

When Dragons Speak Will the Listening Eagle Hear?

A Western Perspective on Japanese and Chinese Strategic Culture

Melanie Graham 10 November 2006

On November 7, the China View News¹ reported that Chinese President Hu Jintao would meet with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and U.S. President George W. Bush during the 14th Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders Informal Meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam from November 12 to 19 2006. Specific agenda items for the meeting were not made public, but it is likely that discussion included plans to resume the Six Party Talks, stalled since last November by the withdrawal of North Korea. In light of the international anxiety caused by the North Korean underground nuclear testing on October 9 2006, one would hope for successful and productive dialoguing at the APEC 2006 informal leaders meeting. The cultural diversity represented in this leaders meeting, however, leaves significant room for misunderstanding and miscommunication that cannot readily be resolved by efficient translation. The underlying challenge is not one of spoken or written language. At issue is the potential impact of divergent core values and assumptions embedded in the disparate cultural philosophies and strategic perceptions, the “Strategic Cultures,” of Japan and China in the context of their relationship with the United States (US). It is imperative that the US eagle begin to understand how the dragons of China and Japan perceive the world and their respective places in the greater international context. A good place to start is with an exploration of their strategic cultures.

¹ www.chinaview.cn 2006-11-07 16:38:56 - http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-11/07/content_5301081.htm

Strategic Culture, in this analysis, will start with the definitions laid out by Dr. Andrew Scobell and Dr. Alastair Iain Johnston. Dr. Scobell, in his 2002 article “China and Strategic Culture” describes the concept as:

“. . . the fundamental and enduring assumptions about the role of war (both interstate and intrastate) in human affairs and the efficacy of applying force held by political and military elites in a country.”²

Dr. Johnston, in his book “Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History” contends that:

“strategic culture consists of two basic elements: (a) a central paradigm that supplies answers to three basic, related questions about the nature of conflict in human affairs, the nature of the enemy, and the efficacy of violence; and (b) a ranked set of strategic preferences logically derived from these central assumptions.”³

These definitions are useful in understanding the concept of strategic culture but for application it is first necessary to consider the factors that define and shape these perceptions, assumptions and preferences in a state specific basis. For the purpose of this analysis attention will be focused on the influence of strategic geography and core cultural philosophy as they affect threat perception, the use of military force, and the strategic priorities of China and Japan today.

Strategic Geography is a component of Geopolitics “the relation of international political power to the geographical setting”⁴ Simple observation of any map of the Asian Pacific region shows that Japan is an island state, while China is a continent with a

² “China and Strategic Culture” Dr. Andrew Scobell, Strategic Studies Institute, 2002. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub60.pdf> , pg 2

³ Alastair Iain Johnston, “Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History: Princeton University Press 1995, Preface page ix-x.

⁴ Saul B. Chen, “Geography and Politics in a Divided World” (London: Methuen, 1964) p. 24

maritime component. What does this mean in strategic terms? In ancient or medieval times continental powers such as China were inclined to prevail in interstate conflict. Maritime traffic, prior to the 15th century, was primarily confined to coastal waters and naval warfare was more often a matter of transporting foot soldiers and cavalry to the shores of a land based conflict than it was a contest of heavy fire power between warships. Portugal and Spain, however, led European transoceanic exploration in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the discovery of the first sea routes that would eventually link all of the world's continents. This marked the beginning of what British geographer Sir Halford Mackinder has called the Columbian Age of 1500 – 1900 when “maritime powers came to enjoy a strategic advantage in their struggles with continental powers”⁵

In 1405 China, under the Ming Dynasty, embarked on a program of expansion and launched a related series of voyages into the Indian Ocean. These maritime expeditions were substantial and extensive and traveled as far as the Maldiv Islands, Calicut, Hormuz, the East African coast and in 1431 went as far as Mecca. In 1433, however, China's beginnings as a modern maritime power were abruptly halted, not to resume with any significance until the 20th century. The expeditions were too costly at a time when the Ming were paying for campaigns against the Mongols and financing the building of Peking. There were also no chartered companies, like the Virginia Company or the Hudson Bay Company, able to found colonies or establish overseas trade. China, unlike most of Europe, was uninterested in the commercial and colonial possibilities overseas. The Ming government regarded land tax as its major source of revenue and

