

Comparative Connections

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Japan-China Relations: Searching for a Summit

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Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro visited Yasukuni on Aug. 15, honoring a long-standing campaign pledge. China protested the visit and moved on, focusing its attention on Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe Shinzo, odds-on favorite to succeed Koizumi as Liberal Democratic Party president and Japan's prime minister. Abe took the reins of the LDP Sept. 20 and control of the government Sept. 26. China welcomed Abe with the same words it welcomed Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian: it would listen to what he says and watch what he does.

Meanwhile in Japan, the late Showa Emperor and the LDP's intra-party search for a successor brought the subject of Japan's relations with its neighbors and the nature of Yasukuni Shrine to center stage. In August, Abe acknowledged an April visit to the shrine but, contrary to his custom of visiting the shrine on Aug. 15, did not do so this year. Even before taking office, Abe made clear his interest in finding a path to a summit meeting with China. As the fourth quarter begins, Japanese and Chinese diplomats are engaged in exploring various paths to a summit.

Prologue

At the end of June, the *Asahi Shimbun*, reporting from Beijing on the visit of a Self-Defense Force delegation, quoted an unidentified Chinese expert on Japan as saying "China is well aware that it is highly likely that Prime Minister Koizumi will visit Yasukuni Shrine on Aug. 15. China is making efforts to prevent such a situation and even if such a situation happens, to prevent China-Japan relations from falling into an irreparable situation."

Also at the end of June, Koizumi told reporters that he had been approached during ceremonies commemorating the Battle of Okinawa by a representative of the War Bereaved Families Association with a request that he continue visiting Yasukuni. Later he reiterated his position that his visits to the shrine, a matter of individual freedom, should not become a problem no matter how many times he visited and certainly should not become a political issue during the LDP presidential campaign. He noted, however, that there were individuals who wanted to make it a political issue, in short, individuals who say "please do as China asks...people who say you must not visit Yasukuni."

Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe Shinzo, the frontrunner in the LDP presidential sweepstakes, told reporters that he thought Koizumi was correct in defining the issue as one of personal choice and that he would prefer not to discuss his stance on Yasukuni to avoid it escalating into “a diplomatic issue.”

And so the stage was set for the July-September quarter.

The Showa Emperor and Yasukuni

On July 19, the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* published a memorandum, written by the former Grand Steward of the Imperial Household Agency that was based on a 1988 conversation with the deceased Showa Emperor in which the emperor said that the reason he had ceased to visit Yasukuni was related to the enshrinement of the Class A-war criminals. Asked whether the emperor’s memorandum would have any affect on his decision to visit the shrine, Koizumi replied “none”; a decision to visit the shrine remained one of each individual’s choice. As for the issue of separation, Koizumi said that it is best for the government not to tell a religious corporation what it ought to do.

Abe ended a press conference with a “no comment” on the Yasukuni issue. However, LDP Secretary General Takebe Tsutomu told the press that “Yasukuni Shrine is a religious corporation. So the government and politicians should not tell the shrine to do this or that.” He though it wrong to judge the memorandum from its impact of the LDP presidential election. Foreign Minister Aso Taro cautioned against having the emperor’s words caught up in politics.

Nevertheless, the publication of the memorandum prodded LDP senior statesmen to renew calls for separation of the Class-A war criminals. Former LDP Secretary General Koga Makoto, current head of the War Bereaved Families Association, suggested consideration be given to the secularization of Yasukuni. Former Defense Minister Kyuma Fumio said that the Class-A war criminals should never have been enshrined in Yasukuni, while former LDP Vice President Yamasaki Taku reiterated his call for a separate secular war memorial.

In Beijing, the Chinese Foreign Ministry responded to the publication of the memorandum by emphasizing China’s consistent desire to develop relations with Japan and the hope that obstacles to that development would be removed as quickly as possible.

The candidates and Yasukuni

Even as the prime minister and chief Cabinet secretary endeavored to take Yasukuni out of succession politics, the candidates and the politics of succession invariably brought it back into the contest.

During a late evening radio broadcast on July 16, Foreign Minister Aso addressed the issue of the Class-A war criminals enshrined in Yasukuni. Aso told listeners that given the shrine’s status as a religious corporation, a decision by the government to separate the

Class-A war criminals would violate the constitution. However, he went on to note that should the shrine lose its religious character, anyone would be able to visit, including the prime minister and emperor. On Aug. 5, Aso unveiled a gradual multi-step draft reform plan for the shrine. Recognizing that the government lacks legal authority to deal with Yasukuni, the plan started with a call to the shrine to surrender voluntarily its status as a religious corporation. If successful, the Diet would pass legislation that would make Yasukuni a secular war memorial and give the Diet the authority to decide on who would be enshrined at Yasukuni, thus opening the door to a resolution of separation of the Class-A war criminals. The Yasukuni Shrine authorities maintain that, based on Shinto beliefs, souls once enshrined cannot be disenshrined and that even if the souls of the Class-A war criminals were moved to another shrine, they would still remain at Yasukuni. On Aug. 5, however, it was learned that Prime Minister and War Minister Tojo Hideki issued a secret order on July 15, 1944 that only those whose deaths “resulted directly from military service” were to be enshrined in Yasukuni. Those who did not die on the battlefield were not, in principle, entitled to be enshrined in Yasukuni.

