# China's Threat Perception of Japan after the Cold War: A Tentative Discussion

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## **I** Introduction

There is no doubt that Japan has been experiencing a long period of peace and economic development since the end of WW II. Taking the lesson from the tragedies of the war, many scholars in Japan have devoted themselves in the research of peace. The social norm of pacifism has been dominant in Japan society (Yoshihide, 1998), though it is relatively weakened these days. To regain the trust of the countries in Asia, Japan has also helped its neighbor countries, including China develop their economy mainly through ODA. After the end of the Cold War, Japan had suffered a relatively long period of recession since its economic bubble burst. Its defense budget is relatively stable, not increased dramatically. From 1991 to 2006, its military expenditure as percentage of GDP is always 1%. In 2006, Japan's military expenditure reached 43701 Million US dollars (Table 1). However, after the cold war, especially in the middle of 1990s, the research in the academic circle and the media cover of "Japan Threat" or "Japan's Revival of Militarism" in China was overwhelmingly gained people's attention (Zhang, 2002; Chu, 2005). Meanwhile, many opinion surveys also indicate that Chinese people looked Japan as the "threatening" or "most threatening" country. For example, the opinion survey conducted in Beijing in 1997 showed that about 70 percent and 75 percent of the respondents considered Japan and the United States, respectively, either "threatening" or the "most threatening" countries, while only about 5 percent of the respondents placed other countries, such as Russia and India, in the same categories (Yu Guoming, 1998).

This paper seeks to explain why the threat perception of Japan became a target of security and political debate in China after the end of the Cold War.

This question is important for three reasons. First of all, it attempts to explain a phenomenon involving two of the major powers in the world today, whose relationship to each other could affect the stability of East Asia and the world as a whole. Secondly, it is important because it offers an insight to the problem of how threat perceptions formed, especially it intends to explore the role of history and identity sharing in the formation of threat perceptions. As we all know, mutual trust, identity sharing and history reconciliation are essential parts to build good bilateral relations. Finally, it is important because the dissertation illustrates how states respond to changes in relations to their domestic politics, especially in the information era.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section II makes a review of theories of threat perceptions. Section III introduces the working hypotheses. Section IV, V, VI are the three arguments respectively. And the final part is the conclusion and indications for Sino-Japan relations.

## **II** Theories of Apology and Threat Perception

In the international relations literature, a threat is defined as a situation in which one agent or group has either the capability or intention to inflict a negative consequence on another agent or group (Davis, 2000). There are two categories of threats: threats against us as individuals and threats against collections of individuals. Threats against collectives can be in the form of (1) military threats, (2) economic threats, or (3)

cultural threats. In this paper, I define "threat" as military threats on the collective level.

Theoretical debates about how states perceive threats focus on the role and relative weight of capabilities and intentions in threat assessments. Some scholars-principally neorealists-argue that threat assessments are based almost exclusively on the balance of material capabilities(Waltz, 1979). Powerful states appear threatening; weak states do not.

Most other scholars, however, argue that the neorealist focus on material capabilities is too narrow. According to this view, whether a country appears threatening depends on both its capabilities and what is known about its intentions. Scholars have proposed and debated a variety of factors that influence how one state's intention will be viewed by others.

Proponents of the democratic peace argue that leaders focus on a state's regime type; democracies tend to trust other democracies(Russett, 1996). Other scholars argue that leaders evaluate another state's intentions by assessing its membership in international institutions. As states become more closely institutionalized, they should perceive each other's intentions as more benign; membership in institutions imposes constraints, promotes transparency, and reduces uncertainty about intentions (Keohane, 1989). Defensive realists argue that states can signal benign intentions by sending "costly signals": pursuing unilateral disarmament, signing arms control agreements, and reducing offensive capabilities(Walt, 1989). In sum, scholars of the democratic peace, liberal institutionalists, defensive realists, and constructivists all argue that perceptions weigh heavily when states evaluate threats. They merely disagree over what variables are most important in signaling benign-or malign-intentions.