⁵ Colin S. Gray “The Continued Primacy of Geography – a Debate on Geopolitics” *Orbis*, Spring 1996.

saw no value added benefit from foreign trade tax. Thus Ming China failed to become a maritime power at a time in history when such a capability was becoming a strategic necessity. This lack of foresight could also be seen as the beginning of a long decline of Imperial China that would culminate in its systematic colonization during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Japan, for all that it was an island nation, was slow to develop more than coastal maritime capability and remained relatively isolated until the end of the 19th century. Mountainous terrain and numerous inlets and bays on the islands of the Japanese archipelago forced the population to cultivate a self-sufficient coastal lifestyle. The rough terrain of the islands also forced coastal maritime travel and a shipbuilding capability that began as early as the middle of the 3rd century AD under the auspices of Emperor Sujin. The difficult coasts and stormy seas that prevailed in the region also served to discourage invasion, while imposed self-sufficiency precluded any need for or interest in extensive seafaring and exploration. External contact was strictly regional, confined to predominantly isolationist neighbours, China and Korea, with most exchanges routed through the nearest of the two, Korea.

It is interesting to note that Chinese and Korean records show frequent Japanese invasions of Korea in the first five centuries of the Christian era. It was not until the 5th century however, that Japan established significant power over Korea, also marking the beginning of Japan's intercourse with the Asiatic continent. Japanese historians, in fact, claim that until the 7th century Japan commanded the seas of the Far East. If they did, it must have been by virtue of numerous small coastal merchant boats that doubled as

warships as Japan lagged well behind China in shipbuilding until the 19th century and Korea until the 17th century. Japanese dominance in Korea was brought to an end in 660 AD by a Korean and Chinese maritime coalition that culminated in a great naval battle in 663 AD. 170 coalition vessels set fire to 400 Japanese vessels. Japan was defeated and quickly evacuated the Korean peninsula. Korea was subsequently united under China's suzerainty.

What does all this mean in terms of strategic geography? China, as a predominantly continental power, chose to turn inward and adopted what Andrew Scobell describes in his article as a closed siege mentality at the open of the modern era. This was also a time when the emerging powers of the rest of the world had embarked on extensive campaigns of international maritime exploration. Earlier Chinese forays into maritime exploration had let the world know of the riches to be found in the Far East, however, so the way was paved for potential exploitation at a time when strategic advantage in interstate conflict had shifted from a land based context to one of naval competence.

Japan, on the other hand, had demonstrated a predisposition, by virtue of the limitations and constraints of its archipelago, to regional maritime exploration from the security of natural isolation. Japan, as a matter of fact, was never faced with hostile control of the home islands until 1945 when the US occupation forces arrived at the conclusion of WWII. This nation, instead, established a pattern of importing and adapting regional ideas, philosophies and technology without compromising its core cultural values and ideals. By virtue of geography, then, as the Modern Era unfolded,

China was inclined to be closed and unreceptive to the overtures or influence of the colonizing international community. Japan, on the other hand, was geographically compelled to be more adaptive and flexible and would therefore be more inclined to a guarded but opportunistic response to colonial overtures.

If these are the compulsions and inclinations inspired by geography, what can we learn of China and Japan from their core cultural values and assumptions? It would take volumes to undertake a summary of the more than four thousand years of Chinese Culture.

Andrew Scobell does not even whisper a breath of insight past the surface of Chinese thought when he describes what he calls the Chinese ‘Cult of Defense.’⁶ By this he is referring to a balance between what he sees as the dominant themes in Chinese Strategic Culture; a blend of Confucius and Sun Tzu philosophy, against a sense of Realpolitik. Included in this balance Scobell also identifies a core Chinese cultural value of national unification.

