilling to accommodate the Japanese. In the first period, Chinese analysts interpreted Japanese interest in closer economic relations with China to mean that Japan "needed" China, and would therefore accommodate the Chinese position without requiring Chinese concessions. Furthermore, even as the Chinese advocated improved Sino-Japanese relations, they worried about the possibility of a configuration in which Japan gained leverage by serving as the pivot of a romantic triangle. Likewise, during the second period, Chinese analysts advocated a balanced triangle and stronger Sino-Japanese relations, but again unrealistically expected the Japanese to bear the burden of improving relations because they believed Japan was to blame for the poor relations.

While realist notions of a more balanced triangle failed during the first two periods because the Chinese expected the Japanese to accommodate the Chinese position, the New Thinking debate failed because it expected the Chinese to accommodate the Japanese position. New Thinking urged the Chinese people to overcome their dislike of Japan in order to create a more rational foreign policy. Such a policy proved to be unrealistic because the Chinese people were unprepared to forgive Japan for its wartime aggression. While some analysts agreed about the need to develop a more rational foreign policy, they too criticized the policy for being too conciliatory and accommodating of the Chinese position. Even as Chinese academics and the Chinese public unrealistically believed that it
was possible to strengthen Sino-Japanese relations by requiring the Japanese to accommodate the Chinese, they objected to arguments that China should take the initiative and accommodate the Japanese.

The failure of attempts to rebalance the strategic triangle, whether by accommodating the Japanese or by expecting Japanese accommodation, reveals two paradoxes in Chinese foreign policy toward Japan. First, the belief that the Japanese will accommodate the Chinese position is clearly unrealistic, but Chinese analysts are unable to realistically advocate accommodating the Japanese position because of the weight of history and anti-Japanese public opinion. A middle position is difficult to achieve because Chinese analysts must convince the Japanese to be more conciliatory at the same time that they convince the Chinese public to be more conciliatory. The Japanese may have been willing to be accommodating in the first period, but a successful improvement in Sino-Japanese relations would have required the Chinese to respond with accommodation of their own. While Chinese analysts agree, during times of insecurity, about the need for stronger Sino-Japanese relations, there will be no feasible way to accomplish such a policy until the two sides are able to reach a more successful agreement on the history issue.

The second paradox relates to Chinese views of the U.S.-Japan alliance. The U.S.-Japan alliance causes the scalene nature of the strategic triangle by ensuring that the United States and Japan are always closer to each other than either is to China. In order to achieve a balanced triangle, China can attempt one of two strategies: First, China can attempt to make its bilateral relations with Japan and the United States as strong as the current U.S.-Japan relationship. The U.S.-Japan relationship is very strong, however, and such a policy will require great effort on behalf of the Chinese. China can also try to achieve a more balanced triangle by attempting to weaken the U.S.-Japan relationship. If China succeeds in weakening this relationship, it can achieve a balanced triangle without improving its relations with Japan and the United States as much as it would have needed to were U.S.-Japan relations still close. The second paradox is that China is unable to decide how strong the ideal U.S.-Japan relationship would be. Since China worries that the goal of the U.S.-Japan alliance is to contain China, it fears a strong U.S.-Japan alliance. In particular, China worries about U.S.-Japan cooperation in a crisis over the sovereignty of Taiwan. At the same time, Chinese analysts worry about a U.S.-Japan
alliance that is too weak. Chinese analysts believe that America's influence on Japan's foreign policy prevents Japan from remilitarizing and potentially resuming its previous militarism. This paradox also relates to the history issue: Since Chinese are unconvinced that Japan has fully apologized for its aggressive militarism, they worry that a stronger, remilitarized Japan will again threaten China's security.

Neither of these two paradoxes is likely to be resolved until China and Japan come to terms with the history issue. Prospects for a resolution of the history issue in the near term are gloomy. Until the history issue is resolved, Chinese analysts will continue to advocate the construction of a more balanced triangle through closer Sino-Japanese relations in response to U.S.-induced feelings of insecurity, and such efforts will fail because of the continued influence of history. With the recession of New Thinking, the China-U.S.-Japan triangle has returned again to its scalene configuration.

The Current Configuration of the Strategic Triangle

The China-U.S.-Japan strategic triangle has reverted to its typical scalene configuration, in which China's relations with both Japan and the United States are weaker than the relationship between the United States and Japan. U.S.-Japan relations remain close, as they have been since the September 11th attacks. The recent Joint Statement on the two countries' security relationship is an explicit indication of the quality of these relations. At the same time, Sino-Japanese relations have weakened precipitously; some say the relationship is at its worst state since normalization in 1972. In November 2004, the Japanese requested an apology from China after a Chinese submarine trespassed in Japanese waters near Okinawa. The Japanese Defense Guidelines, issued in December 2004, angered the Chinese by explicitly mentioning China as a threat. That same month, Japan drew additional Chinese criticism by issuing a tourist visa to former Taiwanese president LEE Tenghui. Meanwhile, China and Japan have been squabbling over Japan's claim to an exclusive economic zone in the East China Sea and the territorial rights to the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.¹

The Sino-U.S. relationship, by contrast, is considered to be at its highest point in decades.² The relationship is still benefiting from the closer cooperation that arose in response to the September 11th attacks. Cooperation with China has been central to America's response to the North Korean nuclear crisis. More recent developments have been slightly less rosy. Scholar JIANG Wenran argues that the February 2005 Joint Statement by U.S. and Japanese officials, and expressions of concern about the Chinese military by CIA Director Porter Goss and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld suggest that America is returning to a view of China as a "strategic competitor."³ Such a view may be a bit premature, however. The United States may have merely been attempting to indicate its displeasure over the Chinese anti-secession bill, which became law on March 14, 2005.⁴

The February 2005 U.S.-Japan Joint Statement: Another Shock?

