

# China Needs a Firmer Stance against Japanese Militarism

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## **1. The Main Source of the Poor Sino-Japan Relationship Lies with Japan and the U.S.**

In recent years, one of the biggest bilateral relationship headaches China has experienced is with Japan. The problems are even greater than those of the China-U.S. relationship. The main cause of the intense relationship is the provocative actions of the Japanese government towards China.

Seeking a friendly Japan-China relationship has never been a problem for China. In thousands of years of history, a strong China always exported advanced technology and culture to Japan, helping Japan's development. In modern history, Chinese leaders, including Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobao, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao, all hoped China and Japan could be on friendly terms. Although in today's Chinese society, there are excessively aggressive comments on Japan, these are not from the Chinese government. Neither are they outcomes of China's patriotic education. They are also not Chinese people's comments for no reason. These are normal responses to Japanese anti-Chinese policy, and are essentially sentimental reactions to Japanese policies.

Over the past 20 years, Japanese policy has tended to lean right, becoming more and more hawkish towards China. The change has fundamental geopolitical reasons. Historically, there has only been one powerful country in East Asia. In ancient times, it was China, while in modern times it was Japan. But the power structure is now changing. China is also becoming a very strong country in East Asia. Never before in East Asia have there been two strong nations co-existing with each other. **The emergence of China and Japanese unwilling acceptance of this emergence is the fundamental cause of today's intense relationship.**

Of course, there is another fundamental reason behind the intense relationship: **the U.S. accommodation of Japanese right wing political force.** After World War II, out of the needs of the Cold War, the U.S. stopped prosecuting Japanese war criminals and instead moved towards helping Japan to fight the Soviet Union and China. In addition, the U.S., with ulterior motives, returned control of the Senkaku Islands back over to Japan, which resulted in problems for any future China-Japan conflict. After World War II, over the past 60 years, the Japanese right wing has intensified their campaign to reverse the verdict of Japanese war crimes, including revising history textbooks, visiting the Yasukuni Temple, denying the Nanjing massacre and comprehensively distorting history. The U.S. has remained neutral on all these actions. In fact, judging from the U.S. value system and its role in World War II, Japanese right wing campaigns should not be tolerated by the U.S. But the fact is the U.S. government and policymaking community have all remained silent during this movement, and to some extent are watching the China-Japan conflicts with an amused attitude. Therefore, because the Japanese right wing is aiming at China and not the U.S., at least so far, this satisfies the U.S. psychological sentiment of constraining China.

## **2. The Underlying Limitation to Sino-Japanese Tension is the Desire to Avoid War**

China has adopted a peaceful diplomatic policy, unwilling to fall into the trap of a bad relationship with Japan and definitely unwilling to provoke military conflict. **Under these circumstances, the degree of the intensity between China and Japan depends only on Japan and the U.S.** Although the Japanese right wing has war ambitions, Japan does not have the power and courage to unilaterally provoke any China-Japan military conflict. But the right wing wants to pull the U.S. into a military conflict among the U.S., Japan and China.

Although the U.S. does not want to see an improved relationship between China and Japan, the U.S. also does not want military conflict with China without a major reason. There are three reasons. First, China is a big country, and the nation's power is strengthening. It also possesses nuclear power. In Chinese history, there is no precedence of war with the U.S. in which the U.S. did not have major loss (for example, the Korean War). This makes the U.S. very cautious in dealings with China. Second, the implementation of U.S. military strategy in the Middle East has not been smooth. The Iraqi war in the military front showed the amazing U.S. military power. However, in the political front, the weakness of U.S. power was exposed. Recently, Iran's hawkish faction assumed power, putting new pressure on the U.S. in the Middle East. The conflict between the U.S. and Arab countries is a long-term factor occupying U.S. attention. Third, the current U.S. government still faces many outstanding domestic problems. The approval rating of the government has been declining. Thus, the U.S. obviously does not want to have direct conflict with China in the Far East, at least in the near future.

### **3. China Should Adopt a Stronger Attitude to Respond to Japan's Hard Line**

China's emergence and Japan's unwillingness to accept this emergence is a long-term cause of the problem. The relationship deteriorated because of Japanese unfriendly attitudes. This cannot be improved in the short term. Facing anti-Chinese policy, China already has no room to yield. **The best response from China is: give up the unrealistic policy of having a friendly relationship with Japan, and instead should adopt a practical attitude to respond to Japanese provocative action. At the same time, China should avoid large-scale military conflict.**

Respond to Japan firmly: this is the policy China should adopt for the following two reasons.

First, Japanese provocative actions against China leave no other alternatives. Japanese positions on issues concerning core interests, for example border classification of the East China Sea, the Taiwan issue, the Senkaku Islands issue, the Russian oil pipeline, and the issue of historical interpretation, constitute a very unreasonable and provocative policy. In these areas, either China's major principles are challenged or its major economic interests and sovereignty rights are challenged, leaving China with no room to give in.

The second reason is Japan is increasingly dependent on the Chinese market, giving China enough power to respond to Japanese policy. **After 20 years of rapid growth, the Chinese economy is emerging and is becoming stronger and stronger, creating two new trends in the Sino-Japanese relationship: the Japanese economy is less important for China, and Chinese market is increasingly important for Japan.** Therefore, when Japanese anti-Chinese policy hurts the two countries' economic interests, Japan is hurt more.

From these two perspectives, China has complete capacity to respond firmly to Japan. This response cannot be ignored by Japan. The key is whether China has the courage to use its own power to respond firmly.

#### **4. Rely on China's Real Power and Maintain the Goal of Peace**

A firm response is not based on emotion, but rather based on rationality and reality. Such a policy towards Japan not only has clear logic but also has a clear bottom line, which is to avoid military conflict. Avoiding military conflict is important because China needs to fully capture the strategic opportunity of development, taking full advantage of a peaceful environment. Solving this problem, China must stabilize its relationship with the U.S. **After stabilizing the relationship with the U.S., Japan cannot unilaterally provoke major conflict.**

More important is that China should increase and reassert its real power. The essence of peace is non-violent order maintained by the strong. The right of maintaining peace has always been in the hands of the powerful. In recent years, Japanese tendency towards military force is increasingly obvious. Specifically, the first piece of evidence is it has increased its military expenses to second in the world. The second piece of evidence its military capacity has obviously surpassed its defense needs. The third piece of evidence is Taiwan defense collusion between the U.S. and Japan. The fourth piece of evidence is Japan has undertaken ten military acts, thereby cauterized the peaceful constitution, fixing the legal restrictions for Japanese troops to be sent overseas and able interfere with Chinese interior affairs. The fifth piece of evidence is Japan openly treats China as a potential competitor, and includes the Taiwan Straits into its plan for military interference with the U.S. **This sequence of events signifies a grave change: Japan has already bid farewell to its postwar peace policy, gradually becoming a new militarist country with a capacity of provocation.** Facing such a country with historical aggression and a country which has not fully reflected on the danger of military aggression, China on one hand should keep a high alert on military conflict while comprehensively enhance its national power, especially defense capabilities. Only when China's real power has a surplus can war be avoided. In the coming twenty years, not only will the Chinese economy will have opportunities to develop quickly, but the Chinese military will also have this chance, since China's industrial production capacity has entered into a surplus: capital is abundant in the military sector, though unemployment is still a problem. The state has been advocating indigenous research and development and improving the technology content of its products. The defense industry can take advantage of all these favorable conditions by using China's surplus production capacity to resolve the employment problem and help technological innovation. China should capture these good opportunities to develop its defense technology at a pace faster than the growth rate of the economy.

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