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Japanese Newspaper Reports and Public Opinion on the Anti-Japan Demonstrations in 2005 in China :

Analysis of the Japanese Popular Sentiment in the Controversy
over the Interpretation of Japan's Past History

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Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the nature of the recent upsurge of nationalism in Japan stemming from the controversy over the interpretation of the assessment of Japan's role in its neighboring Asian states in the earlier part of the twentieth century. It analyzes Japanese newspaper reports and Japanese public opinion regarding the anti-Japan demonstrations which took place in spring 2005 in China. The paper particularly focuses on the following two points: (1)the vicious circle in which Japanese politicians' speeches and actions have stimulated Chinese popular nationalism and the Chinese popular nationalism, in return, have fueled Japanese nationalism; (2)the nature of a complex fabric of Japanese public opinion on history issues.

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Introduction

This paper seeks to examine the nature of the recent upsurge of nationalism in Japan stemming from the controversy over the interpretation of the assessment of Japan's role in its neighboring Asian states in the earlier part of the twentieth century. The study will analyze Japanese newspaper reports and Japanese public opinion regarding the anti-Japan demonstrations which took place in spring 2005 in China. This paper will clarify the following two points.

First, the recent growth of Japanese nationalism is deeply related to the situations in its neighboring Asian states, China, South Korea, and North Korea. In China, popular nationalism is rapidly growing. The growth of popular nationalism in China has stimulated nationalism in Japan. For example, many of Chinese arguments on the Internet, whose user population has been rapidly growing, criticize Japan. Prime Minister Koizumi's continuous Yasukuni visits during his term in office have strongly stimulated Chinese nationalism on cyberspace. Chinese elites who tried to take a conciliatory stance towards Japan were targets of harsh criticism from the Chinese people.

Chinese political leaders have consequently forced to take a harsh stance toward Japan. A remarkable case is the Chinese government's refusal to apologize to Japan for a series of anti-Japan riots in spring 2005 when Chinese attacked Japanese restaurants and Japanese cars, and threw stones at the Japanese embassy. Such negative attitudes on the side of China have aggravated anti-China emotions in Japan and helped to nurture the influence of anti-China hawkish groups in Japan. It is important to pay attention to the vicious circle in which Japanese politicians' speeches and actions have stimulated Chinese

popular nationalism and the Chinese popular nationalism, in return, have fueled Japanese nationalism.¹

Secondly, to understand the recent upsurge of Japanese nationalism, it is important to closely examine the popular sentiment in Japanese society. The Chinese are afraid that the Japanese lean toward the right without reflecting upon the past history. They see the evidence in the Japanese people's support for the then Prime Minister Koizumi's Yasukuni visits. However, Japanese public opinion over Koizumi's Yasukuni visits has been divided into two. This point should not be neglected.

The problem is that the influence of the anti-China hawkish groups in Japan has been growing. The Japanese have started to assess political leadership based more on a politician's abilities to show a decisive attitude and to be assertive. Such abilities matter in a politician's attitude especially toward China.

The popular sentiment in Japan to seek a strong leader backs Koizumi's Yasukuni visits. Still, not a few Japanese feel a sense of incongruity with the fact that the Class-A war criminals are enshrined in the Yasukuni Shrine. Similarly, not a few Japanese oppose the then prime minister's Yasukuni visits. Nevertheless, many Japanese agree upon Koizumi's statement that he cannot suspend his Yasukuni visits yielding to criticisms from China. It is necessary to carefully understand the nature of such a complex fabric of Japanese public opinion.

