

# **Regionalism, Nationalism and China's Regional Activism in East Asia**

(First Draft)

**Zhu Feng**

**Professor and Director**

**International Security Program**

**School of International Studies**

**Peking University, Beijing 100871, P. R. China**

**Tel: 86-10-6275-4259**

**Email: zhufeng@pku.edu.cn**

Since the end of the 90s of last century, China's foreign policy has been admittedly embarking on some sort of regional activism. One of the leading ingredients of China's regional activism is its regionalist approaches. As a leading economy in East Asia, China assumes crucial role in the prospect of regionalization whatever it will take the form. We can easily define China's regional activism as the outcome of Chinese nationalist/strategic aspirations in East Asia. But what its main purpose is to adopt regional activism, or to what extent such activism could be adaptable to other members in the region; and more importantly, China's regional activism would gloomily lead to unmanageable conflicts, or China's rise will re-shape the world order with "Chinese characteristics"?<sup>1</sup> The debate seems to go hotter recently.<sup>2</sup>

Basically, the goals of Beijing's regional activism are quite multiple: by doing that, first of all, the PRC attempts externally to break up the isolation posed in the post-Tiananmen event era and curtail strategic pressures it strongly feels from the United States when Washington tends to regard China as the biggest strategic challengers in the coming years. Seeking an stable and secure international surroundings has been top concern for its foreign relations; secondly, Beijing has been trying to take advantages of all international conditions to promote its domestic economic development in order to revive its national strength along the line of "reform and opening up," which have been labeled as the great task for glorious restoration of Chinese great power position in the world stage. Thirdly, Beijing has been striving for the regional sympathy and support to achieve the national reunification with Taiwan; Fourthly, profitable regional activism will likely help maintaining high rate economic growth and accordingly outstand and consolidate the legitimacy of CCP's domestic rule. Such goals remain intact and will continue to overwhelm Beijing's agenda of diplomacy in East Asia in the foreseeable run. But few

---

<sup>1</sup> David Gosset, "A New World with Chinese Characteristics," *Asia Times*, April 7, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> As for the excellent summarization and comments to scholarly debates about China's implications to the region as well as world politics, please see Aaron Friedberg, "The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?" *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Fall 2005), pp. 7-46; For the latest debate about that, please see "ISP Policy Forum: Hard and Soft Power in East-West Relations," *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring 2006), pp. 23-50.

scholars believe that state goal analysis, as stated or exemplified, would provide solid clue to the reliable insight. Realist school contends that capability drives intentions. By this logic, China's strategic goals would slowly but surely change over time with its ascent of relative capability in the region.

Even though the realist pessimism hardly backs off, dynamism of political economy in East Asia is unveiling us something brand new to interpret the regional compacts of China's rise. As David Shambaugh observes, China, by its engagement policy with the wider Asian region, is warmly welcomed by majority of regional member states as "more benign than malign"; The consequence is "a principal catalyst in shaping a new order in Asia".<sup>3</sup> David Kang, exploring China's relationship in the region by the combination of China's historic legacy with his well tested hierarchic hypothesis, provides a thought provoking account on why China's rise would be peaceful.<sup>4</sup> The main opposition to their far-ranging account concentrates on the explanation of Chinese growing nationalism, and argues that its assertiveness and even intrusiveness will eventually make China rock the boat of the region.<sup>5</sup>

Both theoretically and practically, there is casual mechanism between nationalism and regionalism that are, in nature, all disparate belongings to policy tool and policy preference. To put them together, I am attempting to sort out how either of them plays out in China's foreign policy and what they imply to its activism. Thus, this paper will explore China's regionalist approaches that rejuvenate and resonate in the recent years, and analyze its nationalist approaches that seemingly contradict the former. At the heart of the paper are the security implications of China's mixture of regionalist approaches and altered nationalist thoughts in the midst of course of regionalization in East Asia. There is no doubt that comprehensibility of security concerns ardently dominates Beijing thinking in the steady push for regionalization, one of its essential strategic objectives. Lastly, this paper attempts to reveal that it is not the nationalism to overwhelm China's regionalist approaches. Conversely, its potent involvement into the regional process has greatly moderated its nationalist thoughts. In return, China's regional activism will not be more assertive, but more cooperative as long as Beijing will continue to cling to East Asian regionalization. To envisage their interactions, probably we could have some insight into China's regional activism and its evolution.

