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Japan in the Politics of Chinese Leadership

Legitimacy: Recent Developments in Historical

Perspective¹

Christopher R Hughes

The importance of domestic factors as a constraint on policy-makers is acknowledged by most works on Sino-Japanese relations (Rose; Drifte; Wan) Yet there remains little analysis of the way in which the various issues of concern become significant within the Chinese political system. Among the literature on Chinese politics that looks in most detail at Japan as a theme in domestic politics is the work on the ‘new nationalism’ of the 1990s. This, however, tends to treat society, the state and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as rather monolithic entities in a way that results in a debate over ‘top down’ (Zhao,S. 1997) versus ‘bottom up’ (Gries 2004) explanations. Little light is thus shed on the mechanisms by which these levels of analysis are related to each other.²

One way to fill this gap is to focus on the way that popular sentiments become significant when deployed in the politics of leadership legitimacy at the elite level of the CCP. This avoids a bottom-up explanation by showing how popular sentiments

become a significant political factor when they are deployed in struggles at the top of the political system. If legitimacy is understood as similar to the investment policies that a bank needs to maintain the confidence of its depositors (Bendix 1978: 16-17), a purely top-down explanation can also be avoided because popular sentiments have to be considered as genuine if they are to constitute a form of political capital for members of the elite. By adopting this perspective it is also possible to use recent work on the Chinese political system to show how the use of anti-Chinese sentiments is determined to some degree by the transformation of elite modes of behaviour. This behaviour has been described as moving from a 'winner takes all' mode of struggle that prevailed under Mao Zedong, out of which only one winner could emerge, into a kind of 'power balancing' where more than one winner is possible because power is divisible in a more institutionalised and functionally differentiated system (Bo: 1-8).

To explore how this transformation of elite politics interacts with popular anti-Japanese sentiments a preliminary investigation will be conducted of the way in which the theme of resisting Japan was used under the 'winner takes all' system in the struggles that brought about the downfall of State President Liu Shaoqi during the Cultural Revolution and the resignation of CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang in the early stages of 'reform and opening'. Following this, the way in which the Japanese theme has been managed during the transition to a power balancing mode will be explored by looking at the transfer of power from General Secretary Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao. This should shed light on how rising anti-Japanese sentiments in the population could be managed in a way that allowed the 'new starting point' in the bilateral relationship to be inaugurated when Shinzo Abe came to power in 2006, with no apparent cost to the legitimacy of the CCP leadership.

Resisting Japan as a theme in CCP leadership legitimacy

Before looking at the case studies, it is necessary to clarify how the theme of resisting Japanese aggression has become a source of political capital for the CCP elite. This can be traced back to the context within which the Party was founded in 1921, by figures who had been radicalised partly by the failure of their government to seek redress for a string of national humiliations. Japan figured prominently due to the cession of Taiwan in 1895, the Twenty-One Demands imposed by Tokyo in 1915 and the transfer of German concessions in Shandong to Japan at Versailles in 1919. It was this latter event that triggered the student May Fourth Movement of that year, appropriated over the decades by the CCP as an iconic moment in its own birth (Mitter 2005).

In the years that followed, resisting Japan became a theme of popular legitimacy during the contest for state power with the Guomindang (GMD). It was in fact the GMD government that launched the first universal program of anti-Japanese education after its forces clashed with Japanese troops in May 1928, used largely as a form of compensation for the way in which it had turned against the social revolution (Israel 1966: 21-40). After the 1931 Mukden Incident, the theme was turned against the GMD by the CCP and was further developed as hostilities escalated into the all-out 'War of Resistance against Japan' (1937-45). Mao Zedong summed up the strategy in 1940 when he declared, 'No matter who you follow, the moment you oppose the Communist Party you become a traitor, because you can no longer resist Japan' (Mao 1940: 365).

When the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established in 1949, memories of the suffering that the population had experienced at the hands of the Imperial Army provided a reservoir of political capital for the new elite to consolidate its legitimacy. Mao's charisma was reinforced by the way in which his rise to power during the Long March was portrayed as having made the resistance against Japan possible (*Resolution* 1945). Roughly one half of the contents of *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* are from the period of the 'War of Resistance Against Japan'.

This perpetuation of memories of Japanese aggression has always had a difficult relationship with the requirements of foreign policy. While PRC diplomacy has focused on winning Tokyo's diplomatic and economic support, in domestic politics representations of traumatic events such as the Nanjing Massacre have been used to stir up anti-American patriotism during the Korean War, to strengthen national pride after the split with the Soviet Union in the 1960s, and to discredit the GMD regime on Taiwan (Eykholt 2000: 11-69; Friedman 2001: 103-32). During the Cultural Revolution, representations of Japan's past aggression continued to be used to reinforce what Gries has called the narrative of 'China as victor' (Gries 2004: 72-9). Memories of the resistance and Japanese atrocities were kept alive by productions such as the *The Red Lantern*, a model opera telling the story of how a railway worker and his family follow the leadership of Mao and the Party in the underground war. That recollection of past suffering was supposed to stimulate present emotions is clearly conveyed when the heroin sings these words of warning to her torturer, Hatoyama, in the aria 'Hatred in My Heart Sprouts a Hundredfold':

Chewing my hatred I swallow it down.

In my heart to sprout a hundredfold.
No tears I show, to my heart they go.
To irrigate flowers of blazing fire.

The reporting of contemporary foreign affairs has also been used to enhance negative feelings about Japan. When the US-Japan Joint Declaration was signed in 1969 and Okinawa was transferred to Japan, Tokyo was accused of joining an anti-revolutionary front and Prime Minister Sato was described as strengthening a fascist dictatorship in a society where reactionaries moulded a militaristic public opinion by propagating the emperor system and the bushido spirit of patriotism. Tokyo's economic policy was said to be dominated by a military-industrial complex, alarm was raised over the implications of rising military expenditure for the future of the SDF, and Tokyo's support for Asia-Pacific regionalism was decried as a revival of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere (*Guoji zhishi* 1971: 30-39; *Down with Revived Japanese Militarism* 1972).