Realpolitik is a fairly straightforward approach to politics based on practical notions exercised without any "sentimental illusions" and fits well with Confucianism. Sun Tzu taught a philosophy of warfare that was in keeping with both Confucius thought and Realpolitik. It was practical, advocated strategies that conserved state resources by capitalizing on those of the enemy and identified the highest excellence in warfare as being able to secure victory without conflict. There is validity to these dominant themes when assessing Chinese cultural values and core assumptions, but there is danger in

⁶ “China and Strategic Culture” Dr. Andrew Scobell, Strategic Studies Institute, 2002. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/files/pub60.pdf> , pg 4

stopping with such a superficial dismissal of a culture that has existed more than twice as long as all of western Christian civilization.

Scobell contends that there are three key aspects to Chinese Confucianism: a striving for harmony over conflict; defense over offense; and a predisposition for stratagem over combat. This is a simplistic interpretation that may satisfy a western military concern for strategy, but it does not do justice to the deeper philosophical and cultural tenets of China that inform and define their strategic thinking. China today is a society where the social ethics and moral teachings of Confucius are blended with Taoist communion with nature and Buddhist concepts of the afterlife. Scobell's summary also overlooks the fact that these three philosophies are just that. They are not theistic religions aspiring to comprehend some cosmic universal order. They are simply practical philosophies of life and living intent on achieving communal harmony within a reasonably small social grouping. The stress on harmony and balance is so prevalent that these philosophies co-exist quite peacefully in the same communities that also embrace religions such as Christianity and Islam.

Confucianism has no church or clergy, no teaching on the worship of a deity or on the promise of a life after death. Instead it gives greater emphasis to the ethical meaning of human relationships. The core values are:

- **Li:** includes ritual, propriety, etiquette, etc.
- **Hsiao:** love within the family: love of parents for their children and of children for their parents
- **Yi:** righteousness
- **Xin:** honesty and trustworthiness
- **Jen:** benevolence, humaneness towards others; the highest Confucian virtue

- **Chung:** loyalty to the state, etc.⁷



The Symbol for Confucianism means total harmony, righteousness, in your own life and in your relations with your neighbor. It advocates "universal virtues" of Wisdom, Benevolence, and Fortitude and regards the nature of man as fundamentally good and inclined towards goodness. The teachings hold that a man who is endowed with a good character and divine virtue is, in fact, a princely type of man who adheres to virtue. The inferior man clings to material comfort.

Confucius believed in the attainment of self-development and identified a step by step process by which this could be accomplished. Once achieved, however, self-development naturally flows over into the common life to serve the state and bless mankind. The steps Confucius set forth are as follows:

Investigation of phenomena,
 Learning,
 Sincerity,
 Rectitude of purpose,
 Self-development,
 Family-discipline,
 Local self-government, and
 Universal self-government.

Confucius teaching is largely concerned with the problems of good government. He compared a ruler to the North Star. As is the conduct of the ruler so will follow the subjects. His philosophy held that society was made up of five relationships: husband and wife, parent and child, elder and younger brother, or elders and youngsters, ruler and

⁷ Religious Tolerance.Org – Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, Confucianism.
<http://www.religioustolerance.org/confuciu.htm>

subject, and friend and friend. A country, furthermore, would be well-governed when all the parties fulfilled their roles properly within these relationships. Confucius said:

"There was Tao (a way or road of righteousness) only when fathers were fathers, when sons were sons, when Rulers were Rulers and when ministers were ministers."⁸

Is it still possible, given the deeper insights to Chinese core philosophy, to support Scobell's description of a "Cult of Defense"? Scobell elaborated on this basic premise to claim that the combination of Confucian philosophy, warfare theories of Sun Tzu and Realpolitik resulted in a nation that claimed to be pacifistic and prepared to use force only in the name of defense. This claim of pacifistic intent, he contended, was deceptive, as China was also quite prepared to justify any act of convenient aggression as justifiable self defense.