### **Regionalism in East Asia: its Definition and Reality**

The end of Cold War witnesses the great dynamic of East Asian regionalization. Now multi layered FTA-oriented economic regionalization has swept the whole region. Asian "new

---

<sup>3</sup> David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," *International Security*, vol. 29, No. 3 (Winter 2004/05), p. 65, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> David C. Kang, "Hierarchy and Stability in Asian International Relations," in G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003; "The Theoretic Roots of Hierarchy in International Relations," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (2004), pp. 337-352.

<sup>5</sup> For the recent publications, please see Nicholas Khoo and Michael L. R. Smith, "China Engages Asia? Caveat Lector," *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Summer 2005), pp. 196-213.

regionalism”,<sup>6</sup> a metaphor to East Asian genetic derivation of regional economic cooperation, is prevailing with the intertwined FTA framework. Against the backdrop, the proposal of building East Asia Community (EAC), which ambitiously engages extra regional members into the regional process with new actors more than “ASEAN plus 3” members in December of 2005. However, the process of producing and reproducing space as region implies a contest over demarcation: as a socio-political construct, certain aspects of a region are highlighted, shaded or obfuscated in the process of imputing meaning to economic, political, security and cultural relations in different time and space, thereby demarcating the boundaries to a region.<sup>7</sup> By this standard, 15 years proceedings of regional reach towards East Asia regionalism have ended the plight of East Asia as a “imagined region”, and created great momentum for all members to step up their efforts to reinforce their region-wide economic cooperation for the diverted purports. Actually, besides the small amount of regional members--- North Korea, the most reclusive country in the world, Mongolia, the thinnest economy at the regional periphery, and Taiwan, economically strong but politically crippled, --- no country has been excluded out of regional process. Furthermore, no country casts doubt into the desirability of involving into the regional cooperation whether the form would be. Albeit for their difference acclaims and requests, the regional members, and particularly, major players in the region, like China, Japan, Korea and ASEAN, are all jockeying for their respective FTA terminals both collectively and individualistically.

However, there is still no big room to unload optimism. The region-building process at state level involves new institutional frameworks is still rocky. First of all, there has not been a robust regional institution existing yet that could predominantly and ably energize the regional process. As a result, it remains unknown how the “regionalness” can transcend the diversity of regional members in the terms of their competing policy priority and interest desires. Secondly, power relations in the region improve some way while deteriorating others. Nowadays, the tension between China and Japan has undermined regionalization in East Asia because either of the sides feels compelled to avoid their counterpart’s dominance in the process. “ASEAN plus 3” mechanism had been glaringly perceived as the well- working one to boost regional cooperation. When China-Japan relations was at the lowest ebbs, the summit meeting among China, Japan and S. Korea which has regularly convened with the “ASEAN plus 3” summit meeting adjourned in December of 2005. Even the ministerial meeting which regularly convened prior to the summit meeting was relentlessly cancelled. The volatility of power relations in East Asia has proved to be the biggest detriment to the smooth operability of regional process. Thirdly, with regionalization on process, nationalism does not decline as expected, but dramatically grows. Growing nationalism is not long disturbing the cultivation of regional identity, and even stirs up the great power rivalry and forms new identity crisis.<sup>8</sup> No one suspects the wills of state in the region to go ahead with regional cooperation, but what way could be applied remains incredibly unresolved.