Jennifer M. Lind added another variable-remembrance to the debate over how states signal their intentions. The ways a state remembers and atones for its past violence signals its intentions, and therefore affect how threatening the country appears to others. Apologetic remembrance makes a country's intentions appear less malign, and hence makes it appear less threatening. Unapologetic remembrance, on the other hand, sends signals of malign intentions and increases perceptions of threat (Jennifer, 2005). Social identity theory (SIT) and its offshoot self-categorization theory (SCT) provide two nonmaterial explanations for identity construction and threat perception. Both theories were developed to explain prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior toward members of the out-group. Given that prejudice is often associated with a fear that the out-group has the capability or intention to inflict a negative consequence on the in-group, these theories can provide a competing explanation for the rise and fall of the perception of threat. International relations scholars have adopted the logic of Social Identity Theory to predict that "outsiders" in international affairs will be viewed as more threatening than "insiders" (Wendt, 1999).

## **III** Working Hypothesis

As a result, existing literature tells us little about what constitute threat perception. It is even more difficult to find articles directly targeting on the subject of "China's Threat Perception of Japan" in various databases. Chikako Kawakatsu Ueki managed to fill the blank in her Ph.D. dissertation (UEKI, 2006). However, her argument that relative power positions and increase of power are important factors shaping threat perception can't explain why the "Japan treat" arguments rose when the relative power positions of China became higher.

I examine three potential explanations for the rise of "Japan treat" based on realism, constructivism, and theories of apology. I then examine if the predictions are borne out by empirical data. Meanwhile, some points must be acknowledged at the outset. As for theories of democratic peace and liberal institution, since Japan is already a democratic country and actively participates in international institutions, it is obvious that we should try to explain the phenomenon from other angles.

1. Working hypothesis

(1) Realist Explanations:

*Hypothesis 1*: "Japan threat" arguments rise because of the redefinition of U.S.-Japan Alliance which may target at the question of Taiwan.

(2) Explanations from Theory of Apology

*Hypothesis* 2: "Japan threat" arguments rise because Japanese remembrance of its history is unapologetic.

(3) Explanations from Social Identity Theory and Constructivism

*Hypothesis 3*: "Japan threat" arguments rise because of non-shared identity between China and Japan.

2. Material Sources

The principle data is from both primacy and secondary source. "Interviews" of politicians near the leadership, government officials, academics, and think-tank analysts will be conducted. Furthermore, memoirs, elite-authored scholarly articles and op-eds, archival documents, public opinion polls and media coverage are also of the fundamental bases of the empirical part of the research.

## **IV** China's Threat Perception of Japan and U.S.-Japan Alliance

#### 1 Japan's Military Modernization

With the development of economy, Japan also seeks to become a great political power even a military power. Meanwhile, facing a troublesome North Korea, and a rising China, Japan is adapting its national security policy to the post-Cold War security environment through the revision of its military doctrines (such as National Defense Program Outline, NDPO revision in 1995), the introduction of new security legislation (such as National Emergency Legislation) and the acquisition of new military hardware. In addition, traditional constitutional prohibitions on pre-emptive strikes, arms exports and nuclear weapons are increasingly under question and close to being breached, or have ceased at least to be taboo subjects for debate. In other words, Japan is set to acquire many of the capabilities of a 'normal' advanced military power(Christopher, 2005).

As a result of the 1995 NDPO revision, the Japan Self Defense Forces, JSDF has undergone a quantitative build-down of its Cold War-style capabilities, a trend that will likely be consolidated by NDPO revision in 2005. If measured in nominal U.S. dollar terms, the total Japanese defense budget has continued to rise strongly even after the end of the Cold War-standing at 44 billion US Dollars in 2001, only second to that of the U.S.. And its military expenditure per capital is much much higher than that of China.