That the Party could rein in this anti-Japanese propaganda when foreign policy required can be seen from the remarkable change that occurred with the signing of the 1972 Sino-Japanese Joint Declaration. With the top leaders, Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai, having failed to get a written apology for Japan's past aggression and waiving the issue of reparations, the Foreign Ministry issued guidelines for internal propaganda that explained the need to put policy before emotions in order for China to contain the United States and strike against 'Soviet revisionism' (Liao: 145). Japan thus began to be presented in a positive light (*A New Page* 1972) The CCP and the government refrained from the celebration of key anniversaries of the Anti-

Japanese War, while propaganda emphasised friendship between the two countries and the need to make economics the priority (Eykholt 2000: 11-69).

Despite improving diplomatic relations, however, the theme of resisting Japan was revived when patriotism was used more prominently to legitimise CCP rule during the period of 'reform and opening'. After Deng Xiaoping reined in pro-democracy demonstrators during the Beijing Spring of 1978-9, he reminded the nation that 'socialism and socialism alone can save China – this is the unmistakable conclusion that the Chinese people have drawn from their own experience in the 60 years since the May Fourth Movement' (Deng 1979: 174-5). As he based his appeal for loyalty largely on an appeal for a restoration of the patriotism that young people had shown in the 'days before and after Liberation', the narrative of the CCP leading the nation to salvation in the War of Resistance against Japan was retold as part of the new historical orthodoxy of the 1981 *Resolution on CPC History*.

After the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre and the end of the Cold War, the narrative of resisting Japan was used as a theme of 'patriotic education'. When the newly installed CCP General Secretary, Jiang Zemin, celebrated an exhibition on China's revolutionary history in 1990, he presented the Nanjing massacre as a valuable example that could be used to stir up popular anger. Recommending the production of special text books for this purpose, he stressed how important it was to draw attention to negative examples of people who collaborated with foreign powers or worshipped foreign things and lacked all trace of 'nationalist fibre' (Jiang 1990: 371-2). Teaching materials for schools were peppered with stories of heroic child resistance fighters

alongside images of CCP leaders and emblems and representations of the establishment of the Party, the PLA and the PRC (Hughes: 72-6).

From the CCP's earliest days and down through the period of 'reform and opening', the theme of resisting Japan has thus been cultivated as a source of political capital by the Party elite with varying degrees of intensity. The next two sections will explore how it was appropriated in struggles at the centre of the Party when elite politics was characterised by a 'winner takes all' struggle from which only one contestant can emerge victorious.

Resisting Japan and the downfall of Liu Shaoqi

The struggle against State President Liu Shaoqi took place during the early years of the Cultural Revolution, resulting in his expulsion from the Party in 1968 and his death in prison the following year. The immediate cause of this was the ideological crisis that arose when Liu spearheaded attempts to reverse Mao's policies of egalitarian collectivisation and class struggle. Because Liu had not broken any Party regulations and proved adept at rebuffing attempts to find fault with his ideological credentials, in 1966 the Moscow-trained security czar, Kang Sheng, wrote to Mao to tell him that he had found evidence in old newspapers concerning Liu's organisation of the release of CCP members from GMD prisons in 1936 and 1937. These prisoners were christened the '61 Person Treasonous Bloc' because they had been freed on condition that they signed statements renouncing their belief in communism. Liu Shaoqi was thus branded a 'traitor' (*pantu*) and a nationwide movement to 'root out traitors' was launched.

The Japanese theme began to be brought into the case against Liu because he was accused of failing to secure the unconditional release of the prisoners, ‘...when Japanese imperialism was attempting to fulfil its dream of seizing all of China and the aggressors were trampling our beautiful motherland’ (Investigation Group: 136). When the campaign against Liu intensified in April 1967, the charge of advocating a philosophy of survival, appeasement, betrayal and encouraging others to oppose the Party on the eve of the War of Resistance Against Japan was fixed as an item on the list of crimes he was supposed to have committed (Ji 1967: 1). This was further elaborated when Liu was accused of ‘Five Betrayals of the CCP’, one of which was saving his own life by getting out of a Japanese prison in 1929 ‘On condition that he would disclose a great number of our party secrets to the Japanese imperialists’ (Anon. 1968).

This association of Liu with betrayal in the war against Japan was further reinforced in the campaign against his philosophy of ‘self cultivation’. Originally presented in the CCP base area of Yanan in 1939 in his book *How to be a Good Communist*, this had been revived in 1962 as part of the attempt to moderate Mao Zedong’s ideology of class struggle in favour of an ethics based on selflessness and self-discipline. During the Cultural Revolution the Red Guard units who had been encouraged by Kang Sheng to investigate Liu’s background decried this work for having first appeared when Chiang Kaishek and rightist elements of the CCP were advocating appeasement and ‘the Japanese bandits occupied China. Our Party was leading the people of the whole country in a heroic resistance war’. Emphasising the contrast with Mao Zedong’s heroic patriotism, they explained that while ‘Our great leader Chairman Mao was advocating “maintain resistance, oppose defeatism; maintain

unity, oppose splitting; maintain progress, oppose retreat”, the doctrine of self cultivation appeared. Not only was the doctrine condemned for failing to discuss the nature of the revolution, it was also scorned for not once using the phrase ‘fight Japan to save the country’. This ‘doctrine of losing the party and losing the country’ was said to have its roots in efforts to prevent worker resistance against Japan in CCP controlled areas that went back to 1937 (Central Party School 1967: 1-4).

