6. A regional partner or a threatening other? Chinese discourse of Japan’s changing security role in East Asia

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1. INTRODUCTION

China and Japan are both key actors in East Asia and they share a wide range of economic and trade interests. Their geographical proximity and cultural affinity have helped them develop close links with each other over the years. Yet their relationships are complex, turbulent and at times bitter. Historically, when China was powerful, Japan was weak; when Japan became stronger, the Chinese empire began to crumble. Today, the situation is rather unique in that both countries are major powers in their own right. Japan has established itself as an economic superpower whose influence in the world economy is extremely significant. More recently, Japanese politicians have become more candid in articulating their political aspirations. In particular, they have expressed their desire to become an ‘ordinary’ nation and to play a more prominent role in regional and international affairs (Hughes and Krauss, 2007). At the same time, China is widely regarded as a rising power with growing economic strength and military capabilities. China’s gradual integration into the international community has certainly increased its political influence in the global arena.¹

A crucial question often raised by academics and policy-makers is: how will the relationship between the two East Asian powers develop in the coming years? In terms of regional security, how will China handle its relationship with a Japan that is playing an increasingly prominent and active role in East Asian security? To what extent will China be prepared to cooperate with Tokyo in building a regional security structure to maintain stability and peace in East Asia? Obviously, there are many variables shaping future Sino-Japanese security relations. One important factor is how they perceive each other’s intentions and capabilities. This chapter will focus on Chinese perceptions of Japan’s changing security role in East Asia with particular emphasis on the post-September 11 era.² It will also provide
a critical analysis of Chinese discourse from the perspectives of various international relations theories. This is followed by a consideration of the implications of Chinese security thinking on Japan for regional leadership and security cooperation in East Asia.

Before embarking on the tasks, we must be clear about whose perceptions are under examination when referring to ‘China’. The analytical focus of this chapter is on the security discourse of the Japanese experts and policy analysts in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) who regularly articulate their security perceptions of Japan in Chinese policy journals and academic publications. These specialists have a significant input into the Chinese foreign policy-making process through their participation in policy-oriented seminars, preparation for commissioned reports for government departments and other types of activities. Many of them speak frequently at university departments and think tanks and contribute to public discussion on major international issues via their commentary on television and in newspapers. Their views are thus important in shaping the direction of policy debates and possibly public opinion on major security issues in China.

2. JAPAN’S STRATEGIC AIMS IN A CHANGING GLOBAL CONTEXT

According to China’s Japan specialists, there are two main strategic aims (zhanlue mubiao) in Japan’s foreign policy. The first is to safeguard the national security and prosperity of the country. In the context of the post-Cold War security environment, Japan has strengthened its security alliance with the United States while seeking to build up its own defence capabilities. In the meantime, the Japanese government is said to have placed a greater emphasis on multilateral security arrangements. In terms of economic development, Japan has been actively involved in East Asian economic cooperation, although its trade and economic ties with the US remain strong. What Tokyo intends to do, according to the Chinese, is to establish various free trade areas with ASEAN countries, South Korea and Taiwan. This would be extended to the PRC and eventually to Australia and New Zealand. The Chinese maintain that Japan aspires to play a leading role in East Asian economic cooperation (Liu, 2003: 24–5).

Japan’s second strategic aim, Chinese analysts believe, is to become an ‘ordinary nation’ in the sense that it should be an economic as well as a political and military power (Yang, 2003). By 2003, observe the Chinese, a consensus was reached by various political forces in Japan that becoming an ‘ordinary nation’ is the path that should be followed. This is related to
Japan’s quest for the status of a political power (zhengzhi daguo). From the Japanese perspective, to become a political power it is necessary to develop its economic strength and military capabilities accordingly. This is thought to be the rationale behind Japan’s active involvement in the US-led ‘war on terrorism’ and the diplomatic activities related to the North Korean nuclear crisis (Liu, 2003: 26–27; Yao, 2003: 47, 49).

Chinese security analysts believe that Japan’s ‘United Nations diplomacy’ (Lianheguo waijiao) is an integral part of its attempts to reach the status of a political power. To achieve its objectives, says the Chinese, Tokyo has increased its contribution to the UN’s total expenditure from 11.4 per cent in 1989 to 19.5 per cent in 2004. From July 2003 to June 2004, Japan contributed US$53 billion to the UN’s peacekeeping budget. In addition, Japan has made a significant contribution to various types of UN activities, including UN peacekeeping operations, anti-terrorism, arms control, poverty reduction and so on. The Chinese are aware of the consensus among Japanese politicians that Japan should become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. They have also noticed the increase in popular support for Japan’s UN Security Council membership from 45 per cent in 1992 to 70 per cent in 2004 (Zhang, J., 2005).

The Chinese note that Japan was encouraged by the former UN General Secretary Kofi Annan’s support for UN reform in 2004. Tokyo is said to have become more active in promoting the reform and expansion of the Security Council with other countries with the same ambition such as Germany, India and Brazil. To PRC analysts, Japan is seeking to play a more prominent role in the UN because of national pride in that it wishes to be able to interact with the five permanent Security Council members on an equal footing. This is related to Japan’s motive of revising its pacifist constitution. Being a permanent member of the Security Council, Japan would be expected to be responsible for maintaining international peace and security, which will include authorizing military operations and participating in UN peacekeeping. This, the Chinese assert, would provide the best justification for Japan to amend its constitution, paving the path towards its destination of political power. Finally, Chinese scholars and analysts maintain that Japan is keen to play a major part in preserving the existing international order, which has served Japanese interests. Japan’s eventual aim, argue the Chinese, is to establish itself as a truly ‘ordinary nation’ with an equal relationship with the United States (Liu, 2003; Zhang, J., 2005).

A major concern of the Chinese is whether there will be a resurgence of Japanese militarism in the near future.4 Although some Chinese analysts appreciate the difficulties and disincentives for Japanese politicians to fulfil their political aspirations through military means (Zhao, 1999), the
The possibility of Japan becoming a military power (junshi daguo) has not been ruled out. Indeed, Japan’s growing military power and its responses to the events since 9/11 have caused much trepidation among Chinese analysts and security specialists (Yang, 2002; Hu, 2004). On 29 October 2001, the Japanese government passed an Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law. Although the legislation had a two-year limit, it allowed the Self-Defence Forces (SDF) to provide logistical, rear-echelon support to the American and British forces in the Indian Ocean. From 2002 to 2004, the counter-terrorism legislation passed by the Diet was revised four times. Meanwhile, the government approved the despatch of Japanese C-130 transport planes to provide relief supplies to Afghan refugees in Pakistan. In November, Tokyo decided to send two destroyers and a supply ship to the Indian Ocean. A year later, Japan’s government decided to offer further surveillance and logistical support to American and British naval forces by sending an AEGIS-equipped destroyer to the area (IISS, 2001/2002; IISS 2002/2003).