Abe released his campaign manifesto “Toward a Beautiful Country” on July 20. Like Koizumi, the chief Cabinet secretary criticized China for refusing to hold summit meetings because of the Yasukuni issue. Later in a July 23 speech in Kobe, Abe, speaking to the issue of separation of the spirits of the Class-A war criminals, said that “it would seem that this decision should come from the shrine itself or the bereaved families.” He noted that under Japan’s domestic laws, the Class-A war criminals were not considered criminals and criticized those who opposed visits on the grounds that Japan had accepted the verdict of the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal when it signed the San Francisco peace treaty. He found that position to be “a leap in logic” and an “absurd argument.” Asked whether he would visit the shrine, Abe told reporters that “I have no intention of saying whether I will visit, whether I visited, or when I might visit.” He went on to say that he visited the shrine to pay his respects to those who fought and died for Japan and that “this sort of feeling is still with me and will not change in the future.”

Finance Minister Tanigaki Sadakazu, touching on relations with China and South Korea, told a July 23 *NHK* television audience that “there’s no doubt that there is a fishbone in our throat.” Accordingly, adjustments with regard to Yasukuni were necessary. However, he recognized that “since it is a religious corporation’s problem, it is very difficult to tackle.” The next day, he suggested that the decision should be made by the shrine. For his part, he would refrain from visiting the shrine. Tanigaki told reporters that he supported the efforts of former LDP Secretary General Koga Makoto, currently head of the War Bereaved Families Association, to work toward separation. On July 7, Koga told members of the Niwa-Koga faction that he wanted to advance the debate on Yasukuni “including the possibility of building a facility unconnected with any religious faith and whether the state will sponsor such a secular facility.” Koga, who previously called for a study on the separation of Class-A war criminals, maintained his position that Yasukuni be the “only war memorial in Japan” and his opposition to transforming Chidorigafuchi into a new secular war memorial. Later, during a July 30 appearance on *Asahi TV*, he suggested a secularization of Yasukuni to allow for separation of the Class-A war criminals. On Aug. 2, Koga presented to the War Bereaved Families Association a

proposal to study the issue of separation, but the Association decided to postpone consideration until after the LDP presidential election to avoid being caught up in election politics.

While visiting China in mid-July, Koga met with Wang Jiarui head of the International Department of Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee. Wang told Koga that China had studied his proposal for separation and that, "if that idea were acceptable in Japan, it would be a good idea." Wang added that China understood "the act of consoling the souls of the war dead, but mixing up those who caused the war and the general public must not be allowed."

On Aug. 6, Nakagawa Hidenao, Chairman of the LDP's Policy Research Council announced that he would consider introducing legislation that would make Yasukuni a government directed entity. He conditioned such legislation on securing the agreement of the War Bereaved Families Association. Accordingly, any decision would await the conclusion of Association's debate on the issue, which would follow the LDP election.

On Sept. 1, Abe declared his candidacy in the LDP presidential sweepstakes. In a post-announcement press conference, Abe said relations with China and South Korea "are extremely important" and recognized the need "for both sides to make efforts in order to resume summit talks. Abe again refused to say whether he would visit Yasukuni to avoid turning the matter into a political or diplomatic issue. Speaking that day at a Hokkaido LDP convention, Abe compared the enshrinement of Class-A war criminals at Yasukuni to the burial of confederate soldiers in Arlington National Cemetery. Two days later, former Foreign Minister Machimura told a *Sunday Fuji TV* audience that chances for a summit "are enough to be realized within this year." Abe returned to the issue of summitry on Sept. 5 telling reporters that "we want to make efforts to realize summit talks" and urged China and South Korea to make similar efforts toward their realization.

The polls, the public, and Yasukuni

A number of public opinion polls were conducted in the July and early August focused on approval or disapproval of Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni.

On July 24, the *Mainichi Shimbun* released the results of a 1,000-person telephone survey, conducted July 22-23. On the question of visiting Yasukuni on Aug. 15, 36 percent supported such a visit; 54 percent were opposed. On the issue of separation of Class-A war criminals, 63 percent were in favor; and 23 percent opposed; 64 percent favored the building of a secular war memorial, while 25 percent were opposed. As for future visits to the shrine by Koizumi's successor, 33 percent supported the idea; 54 percent opposed.