It is necessary to analyze the intricate popular sentiment in Japan in a larger context. At the end of the report, I would like to point out that the Japanese people have

¹ Shigeto Sonoda terms the process of the vicious circle as "nationalism game." See, Sonoda (2005).

started to value a stance of self-reliance, “Shutaisei” (“independence of will”/ “self-reliance”), in interpreting Japan’s past history. In this relation, much attention has been paid to the activity of the conservative group, Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, to publish *Atarashii Rekishi Kyoukasho* (New History Textbook) that was intended to promote a "positive view" of Japan by omitting reference to negative facts such as war crimes committed by the Japanese military. In general, such a radical historical view of some conservatives has caught attention. Still, many more Japanese have started to value “Shutaisei” in interpreting the past history. In order to clarify the point, I will examine special reports on the history problem produced by major Japanese newspapers from 2005 to 2006.

Anti-Japan Argument in China

This section examines the popular nationalism that has lately grown in China.

(1) Growing influence of the right wing in Japan

In the joint opinion poll conducted by the Asahi Newspaper and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences right after the anti-Japan demonstrations in 2005, more than 64 % of Chinese respondents answered that they “dislike” Japan (*Asahi Shinbun*, April 27, 2005). The aggravation of anti-Japan emotion in China is attributed to the fact that the notion of “Kubunron” has been weakening (Kagami et al., 2006). The “Kubunron” (“argument of separation”), a traditional Chinese policy toward Japan, distinguishes the right-wing groups in Japan, the target enemy, from ordinary Japanese people, seen as

cooperative partners. What is remarkable in China is that the Chinese people have become less supportive of the “Kubunron” and, instead, have started to be more suspicious of Japanese people’s growing inclination towards the right wing. China has come to recognize that Japan, far from showing remorse for its past atrocities during the Second World War, has started to attempt to contain China from expanding.

Karasudani and Yamaguchi analyzed Chinese newspaper articles about the anti-Japan demonstrations over the period between the end of March to the mid-April of 2005. During the short period, many problems arose between China and Japan on top of the anti-Japan demonstrations, such as the Japan’s candidacy for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council, controversies over Japanese history textbooks, and disputes over explorations of an offshore gas field in the East China Sea. During the period many Chinese newspapers carried many articles and reports critical about Japan. For example, an article in the Beijing News on March 9², under the heading of “Warning of Dangerous Legalization of Yasukuni Visit,” reported that Japan is ready to legislate politicians’ visits to the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, which honours war dead including World War II criminals, and to amend Japan’s peace constitution, which renounced war.³ In short, this article warned that the Japanese people tolerate right-wing policies. Another article in the same newspaper on March 29 reported, under the title of “Why Japan attacks the four aspects,” that Japanese political parties unprecedentedly unite in the struggle over

² Karasudani and Yamaguchi (2006).

³ *Ibid.*

the territorial disputes with China and thus help the Japanese Foreign Ministry to take a decisive stance.⁴

Karasudani and Yamaguchi conclude the basic logic of China's claims as follows:⁵

- Japan is ready to be a major power.
- The growth of the Japanese military and the intensification of the Japan-US alliance are meant to contain China.
- Japan never reflects upon its history. What is worse, it has leaned to the right.
- Therefore, Japan is not qualified for a permanent seat in the Security Council.

(2) Chinese arguments on the Internet

A remarkable phenomenon has emerged in China from the expanding negative image of a Japan which “never reflects its own past” and “tries to contain China.” It is the growing criticisms, generating from arguments on the Internet, of Chinese foreign policy towards Japan. Jing Ying Qi analyzed this point minutely⁶.

According to Qi, the Chinese government was reluctant to oppose Japan's candidacy overtly while Chinese people strongly opposed Japan's candidacy for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. The central theme in the Internet arguments has been about why the Chinese government does not clearly oppose Japan's candidacy for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. Jin Xide, research fellow at the Institute of Japanese Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, commented in

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.134.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.134.