More significantly, the Japanese government decided to support the US’s military actions in Iraq, despite negative public opinion and opposition from the leaders of its coalition partners, the new Conservative Party and the new Komei Party as well as members of its own party, the Liberal Democratic Party. Former Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi promised that Japanese forces would not take part in the US-led invasion of Iraq. Instead, they would contribute to the rebuilding of post-war Iraq, which was made possible by the passage of a Law Concerning Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance by the Diet on 26 July 2003. In December, the Japanese government approved a plan to dispatch several hundred non-combat troops to Iraq for a period of one year. Only 9 per cent of the population showed their support for the plan and critics pointed to the dangerous situation in Iraq and the possibility of the troops being drawn into combat. Nevertheless, the main task of the troops was to provide humanitarian assistance, and the SDF mission was extended.

Not surprisingly, Japan’s reactions to 9/11 and the ‘war on terrorism’ have been followed closely by Chinese analysts. They are convinced that the Koizumi government exploited the fear of terrorism to push legislation through the Diet, which allowed the SDF to be deployed beyond Japanese waters and air space. Tokyo’s active diplomacy in the Arab world, Central and South Asia before and during the Afghan war, coupled with generous Japanese financial support for the post-war reconstruction of Afghanistan have aroused apprehensions in Beijing. Many Chinese scholars believe that Japan’s ‘anti-terrorism diplomacy’ (fankong waijiao) is designed to expand the areas of its security cooperation with the US and to raise its international status more generally (Xu et al., 2002; Jin, 2002). They also argue
that Japan’s decision to support the US’s invasion of Iraq and dispatch SDF abroad signify its intentions of expanding Japanese military activities which will inexorably lead to the revision of its pacifist constitution (Zhang, J., 2003; Hu, 2004). In December 2004, Japan published a National Defence Programme Outline (Japanese Defence Agency, 2004) that would enable Japan to play a broader role in international security. Specifically, it would allow the SDF to defend Japanese security interests and carry out anti-terrorist missions around the world. This has again heightened Chinese concern of Japan’s future strategic intentions (Hu, 2005).

3. JAPAN’S SECURITY STRATEGY IN EAST ASIA

While Japanese ambitions in the international arena have attracted much attention from Chinese security analysts, it is Tokyo’s Asia strategy that causes the greatest concern in China. Many Chinese experts believe that Japan is gradually ‘returning to Asia’ (huíguī Yázhōu), having been a close friend and ally of the US for over 50 years (Zhao, J., 1993; Zhao, 1996). Others, however, contend that Japan has always placed a great deal of emphasis on Asia and that it has regarded the region as its backyard. Its post-war economic development is to a certain extent dependent on the resources and markets of Asia, especially Southeast Asia (Lu, 1997). Following the debate in the 1990s over whether Japan should ‘leave America to join Asia’ (tuo Méi ru Yà) or ‘leave Asia to join America’ (tuo Yà ru Méi), Chinese scholars note, Japan has chosen the external strategy of ‘joining America and Asia simultaneously’ (ru Méi ru Yà) (see Chapter 11). In any case, Japan’s Asia strategy is seen to be inseparable from its global aspirations.

In recent years, apart from maintaining a high level of economic and trade interactions with Asian countries, Japan has been developing closer political and security relations with its Asian neighbours and with the ASEAN states in particular. More significantly, Japan is believed to have taken a more high-profile and assertive stance on a whole range of security issues in Asia. This is because of Japan’s apprehension of the uncertain security environment in the Asia Pacific despite the end of the Cold War. From the Japanese perspective, the Chinese note, the Asia-Pacific is a region of complexity and diversity in terms of its history, culture, political system and level of economic development. Within this region, there are also divergent security perceptions that may lead to tension and conflict. Chinese security analysts recognize Japan’s concern about regional flashpoints relating to the Korean Peninsula, the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea as well as unresolved territorial disputes between Japan
and China, Japan and South Korea, and Japan and Russia, respectively. Many believe Tokyo is also troubled by the rise of defence budgets in many Asian countries and military development in the region. This is particularly destabilizing given the lack of established multilateral security mechanisms in the region (Yao, 2003).

4. JAPAN’S SECURITY RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES

The close defence ties between Japan and the US have long been a concern among Chinese security analysts. Their anxiety heightened substantially following the signing of the 1996 US–Japan Joint Declaration and the revised Guidelines for US–Japan Defence Co-operation in September 1997. In the view of many Chinese elites, Japan–US security cooperation has been broadened and strengthened since 9/11. The various anti-terrorism legislations passed by the Diet, it is argued, have enabled the Japanese government to collaborate more closely with the US in achieving its security objectives. From the Japanese perspective, a solid security relationship with Washington is essential to Japan’s quest for a more significant role in the world. This explains why the Koizumi government acted against public opinion in supporting Washington on the Iraq war (Li, 2006). To the Bush Administration, Japan’s backing for the US invasion of Iraq was vital, even though Japanese contributions to the war were essentially symbolic. As former Prime Minister Koizumi commented at a news conference in December 2004: ‘Japan’s support activities in Iraq are the implementation of policies for the Japan–US alliance and international co-operation . . . such implementation is a national interest of Japan’. What Japan seeks to do, Chinese analysts argue, is to achieve the status of an ‘ordinary nation’ through the expansion of the US–Japan security alliance (Liu, 2003).

Although the PRC is Japan’s biggest trade partner, the Japanese are acutely aware that a stronger China would present a huge challenge to Tokyo’s position in the Asia Pacific. Especially worrying are Beijing’s growing military capabilities. Indeed, this concern was conveyed in the recently published defence outline where, for the first time, China was named as a potential threat (Japanese Defence Agency 2004). The Japanese government also shared the US concern over the PRC’s threat of using force against Taiwan. In a joint US–Japan security statement of 19 February, 2005, both countries agreed that encouraging ‘the peaceful resolution of issues concerning the Taiwan Strait through dialogue’ should be one of their ‘common strategic objectives’. They also agreed to ‘encourage China to
improve transparency of its military affairs’ (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005a). Ono Yoshinori, Director General of Japan’s Defence Agency, is reported to have said: ‘While we should maintain good relations with China, we must also pay attention to its military moves’. The Japanese saw the intrusion of a Chinese nuclear submarine into Japanese territorial waters in November 2004 as evidence of a growing China threat. Chinese scholars accept that the ‘China threat’ is not the only basis on which Japan maintains its alliance with the United States. From a Japanese standpoint, they point out, no other security relations can be more important than the US–Japan alliance in terms of ensuring Japan’s security. The alliance is also seen to be vital in securing American involvement in tackling potential regional crisis. More broadly, Japan hopes that the alliance will play a stabilizing role in Asia Pacific security, and contribute to the preservation of international peace (Yao, 2003).