Also during July 22-23, the *Asahi Shimbun* conducted a similar telephone-based poll. When asked whether they favored a visit to the shrine by Koizumi before the end of his term in September, 29 percent supported a visit; 57 percent opposed. Of those who supported a visit, 39 percent favored a visit on Aug. 15, while 45 percent opposed. As for

the next prime minister's visiting the shrine, 20 percent responded in the affirmative while 60 percent opposed.

On July 28, the *Tokyo Shimbun* released the results of an internet poll in which 52.3 percent opposed a visit to the shrine on Aug. 15, while 35.3 percent approved. Among LDP supporters, 59.3 percent favored an Aug. 15 visit. And on Aug. 1, the *Sankei Shimbun* published the results of its telephone-based poll, conducted July 29-30. With regard to an Aug. 15 visit to the shrine, 26.9 percent of respondents favored the visit, while 55.7 percent opposed. On the question of separation, 58.5 percent supported the idea, while 25.9 percent opposed.

As Aug. 15 approached the *Yomiuri Shimbun* on Aug. 9 released the result of an Aug. 5-6 nationwide survey, revealing that 50 percent of respondents opposed a visit to Yasukuni by the next prime minister, the "No" percentage increasing eight points since a June survey. Those favoring a visit stood at 40 percent, a decrease of six points in the "Yes" vote. As for the separation of Class-A war criminals, 62 percent approved, while 24 percent opposed.

Territorial issues: East China Sea and the Senkakus

On July 8-9, diplomats held working-level talks in Beijing on issues related to the East China Sea. While gaps remained with regard to the demarcation of the respective EEZs and joint development of the natural gas fields, the two sides agreed to set up a panel of technical experts to assist in resolution of the issues. Japanese diplomats, however, were unsuccessful in efforts to persuade China to cease ongoing activities and to provide Japan with data from Chinese exploration activities.

On Aug. 7, *Kyodo News Service* reported from Beijing that China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) had announced on its website that full-scale production was underway in the Chunxiao natural gas field. The statement was attributed to Zhang Guobao, head of China's State Development and Reform Commission. Later that day Futabashi Masahiro, deputy chief Cabinet secretary, told reporters that, in response to an inquiry from Tokyo, Beijing reported that there had been no change in the status quo in the Chunxiao field. Following the Japanese government's inquiry, Zhang's pronouncement was taken down from the CNOOC home page. On Aug. 14, the Ministry of Trade and Economics announced that it had received through diplomatic channels assurances from Beijing that China had yet to begin production. Nevertheless, on Aug. 28, addressing reports of China's activities in gas fields close to the disputed mid-line boundary, Abe told reporters that Japan had repeatedly communicated its strong concerns to Beijing.

In mid-August, following Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni, the Senkakus became the site of a Taiwanese protest. On the morning of Aug. 17, the Japanese Coast Guard warned away the Taiwanese ship, the *Quanjiafu*, before it entered Japanese territorial waters. It was reported that stones were thrown at the intercepting Japanese Coast Guard ship.

Originally, Hong Kong activists were to join the protest but were prevented from doing so by Chinese authorities.

Security

On Sunday July 2, the Japanese Coast Guard found a Chinese maritime survey ship, the *Dongfangdong #2*, operating in waters near Uotsuri Island in the Senkaku island chain inside Japan's EEZ. The Chinese ship had failed to give advance notice of its activities, and that evening the Foreign Ministry protested to the Chinese embassy in Tokyo.

A day earlier, on July 1, the Koizumi government released the 2006 edition of Japan's Defense White Paper, *The Defense of Japan*. On China, the White Paper called for increased transparency with regard to defense policy and military strength, while expressing concern with the continuing rapid increase in defense expenditures as well as intelligence-gathering activities by China's air force over the seas near Japan. The document also noted an expansion of China's naval activities outward to defend China at greater distances from the mainland, to protect the sea lanes and sea-borne commerce, to deter movement toward independence by Taiwan, and to support and secure maritime interests. At the same time, looking at the rate of increase in China's defense spending, the White Paper pointed out that, should it continue at a 15 percent annual increase, China's defense expenditures would surpass Japan's spending on defense by 2008. It also raised questions about the objectives of China's defense modernization – whether it went beyond what is necessary for defensive purposes. Ozawa Ichiro, president of the major opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), criticized the White Paper as reflecting a “confrontational mentality.”