On February 19, 2005, Japanese and United States officials made the biggest explicit adjustment to the U.S.-Japan security alliance since 1996.⁵ U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld met with their Japanese counterparts, Japanese foreign minister Nobutaka MACHIMURA and Defense Agency director general Yoshinori ONO, to discuss the nature of the alliance.⁶ The purpose of the meeting was ostensibly to pressure North Korea into returning to negotiations about its nuclear arms, but the issue that captured the attention of both the American media and the Chinese government was the pledge to

"encourage the peaceful resolution of issues concerning the Taiwan Strait through dialogue" as one of twelve "common strategic objectives." The remark drew attention because Japan has historically been reluctant to make any explicit statements about its policies on Taiwan. At the same time, the two countries pledged to "encourage China to improve transparency of its military affairs." The meeting was considered to be a necessary first step in negotiations on the realignment of U.S. troops in Japan. The Joint Statement suggests even closer cooperation between Japan and the United States and sparked renewed Chinese fears that the containment of China is a main goal of the alliance.

Both the United States and Japan are concerned about the North Korea crisis. Still, the inclusion of Taiwan in the Joint Statement may have been a deliberate attempt to signal opposition to China's impending anti-secession law. At the same time, Professor Jeff Kingston argues that Japan wants to show China that the Taiwan issue "is still on the table" in order to obtain concessions on the East China Sea disputes. In more general terms, scholar Philip Yang argues the Joint Statement should be seen in the context of continuous Japanese efforts to expand the purview of their SDF and move towards becoming a "normal" military power.

The Chinese were predictably outraged over the Joint Statement. The state-run People's Daily called the statement "an irresponsible and reckless move that will have grave consequences." It charged that the statement was "nothing short of blatant meddling in China's internal affairs, and... a direct challenge to our sovereignty, territorial integrity and State security." The article cautioned that the statement would put a damper on Sino-US relations, while also "put[ting] one more icy coating on the still chilly Sino-Japanese relations at a time when both countries are expecting to

see improvements.” The Chinese were mainly concerned that the Joint Statement represents renewed efforts to contain China. As Jing-dong YUAN argues, “Beijing considers the revitalized US-Japan military alliance as part of Washington’s containment strategy against China.”

Despite the predictably negative Chinese reaction to the Joint Statement, this statement is not likely to constitute the next U.S.-centered shock to cause a wave of realist thinking toward Japan. While the statement upset the Chinese, it was issued in a context of strong U.S.-China relations and a moderate U.S. policy toward Taiwan. The United States opposed CHEN Shui-bian’s March 2004 referenda, for example, as an attempt to “unilaterally” alter the status quo. Such a position is consistent with overall American attempts to avoid actions or statements that encourage Taiwan to seek independence. As long as the statement is not the harbinger of a shift to a policy that more actively supports Taiwanese independence, there is no reason for the Joint Statement to constitute a shock.

April 2005 Anti-Japan Protests: The Continued Importance of the History Issue

Widespread Chinese protests over three consecutive weekends in April 2005 drew international attention to the new depths to which Sino-Japanese relations have plummeted. The protests, often led by students, began on April 2 in Chengdu and, over the course of the next two weeks, spread to Hangzhou, Shanghai, Tianjin, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Dongguan, Zhuhai, Chengdu, Shenyang, Nanning, Amoi, and Hanoi in Vietnam, with the largest estimated by Western reports at as many as 10,000 people, occurring in Beijing. Yet, despite the proliferation of protests, Chinese

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officials were already beginning to clamp down on such gatherings by the third weekend. Chinese officials blocked anti-Japan websites to prevent protestors from organizing rallies and successfully preempted a second rally in Beijing.\footnote{18} During the week of April 18th, Chinese officials issued several statements calling for an end to the protests. Those who made such pleas included Foreign Minister LI Zhaoxing, the Ministry of Public Security, and, interestingly enough, Commerce Secretary BO Xilai, who argued in a very free-market manner that the boycott against Japanese goods advocated by protestors would only hurt China’s economy.\footnote{19} By April 26th, there were reports that sixteen “youths” had been arrested for their role in the protests, while twenty-six others were “temporarily jailed.”\footnote{20}

The April protests had two major triggers, both of which point to the continued importance of the history issue in Chinese anti-Japan sentiment. The first trigger was Kofi Annan’s proposal to reconfigure the UN Security Council, released in late March. The proposal would expand the Security Council by adding several nations as permanent members, including Japan. The Chinese opposed granting a permanent seat to Japan because they felt the Japanese were not deserved, given their inability to either come to terms with their wartime aggression or apologize to China. The second trigger was even more clearly linked to historical issues. On April 5, Japan approved several new textbooks, including a new version of one that had previously caused great controversy because of Chinese accusations that it glossed over Japan’s wartime aggression.\footnote{21} While these two incidents provided the clear impetus for the protests, the protests expressed the Chinese people’s overall distaste for Japan. Sino-Japanese relations continued to deteriorate as both sides showed an inability to manage the history issue in a subtle, responsible manner.