⁶ Qi, (2004 and 2006).

the cyberspace discussion: “There are three aspects to be considered regarding Japan’s bid for a permanent seat in the Security Council. First, China’s national interests. Second, general trends in international relations. And, third, China-Japan relation. The relative importance of each element changes depending on the time and situation. Therefore, instead of making a quick final decision on Japan’s bid for a permanent seat in the Security Council, the Chinese government will make an appropriate decision at the right moment.”⁷

Qi introduced the following comment posted in response to Jin’s comment:

The attitude of the Chinese Foreign Ministry is still unclear. I am afraid that China might abstain from voting again in the coming election for permanent seats. I, like many fellow Chinese, am quite against Japan’s bid for a permanent seat in the Security Council. I wish Chinese foreign ministry officials would listen to Chinese people’s voice. If China votes for it or abstains from voting in the election in September, I will renounce my nationality on the exact same day. Even if I lose my citizenship, I must not give up for our enthusiasm and spirit!⁸

Qi points out a change in the relation between the Chinese government and the Chinese over the controversy about Chinese policy towards Japan⁹. Divergence between the government’s view and the main argument on the Internet has started to appear. The difference between the two has become more remarkable especially since the spiraling of anti-Japan demonstrations and the criticisms of China subsequently emerging from the American and European media in spring 2005. Since then, the Chinese government has started to crack down on excessively radical demonstrators and declared, “It is liable to threaten the domestic stability even if the original motivation lies in Chinese patriotism.”

⁷ Qi (2006), p.80.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.80.

⁹ Qi (2006).

In response to this, arguments on the Internet have harshly condemned the Chinese government.¹⁰

These intense criticisms by the Chinese people against the Chinese policy toward Japan show the growing power of Chinese nationalism beyond the expectation of the Chinese government. Japan is an important symbol for the growing Chinese nationalism among the Chinese people, as shown in the case of anti-Japan demonstrations. The strong growth of Chinese nationalism has, in turn, stimulated Japanese nationalism.

Hawkish Anti-China Argument in Japan

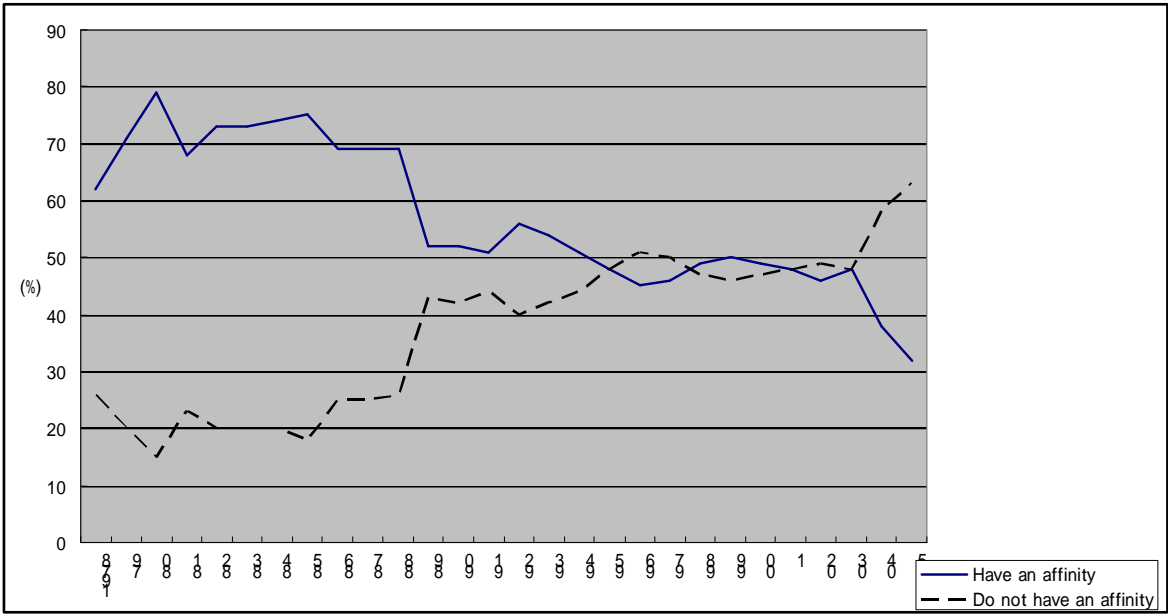
Many observers of the anti-Japan demonstrations points out the difficulty to explain why it happened only by the anti-Japan emotions among the Chinese people since the background of the anti-Japan demonstrations is composed of complex domestic conditions of China. Nevertheless, it is true that Japanese politicians' speeches and acts, especially Prime Minister Koizumi's Yasukuni visits, exacerbated the anti-Japan emotions. The cause lies on the side of Japan. Still, intense animosity among the Chinese people toward Japan, shown by the anti-Japan demonstrations, was a severe shock to the Japanese. Especially, repeated assaults on Japanese restaurants and Japanese cars shocked many Japanese.