To the Chinese, the most worrying aspect of Japan–US security cooperation is arguably Tokyo’s involvement in the development of the Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) system in Asia. In December 1998, Tokyo and Washington agreed that their joint research on the TMD would begin in 1999 involving expenses of 200–300 billion Japanese Yen. Japan indicated in December 2003 that it would procure an off-the-shelf ballistic missile defence system from Washington (Hughes, 2004: 108–109). Chinese specialists are sceptical of the claim that the TMD is designed solely to deal with potential missile attacks from North Korea. They argue instead that the project reflects a wider agenda between Japan and the US in coordinating their missile defence activities in East Asia and deepening their military cooperation in the region and beyond. Japan’s motive, say the Chinese, is to utilize the joint development of the TMD to enhance its position within the alliance and raise its profile in regional security affairs (Yao, 2003: 51–3). But China’s main concern is the possibility that TMD would be exploited by Japan and the US to help Taiwan defend itself in the event of a cross-strait conflict. A full-scale anti-missile defence cooperation among Tokyo, Washington and Taipei would be a nightmare scenario for Chinese defence planners (Wu, 2003).

5. JAPAN, ASEAN AND REGIONAL SECURITY

Apart from strengthening bilateral defence cooperation with the United States, Japan has over the past decade been active in promoting multilateral security in the Asia Pacific region. In particular, Japan has been closely involved in the activities of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Japan’s security engagement with ASEAN and support for the ARF in particular,
according to Chinese analysis, are based on the desire to safeguard Japanese security interests in Southeast Asia. It can be said that Japan’s economic security is largely determined by its geographical location. Eighty per cent of the oil that Japan needs passes via the South China Sea. Thus, a vital part of Japanese security strategy is to ensure that freedom of navigation in the area is not disrupted by any potential conflict. Maintaining security dialogue with ASEAN, some Chinese analysts note, will contribute to the promotion of regional peace and security that will in turn protect the lifeline of the Japanese economy. Others, however, argue that Japan’s close association with the ARF reveals its aspirations to create an Asia Pacific security system in which Tokyo will play a central role (Wang, 1997; Jia, 1997).

A major worry of Chinese analysts is Japan’s alleged collaboration with ASEAN to constrain China. Indeed, the fear of an increasingly powerful China is shared by some ASEAN states that have unresolved territorial disputes with the PRC in the South China Sea. Their attempts to ‘internationalize’ the issue, say the Chinese, have provided an opportunity for Japan to entice ASEAN’s support to curtail China’s influence in the region (Wang, 1997). Given the mutual suspicion between Japan and China, Tokyo was said to be displeased by the announcement of Chinese and ASEAN leaders in November 2002 that they would establish a China–ASEAN Free Trade Agreement by 2010 that could become the world’s third largest trading bloc. In response to China’s economic diplomacy, Japan is said to have become more proactive in developing relations with ASEAN states (Bai, 2004). At the 2002 ASEAN Plus Three summit, Japan launched a new initiative, Japan–ASEAN Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which would involve the negotiations of a series of bilateral trade agreements with individual ASEAN states (Dent, 2003).

6. CHINA, TAIWAN AND NORTH KOREA

In addition to the ASEAN region, China suspects that Japan is seeking to challenge Chinese interests in the Taiwan Strait. Indeed, the extension of the geographical areas covered by the 1996 Japanese–US Joint Declaration and the revised Guidelines for US–Japan Defence Cooperation has led to considerable apprehension among Chinese policy elites. Their greatest concern is the possible inclusion of the Taiwan Strait in the ambiguous ‘surrounding areas’ mentioned in the treaty and guidelines (Xiao, 1998: 8–9). The Chinese are convinced that in collaboration with the US, Japan is exploiting the Taiwan issue to impede the reunification of China and Taiwan.

Since the early 1990s, Chinese analysts contend, Japan has upgraded its relationship with Taiwan significantly. During the Cold War era,
Japan–Taiwan relations were confined mainly to the sphere of economic cooperation. Over the past two decades, it is said, greater emphasis has been placed on political interactions. More official and high-level contacts between the two sides have taken place (Ma, 1997; Yang, 1996). Chinese security specialists believe that the ultimate aim of Japan’s post-Cold War Taiwan policy is to use the ‘Taiwan card’ to constrain China, which is perceived as its principal rival in the Western Pacific region (Fan, 1999; Lian, 1998). A united China that combines the economic strengths and strategic advantages of the PRC and Taiwan will present Japan with a huge challenge in the twenty-first century. As long as Beijing and Taipei remain divided, it is said, they will not be able to take effective measures to deal with the issue of sovereignty in the Spratlys and Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. It is therefore not in Japan’s interests to see the reunification of China and Taiwan.

From the Chinese perspective, Japan has continued to fortify its relations with Taiwan since the mid-1990s with the aim of ‘using Taiwan to constrain China’ (yiTai zhiHua). It is possible, they predict, that Tokyo would provide military support for the US in a Taiwan conflict in future (see Chapter 5). Since the election of Chen Shui-bian as the Taiwanese President, the Chinese assert, Japan has maintained close links with the pro-independence DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) government. Japan is also believed to have increased its influence on the island through ‘economic penetration’, political interactions, high-level defence and security dialogues, and the development of the TMD system. Increasingly, Japan, the US and Taiwan are engaged in regular trilateral strategic dialogues, say the Chinese (Yang, 2004; Wu, 2005). Tokyo’s decision to issue a visa to former Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui to visit Japan in December 2004 was interpreted as another attempt to challenge China on the Taiwan issue. The Chinese reacted strongly to the February 2005 US–Japan security statement that listed Taiwan as one of their common security concerns (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005a).11 This is interpreted by the Chinese as an indication of US–Japan collaboration to interfere with China’s ‘internal affairs’, despite the Japanese government’s reassurance that Japan does not support Taiwan’s independence.

Taiwan is not the only issue that Japan is worried about. Some PRC security analysts recognize that Japan does have broader concerns over China’s policies and activities. Central to Japan’s security considerations are, say the Chinese, China’s rapid defence modernization, strong nuclear capabilities and its non-transparent defence budgets. China’s involvement in various unresolved territorial disputes, such as those in Taiwan, South China Sea and East China Sea has also troubled Japanese defence planners. The fact that China has become increasingly powerful and that it is not willing to
rule out the use of force to resolve border disputes means that conflict may occur in East Asia in future which could affect Japanese security. However, Japan has an ambivalent attitude towards a rising China, according to Chinese observation. On the one hand, it is uncertain of the PRC’s future development and therefore feels the need to guard against China. On the other, Japan sees China’s economic growth as an opportunity for Japanese businesses. Japan’s China policy is said to have reflected this ambivalence (Yao, 2003; Liu, 2003).