\footnote{21} “Japan Attacks China ‘Patriotism,’” \textit{BBC}, April 6, 2005, \url{<www.taiwansecurity.org/News/2005/BBC-060405.htm>}.}
Policy Implications

Several policy implications follow from the discussion of the East Asian security triangle and the continued relevance of the history issue. First, bilateral policy between any two actors in this triangle will affect the other two bilateral relationships as well. In order to anticipate the effectiveness and likely outcomes of a given policy, American policymakers must carefully study the implications of the policy for both Japan and China in the context of the triangular relationship.

Second, policymakers must realize that the perceptions of the Japanese, Chinese, and American policymakers and public can be just as important as actual “objective” conditions. This paper makes no claim that U.S. shocks actually result in a more equilateral strategic triangle; rather this paper argues that U.S. actions that the Chinese perceive as shocks result in Chinese attempts to construct an equilateral triangle.

Third, the cycle described in this paper is not threatening to the United States because there is very little risk of a Sino-Japan alliance in the short to medium term. Such an alliance is unlikely given the strength of the U.S.-Japan alliance, which was only strengthened by the February 2005 Joint Statement, and the failure of China and Japan to resolve the history issue. The adoption in China of a “victimization” view of history, which emphasizes Chinese suffering caused by Japanese aggression, and the rise of a strong right-wing nationalist minority in Japan make resolution of the history issue unlikely in the short to medium term.22

Nevertheless, this nationalism that precludes a Sino-Japan alliance may negatively impact American interests. Nationalism in Japan is associated with the desire for a stronger military and more independence from the U.S. in foreign policy. Such developments would limit America’s ability to control situations of interest in the East Asian region, such as North Korean denuclearization, Korean unification, and the fate of Taiwan, and deprive the United States of its most vital ally against the North Koreans and the Chinese.

At the same time, nationalism in China is often directed against Japan. The tension between China and Japan, the two great powers located in East Asia, creates regional instability. It is therefore in United States’ interest to encourage a better Sino-Japanese working relationship, though, as predicted by triangle theory, it is

best for the United States to also maintain close and positive relations with each country. Furthermore, nationalism, while of anti-Japanese origins, may be swiftly redirected against the U.S. The anti-American protests provoked by the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade are an example of the power of the combination of preexisting nationalist sentiments and U.S. provocation, whether deliberate or accidental. Moreover, Chinese opposition to U.S.-Japan security cooperation due to anti-Japanese nationalism may create a more difficult environment for the alliance. The U.S.-Japan alliance is crucial to American security interests because it allows America to maintain military bases on Japanese territory, which are vital for American regional and global power projection.

Fourth, the United States should not try to mediate the history issue, at least until there are indications that the leadership and public opinion in both countries are in such a position that effective mediation is possible, although it should encourage rational, responsible perceptions of history both as a principle and through its own actions. Any premature attempts to mediate this issue will result in a backlash against the United States because both sides will be unhappy with any compromise, and these damaged bilateral relations may prove detrimental to U.S. attempts to manage regional security issues.

Fifth, the United States should utilize subtle, rather than overt, methods to maintain its current policy of managing China’s rise in order to avoid serious damage to Sino-U.S. relations. The United States should continue to reduce the threat posed by China by managing China’s rise in a way that integrates it into international organizations and regional structures. The quality of U.S.-China relations is vital for America’s security interests in East Asia and for America’s economic interest in trade with China. Although overt U.S. actions against China could cause Sino-Japanese relations to improve temporarily, Sino-Japanese relations will not significantly improve until the history issue has been resolved.

In particular, the U.S. must continue to conduct a patient and subtle policy regarding the Taiwan issue because the Taiwan issue is a microcosm of the larger containment issue. The Chinese believe that the containment of China is a major purpose of the U.S.-Japan security alliance. They believe that U.S.-Japan containment of China is most likely to occur as a cooperative U.S.-Japan attempt to

protect the status quo in an armed conflict over Taiwan. China will perceive efforts to constrain its actions regarding Taiwan as an indication of the hostility of the U.S.-Japan alliance to Chinese interests, with destabilizing effects for the strategic triangle.

In short, attention to the role of the strategic triangle is crucial to any attempt to manage any bilateral relationship within the China-U.S.-Japan strategic. Furthermore, effective policy must consider the role of nationalism in both China and Japan and the implications for each country's foreign policy. Only by considering these two factors, can policymakers reach effective policy decisions.
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