The portrayal of Liu as a traitor on the eve of the war against Japan stands in stark contrast to the heroic presentation of Mao. Even when Mao had lost much credibility with the Party elite at the end of his life, figures who had suffered at his hands continued to be drawn to the man they believed had made national rebirth possible and had become virtually fused with the nation (Teiwes: 54). This lionisation of Mao is even more impressive if Chang and Halliday’s recent biography is right in saying that he viewed the war as an opportunity to fight his rivals and the GMD rather than the Japanese (Chang and Halliday: 207-91). While fabricated accusations could be used to deplete Liu’s political capital, even though he had been a chief organiser of the resistance against Japan in North China, in 1972 Mao’s charisma was strong enough to allow the draft of the Joint Communique with Japan to pass through the Politburo with no opposition from the Gang of Four, despite its waiving of war reparations and failure to include a renunciation of Japan’s treaty with the Republic of China (Taiwan) (Liao: 149).

The downfall of Hu Yaobang

The downfall of CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang in January 1987 took place in the period of ‘reform and opening’. The individuals ranged against him were former

victims of the Cultural Revolution and veterans of the war against Japan, led by the ideologists Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun grouped around the Party elder and guru of economic planning, Chen Yun. His most serious crime was said to be failure to prevent the spread of Western culture and political ideas, known as ‘bourgeois liberalisation’. Japan was again used as a supplementary theme in the accusation that Hu had taken the unauthorized decision to invite 3000 young Japanese to visit China (Whiting 1989: 150-52).

As Zhao points out, this can be viewed as the use of a foreign policy issue to serve the purpose of internal power politics (Zhao, Q.: 122). To understand the nature of this strategy it is important to realise that Hu’s invitation was consistent with the established diplomatic policy of improving relations with Tokyo. In an interview given after his downfall, Hu explains that it was made by the Foreign Ministry and points out that the Standing Committee of the CCP Central Committee also approved visits by some 10,000 people from Japan up to 1989 (Li, R.: 34). According to the inside account given by Deng Liqun, however, the section of the dossier on Hu presented to the Politburo that dealt with foreign affairs was based on the testimony of Foreign Ministry personnel, including Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian (Deng 2006: 449). The accusation can thus be understood as part of a broader strategy to discredit Hu’s ability to make sound judgements, against which a bureaucracy like the Foreign Ministry could provide no resistance once Hu had lost the support of the paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping.

The contest to use public sentiments as a form of political capital in this struggle can be traced back to the way in which the debate over textbook revisions in Japan was

presented to the Chinese public in 1982. Uncertainty over how to handle this issue is evident in the fact that there was a time-lag of about one month before news of the debate was reported. Division is also evident in the different messages given by different Party organs. Newspapers like the *China Youth Daily*, published by Hu Yaobang's factional base, the Communist Youth League, tried to contain the issue by blaming it on 'a handful of militarists' whose plots would not undermine friendship between the people of Japan and China; articles in the *People's Liberation Army Daily* and the leftist monthly *Red Flag*, however, took a more combative stance by warning about the revival of Japanese militarism and the dream of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (Liao: 156-7).

It is in this context of elite division that 1985, the fortieth anniversary of the defeat of Japan, saw a wave of demonstrations over the textbook issue, the import of sub-standard Japanese goods and the visit to the Yasukuni Shrine by Prime Minister Nakasone on 15 August. These were timed to begin on 18 September, the anniversary of the Mukden Incident, and to finish on 9 December, the day on which a patriotic student demonstration in 1935 had demanded the formation of a united front between the GMD and the CCP to oppose Japan, over which the CCP claims leadership (*Resolution* 1981: 7). These demonstrations became increasingly entangled with the broader struggle over the reform process as they spread to a number of cities and resulted in violent clashes in Shanghai at the end of 1986. Alongside complaints against Japan there were demands for better food and accommodation on university campuses, complaints about inflation and corruption, and calls to 'fight for true freedom and democratic rights' (Hughes 2006: 37).

That this crisis was linked to the elite struggle is borne out by revelations made by Japanese officials that their Chinese counterparts had started to ask them for 'help' by not undertaking actions that would worsen the internal division (Whiting 1989: 57). Somewhat ironically, however, linking the anti-Japanese movement with the demand for broader political reforms weakened the position of the reformist Hu Yaobang, especially when talk circulated about the existence of a 'pro-Japanese faction' in the Party (Whiting 1989: 79). Matters came to a head when Hu told a mass meeting of Chinese and Japanese youths he had organised to receive Nakasone during his November 1986 visit to Beijing, that 'If Chinese young people think merely of the well-being of their own country and ... are indifferent to promoting unity, friendship, and cooperation for mutual benefit with young people in Japan and other countries, they are not sober-minded patriots' (Xinhua, 8 November 1986). His opponents had other ideas. Vice Premier and Minister of Education Li Peng told six thousand youths gathered at the Great Hall of the People on 8 December that they could only contribute to development if they formed an organized and disciplined force under the leadership of the Party (Whiting 1989: 75). After Hu's forced resignation, Deng Xiaoping strengthened the credentials of the leadership by talking about how Japan's wartime aggression obligated it to make much greater contributions to China's development for the first time since 1972 (Liao 2006: 168).

In the cases of both Liu Shaoqi and Hu Yaobang, therefore, popular anti-Japanese sentiments were used as a source of political capital in the wider battle over the nature of socialism. In both cases mass movements were encouraged, only to be constrained when the victim had been removed from power by the winner takes all system, leaving the paramount leader to restored order at the Party centre. Whereas Mao had

been able to steer the rapprochement with Japan that culminated in the 1972 Joint Declaration, however, Deng could not match his charismatic authority and took a relatively stronger line against Tokyo.