The teachings of Confucius have been around since the end of the sixth century BCE and were incorporated into Chinese Law in 210 BC. Sun Tzu was a highly respected and much read Chinese general who lived in the state of Wu in the 6th century BCE, and was a contemporary of Confucius. Four thousand years of practice should ensure that the precepts of Confucianism and the theories of warfare as taught by Sun Tzu are fairly embedded in the bedrock of Chinese culture today. There is a heavily ritualized and hierarchical approach to relationships within Chinese society aimed at ensuring harmony, balance and right action within the family, the local community and the state. Individual conduct is defined in the context of these relationships. Conflict is not in keeping with this striving for a harmonious life. The highest human virtue, furthermore, is that of benevolence and humaneness to others. The philosophy of

⁸ <http://www.religion-cults.com/Eastern/Confucianism/confuci.htm>

Confucius also places greater value on good character and virtue than it does on material comfort. The overall focus is a striving for good government on the basis of a society where everyone knows their place, fulfills their respective roles and lives in harmony. The overall vision is idealistic, but so is Christian doctrine when presented as a pure doctrine. Reality is always short of the ideal. Confucian philosophy combined with the teachings of Sun Tzu, where the highest excellence in warfare was victory without conflict, presents an insight to China that does not fit well with Scobell's view of Chinese strategic culture as a "Cult of Defense."

China is a society that might be more inclined to perceive a threat in anything that had the potential to disturb or undermine community harmony and balance, whether it was internal or external.

The practical and down to earth, real time approach to life and higher regard for human virtue than wealth might also allow for a pragmatic approach to the use of force. If the harmony of the community, the state, is threatened and force is the most effective means to restore balance, then best to get on with it and move one.

Strategic priorities have two influences. First and foremost is the need to maintain the harmony and balance of Chinese society. The second is informed by the military teachings of Sun Tzu. These include five points for assessing a potential conflict situation. The first is the way or Tao of your people. Is their thinking in line with that of their superiors? If it is they will go to their deaths or live without misgiving. The second is a consideration of the weather. Third is a consideration for the challenges and opportunities inherent in the terrain of the potential conflict. Fourth is the quality

(wisdom) of the command. Fifth is consideration for organization and logistics. In essence, much of what is advocated in this guide to successful warfare is to assess the likelihood of victory before you commit to conflict. If it is assured, go ahead. If it is not, reconsider and perhaps come back to fight on a more propitious day. A final interesting notion in the teachings of Sun Tzu is the claim that “Warfare is the art (tao) of deceit.”⁹ This advocates that you should appear weak when you are strong, seem unready when you are ready, or when nearby seem far and so on. Basically, in this context, Sun Tzu advocates a kind of strategic sleight of hand.

Overall, then, on the basis of this deeper strategic culture analysis, China is not particularly inclined to hegemonic expansion, but will fight vehemently to protect or maintain domestic harmony and balance, no matter the nature or source of the threat. Any decision to undertake armed conflict, however, will be carefully considered and is not likely to be entertained unless success is reasonably assured. The highest aspiration, however, in the face of any potential conflict, is victory without force, and deception is an integral part of strategy. Is this a “Cult of Defense” that is predisposed to rationalize any aggression as defense? A more accurate assessment might be of a self contained but pragmatic culture that prefers to get along with its neighbours. It has little tolerance for outside interference, is usually content to tend to its own affairs and is very selective in taking on conflict. It is definitely a culture inclined towards self defense with no qualms about the use of force, domestically or in interstate conflict, when it is deemed necessary. The perception of willful aggression rationalized as self defense, however, may very well be a projection of western values that has no basis in Chinese reality.

⁹ Caleb Carr, Ed. “The Book of War” The Modern Library, New York, 2000, Sun-Tzu, “The Art of Warfare” p 74

This brings the analysis to Japan. There are four cultural philosophies or belief systems that have shaped Japan and all are still practiced today; Shinto, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Bushido. None are monotheistic religions, but all are a philosophy of right living.

Japan was first united as a political entity, called Yamato Japan, around 400 AD so is about a millennia younger than China. The emperor was ruler but primarily acted as the symbol of the state and performed Shinto rituals. Shinto ("the way of the gods") is the indigenous faith of the Japanese people and is understood to be as old as Japan.