A month later, on Aug. 11, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* released the results of a poll on Japan-China relations conducted July 8-9. The findings were not encouraging. On the present state of relations, those who considered it “good” or “good to a certain extent” accounted for 27.1 percent of respondents; those viewing it as “bad” or “bad to a certain extent” totaled 66.4 percent. Those who considered China “very trustworthy” or “somewhat trustworthy” stood at just under 30 percent (29.5); the opposite opinions totaled 65.3 percent. Those with a “good” or “good to a certain degree” view of China amounted to 26.8 percent of respondents; those with a “bad” or “bad to a certain extent” view of China accounted for 66.8 percent. China ranked second, 44.0 percent, only to North Korea, 77.7 percent, as posing a threat to Japan. Views were mixed with regard to the effect of China's economic growth on Japan – 28.4 percent thought it positive; 35.7 percent found it negative; and 29.7 percent thought it both positive and negative. As for the future, 50 percent thought relations would continue “unchanged” while 28.7 percent had hopes for improvement and 16.5 percent were not optimistic.

Also related to security issues, Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe in announcing his candidacy for the LDP presidency raised the issue of constitutional reform, including Article IX and the right of collective self-defense. During a Sept. 5 press conference, addressing a question on the constitution and the right of collective self-defense, Abe argued that

“given the expectations for Japan to contribute actively ... to maintain stability and security in the region, we must consider specific cases more seriously.”

On Sept. 5, former Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro called for Japan to study the issue of nuclear weapons. While advocating efforts to strengthen the NPT, Nakasone noted that there are nuclear powers close to Japan and that Japan, currently dependent on the United States extended deterrence, had to look at a future in which “it is not necessarily known whether the U.S. attitude will continue.” That same day Shikata Toshiyuki, currently a professor at Teikyo University and former commanding general of the Northern District/Ground Self-Defense Force, argued that to deal with possible attacks from terrorists and failed states, Japan “should possess the military capability of preemption against enemy bases.” Shikata went on to say that use of such capabilities would be “a political decision.” He also was critical of Japan’s dependence on the United States for intelligence that “forms the basis of political decisions.”

High-level visits

In early July, DPJ President Ozawa traveled to China for a six-day visit. On July 3, shortly after arriving, Ozawa met with Wang Jiarui, head of the International Department of the Chinese Communist Party’s Central Committee and with State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan. The following day, Ozawa met with President Hu Jintao. Ozawa quoted Hu as welcoming him as an “old friend” at a time when bilateral relations were “facing difficulties.” The *Yomiuri Shimbun* reported that Ozawa told Hu that relations among Japan, China, and the United States “must be an isosceles triangle.” This caused Foreign Minister Aso to respond that such a proposition was “inconceivable” – Japan and the United States shared “universal values.” Relations between Japan and China were “important,” but the foreign minister emphasized the two countries were not “allies.”

From July 4-9, a delegation of junior members from both ruling and opposition parties, members of the Japan-China Parliamentary Association traveled to China. The group was led by LDP Upper House member Hayashi Yoshimasa. In meetings with State Councilor Tang, Hayashi expressed concern that a visit to Yasukuni by the prime minister could produce an excessively strong Chinese reaction, “which would result in an outcome undesirable to China.” Tang replied that China would “take your advice to heart.” An LDP delegation led by Acting Secretary General Aisawa Ichiro also met with State Councilor Tang July 8.

On the official level Foreign Ministers Li and Aso met July 27 in Kuala Lumpur during the meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum. Li and Aso centered their talks on cooperation with respect to North Korea. As for bilateral relations, Li told Aso that a political obstacle to their development had yet to be removed. The *Sankei Shimbun* reported that Aso did not receive a hoped-for invitation to visit China; the paper interpreting Beijing’s decision not to extend an invitation as a move to forestall a Koizumi visit to the shrine.

A month after the visit to Yasukuni, Koizumi traveled to Helsinki for the Asia-Europe meeting. During the conference, Koizumi was reported to have informally met several times, on Sept. 10-11, with China's Premier Wen Jiabao. According to a *Yomiuri* story, the two leaders were photographed smiling and shaking hands by the official Chinese photographer, who then asked ASEM officials to post the photo on the ASEM official website. The *Yomiuri* quoted a Japanese government source in Helsinki as saying "we take it a clear message from China that it wants to repair relations with Japan."

Abe and Koizumi visit Yasukuni

When Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe told reporters that he had no intention of saying whether he would visit Yasukuni, had visited, or when he might visit the shrine lest he make the shrine a political or diplomatic issue, he was concealing the fact that he had visited the shrine April 15. The visit came to light Aug. 4. Shrine officials confirmed that he signed the guest book as chief Cabinet secretary. Asked whether he thought the visit would affect the LDP election, Abe said that his position remained unchanged – namely that it should not become an election issue.

In Beijing, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson called on Japan's political leaders to end visits to the shrine and thereby remove an obstacle to the proper development of relations; Japanese officials judged the tone of the comments as being restrained. Koizumi told reporters that Abe's visit was based on individual freedom and that he thought the reaction from China and Korea as always was "strange." LDP Secretary General Takebe referred to the constitutional guarantees and said that no matter who visited the shrine there should be no issue. He also noted that within the LDP, a majority of members were opposed to politicizing the matter and thought Abe's visit would have zero impact on the election.