Managing Japan under Jiang Zemin

The conditions for Japan to become a significant issue of leadership legitimacy were certainly in place during the period of Jiang Zemin's term as CCP General Secretary (1989-2002). The crisis of socialist ideology deepened with the violent suppression of the democracy movement in June 1989 and the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Yet the atmosphere of harsh repression inside China allowed little space for Japan to become a focus for public demonstrations as the new leadership took advantage of developments in Japan to improve the bilateral relationship. These included the death of Emperor Hirohito, the decline of the LDP monopoly on power and the fact that Japan was the first industrialised nation to break the sanctions that had been imposed on China after Tiananmen. Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki could visit China in 1991, Jiang Zemin visited Tokyo as General Secretary of the CCP in April 1992 and Emperor Akihito went to China in October that year.

With the Party centre preoccupied with retrenchment, there was little incentive for any individual or faction to use the Japanese theme in elite politics. Jiang Zemin, moreover, continued to deploy the theme of resisting Japan as part of his campaign to recapture the patriotic high ground. His confidence can be seen in the encouragement given to the burgeoning movement to gain compensation for victims of Japanese wartime aggression. In 1991 articles by one of its leading figures, the lawyer Tong Zeng, could be published in organs such as the *People's Daily* and circulated in the

National People's Congress and the CCP Central Committee. Tong relates in an interview with the Chinese political commentator, Liu Ning, how Jiang himself asked him for a list of items to raise when Emperor Akihito visited China (Liu, N. 2005: 34-6).

The balance between diplomacy and domestic politics was increasingly difficult to maintain, however. Tong, for example, recalls how a memorandum was sent from the Party's legal system in 1993 that claimed the reparations movement was aimed at the Chinese government. After that he was removed from the capital every time an important event was held and the compensation movement had to go underground. Publication of news about the movement was banned and its witnesses were harassed (Liu, N. 2005: 36). The fact that an attempt by the Public Security Bureau to arrest Tong was blocked by the National People's Congress (NPC), then passing from the chairmanship of the liberal Wan Li to another liberal, Qiao Shi, shows that the leadership was again divided over how to deal with this kind of movement.

One reason for this confusion can be found in the difficulties encountered during the move towards a more institutionalised form of government that was marked by the complete retirement of Deng Xiaoping from politics in 1992. This left Jiang Zemin facing opposition to the programme of accelerating the economic reforms that had been formalised by the CCP's Fourteenth National Congress in October 1992, spearheaded by figures on the 'Left', like Deng Liqun (Hughes 2006: 94-5). There was also growing concern in the military over what was perceived to be soft policies towards the United States, Taiwan and Japan (Whiting 1995). The salience of the latter was heightened by the fact that 1995 was the fiftieth anniversary of the end of

World War Two. The combination of a commercialised publishing industry and easier access to overseas information made it more difficult to protect Jiang's patriotic credentials.

While the 1995-6 Taiwan crisis made the United States the main foreign focus of the popular 'new nationalism', Japan is the subject of three out of 75 chapters in the best-selling collection of essays by young authors published in 1996 under the title *China Can Say No* (Song *et al* 1996). Just as with the pre-1972 propaganda, accusations were made that Japan was helping the US to 'contain China' and that the SDF was growing into a formidable military power. As in the mid-1980s, resentment was also expressed over economic issues, such as the export of sub-standard Japanese automobiles to China. Newer themes include rejection of Japan's bid to become a Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council and complaints Tokyo's threats to freeze ODA as a response to China's nuclear weapons tests (Song *et al*: 85-7, 111, 177, 179-80).

More significant for leadership legitimacy is the oblique references made to Beijing's Japan policy. The distinction between the Japanese militarists and the innocent Japanese people that Zhou Enlai had used to facilitate the 1972 normalisation is called into doubt, for example, when one of the authors recalls his disappointment on realising that only a tiny number of the 3000 Japanese youths invited to China by Hu Yaobang had known much about the invasion of China or the Nanjing Massacre (Song *et al*: 90). The feasibility of this distinction is also questioned in light of the fact that militarism had managed to take hold of the whole Japanese population so easily in the past (Song *et al*: 110). On the other hand, the conservative premier Li Peng,

widely seen as a rival to Jiang Zemin, is presented in a relatively positive light for reminding a visiting delegation of the Japan-China Economic Association from Japan of the losses caused to China by Japanese militarism and his warning that this was incomparable to the ODA provided by Japan (Song *et al*: 178).

The significance of Japan as an issue in the new nationalism was further deepened by popular anger over the status of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands after Japanese rightists constructed a lighthouse there in July 1996. This debate was difficult to control because petitions condemning Beijing's weak response were organised by academics and journalists in British-ruled Hong Kong, posing a special problem for a leadership that had been promoting patriotism in preparation for the transfer of the colony to China in 1997. This was picked up in mainland China by activists such as the authors of *China Can Say No*, who insisted that there could be no compromise over national sovereignty, no matter how small the territory concerned might be. The Taiwan crisis was also linked to Japan through warnings that support was being given to the island's independence movement by Japanese political circles (Song *et al*: 179). The dilemma this swelling of public sentiments presented for China's leaders is encapsulated by Chen Zongshu, an activist in the movement to defend the Diaoyu islands who was well known as a writer of books about the Japanese invasion, who, when asked whether he was afraid of coming under political pressure, retorted: 'How can patriotism be a crime?' (*Ming Bao*, 7-9-96, reprinted in *Diaoyutai*: 17).