In the view of Chinese policy elites, there are two dimensions to Japan’s strategy towards China. First, Tokyo is seeking to integrate the PRC into the current international system. In terms of regional security and economic cooperation, the Chinese note, the two countries have common interests as well as differences. What the Japanese are hoping to do is to establish a multilateral security framework that can be used to constrain Chinese actions without antagonizing it. As to economic cooperation, Japan needs China’s participation but is wary of its growing economic power in the region. Essentially, the Japanese government is believed to be trying to influence China’s behaviour through engagement and dialogue but it is unsure of Beijing’s security intentions. This is why Tokyo has strengthened its alliance relations with the US while engaging in security dialogue with China (Li, 2006). At the same time, Japan is seeking to develop its relations with China’s neighbouring countries in order to balance an increasingly powerful China. This strategy, the Chinese observe, has been written into Japan’s strategic documents (Liu, 2003: 33–4).

In Northeast Asia, North Korea is seen as a significant challenge to Japan. Indeed, Pyongyang’s nuclear programmes and ballistic missile activities pose a tremendous threat to Japanese security given the geographical propinquity between the two countries. The North Korean missile launch in August 1998 is a vivid reminder of how vulnerable Japan is to a missile attack. Despite the difficulties in dealing with North Korea, Japanese leaders have been trying to develop a stable relationship with Pyongyang. They do not wish to see a military confrontation on the Korean Peninsula, nor face the consequences of a sudden collapse of the North Korean regime. Chinese security experts agree that Koizumi’s historic visit to Pyongyang, and his meeting with the North Korean leader Kim Jong-il in September 2002 demonstrated Japan’s desire to engage with North Korea through diplomacy and dialogue (Jin, 2003).

To Tokyo, a desperate North Korean communist regime could fire missiles at Japan and South Korea where US troops are stationed. Both Japan and the US regard a peaceful resolution of the North Korean issue as a ‘common strategic objective’, as outlined in their recent joint security statement (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005a). In the meantime, the
Japanese government has expressed a willingness to collaborate with the Bush Administration to maintain ‘preparedness for any situation’ (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005b). However, Chinese analysts argue that Japan’s alliance with the US has constrained Japanese actions regarding the Korean Peninsula and can actually undermine Japan’s security. Japan can only play a positive role, they believe, in handling the North Korean crisis if it has the support of its neighbouring countries (Wang, 2005). In order to find a diplomatic solution to the recent nuclear crisis, Japan has been actively involved in the Six Party Talks with North Korea, South Korea, China, the US and Russia.

7. SHOULD JAPAN BE TREATED AS A POTENTIAL ENEMY OR A REGIONAL PARTNER?

In the past few years, there has been an intense debate among PRC scholars and analysts on the nature and direction of Japanese security strategy and how China should respond to the Japan challenge. As discussed in the previous sections, most Chinese scholars perceive Japanese intentions with great suspicion. In their view, a major consideration in Japan’s security strategy is to prevent China from threatening its security interests and challenging its position in East Asia. Japan is also believed to have been collaborating with Washington to thwart China’s attempts to fulfil its Great Power aspirations. However, a small but vocal minority of Chinese analysts contend that it is not in China’s interest to treat Japan as a threat and potential enemy.

In 2002, Ma Licheng (2002), a commentator of the People’s Daily, published a controversial article on Sino-Japanese relations in the influential journal Strategy and Management. In this article, he strongly criticized nationalistic writings on Japan and the irrational behaviour of some Chinese citizens, arguing that China needed to have ‘new thinking’ (xinsiwei) towards Japan. He pointed out that successive Japanese Prime Ministers had already apologized for Japan’s wartime behaviour, and that China should not wrangle over the issue of apologies endlessly. Instead, China should forgive what Japan did in the past, focus on the common interests of the two countries and cooperate with each other to build a stable and prosperous Asia. Ma was particularly critical of irrational anti-Japanese sentiment in China that, in his view, would be detrimental to Chinese interests. This sort of nationalistic sentiment was said to have been fuelled by anti-Japanese reports and publications produced by some irresponsible media organizations. He contended that historically it was impossible to prevent a defeated country from regaining its status of a
normal nation. China should therefore be prepared to accept a Japan that would sooner or later become a major political and military power. There was a difference, said Ma, between the development of Japan's military capabilities and the revival of Japanese militarism. What China needed, according to him, was to learn from the experience of European countries which, having fought bloody wars with each other for years, were now able to achieve successful regional integration with a common currency.

The publication of Ma’s article immediately stimulated a heated debate among Chinese intellectuals and scholars on how to handle the PRC’s relations with Japan. Central to this debate is the question of how to respond to Japan’s global and regional security strategy as China is rising to a Great Power status. There is no doubt that many Chinese analysts are wary of Tokyo’s strategic intentions and its China policy in particular. Is it possible to maintain a stable and cooperative relationship with Japan while China is developing its great power capabilities? Should Japan be treated as a partner or as a long-term rival? How is China’s Japan strategy related to its broader aim of ‘peaceful rise’?12

In support of Ma’s arguments, Professor Shi Yinhong (2003) of Renmin University published an article in *Strategy and Management* where he proposed a ‘diplomatic revolution’ (waijiao geming) in Sino-Japanese relations. He argued that China and Japan should become closer with each other, thus alleviating their ‘security dilemma’. His view was based on the argument that China could not afford to face a hostile Japan apart from dealing with hostility from the US, Taiwan and possibly India. To develop a closer relationship with Tokyo, said Professor Shi, China would be able to concentrate on handling the pressure and potential threat from the US and preventing Taiwan from gaining independence. Shi concluded that a stable relationship with Japan would help improve China’s peripheral security environment. He believed that Japan might also be interested in having a closer relationship with China. Economically, China is said to have provided Japan with huge investment and trade opportunities. Thus, a hostile relationship with a China whose economic influence was rising rapidly would not be in Japan’s national interest (see Chapter 2).