Japan is continuing a qualitative build-up of JSDF capabilities, including, most notably: the Maritime Self Defense Forces(MSDF)'s Navy Theater-wide Defense(NTWD) Ballistic Missile Defence(BMD) assets, amphibious capabilities and the rehearsal of aircraft carrier technologies; and the Air Self Defense Forces(ASDF)'s Patriot Advanced Capability-3(PAC-3) BMD system, F-2 fighters and in-flight refueling. In sum, these represent new JSDF power-projection capabilities for a range of missions, such as UN Peace Keeping Operation, but that can also be used to support US-led expeditionary campaigns, as in Afghanistan and Iraq. Japan has complemented this hardware with the introduction of Revolution in Military Affairs(RMA)-type Battle Management Command, Control, Computers and Intelligence(BMC4I) systems, and a new Joint Staff Organization(JSO) for streamlined operational decision-making. Japan sees this as essential to maintaining an edge over regional rivals and to enable improved interoperability with the US. Japan has further acquired and integrated new intelligence capabilities in the form of the Japan Defense Agent(JDA)'s Japan Defense Intelligence Headquarters(JDIH) and the spy satellite program (Christopher, 2005).

#### 2 Redefinition of U.S.-Japan Alliance

U.S.-Japan alliance was been established in 1951. Its main function was anti Soviet

Union during the cold war era. As neo-realism's theory of alliance points out that alliance will be dissolved after the major enemy disappears. However, after a period of uncertainty, U.S.-Japan alliance not only has been remained, but also is being intensified. In 1996, Japan and the US issued the "Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation" and started to amend the "Defense Cooperation Guidelines" worked out in 1978. In September 1997, the new defense guidelines were formally defined. On October 29, 2005, the United States and Japan "Security Consultative Committee" issued the document of "U.S.-Japan Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the future." In the year of 2006 and 2007, the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee (2+2 Meeting) was held respectively. In the 2006 meeting's document, Taiwan was listed as one of the "common strategic objectives" between the United States and Japan in the Asia-Pacific region. Enhanced security ties between Washington and Tokyo have transformed the U.S.-Japan alliance and reshaped the East Asian security environment.

Why has U.S.-Japan alliance been enhanced? Many scholars have made contributions on this. Nevertheless, the factor of China is one of the most critical factors. As a matter of act, Joseph S. Nye is the advocator of "East Asian Strategy Report", which is also known as Nye Report. For Nye, the redefinition of the US-Japan alliance was none other than a redefinition in the face of the China challenge (Funabashi, 1999).

As the United States and Japan have expanded their security ties to reflect changes in their respective threats perceptions and regional security strategies, strong concern has arisen in other countries (Wu, 2005-06). This is particularly true in Beijing, which believes that enhance security between Washington and Tokyo compromises China's security interests.

Chinese concerns about Japan's military role have increased over the past decade. The 1996 joint declaration on the bilateral security alliance and the subsequent revision of the Mutual Defense Guidelines were perceived as a clear indication that Japan had abandoned its policy of 'homeland defense', which required strictly limiting defense to Japan's soil and passively meeting an enemy attack, and was moving towards becoming a military power. Specifically, Chinese analysts were concerned that China was taken as the imaginary enemy of the U.S.-Japan security alliance and that there was a hidden danger of strategic conflicts between China and the U.S.-Japan alliance over Taiwan. On August 17, 1997, Chief Cabinet Secretary Kajiyama Seiroku indicated that the guideline covers Taiwan, a remark strongly protested by Beijing. An alarmed Beijing pressured Japan to declare that the new guidelines do not cover Taiwan. Beijing suspended regular bureau-chief-level security dialogue with Japan (Christensen, 1999). The Chinese government voiced strong opposition to the new defense guidelines and Japan's cooperation with the United States over theater missile defense during Hashimoto's visit in September 1997. Chinese analysts also argued that although Japan's roles would mainly be to provide logistics and rear-area support, Japan was actually 'sailing out in a borrowed boat' (Yang, 1999). China was concerned that enhanced U.S.-Japan security cooperation would allow Japan to increase its defense capabilities and that TMD might integrate Taiwan into a security structure in an East Asia hostile to Beijing(Kori, 2000).