It is important to note that, just as in the anti-Japanese movements of the 1980s, this perceived weakness in foreign policy was also being used to legitimise criticism of a leadership that was uncertain on a broader range of other issues. Much of the new

nationalist writing at this time is really an expression of deep anxiety over the erosion of Chinese identity under the programme of 'reform and opening', which broadens out into a more systematic analysis of China's domestic woes in works such as *China under the Shadow of Globalization* (Fang *et al*, 1999). Moreover, the new nationalism was merging with a popular 'New Left' that was growing as a younger generation of journalists and academics spoke out more boldly over issues of corruption and growing inequality (Hughes 1996: 116-9).

Within this broader struggle over ideology, it was important that Jiang should prevent popular anti-Japanese sentiments from becoming a source of political capital for his opponents in the political elite. Attempts to strengthen his credentials can be seen from at least as early as the appearance of a *People's Daily* commentary April 1995, that warned about the challenge posed to the Murayama administration by the rise of right-wing forces. Jiang also emphasised the need for Japan to recognise its history of aggression when he met Prime Minister Kaifu in June, and took a high profile during meetings to commemorate the end of the war (Liao 2006: 182).

Jiang's boldest initiative, though, was to appropriate many of the themes raised by the new nationalists when he made the first visit by a PRC head of state to Japan in November 1998. When he met Prime Minister Obuchi he thus insisted that better relations depended having more discussion about Taiwan and history and stated that visits to the Yasukuni Shrine and denials of the Nanjing Massacre called into doubt Zhou Enlai's distinction between the Japanese people and the militarists. He also claimed that inclusion of the island in the scope of Japan-US defense cooperation would be interpreted as involvement in the Taiwan issue. The origins of such

problems he traced to the failure of the Americans to demilitarise Japan, which had left the population ignorant of their history and thinking of themselves only as victims of atomic war (Jiang 1998a).

Jiang's strong message on this occasion is seen by some as a response to the failure of his host to deliver an appropriate apology for past aggression or to sign up to President Clinton's 'Four Nos' policy towards Taiwan. Yet he had already established the main themes during a meeting with Chinese ambassadors that August, when he emphasised that it was necessary to 'speak deeply and clearly' and to 'stress the historical question from start to finish, and always talk about it' (Jiang 1998b: 204). That he was attempting to strengthen his personal patriotic credentials can also be seen in the way that made a special point of claiming that he had done underground work for the Party in Shanghai during the war and had joined demonstrators marching against US support for Japanese imperialism when he met Obuchi. This biographical detail was reinforced in the chronology of his life released at the time of the CCP's Sixteenth National Congress in November 2002.³ Needless to say, this has been disputed by critics overseas who claim that Jiang prospered in Nanjing under the puppet regime of Wang Jingwei and only advocated patriotism when in power to justify a range of crimes from holding back democracy to 'selling out' the nation through quiet deals over territory with China's neighbours.⁴ Despite the eruption of the anti-Japanese movement at the end of 2001, however, there is no evidence that such accusations or popular sentiments were mobilised against Jiang by individuals or factions at the centre of the CCP.

Managing Japan from Jiang to Hu

A number of factors could have made the rise of the anti-Japanese movement a source of political capital among the CCP elite in the jockeying for position that inevitably took place in the sensitive context of the transfer of power from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao at the Sixteenth National Congress in November 2002. The ideological crisis of socialism had intensified when Jiang Zemin marked the eightieth anniversary of the establishment of the CCP by launching his new doctrine of the 'Three Represents', according to which entrepreneurs can join the Party as an element of the revolutionary vanguard.

Anti-Japanese sentiments had been stimulated partly by the visit to the Yasukuni Shrine by Prime Minister Koizumi's in August 2001. Yet they were equally fuelled by domestic events, the most notorious being the publication in September of a photograph of the popular film star, Zhao Wei, wearing a dress decorated with an imperial Japanese flag. This was followed over the following years by the story of an orgy in Zhuhai involving hundreds of Japanese businessmen and Chinese prostitutes, an ill-received tour of China by the Japanese soccer team, an ill-fated drag show put on by Japanese students at the Northwestern University in Xian that triggered demonstrations because it was considered to be disrespectful and the lethal explosion of World War Two Japanese munitions in Northeast China . Even Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council was brought to the top of the domestic Chinese agenda not by Tokyo but by the reform package produced by General Secretary Kofi Annan.

Hu Jintao must have been acutely aware of the dangers of allowing the anti-Japanese movement to be used in elite politics during the leadership transition. He had been a

cadre at Tsinghua University in 1968, the centre of the struggle against Liu Shaoqi. In 1982 he had been brought into the Party centre by Hu Yaobang, who had appointed him to head the secretariat of the Communist Youth League, his factional base. The two men worked closely together until Hu Yaobang's fall from power. Perhaps this background explains why attempts to push public opinion in a more positive direction in the run-up to the CCP's Sixteenth National Congress were largely confined to the vicarious use of 'establishment intellectuals' like the *People's Daily* journalist Ma Licheng, who was branded as a 'Han traitor' after publication of his article 'New Thinking on Sino-Japanese Relations' (Ma 2002) and left his post to take up a job in Hong Kong (Gries 2005).

Hu's caution can also be seen in the way that he was able to use a kind of power balancing among the elite to reduce the incentives for possible opponents to use the anti-Japanese movement as political capital against him, effectively reducing the costs of political exit for Jiang Zemin. Most important among these was the way in which Jiang was gradually eased out of power, retaining control of the military until he transferred the chair of the CCP Central Military Commission (CMC) to Hu in September 2004, and the state Central Military Commission in March 2005. These dates are significant because they indicate how Jiang finally withdrew from formal politics right at the time that the anti-Japanese movement was building up to the climax of the petition movement and large demonstrations that took place in several cities in the spring of 2005. Although the linkage is hard to establish, it is significant that Hu was secure enough to use police methods to suppress the movement on 16 April, right after Jiang had finally retired.