In addition, Shi (2003) pointed out that there was considerable concern in Japan about certain aspects of the US’s assertive China policy. Finally, establishing closer relations with China would help Japan to ‘return’ to Asia. Specifically, Shi recommended the adoption of five main strategies in relation to his ‘diplomatic revolution’. First, China should not allow the historical issue to undermine its overall security strategy. Second, Chinese leaders should express their gratitude to Japan for the enormous amount of economic assistance given to China since the beginning of the reform era. Third, China should not repeatedly express its concern over the possibility
of a Japanese remilitarization. Fourth, Japan should be welcomed as a
great power to participate in multilateral meetings dealing with regional
economic, political and security issues. Fifth, on the issue of reforming the
UN Security Council, China should treat Japan in the same way as it would
treat other countries. China might even consider supporting Japan’s mem-
bbership of the Council in due course (see Chapter 9).

Not surprisingly, the articles by Ma Licheng and Shi Yinhong generated
a huge response from other scholars. For example, Feng Zhaokui, a well-
respected specialist at the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Chinese
Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), published four lengthy articles on the
‘new thinking’ in Sino-Japanese relations exploring the issues raised in Ma
and Shi’s articles. The journal *Strategy and Management* published a
special issue on Sino-Japanese relations. The CASS journal *World Economy
and Politics* also organized a special seminar on China’s strategic thinking
towards Japan. A number of prominent scholars were invited to participate
in the seminar, including the journal’s editor Wang Yizhou, Shi Yinhong,
Feng Zhaokui, Pang Zhongying, Ling Xingguang, Zhang Tuosheng and
Yang Yanyi.

Many scholars supported the argument of Ma and Shi that China should
consider its political and security relations with Japan within its overall
security strategy. They agreed that a confrontational relationship with
Japan would undermine China’s security environment and its efforts to
pursue a great power status. Some scholars argue that China should not
apply a double standard to judge Japan. As Zhou (2003) put it: ‘If we
believe that a rising China is entitled to become an important member of
the international system, then we have no reasons to object to Japan’s
attempts to gain a similar status given that it is playing an increasingly
important role in the international system’ (p. 20). Zhang W. (2003) ques-
tioned the widely accepted assumption that Japan’s participation in UN
peacekeeping and other activities indicated the revival of Japanese mili-
tarism. Such security discourse, he warned, could turn into a self-fulfilling
prophecy. Similarly, Li (2003) suggested that the Chinese should try to tran-
scend the historical issue in Sino-Japanese relations. It might be wise, he
said, to shelve historical issues (for example, formal apologies, visits to the
Yasukuni Shrine) and not to over-react to the textbook issue, discussion on
the revision of Japanese constitution, the despatch of Japanese SDF to
overseas countries, and Japan’s desire to become an ‘ordinary nation’.

While accepting the strategy proposed by Ma and Shi, some scholars
took issue with them on several arguments. For example, they contend that
the responsibilities for resolving historical issues rested with Japan rather
than China because of repeated attempts by some Japanese politicians to
distort history. They questioned the sincerity of the apologies by certain
Japanese Prime Ministers. It was also argued that trying to become closer to Japan in order to deal with potential threats from the US was wishful thinking given Tokyo’s alliance relations with Washington. Still others believed that it was right to ask Japan to promise not to pursue a policy of remilitarization in future despite the fact that it would be difficult for Japan to return to militarism (Zhang, T., 2003).

One of the most critical articles is probably the one by Lin (2004) who believed that the ‘new thinking’ in China’s Japan policy advocated by Ma and Shi was unhelpful and even ‘harmful’. He argued that it was misguided to suggest China should be responsible for poor Sino-Japanese relations. The country that needed ‘new thinking’ was Japan rather than China. In Lin’s view, Japan was responsible for causing concerns in China and tensions in Sino-Japanese relations. He cited Japan’s changing defence policy, enhanced alliance relations with the US, participation in the TMD system, proposals to amend its pacifist constitution, and the despatch of the SDF to Iraq and so on as indications of Japan’s non-peaceful intentions. He contended that extreme nationalism did not exist in China as suggested by Ma and Shi.

8. POWER, SECURITY AND IDENTITY: THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF CHINESE SECURITY DISCOURSE ON JAPAN

The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that the majority of Chinese policy analysts perceive Japan as a major challenge to Asia Pacific security and to the security of China. The Chinese view of Japan’s post-Cold War global aspirations clearly reflects the realist perspective on international relations in that Japan is seeking to increase its global economic and political influence in order to advance its national interests in the international system. Chinese analysts tend to see Japan as a unitary actor seeking to compete with other great powers in the world and with China in particular. Their interpretations of Japan’s post-Cold War security strategy in the Asia Pacific are shaped largely by the consideration of Great Power competition and the balance of power in the region (Morgenthau, 1978; Waltz, 1979). It can be argued that the Chinese primarily perceive Japanese intentions and actions through the realist lens. In the eyes of the Chinese, Japan is an ambitious nation seeking to become a ‘political power’ in the world and a regional power in the Asia-Pacific. Thus, the decision of the Japanese government to renew its security treaty with the US is motivated by a desire to strengthen Japanese power so as to dominate Asia-Pacific security matters.
In addition, it appears that China's perception of Japan's post-Cold War security strategy is shaped by the views of structural realism. It can be argued that Japan's desire to play a more significant role in the world and in East Asia is driven largely by the changing structure of the international system. The end of bipolarity has arguably given Japan the opportunity to reassert itself as a more significant player in world politics. This is why some Chinese security analysts argue that Japan is seeking to become a more equal partner of the US within the US–Japan security alliance. It can also explain why the Chinese believe that Japan has become more assertive in its pursuit of a ‘political power’ status. As Waltz (2000) argues, it is inevitable that the current international structure will shift from unipolarity to multipolarity. He believes that Japan will inexorably develop into a great power because of its economic capability and its fear of vulnerability to other great powers, especially China (Waltz, 2000: 32–4). The structural realist theory can therefore be used to explicate the Japanese government’s concern of growing Chinese military power and Japan’s recent activities in UN peace-keeping, anti-terrorist operations, the Iraq conflict and cooperation with the US on missile defence programmes. The Chinese may ponder over Waltz's (2000) question with some trepidation: ‘How long can Japan live alongside other nuclear states while denying itself similar capabilities?’ (p. 34).

In the view of many Chinese security specialists, Japan has the ambition of becoming a political power with or without the potential threat from China. They believe that Japanese politicians have merely used the ‘China threat’ theory to justify its high defence spending, military development and enhanced security cooperation with the US. Tokyo’s ultimate aim, according to the Chinese, is to become a political and military power possessing the capability of exerting regional hegemony in East Asia. In this sense, the Chinese perception of Japan can be explained by offensive realism, which argues that states would exploit any opportunity to maximize their relative power. In an anarchic international system, according to this theory, all great powers are non-status quo powers (Mearsheimer, 2001). Seen from this theoretical perspective, it is not too difficult to comprehend why some Chinese analysts believe that Japan’s security strategy is of an offensive rather than defensive nature. If Japan were to become a regional hegemon in East Asia, it would be in a position to prevent China from acting assertively in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea. For PRC leaders and elites, reclaiming their ‘lost territories’ is an integral part of China’s great power aspirations. Thus, Chinese analysts perceive Japan’s ‘ambition’ as a major obstacle to their construction of a great power identity for China.