The announcement, however, made the visit at least an issue for political comment in Tokyo. Opposition leader Ozawa told reporters that he thought it would be difficult to improve relations with China and Korea under an Abe government. Finance Minister and political rival Tanigaki recognized that the constitution's guarantee of freedom of religion allowed individuals to visit the shrine, but he wondered if, given Abe's position, the argument that he had visited the shrine as an individual was persuasive. Moreover, he thought consideration should be given to diplomatic implications. Foreign Minister Aso took an indirect shot at Abe, telling the media that in the event he became prime minister he would exercise self-restraint regarding visits to Yasukuni. Kanzaki Takenori, head of the New Komeito Party, the LDP's coalition partner, found Abe's visit "regrettable," noting that he had previously called for self-restraint on the part of the prime minister, foreign minister, and chief Cabinet secretary.

In the first days of August, the prime minister, in a series of remarks, began to signal his intention of visiting Yasukuni on Aug. 15.

On Aug. 6, after attending commemorative ceremonies in Hiroshima, Koizumi told reporters that he was ready to visit the shrine “at any time.” He added that he did not think “there is anything wrong with a visit by a Japanese prime minister to a Japanese establishment to mourn the war dead” and to renew his commitment that “war should never be waged.” He saw “no problem in that.” As for relations with China, the prime minister reaffirmed that he was “ready to talk at any time.” He also offered the thought that should he refuse to talk because of differences over a single issue, he would undoubtedly be criticized. Two days later, Koizumi reaffirmed that his 2001 campaign promise to visit Yasukuni on Aug. 15 was “still valid.” The next day, he added that, because his promise was “still valid,” it “ought to be respected.” And on Aug. 10, he announced that whenever he goes to the shrine, be it Aug. 15 or Aug. 13, China’s criticism is “always the same.” He saw “no reason” for the visits of a Japanese prime minister to be criticized. As for an Aug. 15 visit, the prime minister said he would “decide appropriately.”

The prime minister visited Yasukuni early in the morning of Aug. 15. Koizumi was joined by two of his 17 Cabinet ministers, Nakagawa Shoichi, minister of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, and Kutsukake Tetsuo, chairman of the National Public Safety Commission. Ninety members of the Diet also visited the shrine on Aug. 15 and 101 were represented by staff visits. It was later reported that the Foreign Ministry had informed Beijing and Seoul to expect an Aug. 15 visit. Also coming to light was a cable, sent in the summer of last year by Koreshige Anami, then ambassador to China, to Koizumi advising against visiting the shrine. Beijing’s protests followed. Foreign Minister Li called in Ambassador Miyamoto. Li told the ambassador that the visit was “an affront to international morality,” a remark that the ambassador found “totally inappropriate” and “unacceptable.” A similar protest was lodged at the Japanese Foreign Ministry by the minister at the Chinese embassy

At the same time, the Foreign Ministry released a statement saying the visit “gravely offends the people in countries victimized by the war of aggression launched by Japanese militarists and undermines the political foundation of China-Japan relations.” It went on to say that Koizumi had “repeatedly offended the Chinese people over the history issue...” Nevertheless, China would “continue to work untiringly with all Japanese statesmen and people who value and are committed to China-Japan friendship” and was “confident that the Japanese people ... will follow the trend of history to remove the political obstacle and help put China-Japan relations back on the track of normal growth at an early date.” On Aug. 10, *Kyodo News Service* reported the text of an Aug. 18, 1998 speech by former President Jiang Zemin in which he instructed China’s diplomats in dealing with Japan to “continuously emphasize the issue of history, and forever discuss this issue.” Japanese media found the Chinese statement to be a forward-looking, post-Koizumi message aimed at advancing the bilateral relationship.

In response to reporters’ questions about the protests from China and Korea, Abe replied that he wanted to create conditions to advance resolution of misunderstandings. Mutually keeping the door open to dialogue was a link to the development of bilateral relations. Asked whether he thought the visit would affect the next government, Abe replied that he

did not. On Aug. 25, the *Mainichi Shimbun* reported that Abe had initiated planning for a Japan-China summit during the November APEC conference in Vietnam. At the same time, Abe's political *consiglieri* told a Naha city audience on Aug. 24 that China was indicating an interest in improving bilateral relations, referring to an Aug. 18 statement from Beijing calling on both Japan and China "to make efforts for opening summits."

The polls, the public and Yasukuni – part II

Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni set off a second round of polling with regard to the shrine. One casualty of Koizumi's Yasukuni visit turned out to be a residence of Kato Koichi, former LDP secretary general who had opposed the prime minister's visits. On the evening of Aug. 16, the house of Kato's mother in Yamagata prefecture and Kato's local office burned down. Nearby, police arrested a 65-year-old man, who had apparently attempted hara-kiri. Police identified the suspect as belonging to a rightist organization. The pollsters asked the public whether they approved of Koizumi's Aug. 15 visit and whether they would support visits to the shrine by the next prime minister. Some polls also asked whether the Class-A war criminals should be disenshrined from Yasukuni or whether an alternate site should serve as a memorial to the war dead.