---

<sup>6</sup> For the detailed account of East Asia regionalism, please see Andrew Hurrell, *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order*, Oxford: Oxford University, 1995; Michael K. Connors, Remy Davison and Jorn Dosch, *The New Global Politics of the Asia-Pacific*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Glenn D. Hook, “Japan and Micro-Regionalism: Constructing the Japan Sea Rim Zone,” in Yoshinobu Yamamoto, ed., *Globalization, Regionalism and Nationalism: Asia in Search of Its Role in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, p. 126.

<sup>8</sup> Suh Sung, “Japanese Neo-Nationalism and An Idea of An East Asian Community,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, Number 4, 2005, pp.

For instance, China prefers to keep “ASEAN plus 3” mechanism as the leading engine to undertake the regional process, and broadened “regional” boundaries would not be urgently handled. Contrary to Beijing basic line of building on “ASEAN plus 3” as top priority, Tokyo assumes that the expanded inclusion to Australia, India and New Zealand should be favorably dealt with. Consequentially, the first summit meeting of 16 members in December of 2005 which was dubbed as the EAC inaugural touch appeared nothing more than “symbolic”. The final statement signed by the leaders of 16 participatory countries did not proclaim the EAC as their commonly shared goal. Given the lack of solid ideational and political foundations, East Asian regionalism is particularly vulnerable to state-backed veto power.<sup>9</sup> Fourthly, the skeptics have increased after the Japan-Korea FTA talk stalled as they failed to narrow the gap on agricultural regard. As a result, the stagnation of across-region FTA weaving work is looming over East Asia. In short, regionalism, no matter how new or how old it is, does not take its root in East Asia. Consequently, the fate of East Asian regionalism remains at best fuzzy.<sup>10</sup> There are many different initiatives and ideas afloat but there is no clear overarching vision as the operable and commonly identifiable blueprint for its future.

The “problematic” portray of current state of East Asian regionalization reflects practically and adequately on the problematic nature of its “new regionalism”. The “new regionalism” is largely market-led, an outgrowth of complex economic interdependence driving firms, markets and states closer together. Regional economic linkages spill over into regional agreement, which have served to deepen the process of integration. What is distinctive about the new regionalism is that politics tends to follow markets.<sup>11</sup> When the negotiating process finds that there is any tendency to steer states and markets in directions they do not necessarily wish to go, the regional process would inexorably slow down. Furthermore, any regional cooperation, whatever forms it takes, is indispensably subject to, more or less, power politics, interest calculations, domestic constraints, and more importantly, the pressures posed by globalization. They are all what matters, and what matters in power and interest is one’s relative capabilities, prestige, policy preference and domestic politics. The ASEAN countries, most of who are driven by the fear of 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis, have turned to regionalism as response given they lack the capability to manage the challenge of globalization.<sup>12</sup> Nowadays, globalizing is still there but the driving/blocking forces have been altered. There are three most significant trends which are shaping the outlook of East Asian regionalization: How far the US would be to cross border sticking its step into the “boundaries of regionness”; China’s rising power and how resolve it would be to cement all regional members; and the last one is in what direction Japan would like to re-direct its mounting nationalism. A number of new factors plaguing East Asian “new regionalism” explicitly unravels the real story with the region: the process of regionalization would not automatically curb the great power rivalry, but even exacerbates such rivalry. Due to the lack of institutional authority to bind all members up forcefully, the vulnerability of East Asian regionalism is still visible almost everywhere. Only through the prism of regional background regarding regional dynamism, can

---

<sup>9</sup> Samuel S. Kim, “regionalization and Regionalism in East Asia,” *Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (January-April 2004), p. 61.

<sup>10</sup> Yeo Lay Hwee, “Realism and Reactive Regionalism: Where is East Asian Regionalism Heading?” *UNISCI Discussion Paper*, May 2005, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Michael K. Connors, Remy Davison and Jorn Dosch, *The New Global Politics of the Asia-Pacific*, p.149.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel S. Kim, “Regionalization and Regionalism in East Asia,” *Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (January/April 2004), p. 61.