Chinese analysts believe that the Japanese military will gradually expand its role and participate in all sorts of US military operations. It is just a matter of time before Japan revises its Peace Constitution to enable Tokyo to freely send military forces overseas (Liu, 2002). Moreover, Japan's intentions could be matched by its strength. A Chinese military observer claimed that what Japan's military really has was 'more than its fame'. Liu Tinghua of the Chinese Academy of Military Science argues that Japan's Self-Defense Forces have become 'a strong military with a full range of forces and equipped with advanced weapons'(Zhang, 2005).Wu Xinbo took a more pessimistic view on China-U.S.-Japan trilateral relations. Wu argues that the United States is now driving rather than constraining Japan's rearmament. The bright side of the U.S.-Japan alliance seems to be gone(Wu, 2005-06).

## V China's Threat Perception of Japan and Japan's History Remembrance

Testing the effects of apologies on threat perception requires a framework for categorizing different types of remembrance, and criteria for defining a given state's remembrance as either "apologetic" or "unapologetic." A state remembers and judges its pasts in a variety of areas: through *statements* (such as apologies), *reparations, legal trials* of perpetrators of past violence, *education* (textbooks) and *commemoration* (monuments, museums, ceremonies, and holidays) (Jennifer, 2005).

The first step in coding apologies was to establish criteria for defining individual acts as *apologetic, unapologetic, or neutral(Table 2)*. The second step is to establish rules for aggregating the numerous gestures of remembrance that a state displays over a

given time period to code the extent to which a given period is "apologetic." To do so,

we can assess the frequency and breadth of a state's remembrance.

Туре	of	Types of Policies	Criteria						
Remembrance									
Apologetic		Apologies	Admission and remorse						
Neutral		Acknowledgment	Admission. No moral judgement						
		Amnesia	Little or no discussion of events						
Unapologetic		Denial	Denial that events occurred, or						
			denial of one's role in them						
		Justification	Admission and claims of necessity						
		Glorification	Admission with favorable moral						
			judgement						

 Table 2: Defining Policies of Remembrance

Source: Based on Jennifer M. Lind, "Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics", Paper Prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington D.C., Sep.1-4, 2005

## Remembrance in Sino-Japan Relations since the end of the Cold War

JAPANESE REMEMBRANCE. Japanese remembrance of war and colonization evolved dramatically since the end of Cold War. Japanese Government began regularly issuing apologies—some of them quite remarkable. Numerous high-level leaders issued remorseful statements: Prime Ministers Miyazawa (1992) and Murayama (1994 and '95). The Socialist Party (members of the ruing coalition in 1995) attempted to pass a contrite Diet Resolution, and passed a tepid statement. For more remarkable were apologies issued by Hosokawa (1993) and Koizumi (2001), which included both detailed admission and remorse (Jennifer, 2005). In this period Japan began regularly issuing numerous statements of apology, ranging from lukewarm to remarkably apologetic.

Japanese statements during this period were far from uniform. Reacting to Murayama's contrite statements, cabinet members Nagano Shigeto and Sakurai Shin made statement of denial in 1994. In the 1990s a distinct pattern emerged in which one leader's apology triggered a statement by another leading politician that denied, justified, or glorified Japan's past actions. Still, Japanese statements of apology during this period increased relative to the earlier period.

Japanese education in this period reflects increased coverage of Japanese actions during the war. Discussion of the sex slaves, the Nanjing Massacre appears in textbooks. Coverage of Unit 731 was approved after a ruling in the Japanese courts. For many of these issues, coverage remains scanty; depending on the textbook, these issues might be omitted, mentioned vaguely, or presented in moderate detail. And certain Japanese actions during the war remain consistently omitted from textbooks, such as Japan's strategic bombing of Chinese cities, and biological warfare against Chinese citizens. A controversial textbook was also published during this period by a group who resented the 1996 legal ruling that permitted mention of the sex slaves in Japanese textbooks, MoE approval of this textbook caused a third textbook dispute in 2001.

Japanese commemoration in this period remains unapologetic. Museums do not educate the public about victims of Japanese aggression or atrocities. Monuments and museums, such as Yushukan museum, reflect amnesia or glorification about Japanese atrocities and colonization in East Asia. During this period Japanese Prime Ministers resumed visiting the Yasukuni Shrine. In sum, Japanese remembrance is moderately apologetic.