However, Chinese scholars are not oblivious to the variety of traditional and non-conventional security challenges that Japan faces. They appreciate
the relevance of other dimensions of security to Japanese strategic thinking. In particular, they have recognized the linkage between economic development, energy security and strategic considerations. Chinese scholars have pointed out, for example, that one of the main reasons why Japan is interested in the territorial disputes in the South China Sea, the Taiwan Strait and the East China Sea is its concern over the impact of potential regional conflict on the Japanese economy. As freedom of navigation in these areas is of utmost importance to Japan in terms of oil supply and trade activity, it does not wish to see any developments that might be detrimental to Japanese interests. This is a reflection of the neo-realist security perspective and mercantilist theory of international political economy in that the state is seen as the primary actor in international relations, and economic activity should not be separated from state interests (Gilpin, 1987).

Chinese analysts are aware of the Japanese apprehension that successful resolution of the disputes over the sovereignty of Taiwan and the South China Sea islands hinges largely upon the future policy of the PRC. Hence, the Japanese perceive China as a challenge, if not a potential threat, to Asia-Pacific security. It is precisely because of these concerns, Chinese specialists note, that Japan has decided to maintain a close security tie with the United States. At the same time, Tokyo is keen to promote security cooperation with its Asian neighbours (Liu, 1998; Yang, 1998). In particular, the Japanese government sees the ARF as a useful channel of security dialogue through which suspicion could be reduced, mutual understanding enhanced and confidence built among the key regional players. Like China and other Asian nations, Chinese analysts observe, Japan needs a stable and peaceful environment to sustain its economic growth. All this indicates Chinese awareness of Japan’s intention of enhancing its security through multilateral institutions and cooperation. In this regard, Chinese analysis is consistent with the theory of defensive realism that posits that cooperation is possible in an anarchic international system (Jervis, 1978). But this can also be explained by the theory of neo-liberal institutionalism, which is widely used to explain why and how states can cooperate through international institutions.

Chinese experts have also noted Japan’s fear that arms proliferation and territorial conflict may intensify in post-Cold War Asia, which could undermine the stability of the entire region. As China is involved in many unresolved territorial disputes in East Asia, they admit, its growing economic strength and military capability are viewed with considerable concern by Japan. But this apprehension has not prevented Japan from accelerating the development of its trade relations with China. Despite their mutual suspicions on security matters, Sino-Japanese economic relations have continued to grow. Chinese security specialists have clearly grasped the essence
of Tokyo’s strategy of achieving regional peace through trade and economic interdependency. In this sense, they could be regarded as liberals rather than realists. Indeed, the Chinese recognize the liberal elements in Japan’s policy towards China.

In their analysis of the relationship between Japan’s domestic politics and its security strategy, Chinese analysts seem to have moved further away from their realist position. They have demonstrated an understanding of the impact of domestic factors on Japan’s foreign relations. Specifically, they have discerned the changing balance of power between various institutions within the Japanese foreign policy-making process. In addition, Chinese scholars have noticed the rising influence of the revisionists on Japan’s foreign and security policy since the 1990s. They realize that the rise of neo-nationalism in Japanese politics and society could lead to a more assertive security strategy and unstable Sino-Japanese relations.

Despite their negative security perception of Japan, few if any Chinese analysts suggest that China should adopt a confrontational stance towards Japan at the expense of economic and commercial benefits. It is clear that China has much to gain from Japanese investment and Sino-Japanese trade (Taylor, 1996). Chinese scholars acknowledge the need to pursue further economic and security cooperation with Japan. They accept that China and Japan are great powers and that they have a shared interest and responsibility to maintain peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. This view seems to reflect both defensive realism and neo-liberalism in that cooperation is possible under anarchy.

Nevertheless, the complexity of Sino-Japanese relations cannot be adequately explained by realism and liberalism alone. While material factors are pertinent to the analysis of China’s security perceptions of Japan, one has to take into account the ideational aspects of Chinese discourse. As the social constructivists argue, history and culture are important in shaping an actor’s identity, which in turn influences what the actor considers as its interest. In the case of Japan, history plays a significant role in shaping its own identity and how other countries perceive Japan’s identity. Indeed, the way Chinese analysts view Japan’s security thinking and foreign policy behaviour is overshadowed by Japan’s modern history. They tend to emphasize the militaristic tendency in Japanese security discourse on the basis of Japan’s wartime behaviour.

The Chinese are particularly sensitive to Japanese actions that may trigger their historical memory, the most prominent example of which is the visit of senior Japanese politicians to the Yasukuni Shrine. The regular visits of successive prime ministers to the shrine, where executed war criminals are venerated along with other war dead, are seen as a sign of Japanese reluctance to accept the past. Another example illustrating the relevance of
history to China’s perception of Japan is the dispute over how Japan’s actions during World War II are presented in Japanese history textbooks that, according to the Chinese, have been deliberately distorted. The textbook issue is of course not just a matter of interpretation of history (Rose, 1998). As the issue is seen as an indication of Japan’s attitudes towards its national goal and military policy, a ‘correct view of history’ becomes directly relevant to how the country is perceived by its neighbours.

The Chinese (and the Japanese) are constantly reminded of the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s by the phrase *qianshi buwang, houshi zhishi* (past experience, if not forgotten, is a guide to the future). The latest row over the Japanese government’s approval of eight high school history textbooks that had allegedly downplayed the magnitude of Japan’s wartime crimes led to widespread public protests in China in April 2005.13 To many Chinese elites and analysts, the history of Japanese invasion reminds them of the invasion and division of China by foreign powers during the ‘century of shame and humiliation’. For example, their conjecture of Japanese support for the pro-independence forces in Taiwan is often linked to the history of Japanese occupation of the island before 1945. There is a tendency among Chinese writers to view Japanese security strategy through a historical lens. For many years, the Chinese population including Chinese intellectuals and analysts have been socialized into viewing Japan’s foreign policy in terms of its historical record. This kind of discourse underpins the argument that Japan should not be allowed to develop its military capabilities, play a leadership role in Asia, assume the responsibilities of a permanent member of the UN Security Council and become a ‘normal nation’.