Shinto does not have a prophet or first teacher and has no sacred scriptures or texts. The Shinto gods, called kami, are sacred spirits. These can take the form of objects, animals, and elements, such as wind, rain, mountains, trees, and rivers. Humans become kami after death and are subsequently held in high regard by their families as ancestral kami. Shinto, as a philosophy, is free of any sense of absolutes. There is no right or wrong, no good or bad. Humans are held to be fundamentally good and evil is caused by evil spirits. Shinto rituals are used to keep evil spirits away. Ironically, in spite of the reverence for ancestors as kami, death itself is viewed as an impurity, so there are no Shinto cemeteries and few Shinto funerals.

Buddhism made its way to Japan in the 6th century by way of China through Korea as a gift from the Korean kingdom of Kudara (Paikche) It was well received by the ruling nobility, but was slow to gain acceptance with the lower classes of Japanese society.

Buddhist belief aspires to end the human cycle of suffering and rebirth. A virtuous life, however, is only half the battle in achieving the cherished nirvana. The other half is wisdom, or a profound understanding of the human condition. This is achieved through meditation, reflection and embracing of the Four Noble Truths:

The First Noble Truth is The Truth of Suffering. Suffering can take many forms and is an inevitable and omnipresent part of life. The five factors of individuality that constitute human suffering are:

- corporeality or physical forms,
- feelings or sensations,
- cognition,
- mental formations, and
- consciousness.

These factors represent suffering because they include no mention of the existence or of a need for a soul or self, without which there can be no eternal happiness.

The Second Noble Truth is The Truth of Arising which explains that the cycle of rebirth is a result of craving, of an addiction to life and the pleasant experiences it offers. There are two kinds of desire, the right kind and the wrong kind or Tanha. This is desire that has become corrupted by being excessive or wrongly directed. Tanha represents the three roots of evil, greed, hate and delusion

The Third Noble Truth is The Truth of Cessation or the cessation of suffering due to the overcoming of craving. The fires of greed, hate and delusion are extinguished.

The Fourth Noble Truth is The Truth of the Eightfold Path. This is the path of:

1. Right View
2. Right Resolve
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Meditation

The Eightfold Path is one of self-transformation in which a person's outlook is transformed from a selfish and narrow one to one of limitless opportunities.

Three Buddhist sects have evolved over the course of Japanese history. The Jodo, or Pure Land sect was founded in 1175, and was well received by all of the nation's social classes as the theories were simple. They were based on the principle that everybody can achieve salvation through strong belief in the Buddha Amida. The Jodo sects continue to have millions of followers in Japan today.

Zen Buddhism was introduced from China in 1191, and found popularity with the military class of Japan. Zen teachings advocated the achievement of self enlightenment through meditation and discipline. This sect has lost in popularity in Japan today but is popular in western cultures.

The Lotus Hokke or Nichiren sect, was founded 1253 and though exceptionally intolerant of earlier Buddhist sects is also still widely practiced in Japan today. The belief is still that the human condition in general is one of suffering. People may think that they are happy, but this is a false perception. The only way to gain happiness is through practicing Nichiren Shoshu. This involves overcoming the universal sufferings such as old age and death, to purify one's life, to maintain spiritual and physical health,

and to change all misfortunes into good fortunes. Finally, it is believed that nobody can accomplish complete happiness until all humankind accomplishes it.

Confucianism was first introduced to Japan via Korea in the year 285 AD. According to the Japanese view of Confucianism, the most important principles are humanity, loyalty, morality and consideration on an individual and political level.

Neo-Confucianism was introduced in China by the Sung dynasty (979-1279) as a creative revitalization of a stagnating Confucian tradition. It manifested as a creative reinterpretation of the traditional Confucianism in a way that answered the Buddhist need for transcendence of the mundane. Human interpersonal relationships and concern for society and government became inseparably united with a deepened ascetic practice as the path to ultimate personal fulfillment.