The image of China, which had already been aggravated by the turmoil over the 2004 Asian Cup Football game, worsened due to a series of anti-Japan demonstrations in Spring 2005. According to a search done by the Cabinet Office of Japan in October 2005,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.95.

more than 60 % of respondents answered that they did not have a sense of affinity to China (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Japanese’s Sense of Affinity towards China¹¹



Still, not all the Japanese newspapers leaned towards a hawkish attitude toward China. In the following part, I will examine, based on the analysis by Yamakoshi¹², how the Japanese media and Japanese public opinion reacted to the anti-Japan demonstrations. Five major Japanese nationwide daily newspapers are classified as either dovish or hawkish. The dovish are *Asahi Shinbun*, *Mainichi Shinbun*, and *Nihon Keizai Shinbun*. On the other hand the hawkish ones are *Yomiuri Shinbun* and *Sankei Shinbun*. The difference between the two poles is deeply related with the interpretation of modern Japanese history.

¹¹ Yamakoshi created the figure based on the research data released by the Cabinet Office of the Government of Japan. See, Yamakoshi (2006) p.63.
¹² Yamakoshi (2006).

According to Yamakoshi, dovish newspapers attributed the root cause of the current Japan-China friction to the then Prime Minister Koizumi's controversial visits to the Yasukuni shrine and reiterated the need for Japan to reflect upon its history.¹³ For example, *Asahi Shinbun* made the following comment:

What lies underneath is a deeply rooted mutual distrust between China and Japan, which have failed to reconcile with each other in the postwar period of over sixty years. Prime Minister Koizumi's four visits to the Yasukuni shrine have intensified the friction. The relationship between the two countries seems full of gas and ready to explode upon ignition. (*Asahi Shinbun*, April 7, 2006)

Based on this recognition, the dovish *Asahi* insists that the Prime Minister suspend his visits to the Yasukuni shrine. In contrast, the hawkish *Yomiuri* and *Sankei* refute China's claims on the issues of Yasukuni visit and Japanese history textbooks as a serious interference in the domestic affairs of Japan and call for the Japanese government to take a strong stance on it.¹⁴ The hawkish press blames a timid attitude of the Japanese government for Sino-Japanese tensions. For example, *Sankei* points out:

Successive cabinets have repeated apologies and reflections to China without objection.... The Japanese government should clearly show Japan's determination not to follow the incorrect historical position held by China. (*Sankei Shinbun*, April 21, 2006)

¹³ Yamakoshi (2006), p.52.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.53.

The hawkish press criticizes the government's "hesitant" attitude and the dovish "appeasement" to reflect upon Japan's past.¹⁵ For example, *Yomiuri* blames the dovish for "giving China momentum of Japan bashing" (*Yomiuri Shinbun*, April 14, 2006). *Yomiuri* urged the Japanese government to take a strong stance against China, noting that China used the issue of Japanese history textbook to pressure Japan.

Japanese Foreign Minister [Machimura] should demand not only that China apologize and compensate [for the damages of anti-Japan demonstrations], but also that China suspend from capitalizing on anti-Japan sentiments to gain a political advantage (*Yomiuri Shinbun*, April 17, 2006).