Based on the values of the remembrance variable, the apology theories make

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predictions related to both congruence and reasoning. The official theory expects Chinese to say that their perceptions of Japan are improving because of Japan's increasingly contrite policies; the societal theory expects Chinese to say that they still do not trust Japan because of widespread denial in Japanese society.

#### CHINA PERCEPTIONS OF JAPANESE INTENTIONS AND THREAT. China

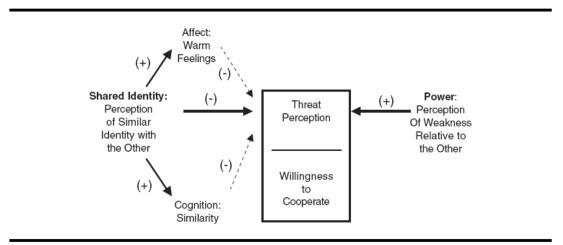
continued to distrust Japanese intentions in this period. This sentiment is frequently expressed in the media and by elites. Chinese highlight Japanese denial as a major factor in their distrust of Japan. Chinese did express some praise for Japanese apologies. However, Chinese also observe and complain about statements of denial that accompanied apologies during this period. Chinese also criticized Japan for approving the history textbook seen as whitewashing Japan's past violence. In sum, Chinese specially say that distrust Japanese intentions because of Tokyo's unapologetic policies of remembrance.

## VI China's Threat Perception of Japan and Identity Sharing

The perception of threat is a function of the line drawn between the in-group and the out-group. Power influences people's threat perceptions only after identity between the self and the other has been established. If the other is completely unlike the self (i.e. if no shared identity exists), the material balance of power between the self and the other will be a good predictor of threat perception. However, the higher the level of shared identity between the self and the other, the less threatening the other will appear (Figure 1). In the extreme case in which the other and the self are members of

the same in-group, the other will not be seen as a threat regardless of the particular balance of power. In sum, both a shared sense of identity and power interact with each other when influencing people's threat perceptions(David and Rocio, 2007).

#### Figure 1



The Aggregation of Latent and Salient Identity Dimensions

*Source*: David L. Rousseau, and Rocio Garcia-Retamero, "Identity, Power, and Threat Perception Across-National Experimental Study", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol.51, No.5, Oct. 2007 National identity has a profound impact on how the Chinese and Japanese play the relationship game. How governments and peoples view their country and its place in the world as well as how they see the counterpart country and its place contribute to how issues are interpreted and how policy goals and approaches are defined. Needless to say, the subject of identity in China and Japan is extremely complex. Definitions of Self and Other shift over time, influenced not only by domestic developments but also by the two countries' interactions with each other and with third countries(Wang, 2006).

#### 1. Chinese National Identities

China had an identity of a developing, socialist, major political power, which was

largely consistent with the country's place in the world throughout the 1980s. However, by the early 1990s, China's situation had changed, leading to the formation of a new identity as a responsible emerging major power. But the change produced corresponding confusion, and a parallel identity drawing on victimization-based nationalism (Wang, 2006).

By the end of the 1990s, however, China began to embrace the identity of a major economic power and a new thinking on China taking on big-power responsibilities. While China has gradually accepted the market economy as its economic identity, it has faced far more confusion over its political identity. Now that communism can no longer be used as a basis for legitimizing the Chinese Communist Party's political rule, the party has been trying to forge a new nationalist identity for the party and the state. And the government has actively engaged in patriotic campaigns since the early 1990s, which has had its intended impact on China's youth.

China's emerging identity of a responsible major power has already affected its foreign policy, in a positive sense for most other nations. However, this new thinking has not been applied to Japan. When it comes to Japan, a victimization-based identity rather than a responsible-great-power identity prevails in explaining Beijing's strategic goals and approach.

#### 2. Japanese National Identity

In comparison with the pre-1989 period, Japan remains a modern, developed capitalist country. What has changed is Japan's desire to become a "normal state," which essentially means that it may act like other major powers in the world. This desire, which existed during the Cold War, has become mainstreamed. Conversely, Japan's strong antimilitarist identity has faded. Pacifism has not disappeared. Thus, tensions exist between a normal state identity and a nonmilitarist identity (Wang, 2006).