China’s perception of Japan is also shaped by cultural factors in the sense that the Japanese language and culture are in many ways influenced by China. This explains why the Japanese tend to show more restraint in dealing with China. Despite its concern of the implications of a rising China and their close security ties with the US, the Japanese government has been loath to take a confrontational approach to China. On the contrary, it seeks to reassure China of its benign intentions while working closely with Washington to minimize the potential ‘threat’ of a powerful China to Japanese interests. This has been noted by the Chinese and is sometimes exploited effectively to put pressure on the Japanese government to show more ‘understanding’ of China’s position. Nevertheless, Japan’s deference towards China has not altered Chinese analysts’ perception of Japanese security intentions. As Drifte (2003) argues, it has actually exacerbated Chinese suspicion that Japan may be trying to conceal its real motives and will confront China when the time is ripe. This demonstrates how difficult it is to change ideas and perceptions that are historically and socially constructed, as the social constructivists argue.
It is clear that Chinese scholars and analysts perceive Japan’s security strategy as a major obstacle to the formation of China’s great power identity. Post-modernist scholars would argue that the discursive construction of Japan as a threatening ‘other’ serves to unite the Chinese people in achieving their common goal. The general view presented in most Chinese writings is that a politically and militarily powerful Japan is detrimental to the security of Asia and of China in particular. This assessment is based largely on Japan’s behaviour during World War II and its ‘unrepentant attitudes’ towards its history. What is more ‘threatening’ to the Chinese is the supposition that Japan is working closely with the US to frustrate China’s great power aspirations. The extension of the scope of Japanese–US security cooperation to include ‘the situation in Japan’s surrounding areas’, Japan’s involvement in the development of the TMD system and the dispatch of Japanese SDF to Iraq are but a few examples cited in Chinese writings to illustrate the growing ‘Japan threat’. Japan’s gravest ‘threat’ to China’s core interests would be a US–Japan–Taiwan collaboration in preventing China from using force to ‘reunify’ with Taiwan. This type of ‘discourse of danger’ (Campbell, 1998) is useful in reminding the Chinese population how important it is to build a strong and powerful nation. Both China and Japan have the ambition and potential of achieving the status of a great power but are uncertain of each other’s future intentions. Their competition may thus be interpreted as a clash of identity. Seen from this perspective, Chinese writers’ construction of the ‘self’ seems inseparable from the construction of the ‘other’, that is, a threatening Japan.

9. GREAT POWER ASPIRATIONS, SECURITY DISCOURSE AND REGIONAL LEADERSHIP IN EAST ASIA

Whether China will rise to a great power status remains to be seen, but China’s desire to fulfil its aspirations has had an immense influence on its self-perception and its perception of Japan. This will inevitably shape China’s conception of regional leadership in East Asia. The analysis of Chinese security discourse of Japan in this chapter gives little indication that Japan is a trusted regional partner in dealing with security issues. Instead, Japan is perceived as a threatening other whose security strategy and activities in East Asia are considered as a serious impediment to China’s endeavour to construct a great power identity. It is therefore difficult to imagine that Japan would be entrusted by the Chinese to play a leadership role in the region.

In the meantime, there is strong evidence indicating China’s desire to exert its influence in East Asia, if not to lead it. Many observers agree that
China’s influence in East Asia has increased considerably in the past few years (Shambaugh, 2005). There are of course different interpretations of the meaning of regional leadership. Do China and/or Japan intend to play a leadership role in institutional terms or in terms of exercising soft power? Either way, it is inconceivable that China will happily accept a regional order under Japanese leadership. This is closely related to Chinese memory of the history of the 1930s and 1940s when Japan sought to ‘lead’ the region through coercive measures and military means.

Another question is whether and to what extent China will be willing to take on a joint leadership role with Japan on security matters, given that Japan is equally reluctant to concede to any form of Chinese hegemony in East Asia. China and Japan have been able to work together to promote regional economic cooperation, but can they cooperate in building a regional security structure that takes into account the security concerns of both countries and their neighbours? Prior to the mid-1990s, China was very sceptical of multilateral security forums, fearing that the US and other Asian countries would exploit them to constrain Chinese actions. But these perceptions have changed substantially in recent years, as Chinese leaders have discovered that it is in China’s interests to take part in multilateral security cooperation (Hughes, 2005). Indeed, PRC officials and security experts have participated in a variety of Track-I and Track-II security meetings in East Asia such as the ARF and Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP).

A major change in China’s attitudes is that it has actually been involved in the creation of multilateral security mechanisms, playing a leading role in both the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (see Chapter 10) and the Six Party Talks on the North Korean nuclear crisis (see Chapter 12). Chinese scholars stress the depth and breadth of China’s involvement in multilateral security cooperation in the past decade. A related development is that the PRC has become more active in promoting military cooperation with other states, including conducting joint military exercises with neighbouring countries. In October 2004, the ARF’s security policy conference was held in Beijing, which signified the transformation of China’s perception of the nature and utility of multilateral security forums (Sun, 2005). Indeed, some PRC scholars argue that China should play a more prominent role in developing multilateral economic and security cooperation. This would help strengthen China’s influence on its surrounding security environment as well as reducing the concern of China’s neighbouring countries over the growth of Chinese power. They argue that it is in the interest of both China and its neighbours to find common grounds in their security cooperation (Tang, 2000: 47–8).

Many Chinese scholars have argued that China should actively participate in regional security cooperation organizations (Yan, 2000).
Sa Benwang (2004), Deputy Head of the China Committee of CSCAP, argues that closer security cooperation among Asia-Pacific countries is an inevitable trend despite numerous obstacles. Shi (2000) has written a very important article arguing that the creation of East Asian security mechanisms will benefit all the countries in the region including China. His view is based on the analysis of the ‘security dilemma’ in East Asia. Professor Shi points out that the security situation in East Asia is a classic example of the ‘security dilemma’ widely discussed in the international relations literature. With the rise of China, the balance of power in the region is expected to change significantly at some points in future. This has led to considerable apprehensions among the US and Japan. American and Japanese leaders feel that they have to respond to the power transition in East Asia because of the uncertainties of China’s security intentions. The three major powers are thus locked into a vicious circle of suspicion. Similar suspicions also exist between China and India, China and certain Southeast Asian countries. The only way out of this ‘security dilemma’, according to Shi, is to establish East Asian security mechanisms. Such mechanisms would reduce the possibility of regional conflict and help improve China’s security environment, Professor Shi maintains.