Anti-China Hardliners and Japanese Public Opinion

Japanese public opinion as well as Japanese newspapers is divided into two. Yamakoshi notes that the number of sympathizers with anti-China hardliners has been increasing since the series of anti-Japan demonstrations in China (Yamakoshi, 2006). Three facts confirm Yamakoshi's point. The first is a change in public opinion on Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni shrine.¹⁶ After the rise of anti-Japan demonstrations, from April to July of 2005, many more Japanese have opposed his Yasukuni visit.

Though this seems that Japanese public opinion accepts the dovish view, the percentage of opposition to his Yasukuni visit has started to decrease after reaching a pique in July and August. On the other hand, the percentage of sympathizers with the Yasukuni visit has increased, narrowly exceeding the percentage of the negative view of the Yasukuni

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.54.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.62.

visit, as shown in the opinion polls conducted over the period from the end of October to early November of 2005 (Table 1).

Table 1. Opinion Poll on Prime Minister Koizumi's Visit to the Yasukuni Shrine

Asahi Shinbun

	November, 2004	April, 2005	May, 2005	June, 2006	August, 2005	October, 2005	August 2006
Positive	38%	36%	39%	36%	41%	42%	49%
Negative	39%	48%	49%	52%	47%	41%	37%

Mainichi Shinbun

	Dec-2004	April, 2005	June, 2005	July, 2005	October, 2005	November, 2005	August 2006
Positive	46%	42%	41%	39%	44%	50%	50%
Negative	41%	45%	50%	51%	51%	46%	46%

Nihon Keizai Shinbun

	June 2005	August 2005	November 2005	August 2006
Positive	38%	46%	47%	48%
Negative	42%	38%	37%	36%

Yomiuri Shinbun

	Aug-2001	May-2005	Nov-2005	Aug-2006
Positive	40%	48%	47%	53%
Negative	34%	45%	40%	39%

Sankei Shinbun

	August 19, 2005	November 8, 2005	August 2006
Positive	40%	47%	41.4%
Negative	43%	45%	44.6%

[Source: The author makes some changes to the cart published in Yamakoshi, “Nihon no Shinbun ha Hannichi Demo wo dou tsutae tanoka? (How Did Japanese Newspapers Report the Anti-Japan Demonstrations?)” in Oishi and Yamamoto (2006).]

Secondly, the rate of dovish sympathizers with China’s protest to Prime Minister Koizumi’s Yasukuni visit has decreased.¹⁷ Table 2 shows that the dovish opinion declined from 55% in August 2001 down to 37 % on May 31 in 2005. In contrast with it, the percentage of the people who cannot understand China’s resistance increased from 35% to 51% during the same period (Table 2).

Table 2. Sympathy with China’s opposition to Yasukuni visit¹⁸

Asahi Shinbun

Question: Can you understand China’s and South Korea’s protest to the Prime Minister’s Yasukuni visit?