- An Aug. 16 *Kyodo* poll found 51.1 percent approving of Koizumi's visit and 41.8 percent opposed. As for visits by the next prime minister, 44.9 percent were opposed, while 39.6 percent supported the visits. Sixty-four percent believed that the Class-A war criminals should be disenshrined.
- A *Mainichi Shimbun* poll, conducted Aug. 15-16, found 50 percent in favor of Koizumi's visit and 46 percent opposed. As for visits to the shrine by Koizumi's successor, 47 percent were opposed while 42 percent approved.
- An Aug. 15-16 *Yomiuri Shimbun* poll revealed that 53 percent supported Koizumi, while 39 percent opposed. Sixty percent supported an alternate site from Yasukuni as it is at present. Among those favoring an alternate site, 30 percent favored a government-run shrine with no religious affiliation; 19 percent supported Yasukuni after the Class-A war criminals are disenshrined; 11 percent supported an expansion of Chodorigafuchi.
- A *Nikkei Shimbun* poll of Aug. 18-20 found 48 percent supporting Koizumi's visit with 36 percent disapproving; 43 percent supported a visit to the shrine by the next prime minister while 39 percent opposed.
- An *Asahi Shimbun* poll of Aug. 21-22 found 49 percent in favor of Koizumi's visit with 37 percent opposed. As for visits by his successor, 47 percent were opposed with 37 percent in favor.

- A *Sankei Shimbun* poll conducted Aug. 19-20 showed a counter trend: 44.6 percent disapproving of the visit with 41.1 percent in support. Also, 47.4 percent opposed visits to the shrine by the next prime minister, with only 26.9 percent approving; among LDP members 42.8 percent favored such visits and 28.9 percent opposed.

From Koizumi to Abe

Koizumi said good-bye in a farewell interview with members of the Japanese media on the evening of Sept. 25. Asked if he had any regrets regarding the affects of his visits to Yasukuni on relations with China and South Korea, the prime minister replied “none.” Moreover, he visited the shrine to pay respect to those who gave their lives for their country, not to justify war or militarism.

On Sept. 19, Abe was elected president of the LDP. Beijing welcomed Abe with the same words it welcomed Taiwan’s President Chen Shui-bian, namely, that it would listen to what he says and watch what he does. A week later, Abe succeeded Koizumi as prime minister and retained Aso as foreign minister. In the interim, Japanese and Chinese diplomats, led by Vice Ministers Yachi Shotaro and Cui Tiankai, met in Tokyo on Sept. 23-24, to conduct the sixth Comprehensive Policy Dialogue and to explore paths to a summit.

During the first day’s meeting, Yachi conveyed Abe’s hope for an early summit, and Cui expressed China’s hope for an improvement in the relationship after five years of treading water. Yet, the *Asahi Shimbun* reported that an “informed source” as saying that “nothing would occur unless Mr. Abe comes up with positive stance” with regard to Yasukuni.

The next day, Yachi endeavored to explain Abe’s position on Yasukuni, which sounded very much like that of his predecessor: that “what should not be done is to shut off every dialogue just because of the Yasukuni issue.” In turn, the Chinese side asked Abe to drop his ambiguity with regard to his intention of visiting the shrine and to state that he would not. Japanese efforts to persuade the Chinese that Abe would not visit the shrine by the time of next year’s Spring Festival proved unavailing. The outcome of the two days of meetings seemed to confirm what a senior Foreign Ministry official had told the *Asahi Shimbun* – that “the situation is not so easy that the strained relations will not turn for the better only with a change of prime minister.”

Two days later, the new foreign minister sounded very much like the old foreign minister. In an interview with the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, Aso, addressing the summit issue, told the paper that sooner would be better and that the ball is in China’s court on this one. While hoping for a meeting before the November APEC meeting in Hanoi, Aso noted that China continues to make restraint with regard to Yasukuni a condition for talks, that it is “China that is raising the hurdle.”

Outlook

The political debate in Japan appears to be moving toward a resolution of the Yasukuni issue, in particular the enshrinement of the Class-A war criminals. Movement on this issue would certainly provide a positive impetus to bilateral relations, but just as certainly would not resolve all the problems in this complex relationship. The same may be said of a summit, if it occurs.

Chronology of Japan-China Relations July-September 2006

July 1, 2006: Koizumi government releases 2006 Defense White Paper.

July 2, 2006: Japanese Foreign Ministry protests operation of Chinese research ship within Japan's EEZ.

July 3, 2006: Democratic Party of Japan President Ozawa meets Wang Jiarui, head of CCP Central Committee International Department and State Councilor Tang Jixuan.