Hayashi Razan (1583-1657) was a Japanese Neo-Confucian philosopher who served as an advisor to the first three shoguns of the Tokugawa *bakufu* or administration. Greatly influenced by the work of Chinese Neo-Confucianist Zhu Xi, which emphasized the functional role of the individual in society according to a certain hierarchical form, Hayashi Razan separated the Japanese people into four distinct classes: samurai (ruling), farmers, artisans and merchants. His philosophy slowly became the dominant ideology of the *bakufu* until the end of the 18th century.

The last and possibly most influential cultural philosophy that shaped the strategic culture of modern Japan is Bushido or the moral code of conduct that developed among the samurai (military) class of Japan. Heavily influenced by Zen and Confucianism, the

term was first applied during the civil war period of the 16th century. Its precise meaning has varied historically with the evolution of the samurai standards. It has, however, consistently adhered to an ideal that included martial spirit, athletic and military skills and fearless facing of the enemy in battle. Bushido also demanded frugal living, kindness and honesty. In keeping with its Confucian roots, Bushido required filial piety. At the same time it retained aspects of the Japanese feudal system, contending that it was a supreme honour to serve one's lord unto death. If filial piety, however, found itself at odds with service to one's lord, the samurai was bound by loyalty to his lord despite the suffering he might cause his parents.

During the Tokugawa period (17th century ff.) Yamaga Soko (1622-85) compared the samurai to the Confucian "superior man." His essential function was to exemplify virtue to the lower classes. Bushido represented a strict code of honour, affecting matters of life and death. It demanded conscious choice and cultivated individual initiative. At the same time it also reinforced obligations of loyalty and filial piety. Obedience to authority was vital, but duty always took precedence, even if it violated the law. In this last case the true samurai would fulfill his duty and then pay for his crime against the government by subsequently taking his own life.

By mid-19th century, Bushido standards had become universal in Japan. The abolition of the samurai class in 1871 was the final step in making it the property of the entire nation. The emperor replaced the feudal lord as the object of loyalty and sacrifice in the public education system and Bushido became the foundation of ethical training.

The influences of Confucianism and Buddhism in Japan are similar to those felt in China. Shinto is comparable to Taoism in a shared closeness with nature. Bushido, however, effectively transformed the Chinese Confucian reverence for harmony and right relationships, for balance between the individual and family, the community and the state. There was still a requirement to know and adhere to your place in the grand social scheme of things, but it was not as clearly for the sake of harmony in the community and demanded more rigid adherence. It was no longer about relationships per se, but was about duty, loyalty and obligation, first to your emperor, then to your father, your mother, and your older brother. Every act of consideration or courtesy, furthermore, was weighed and measured. Every favour was noted and recorded, mentally or in writing somewhere so that no burdensome favour debt could be incurred. A simple kindness could provoke anger if it was perceived as having placed an onerous burden of debt on an individual or a family. There were also a variety of debt or obligation types, some of which could never be repaid. These were not financial debts, but they had the same weight in terms of obligations to repay. Failure or inability to do so could bring such great shame as to be unbearable. Ritual suicide would be the only way to restore honour to the family, to one's name.

What is the end result, the strategic culture that derives from these four philosophies as they manifested in Japan? It is well summed up in the title of Ruth Benedict's book "The Chrysanthemum and the Sword."¹⁰ You find a martial culture that is equally entranced by elegant expression of creativity. The down to earth sense of community and harmony of China has been replaced by a rigid hierarchical system of

¹⁰ Ruth Benedict, "The Chrysanthemum and the Sword," Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1946.

obligation, loyalty and a strange abrogation of self balanced by a preoccupation with self caught in a perpetual struggle to know and keep one's place. To do otherwise is to lose face, to encounter such great shame that the only resolution may be suicide.

Japanese perception of threat is closely linked to any risk of loss of place or status in the international community. This includes any perceived threat to the incremental development of economic dominance and political and cultural status.

As a nation heavily influenced by martial culture, there would be little hesitation to use force if the emperor made that choice. The hierarchy of loyalties in Japan has its zenith in the emperor, and loyalty is, traditionally, so absolute as to prompt unquestioning obedience. Moral judgments are secondary to keeping to one's place in this hierarchy.