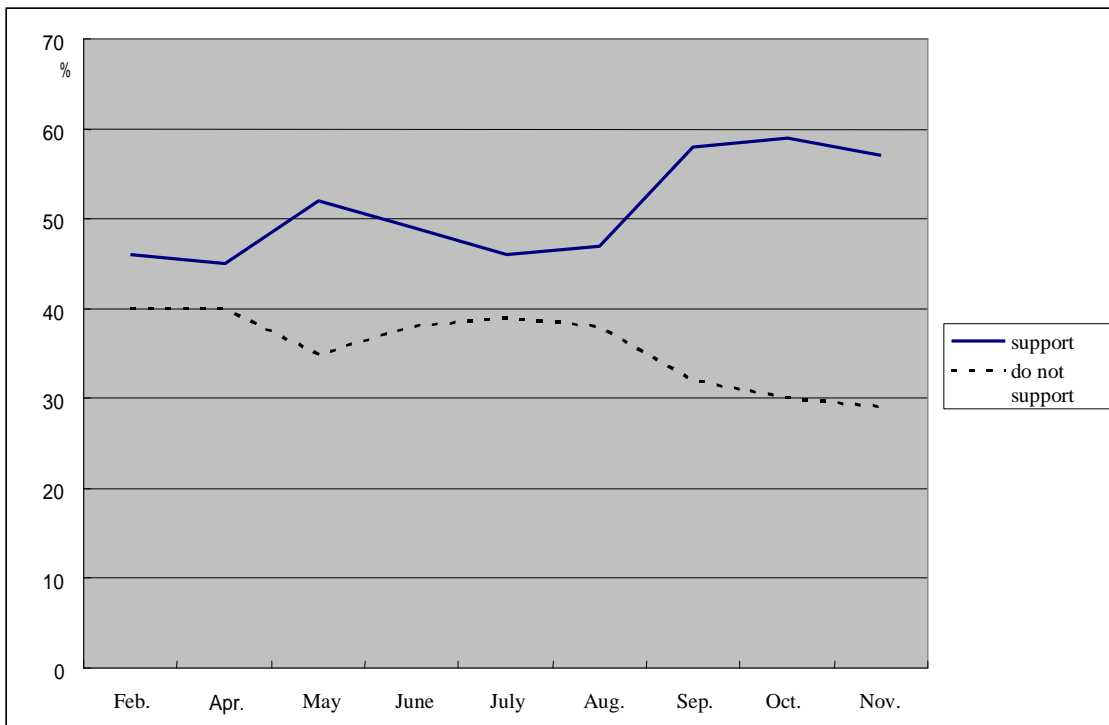
¹⁷ Yamakoshi (2006), p.63.

¹⁸ This table was created by Yamakoshi based on the search data by the Asahi newspaper. See, Yamakoshi (2006), p63.

	August 4, 2001	May 31, 2005
Yes, I can understand.	55%	37%
No, I cannot understand.	35%	51%

Thirdly, the approval rating of Prime Minister Koizumi has been rising. The Koizumi cabinet's approval rating did not suffer from the series of anti-Japan demonstrations in China.¹⁹ Rather it rapidly increased after August (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Koizumi Cabinet's Approval Rating (the NHK poll)²⁰



¹⁹ Yamakoshi (2006), p.64.

²⁰ This table was created by Yamakoshi based on the search data by the NHK, *Nippon Hoso Kyokai*, (the Japanese Broadcasting Corporation). See, Yamakoshi (2006), p.64.

It is thought that Koizumi's media strategy during the campaign for the lower-house election of September 2005 has raised his approval rating.²¹ Prime Minister Koizumi solicited voters' support, urging, "We should stop not our [ongoing structural] reform." He successfully impressed people with his strong leadership of "uncompromising stance" toward the administrative reform. His firm stance was successful not only in domestic politics but also in foreign policy toward China.²² It is thought that people supported Koizumi's "uncompromising stance" toward "unfriendly" China.

A similar stance appeared in the Japanese people's view on Koizumi's last visit to the Yasukuni shrine. Prime Minister Koizumi, before his resignation in September 2006, visited the Yasukuni Shrine on August 15, 2006, the anniversary of the end of the Pacific War. In a subsequent press conference, Koizumi firmly insisted that it is wrong not to visit the Yasukuni just because of criticisms from China and South Korea. An opinion poll by *Yomiuri Shinbun* revealed that 53% of respondents support the Prime Minister's visit to Yasukuni, whether strongly or unenthusiastically, while only 39% oppose it. According to an opinion poll by *Mainichi Shinbun*, 50% of respondents support his visit while 46% do not support. It is thought that the support group for his Yasukuni visit, which had closely competed with the opposition group, eventually prevailed against the opposition group since not a few Japanese supported Prime Minister Koizumi's strong will to put into practice his belief with an "uncompromising attitude."

²¹ Yamakoshi (2006), p.64.

²² *Ibid.*, p.64.

Studies on Japan's History Problem by Major Newspapers'

In this section, I would like to argue the implication of the growing awareness of the "Shutaisei" (the independence of will/ self-reliance) to be employed in interpreting modern Japanese history.