Although mainstream Japan desires to become a normal state, one has to recognize the growing influence of right-wing nationalists who seek to reverse the historical verdict on Japan's aggressive past and to assert what they believe are Japan's rights vis-à-vis neighboring nations.

Japanese Identity is now framed primarily as a member of the "G-7," and this categorization allows Japan to free itself from a sense of separation from the West, from the modern, and allows Japan to assume a rightful place in a club whose members share the world's highest per capita incomes (Masaru, 2003).

U.S.-Japan Alliance also affects Japanese Identity. And the alliance is not about to erode soon. Japanese political culture is dependent on the security arrangement with the United States, thus will remain ambiguous as long as the United States continues to command preponderance in East Asia security affairs.

#### 3. Interaction

An image of China as a nondemocratic violator of human rights also sharpened Japanese's image of itself as a mature democracy. Japan has its self-image as a powerful country that should mentor China as a developing nation in its modernization drive, and as a bridge between Asia and the West. Although China has become an open country and Sino-Japan Economic Relation has become more interdependent, regarding the nation type, Japan still holds that both Japan and the

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United States are "Western Democratic Countries", while China is just a developing "transition country" (Zhu, 2007). As a matter of fact, Japan has been holding a "mental advantage" to her neighbor countries since the beginning of the modern time. Furthermore, in a few Japanese people's minds, the ideas of "looking down" on her neighbor countries or societies have never changed since Japan adopted the policy of "Leaving Asia and Joining Europe"(Koro, 1999).

Japan's image of China changed drastically again after the mid-1990s. The Japanese still saw China as politically different, but there was a new shift bred of concern about a rising China and a declining Japan, accompanied by a growing belief among the Japanese that their country could not depend on economic power alone to be a player in the global power game.

By the mid-1990s, the Chinese began to view Japan's development model critically. This was a noticeable shift. As a leading Japan specialist in China noted, the Chinese public went from one extreme to the other: The Chinese were afraid of Japan in the early 1990s but were now confident that China could take on Japan by itself.

## **VII** Concluding Remarks

China's threat perception of Japan after the Cold War is a very complicated issue. No single model, theory can give the whole picture. This paper examines three potential explanations for the rise of "Japan treat" based on realism, constructivism, and theories of apology. The paper finds out that enhanced U.S.-Japan Alliance was the major cause of the rise of "Japan Threat" argument. One of the biggest concerns for

China is territorial integrity. Therefore, Taiwan problem stands as the core interest of China. The enhanced U.S.-Japan Alliance listed "Peaceful Resolve of Taiwan" as one of the "common strategic objectives" between the United States and Japan in the Asia-Pacific region, which may undermine China's reunification of Taiwan. Meanwhile, the tendency to perceive treats was strengthened by Japan's unapologetic remembrance of history and non-shared identity between China and Japan.

However, the relative change of power position between China and Japan, China's leaders' miscalculation of the big powers game, and the rise of Chinese Nationalism may take a role of China's threat perception of Japan. These are all the points which need a further research.

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## Table 1

#### **Convention:**

**US\$ m.** = Million US dollars; - = Empty cell

.. = Data not available or not applicable, () = Uncertain figure, [] = SIPRI estimate.

Japan																		
Military expenditure in b.yen																		
1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3655	3865	4099	4329	4510	4618	4673	4714	4815	4922	4942	4934	4935	4950	4956	4954	4916	4868	4824
Military expenditure in constant(2005)US\$ m.																		
1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
37135	38395	39513	40410	41390	41849	42051	42471	43328	43521	43405	43483	43802	44275	44725	44814	44473	44165	43701
Military expenditure as percentage of gross domestic product																		
1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1	.9	.9	.9	.9	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Commen	Comments:																	
<ul> <li>Figures for Japan include the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO).</li> <li>Figures are for the adopted budget, rather than actual expenditure</li> <li>Figures do not include military pensions</li> </ul>																		

Source: SIPRI