The impact of Hu's power balancing on management of the anti-Japanese movement can also be seen in the way a degree of continuity was ensured by appointing six members of Jiang's 'Shanghai Faction' to the new Politburo. Among the three who took posts in the supreme Standing Committee, Zeng Qinghong had particularly good reasons for being sensitive about Japan. His father, Zeng Shan, had been accused of being a traitor during the Cultural Revolution on the grounds that he had communicated with the Japanese during the war as head of the organisation department of the Southeast Bureau of the CCP. In the early 1980s Zeng Qinghong had worked in the state energy bureaucracy when it had come under attack from inside the Party for 'losing sovereignty and humiliating the country' due to the signing of joint exploration and development agreements with Japanese firms operating in the Bohai Gulf. After he became deputy head of the organisation department of the Shanghai Municipal CCP in 1984, he gained further experience of handling the Japanese theme when he helped Jiang Zemin (then mayor of Shanghai) control the 1986/7 demonstrations that brought down Hu Yaobang.⁵

It was essential for Hu Jintao to win Zeng's support, because Zeng had helped Jiang Zemin to consolidate his power base by unleashing anti-corruption campaigns against his opponents in the late 1990s, as head of the CCP Organisation Department. He also has a long record of acting as a trouble-shooter over nationalistic issues such as Taiwan and Hong Kong and had begun to play a major role in Japan policy after of Jiang's 1998 summit with Obuchi. He had been the first foreign visitor to be received by Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori in April 2000 and developed a network of contacts around LDP former Secretary General Nonaka Hiromu. Japanese government approval of a grant of 1 million RMB for flood works and development in his home

town, Jinyuan, in December 2001, is said to be indicative of his good standing with the LDP elite. That Zeng could lead a delegation to Japan to take part in a ceremony to mark the opening of a new shipping route between Shanghai and Kyushu in April 2002, so soon after Beijing cancelled Koizumi's trip to China due to his visit to Yasukuni, attests to his ability to keep diplomatic channels open during times of high anti-Japanese sentiments in China.

This power-balancing among the elite can also be seen in Hu Jintao's management of diplomatic personnel. Here a degree of continuity with Jiang Zemin was maintained by appointing Li Zhaoxing as Foreign Minister in 2003 after he switched allegiance from the Shanghai faction at the Sixteenth National Congress (Lam: 162). When the anti-Japanese movement grew, and Jiang Zemin's power waned, this also meant that Li Zhaoxing could be made responsible for the deterioration of the bilateral relationship and given the sensitive task of issuing warnings that further demonstrations were forbidden. He also oversaw a certain amount of diplomatic posturing, such as telling his Japanese counterpart that his country had hurt the feelings of the Chinese over the issues of history and Taiwan when he visited Beijing in expectation of an apology for the violence.

This allowed the more sensitive diplomacy with Japan to be conducted by Hu's own proteges. In autumn 2004 he had appointed the fluent Japanese speaker, Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi, as ambassador to Japan, which was followed by the 'mini summit' that took place between Hu and Koizumi at the APEC meeting in Chile that November (Lam: 203-4). Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo was appointed by Hu as director of the CCP Central Office for Foreign Affairs, a politically more significant

role than that of Foreign Minister. With Li Zhaoxing playing the public role, Dai was also free to begin the less visible dialogue with his Japanese counterpart, Yachi Shotaro that culminated in the visit of Shinzo Abe to Beijing after he became Prime Minister in 2006.

Hu Jintao thus removed incentives for key members of the elite to use the anti-Japanese movement as political capital in the leadership transition by easing Jiang Zemin out of power, winning over key members of the Shanghai faction and effectively managing diplomatic personnel. The process took place remarkably smoothly, given that public opinion was provoked by both external and domestic factors during the Koizumi administration in Japan. Moreover, once Jiang was removed from power, the anti-Japanese movement could be suppressed through police action in April 2005 with little risk to Hu's standing.

That Hu wanted to leave no doubts about who was in control in the CCP can be seen in the way that Prime Minister Abe was invited to come to Beijing on the afternoon of 8 October 2006, right after the Chinese leader had attended the opening of the Sixth Plenary session of the CCP's Sixteenth Central Committee. Aside from the summit, the main topic of discussion in Chinese political circles and public opinion at that time was the arrest of Chen Liangyu, chairman of the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee and Jiang Zemin's favoured candidate for the post-Hu leadership, on charges of embezzling the city's pension fund. What State Councillor Tang Jiaxuan christened the 'new starting point' in bilateral relations thus coincided almost exactly with the completion of the transition to the Hu Jintao leadership through a process of power balancing among the elite.

Maintaining the 'New Starting Point'

With Hu's leadership consolidated in elite politics, the next task was to present the visit by Abe in a way that would further strengthen his popular legitimacy. This was important given that the new Japanese Prime Minister was known for having supported visits to the Yasukuni Shrine and came to power on a programme to make Japan into a 'normal' country with a real military, reformed constitution and an education system that could inculcate a stronger sense of patriotism. The news media were thus used to disseminate a somewhat sanitized version of Abe, which was reinforced by tightly controlled discussion in cyberspace that can be illustrated by looking at the reporting of Japanese issues by the official Xinhua news agency and the discussion that took place on the Strong State Forum (*Qiangguo luntan*) website.