Many Japanese disagree on the Yasukuni Shrine's historical view. As Yamakoshi's analysis indicates, Japanese public opinion over the legitimacy Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni shrine is divided. The basis for the growing support for Koizumi's Yasukuni visits after the anti-Japan demonstrations lies upon many Japanese's belief that Japan should take an uncompromising attitude towards China. These clarify the following two points.

First, not all the supporters for Koizumi's Yasukuni visits agree upon the historical view of the Yasukuni shrine. It was in 1978 when the Class-A war criminals were enshrined along with other war dead in the Yasukuni Shrine. Mr. Matsudaira, then chief priest of the Yasukuni Shrine, who did enshrine them, commented that the enshrinement was based on the belief that "without denying the historical view of the Tokyo Trials, Japan's spiritual revival was impossible."²³ However, only a minority of Japanese agrees to completely deny the legitimacy of the Tokyo Trials.

Japanese politicians also show a similar attitude towards the Tokyo Trials. In response to *Mainichi Shinbun's* intriguing inquiry about all the parliamentarian's historical views, among the three choices only 8% of the parliamentarian picked up the first choice

²³ *Mainichi Shinbun* produced special reports on the Yasukuni shrine many times. For example, see the special report, "Yasukuni, from 'Post War' to where?" which had continued daily from August 6, 2006 to August 19, 2006.

that the Tokyo Trials were unjust trials unilaterally conducted by the victorious allies. And the absolute majority of 61% of them picked up the second choice that Tokyo Trials were unjust but that Japanese had no choice but to accept the imposed trials. 13 % chose the third choice that the Tokyo Trials were just trials to punish war criminals.²⁴ This means that many Japanese politicians disagree with the historical view of the Yasukuni shrine.²⁵

Second, it is a clear fact that Prime Minister Koizumi's claim that he could not stop his Yasukuni visit yielding to criticisms from China convinced Japanese, though many of them deny the historical view of the Yasukuni shrine. How should we interpret this contradiction?

An important clue to understanding this contradicting phenomenon over the Yasukuni controversy lies in the awareness of "Shutaisei" ("independence of will"/ "self-reliance") in interpreting history rather than a final conclusion to the Yasukuni controversy. I will pay attention to a common attitude lately seen among major national newspapers in Japan towards the issue of the Yasukuni shrine. Except *Sankei Newspaper*, major national newspapers in Japan in the early twenty-first century oppose the prime minister's Yasukuni visits and deny the historical view of the Yasukuni shrine. However,

²⁴ *Mainichi Shinbun*, June 25, 2006.

²⁵ It is necessary to note that the historical views of politicians depend on the factions which they belong to within the Liberal Democratic Party. Parliamentarians of younger generations and middle standing, many of who strongly support the new Prime Minister Abe, have established a new study group to promote Abe's Yasukuni visit. Pros and cons of the new prime minister's Yasukuni visits are related to the number of terms a parliamentarian has served in office. The fewer terms a parliamentarian has served in office, the more affirmative he or she is about Abe's Yasukuni visit; 65% of the parliamentarians in their first terms in parliament support Abe's Yasukuni visit and 47% of the parliamentarians in their second terms support it, while only 37% of parliamentarians in their third terms support it. See, the questionnaires of the all the parliamentarians in a report, "Beginning after the Sixty Years of Post War Japan," *Mainichi Shinbun*, June 25, 2006.

these newspapers have also started to claim that Japanese themselves should reconsider Japan's past war.

Studies on Japan's history problem done by Japanese major newspapers from 2005 to August 2006 are worth close examination. To begin with *Nihon Keizai Shinbun's* scoop on the newly discovered Tomita memo, which clarified Emperor Hirohito's strong discomfort over the fact that the Yasukuni Shrine began honoring Class-A war criminals in 1978, major newspapers carried closely examined reports on Japan's history problem: *Asahi Shinbun's* report, "Face the History," *Yomiuri Shinbun's* "War Responsibility Verification," *Mainichi Shinbun's* "Yasukuni: from Post-War to Where?" and "Consider the Yasukuni Problem." The numerous serious studies on Japan's history problem are motivated by the 60th anniversary of the Tokyo Trials as well as by the Sino-Japan friction caused by former Prime Minister Koizumi's Yasukuni visits.