Feng (2005) holds a similar view, contending that the Sino-Japanese security dilemma has been exacerbated by China’s ascendancy as a great power. He believes that the only solution to the problem is to replace the Hobbesian culture of security dilemma by the Kantian culture of security community. From a social constructivist perspective, he says, the intersubjective knowledge of mutual distrust between China and Japan can be changed through the development of a security community (Wendt, 1995). Specifically, Feng suggests that the Six Party Talks should be upgraded to a formal security cooperation mechanism in Northeast Asia equivalent to the ARF in Southeast Asia. Similarly, the ASEAN Plus Three mechanism should be used by China and Japan as an avenue for further cooperation, with the ultimate aim of establishing an East Asian community.

For the foreseeable future, China would feel more comfortable with pursuing security cooperation with Japan via various channels of bilateral and multilateral dialogue. This would also make it easier for China to shape the regional agenda through economic, diplomatic, and increasingly, cultural means. To be sure, China has become much more proactive in engaging with multilateral security forums but whether it will be prepared to collaborate with Japan in establishing new security mechanisms and leading them is far from certain given PRC leaders’ apprehensions of Tokyo’s security intentions and its alliance relationship with the US. So long as Japan is perceived as a threatening other in Chinese discourse, it would not be easy for Beijing to trust Japan in tackling regional security issues. It is notoriously
difficult to alter an actor’s security discourse, as perceptions are socially and historically constructed and they do not change overnight. On the other hand, as social constructivists would argue, state behaviour can be constrained and indeed influenced by inter-subjectively shared ideas and values as well as institutions and norms. If anarchy is what states make of it, it is possible to change perceptions via international interaction and social practice that aim to reduce conflict and promote peace and security (Onuf, 1989; Wendt, 1999).

There were clear signs of improvement in China–Japan relations after Shinzō Abe became the Japanese Prime Minister in September 2006. It is too soon to assess the impact and recent departure of Koizumi on Japan’s China policy. Nevertheless, Abe’s decision to make China the destination of his first overseas trip contributed immensely to the reduction of tensions between the two countries that had been built up in the Koizumi era. Following this ‘ice-breaking visit’ to Beijing, Abe emphasized the importance of building a ‘mutually beneficial, strategic relationship’ with China in his New Year statement in 2007. In response to Abe’s positive moves, the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao made an ‘ice-thawing’ trip to Japan in April where he gave an address to the Japanese parliament thanking Japan’s ‘support and assistance’ in China’s economic modernization. Wen also acknowledged the ‘apologies’ made by Japanese leaders and politicians over various historical issues, while urging Japan to ‘show in concrete ways their expressed attitudes and promises’. Interestingly, both of the two major points in Wen’s speech were suggested by Chinese scholars and analysts who advocated ‘new thinking’ in Sino-Japanese relations (see Chapters 2 and 3).

To achieve reconciliation between China and Japan, the two countries would need to recognize each other’s genuine concerns and tackle the issues that have affected or may affect their bilateral relations. In particular, they should confront the history-related problems rather than avoiding them. The joint historical research project between Chinese and Japanese scholars (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006), which began in December 2006, was a good starting point. Of course one should not expect any significant outcomes from the project in the short run but it is a useful avenue through which the ‘history question’ in Sino-Japanese relations can be addressed. Similar scholarly activities should be encouraged at semi-official and unofficial levels. Unless the history problem is resolved, it would be very difficult for the two East Asian powers to move forward.

A prominent issue over which China and Japan may come into conflict is their territorial dispute in the East China Sea. Apart from conflicting claims over the sovereignty of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, both countries have been actively competing for access to the rich deposits of natural gases that are believed to exist in the area. Given the growing demand for energy
in both countries, their rivalry will only intensify in the coming years. There has been some discussion on joint development between Beijing and Tokyo but it has not led to any tangible results due to disagreements over the nature and operation of joint development (Drifte, 2007; Valencia, 2007). If Chinese and Japanese leaders wish to avoid a resource conflict in future, they must seek to develop inter-subjective values and norms of negotiations that are based on the concept of ‘absolute gains’ advocated by the neo-liberal institutionalists.

I agree with van Ness (2007) that security cooperation in East Asia is closely linked to the extent of reconciliation between China and Japan. If the Chinese can change their security discourse of Japan from a threatening ‘other’ to a less threatening or even a non-threatening neighbour,19 it would be possible for the two countries to establish some sort of co-leadership in East Asia which may also be developed into a collective leadership involving other major powers or actors such as the US and ASEAN. Meanwhile, future developments in Sino-Japanese relations and security cooperation may be shaped by the perceptions and policies of other countries in the region. Here the role of the United States is particularly important, as it has extensive economic and security interests in Asia and is a powerful strategic ally of Japan (Li, 2004b; Li, 2006).

China’s continuous economic engagement and security dialogue with Asian countries may gradually change its perception of the region and security perception of Japan in particular. As mentioned earlier, the debate between the PRC elites who see Japan as a threat and those who hold a more positive view of the country is intense and is not likely to be resolved any time soon. Which of the two discourses prevails will have profound implications for Sino-Japanese relations as well as the stability and security of East Asia. It is therefore important for Western scholars and analysts to unpack the Chinese security discourse of Japan and detect any significant change in the discourse as China continues to engage with its Asian neighbours and the wider world.

NOTES
1. I have provided a detailed consideration of the Western debate on the nature and security implications of a rising China elsewhere. See Li (2004a).
2. For analyses of Chinese security perceptions of Japan in the 1990s, see Christensen (1999) and Li (1999).
3. My analysis of Chinese security discourse is based on a wide range of Chinese-language material. However, only a limited amount of relevant sources can be cited in this chapter due to space constraints.
4. This question has also been investigated by Western scholars. See, for example, Hook (1996).
6. For a good discussion of the significance of the US–Japan security treaty and the revised guidelines, see Hook et al. (2001), pp. 139–42.
8. For a comprehensive analysis of Japan’s concerns about the security implications of a rising China, see Drifte (2003).
11. According to many observers, this was the first time that the Taiwan issue had been mentioned publicly by Japan and America in their bilateral security statement. However, as Drifte (2003) has pointed out, in the 1969 Japan–US joint communiqué Prime Minister Sato and President Nixon already called the ‘maintenance of peace and security in the Taiwan area . . . a most important factor for the security of Japan’ (p. 96).
12. For a detailed analysis of the debate among Chinese scholars and security specialists on China’s ‘peaceful rise’, see Li (2008).
13. For coverage of the protests, see BBC, ‘Thousands join anti-Japan protest’, 16 April 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4450975.stm. The public protests were initially directed at Japan’s efforts to gain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and the history issue was brought in to support the argument against Japanese membership.
17. See the section ‘Should Japan be treated as a potential enemy or a regional partner?’ in this chapter.
19. Japanese security discourse of China is equally important in shaping China–Japan relations but that is obviously beyond the scope of this chapter.

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