It is worth looking at Xinhua because, as the state news agency in a tightly controlled media, it has a strong influence over the formation of public sentiments concerning Japan. The Strong State Forum is interesting because it grew out of the CCP's main organ, the *People's Daily*, when its discussion forum was overwhelmed by the wave of Internet activism that followed the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999 (Zhou: 147-54). Rather than being a space for free debate or a source of data to measure public opinion, it should thus be viewed as part of the apparatus that the state uses to shape political discourse in cyberspace and a barometer for what the CCP considers is permissible and desirable for discussion. Its exchanges thus tend to consist of one-line outbursts of anger or indignation towards Japan, interspersed with longer commentaries that are quite thoughtful and well-informed arguments for a rational approach to policy making.

On the Strong State Forum between 1 August and 4 December 2006, some 166 messages including the word 'Japan' were permitted, and 238 including the word

‘Abe’.⁶ The majority posted before Abe became leader of the LDP reflect long-standing discussions over issues such as remembrance of the atrocities committed by the Japanese army, disputes over maritime territories, munitions left in Northeast China and discussion of whether the Japanese are descendants of the Chinese and how much their culture owes to China. New issues of irritation include complaints over the application by a Japanese firm to register its Chinese branch under the name ‘Sanguang’,⁷ and attempts by Japan to use the EU to contain China.

When Abe became leader of the LDP, it is notable that a relatively sceptical appraisal appears in a small number of lengthy postings between 21 and 24 September, which stress his continuity with Koizumi, express hope that he will not visit the Yasukuni Shrine (Huang Caoping 21-09-06; Yi tian yi guangzai 22-09-06) and relay a Xinhua report on a Japanese media revelation that Abe’s grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi (who became Prime Minister in 1957) went to Taiwan in 1969 to urge Chiang Kaishek to declare independence for the island (Zhongguo yao lianxi shuo bu 23-09-06). Yet the assessment becomes much more up-beat as soon as Abe’s visit to Beijing was announced by the Chinese Foreign Ministry on 4 October.

This is also when the Xinhua report on Abe’s first speech to the Diet as Prime Minister appeared. This Xinhua text is remarkable for the way in which it contains no mention of the pledges Abe made to push ahead with the bid for a permanent seat on the UNSC, revise the constitution, ease restrictions on collective defense and teach more ‘patriotism’ in schools. Such a positive presentation was made easier by the way in which these controversial promises were bunched together in the first part of Abe’s speech. Xinhua could thus concentrate solely on the section that followed, which contained his promise to make the building of ‘future-oriented’ ties with China and

South Korea his foreign policy priority, presenting the new Prime Minister as wanting to depart from the Cold War mentality and strengthen bilateral relations for the sake of regional stability. Approval could also be given for his confirmation of the 1993 acceptance by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono that the Japanese military were involved in the crime of the ‘comfort women’ and the apology for Japan’s past aggression delivered by Prime Minister Murayama in 1995.

The most important issue of all, Abe’s compromise formula of refusing to say whether or not he intended to visit the Yasukuni Shrine, was mentioned in the same Xinhua report but with no elaboration. The version of the report that was published in the online version of the *People’s Daily* even erased the mention of Yasukuni altogether. When news broke of the proposed visit to Beijing on 4 October, the following paragraph appeared in the English version of the Xinhua report but not in the Chinese:

The [sic] Sino-Japanese relations have been soured by former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's repeated visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, where Japan's war dead, including 14 class-A war criminals in WWII, are honored. The leaders of the two countries halted exchange of visits since Koizumi paid a homage to the war shrine in 2001 (Xinhua 04-10-06).

The italicised words (my italics) concerning the Yasukuni Shrine in the following statement were also omitted from the Chinese version:

He [Abe] has pledged to improve relations with Japan's Asian neighbors, *but refused to say whether or not he would visit the shrine as prime minister* (*People's Daily*, 04-10-06).

In the weeks that followed, Xinhua provided little or no coverage of developments in Japanese politics that might antagonise public opinion in China. These include Abe's questioning of the conviction of Class A war criminals by the post-war Tokyo Tribunal, doubts cast on the historical facts concerning the 'comfort women' expressed by Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Hakubun Shimomura, and revision of Japan's education law to foster 'patriotism'. When two Xinhua journalists interviewed Abe on 15 November, they merely asked him about his visit to Beijing and what measures he would take to improve economic ties, without touching on any of these sensitive issues (Xinhua, 15-11-06).

This anodine representation of Abe by Xinhua is reflected in the discussion on the Strong State Forum, where the dominant tone of discussion became one of support for giving Abe a chance to improve relations. Despite a degree of caution in many of the messages, there was also a general expression of enthusiasm that Abe had realised how Japan's national interest lies in having good relations with China, under messages with titles such as 'Abe You Have Done Well!' (Li Wang, 9-10-06). There was even one message based on a Xinhua report that Abe's wife had told a group of Chinese schoolchildren that Japanese culture had come from China (Ruo Lahan, 11-10-06).

A more cynical tone only entered the discussion of Abe in Xinhua and on the Strong State Forum when the debate began in the Diet over whether Japan should acquire

nuclear weapons. While a statement by Abe on 10 October that Japan would maintain its adherence to its non-nuclear principles was reported (Xinhua, 10-10-06), the response on the Strong State Forum on that same day includes a scathing attack on Jin Xide, deputy head of the Japan Research Institute at CASS, for stating that there is no need for concern because the nuclear debate is just a matter of dissent in the Japanese cabinet and represents the views of a minority. The author finishes by calling on Jin to resign, pointing out that his logic overlooks the gravity of the situation and can be applied to anything from Koizumi's Yasukuni visits to the expansion of Japan's armed forces (Qiangguo boke guangming xing, 10-10-06). This is followed by a posting from 'a Chinese youth' reminding Abe of the promises he had made about improving relations during his meetings with Chinese leaders in Beijing, and stressing that he was now being watched to see if his actions matched his words (Yunnan Luoyi, 10-10-06).