Yomiuri Shinbun's "War Responsibility Verification" reassessed the war responsibilities of Japanese political leaders. The study compared leaders whom *Yomiuri* verified as heavily responsible for the war and those judged in the Tokyo Trials. The study concluded that Kanji Ishihara as the architect of the Manchurian Incident was heavily responsible for the war, though Ishihara was not even a suspect Class-A war criminal in the Tokyo Trials.

To deny the legitimacy of the Tokyo Trials was not what the verification sought. Rather, it is an attempt to deeply understand the Tokyo Trials based on Japanese's own standard. To have one's own standard is what the term, "Shutaisei" ("independence of will"/"self-reliance"), means. More precisely, Japanese national newspapers are aware of

the importance for Japanese to make efforts to form their original historical view, apart from the historical view of the Yasukuni Shrine.

The national newspapers also reconsidered the characters of the Class-A war criminals, aside from their war responsibilities.

To recognize the Class-A war criminals neither as gods or as devils leads to atonement for past atrocities and to a common understanding [between Japan and neighboring Asian states].

This is a statement by a South Korean documental maker, Soo-Woong Chung, which *Asahi Shinbun* introduced in an article.²⁶ He made a documentary film about Shigenori Togo, a Class-A war criminal. The same article carried the following comment by a Japanese parliamentarian, Taku Yamazaki: “It suffices for the Japanese to recall war criminals in their minds. If the Japanese want to honor Hideki Tojo for his deeds, they can go ahead. They can honor Togo without enshrining him as a god in the Yasukuni Shrine.”²⁷

These statements are very important. It is an important duty of journalism to describe the personal aspect of a political leader, distinguished from his political

²⁶ Japan Personal History: Unfinished Trials. Series 8, “War Criminals: Neither as Gods nor as Devils,” *Asahi Shinbun*, August 18, 2006.

²⁷ Taku Yamazaki attended the same high school as Koki Hirota, one of Class-A war criminals. Yamazaki attends annually a group meeting to respect and recall his senior Hirota. Yamazaki is sympathetic to Hirota, who, Yamazaki believes, should not have been sentenced to death. However, at the same time Yamazaki maintains that Japan should value the fact that Japan accepted the sentences in the Tokyo Trials. The author of this report sees the importance of Yamazaki’s rational stance to distinguish his personal concern for and sympathy to Hirota as a person from his acknowledgement of Hirota’s political responsibility as a political leader.

responsibility as a political leader. An excellent story of a man leads its readers to reassess the past war.

The major newspapers' special reports have caused great repercussions among the readers. This phenomenon reflects popular sentiment in Japan. In contemporary Japan, the number of people who experienced the war is decreasing. The number of people who can listen to wartime stories from fathers and close relatives is also decreasing. To what extent should Japanese sincerely accept criticisms from China and South Korea? Many Japanese feel repelled about the anti-Japan demonstrations, even though they recognize the importance to sincerely accept many of the criticisms. Many Japanese suspect that political leaders in China and South Korea capitalize on the pressure they made on Japan in order to reinforce the bases of their political supports. However, many Japanese cannot agree upon the historical view of the Yasukuni Shrine.

What kind of historical view should Japanese have? It seems that many Japanese have hoped to form a new satisfactory historical view in the face of the frictions with China and South Korea over the interpretation of the war. Behind the growing consciousness of the importance of "Shutaisei" ("independence of will"/"self-reliance") in the interpretation of history exists the contradicting popular sentiment of the Japanese. Analyses of such popular sentiment are crucial for a deeper understanding of current Japanese nationalism.

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