In terms of strategic priorities, again Bushido tends to overshadow the other philosophies. Loyalty to the emperor remains paramount. Strategic priorities are those most closely related to the incremental development of the state and the preservation of the Japanese identity, its essence.

It is useful, at this juncture, to place all this in the context of the disparate Chinese and Japanese responses to colonialism. When the Portuguese, the Dutch, the British and the Americans began to arrive in Asian waters, how did the respective strategic cultures as described above play out? Was China aggressive in the name of defense, as Scobell would argue? 19th century China did, in fact, adopt a defensive posture towards Europe, as it belatedly acknowledged the rest of the world again. China opened up to foreign trade and missionary activity, however, and opium became available. The two Opium

Wars with Britain weakened the Emperor's control of an already declining empire. The Taiping Civil War followed and lasted from 1851 to 1862. The imperial forces were eventually victorious, but the civil war was one of the bloodiest in human history, costing at least twenty million lives. The continuing flow of opium contributed to further the decline. The Boxer Rebellion of 1900, an effort to repel westerner colonizers, added to the destruction. China attempted to defend herself, but civil war and indifferent leadership combined with half hearted efforts to re-engage in international trade through colonization failed. As a fading continental power that had abandoned the sea, China was defenseless in the face of ship born colonizers.

The 18th and 19th century ships of the West were looking to trade with East Asia but saw in Japan more of a strategic location than a rich source of trade goods. Japan, true to its pattern of importing and adapting regional ideas, philosophies and technology regarded the technical and social development that came from the west as potentially beneficial, and carefully but systematically adapted to make best use of the opportunity.

The success of Japan in adapting to and emulating the US, Great Britain and Europe stimulated the emergence of Japanese industry and an increased need to access foreign natural resources. Japan took the emulation of their colonizers a step further and began to invade China's traditional sphere of influence, with the annexation of the Ryukyu Islands, then a Chinese tributary state, the occupation of Taiwan after the Sino-Japanese war of 1894, and the invasion of China itself in 1937.

How does all this have a bearing on the informal leadership talks of APEC 2006? China has learned from its self proclaimed “150 years of shame and humiliation” and has

vowed not to be a victim again.¹¹ No longer an empire in decline it is a nation rapidly pursuing a successful course of economic growth. It is reclaiming a maritime component for its defense profile and is becoming regionally and internationally engaged. Japan has capitalized on the US occupation following WWII and has also known tremendous economic growth. Like China, it has learned from past lessons and put aside borrowed practices, such as military hegemony, that proved unfruitful or counterproductive. Instead it has cultivated a Bushido like approach to economic hegemony and is becoming regionally and internationally engaged. The US, as the sole remaining super power in the world, stands in a delicate balance with both of these countries. US military presence in the Asian Pacific region acts as a stabilizer while industrial growth extends throughout the region. Its tendency to economic, ideologic and military expansion, however, represents a potential threat to China's sense of domestic harmony and balance in terms of competition for control of access to international and regional resources vital to continued industrial growth. It also stands as a potential threat to Japans growing sense of place as a leader in the international community. The question of North Korea, furthermore, is primarily one of family business so to speak. Both China and Japan have extensive shared history with North Korea, sometimes positive, sometimes negative, but still shared. The nuclear testing was behaviour that was inappropriate to good relations between neighbours as well as unacceptable for North Korea's 'place' in the hierarchy of the region. It is vital to successful deliberations in any renewed Six Party Talks that the US be sufficiently aware of Chinese and Japanese strategic values, priorities and assumptions, their strategic cultures. It is very easy, when security is threatened, to

¹¹ Evan S. Medeiros and M. Taylor Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy" Foreign Affairs, November/December 2003

project your own prejudices, fears and perceptions in determining a solution. China and Japan, by virtue of a US tendency to be both vocal and demonstrative of its values and fears, are likely quite familiar with the American strategic culture. The area of concern, however, North Korea, is more likely to fall within the same general philosophical and cultural defining characteristics of China and Japan than it is to fit with those of the US. Better understanding all around is far more likely if the eagle of the US takes the time to understand and hear what the dragons of China, Japan and North Korea really have to say when they speak.

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