That this critical turn in the on-line discussion was brought about by the nuclear issue supports the view that the Chinese leadership wants to be seen as making geopolitics and not historical issues the primary concern when dealing with Japan. This is further indicated by the fact that Xinhua reported a statement by Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao on 17 October that Japan should adhere to its non-nuclear principles and adopt a responsible attitude for maintaining regional peace and stability. Although Abe restated his commitment to Tokyo's non-nuclear principles on 25 October, this was reported by Xinhua on 25 October with a link to an article it had published the previous July accusing Abe of being a 'hawk' who would use the North Korean missile tests that month as an excuse to go nuclear (Xinhua 27-01-06). As support for a debate on nuclearisation continued to be voiced by senior LDP figures, Xinhua

covered the discussion and included links to reports in other Chinese newspapers, such as Shanghai's *Liberation Daily* (Xinhua 2-11-06; 15-11-06).

This attempt to manage the representation of the Abe administration to the Chinese public indicates the dilemma for the Chinese leadership when it comes to managing popular anti-Japanese sentiments as a resource in what is known in China as the 'double-edged sword' of nationalist politics. On the one hand it is recognised that the Party still relies upon patriotism to mobilise the population, while on the other the leadership is aware that this can become a source of instability when not managed properly. The enduring difficulty of balancing diplomacy with the demands of domestic politics is perhaps well illustrated by contrast between the very positive reporting of Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's visit to Tokyo in April 2007 and the angry reaction on the Internet that followed shortly after when news broke that the Tokyo High Court had rejected a series of long-standing claims for compensation by victims of Japan's wartime aggression. More significant than the content of the activity in cyberspace on this occasion is the way in which it was linked with political mobilisation by several campaigning organisations that cooperated to sign a strongly worded joint protest. Not only did these activities fall far short of the anti-Japanese demonstrations of 2005, however, the organisations concerned are also closely linked to the state.⁸

Can the consensus hold?

One positive conclusion that can be drawn from the above case studies is that neither domestic political constraints on Chinese policy-makers nor events in Japan have completely de-railed working relations between Beijing and Tokyo over the decades. It is also clear that popular anger towards Japan can still be suppressed through police

action and placated and moulded to some degree through diplomatic posturing and media manipulation. Yet, despite the optimism over greater institutionalisation that emanates from observers of CCP elite politics, it is wise to finish on a note of caution.

This is because the possibilities for managing elite politics remain limited so long as there are no formal rules for the transfer of power in the CCP. The Hu Jintao leadership will continue to be tested as a new generation of leaders has to be groomed after the CCP's Seventeenth National Congress in October 2007, in time to take over when Hu's term as General Secretary ends in 2012. In the meantime, speculation continues that the power struggle between Hu Jintao and the Shanghai Faction is not over, especially since the unexpected appointment of the Shanghai-aligned Xi Jinping to the Standing Committee of the Politburo has created a situation in which the context for the next succession will be between the new arrival and Hu Jintao's preferred candidate, Li Keqiang. In the meantime, with the retirement of Zeng Qinhong, there is a serious lack of experience in the new team for dealing with crises over sensitive nationalistic issues such as relations with Japan and Taiwan. Moreover, the crisis of socialist ideology remains unresolved as it is fed by concerns over growing social inequality, environmental degradation and failing social services. Despite the resources invested by the Chinese state and the CCP in shaping public opinion and controlling access to information, the public cannot be isolated from possible changes of track by the post-Abe administration in Tokyo or processes less directly under Japan's control, such as the holding of parliamentary elections and referenda in Taiwan which can bring discussion of the links between Japan and the island back into the public spotlight. Under such circumstances popular anti-Japanese sentiments can still be seen as a resource in elite politics.

It has been argued above that the ‘winner takes all’ mode of struggle radicalised the use of Japan in China’s elite politics under Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. Yet those charismatic leaders were also able to restore unity at the centre and stop elite conflicts from destabilising the bilateral relationship. The diplomatic relationship with Japan was negatively affected, however, when the relatively weak Jiang Zemin strengthened his nationalist credentials by taking a stronger attitude towards Japan under pressure from the rising anti-Japanese movement. The movement towards a mode of power-balancing behaviour among the elite may have helped Hu Jintao to prevent the dynamic between public opinion and elite politics from spilling over into Japan policy again. In the absence of more formal rules to govern succession politics in the CCP, however, maintaining restraint in the mobilisation of popular anti-Japanese sentiments may depend primarily on finding acceptable ad hoc exit strategies for individuals at the centre of the political system.

Notes

1. This article was first delivered as a paper at the conference on ‘Rivalry and Realpolitik: China-Japan Relations at the Start of the Twenty-first Century’, St Antony’s College, Oxford, 13 December 2006. It has benefited from the critical comments of those present and from two anonymous referees.
2. These positions are not exclusive of each other but more a matter of emphasis. See the discussion in Gries 2004: 18-20.
3. Jiang’s chronology can be found at http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2002-01/15/content_238452.htm.
4. An account of the deconstruction of the myth can be found in Ren 2005: 21-5.

5. For information on Zeng I have relied on the biography by Wu 2004.
6. These figures were taken from accessing the Strong State Forum on 3 December 2006. However, when the forum was accessed again on 4 December, the results for 'Abe' had been reduced to a mere 28, confined between 21 September and 4 December.
7. These were the words used during the Japanese invasion to refer to the policy of 'burn everything, kill everything, steal everything' (shao guang, sha guang, qiang guang).
8. The statement was issued on 27 April 2007 and signed by the China National Lawyers Association, All-China Women's Federation, China Association for the Advancement of Human Rights, China Legal Aid Foundation, China Association for the History of the War of Resistance Against Japan.

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⁵ For information on Zeng I have relied on the biography by Wu 2004.

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