July 4, 2006: Ozawa meets with China's President Hu Jintao.

July 4-9, 2006: Delegation of junior Diet members from ruling and opposition parties visits China.

July 5, 2006: Tokyo Gov. Ishihara equates 2008 Beijing Olympics to Hitler's 1936 Berlin games.

July 5, 2006: Cleanup of chemical weapons abandoned by Imperial Army begins near Ning'an in China's Northeast; 210 poison gas bombs found; completion of chemical weapons cleanup slated for 2007; in August, Japanese official says complete cleanup will require five additional years.

July 7, 2006: Former LDP Secretary General Koga, head of War Bereaved Families Association, proposes secular war memorial as solution to Yasukuni.

July 7-11, 2006: LDP and DPJ Diet members visit China, including acting LDP Secretary General Aisawa.

July 8-9, 2006: Working-level talks on East China Sea held in Beijing.

July 9, 2006: Yamasaki tells *Asahi TV* audience that Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni may be unconstitutional.

July 10-11, 2006: DPJ President Ozawa visits China; meets State Councilor Tang and President Hu.

July 11, 2006: Taipei Mayor and Nationalist Party Chairman Ma meets former Prime Minister Mori in Tokyo; also meets Tokyo Gov. Ishihara, Yokohama Mayor Nakada, and addresses Tokyo Foreign Correspondents Club during six-day stay in Japan.

July 14, 2006: Transportation Minister Kitagawa visits China; markets shinkansen technology to China's railroad minister.

July 16, 2006: Foreign Minister Aso addresses Yasukuni issue; points to difficulty of government making decisions with regard to Yasukuni as private, religious corporation.

July 16, 2006: Koizumi meets with German Chancellor Merkel during G-8 Summit in St. Petersburg; lobbies against dropping of EU arms embargo on China.

July 16-20, 2006: Koga visits China; July 17 visits Nanjing and museum dedicated to Nanjing Massacre; on July 19 Koga meets with Wang Jiarui, head of CCP Central Committee International Department; Wang approves of Koga's Yasukuni plan.

July 18, 2006: Yamasaki faction issues proposals for LDP presidential election; calls for secular war memorial.

July 19, 2006: *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* publishes record of conversation with Showa Emperor on the enshrinement of Class-A war criminals in Yasukuni.

July 20, 2006: Abe publishes campaign manifesto "Toward a Beautiful Country"; criticizes China for refusing to meet with Koizumi because of Yasukuni.

July 21, 2006: China's Vice Foreign Minister Wu and Japan's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Nishida lead delegations to 10th China-Japan security dialogue in Beijing.

July 23, 2006: Abe tells Kobe audience that decision on Class-A war criminals should be made by the shrine or the War Bereaved Families; refuses to say whether he will or had visited the shrine.

July 23, 2006: Finance Minister Tanigaki characterizes Yasukuni as a "fishbone" in Japan's throat with respect to China and Korea.

July 25, 2006: Minister for Financial, Economic, and Fiscal Policy Yosano calls on Yasukuni to create environment that would allow emperor to visit.

July 25, 2006: In Tokyo speech, Koga calls on Yasukuni to remove Class-A war criminals.

July 26, 2006: *Asahi Shimbun* publishes interview with grandson of Class-A war criminal Hirota Koki in which grandson voices family opposition to Hirota's Yasukuni enshrinement.

July 27, 2006: LDP Asia Study Group meets at LDP headquarters; calls for strategic ambiguity with regard to Yasukuni.

July 27, 2006: Foreign Ministers Aso and Li meet in Kuala Lumpur during ARF meeting.

July 28, 2006: China's Ambassador Wang suggests to Nagoya audience that restraint on the part of Koizumi with regard to Yasukuni visit could open door to summit meeting.

July 28, 2006: LDP Tokyo chapter hosts Abe, Aso and Tanigaki in policy debate.

July 30, 2006: Koga suggests secularization as solution to Yasukuni issue.

Aug. 1, 2006: Akiba Takeo appointed director of Foreign Ministry's China and Mongolia Division.

Aug. 1, 2006: Grandson of Class-A war criminal former Foreign Minister Togo Shigenori calls on Koizumi to end visits to Yasukuni.

Aug. 2, 2006: Koga presents War Bereaved Families Association with plan to study separation of Class A-war criminals; association decides to postpone consideration until after Sept. 20 LDP presidential election.

Aug. 2, 2006: Relatives of Taiwanese conscripted into Imperial Army file law suit in Osaka District Court requesting disenshrinement from Yasukuni.

Aug. 2, 2006: Hong Kong-Taiwan group announce plans for Senkaku protest.

Aug. 4, 2006: Reports surface that Abe had visited Yasukuni April 15.

Aug. 5, 2006: 1944 War Ministry order becomes public; by order of War Minister Tojo enshrinement at Yasukuni limited to those who directly died from military service.

Aug. 5, 2006: Aso releases multi-step reform plan for Yasukuni.

Aug. 6, 2006: Nakagawa Hidenao, chairman of LDP's Policy Research Council, suggests legislation to make Yasukuni a government-directed entity.

Aug. 6, 2006: Koizumi announces that he is ready to visit Yasukuni at any time.

Aug. 7, 2006: *Kyodo News* reports that China National Oil Corporation had announced on its website the beginning of full-scale production; later Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Futabashi reports that Beijing confirmed no change in status quo.

Aug. 8, 2006: Koizumi reaffirms 2001 campaign pledge to visit Yasukuni on Aug. 15.

Aug. 10, 2006: Koizumi says that he will decide appropriately with regard to visiting Yasukuni.

Aug. 11, 2006: Relatives of war dead enshrined at Yasukuni file suit in Osaka District Court; demand relatives be disenshrined on grounds that enshrinement was effected without their permission.

Aug. 13, 2006: Former Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui announces plans for Sept. 12-17 sight-seeing visit to Japan.

Aug. 14, 2006: Ministry of Trade and Economics confirms no change in status quo in East China Sea.

Aug. 15, 2006: Koizumi visits Yasukuni; China protests; Japanese ambassador called in; Chinese ambassador protest to Japanese Foreign Ministry.

Aug. 15, 2006: Fisheries Vice Minister Miyakoshi Mitsuhiro makes “private” visit to Taiwan meets with Taiwan’s President Chen, Premier Su, and Agriculture Minister Su to discuss fisheries issues; China urges Japan to honor “one China” policy; trip acknowledged by Abe on Sept. 12.

Aug. 17, 2006: Japan Coast Guard ship intercepts Taiwanese ship attempting to land on Senkaku islands.

Aug. 21, 2006: Foreign Minister Aso declares candidacy for LDP presidency.

Aug. 24, 2006: Chinese court awards 1.6 million yuan damages to Nanjing massacre survivor.

Aug. 25, 2006: *Mainichi Shimbun* reports Abe had initiated planning for a Japan-China summit during November APEC meeting in Hanoi; Nakagawa tells Naha audience that China is interested in improving relations.

Sept. 1, 2006: Abe announces candidacy for LDP presidency.

Sept. 3, 2006: Abe tells Morioka LDP convention of plans to elevate JDA to ministry status.

Sept. 5, 2006: Abe tells reporters that he will make efforts to realize a summit; urges China and Korea to make similar efforts.

Sept. 5, 2006: Former Prime Minister Nakasone raises issue of Japan possessing nuclear weapons; former Ground Self-Defense Force Gen. Shikata talks of need for Japan to possess pre-emptive strike capability.

Sept. 6, 2006: Keidanren Chairman Mitarai Fujio, adviser to the Japan-China Business Associations, visits China; meets President Hu; Hu calls for regular high-level exchanges, once political obstacles are removed; meeting, however, is focused on economic, financial, technology cooperation.

Sept. 7, 2006: National Defense Academy President Iokibe Makoto in Koizumi government e-mail magazine criticizes the prime minister's Yasukuni visits as having negative affect on Japan's diplomacy.

Sept. 7, 2006: Former President Lee postpones travel to Japan due to health reasons.

Sept. 9-10, 2006: Senior Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Shiozaki visits Beijing; holds informal talks with Communist Party officials on possibility of summit.

Sept. 10-11, 2006: Koizumi and China's Premier Wen Jiabao meet in Helsinki at ASEM meeting; photographed smiling and shaking hands; photo taken by official Chinese photographer posted on ASEM website, reportedly at request of Chinese government.

Sept. 12, 2006: Abe rejects China's logic on war responsibilities as basis for normalization, i.e., separation of general public and war leadership.

Sept. 20, 2006: Abe elected LDP president; Beijing welcomes Abe with same greeting it gave to Taiwan's President Chen; namely that China would listen to what Abe says and watch what he does.

Sept. 23, 2006: Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry Nikai visits trade fair in Hunan province; meets Vice Premier Wu Yi and Commerce Minister Bo Xilai.

Sept. 24, 2006: LDP Policy Research Council Chairman Nakagawa meets Vice Foreign Minister Cui Tiankai in advance of Comprehensive Policy Dialogue to explore summit possibilities.

Sept. 23-24, 2006: Vice Foreign Minister Yachi Shotaro and Vice Foreign Minister Cui meet in Tokyo in sixth Comprehensive Policy Dialogue; talks major focused on summit possibilities; also discussed are East China Sea and Korean Peninsula issues.

Sept. 25, 2006: LDP and New Komeito agree on new coalition government under Abe.

Sept. 26, 2006: Abe becomes prime minister; new Cabinet announced; Aso remains foreign minister.