China's regionalist approaches as well as its perceptions of regionalism be clearly examined. Beijing's endorsement to East Asian regionalization partially results from its interest pursuit, and partially from its increasing desire to upgrade policy relevance in the region.

### **Regionalism and China's Regionalist Approaches**

China as a regional and sub regional player, as well as in regional issues more generally, is a hallmark of the Post-Cold War era. In the contrast to Japan and ASEAN, China is totally a later comer in the game field of East Asian regionalization, and regionalism is a relatively young concept to Chinese. But, the regionalization, as an arrangement based on inter-state networking to facilitate flows of goods, services, capital and technology across state boundaries,<sup>13</sup> has long-term historic roots in China. The tributary system, centered by Chinese superiority over neighbors, could be tracked as a synonym to the regionalization in East Asia. However, the essence of tributary system is some sort of the regional order anchored by Chinese empire. It had more interests in inland than sea lane trade. Tributary system thus worked well to promote the regional trade between China as political patron and many of regional members as tributary countries. Its demise quickly and explicitly followed the debacle of Sino-centrism as the country grew so weaker that China-centered regional order had been fully shattered by the modern colonialism and imperialism between 1840-1945. Regardless of once tarnished China in the past, East Asia is an old concept rooted in history remarkably with cultural depth and geographical legitimacy mainly due to China's historic attribute. Of course, Japanese military invasion and occupation to the region in the Second World War objectively heightens East Asia as a historical as well as geographical concept. Mostly in the post war period, East Asian meant almost nothing economically to China until it launched campaign of reform and opening up in 1979. In Mao's era, regionalization was synonymous to the communist expansion movement and Beijing's revolution exporting strategy. But the irony was that such a unsurprisingly "ideologized" regionalizational attempt virtually led to China's diplomatic switch from "revisionist" to "separatist" in the region.<sup>14</sup>

China's involvement into the regional process started off early 1993 when Beijing decided to take part in APEC. Its aspiration to multilateral cooperation has also abounded. From then on, Beijing's regional incorporating process has impressed the most of China watchers and brought about its "new diplomacy" imminently characterized as "proactive and responsible".<sup>15</sup> China's pattern of international behaviors have tremendously shifted over to "integrationist" one, which could be summed up as "national rhetoric and doctrines" that value engagement with the extant norms and rules, efforts to join or sustain extant institutions.<sup>16</sup>

However, Beijing's active involvement into East Asia regional process does not automatically mean that China is to steadily bid for regional supremacy. If history is any guide, the future of East

---

<sup>13</sup> As for the definition of regionalization, please see Andrew Hurrell, *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order*, p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> Jeffrey W. Legro, *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005, pp. 9-11.

<sup>15</sup> Evans S. Medeiros and M. Taylor Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 6(November /December 2003), pp. 25-32.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey W. Legro, *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order*, p. 10.

Asia will regain its stability and prosperity as China maintains booming economy and undertake open, benign and cooperative strategy that is adequately aimed at accommodating itself to all regional members. More fundamentally, the assumption that with China's rise, which has commanded attention from analysts and observers for more than a decade now, the future of Asia is all but identifies with China's ascendance as the preeminent military, economic and political power, is something scary in Chinese eyes. Their leadership's decision to choose the notion of "peaceful development" over "peaceful rise" in the official discourse is a persuasive indication that Beijing feels quite uncomfortable when the country's muscular future would be always chatted and spotlighted. By doing that, Beijing sincerely feels that the country could not be, and will not be either, assertive and intrusive, though such low-key posture does not make the same sense abroad as it does domestically. China's proactive participation into the regional process is designed and implemented largely by its regionalist approaches, which comprise the key points as blow:

### **First, regionalism versus globalization**

5 years later with Beijing's entry into the WTO in 2001 and after abandoning its currency pegged down with US dollars in 2005, China is gearing up its full integration into the global economic system, despite the financial reform underway. Its pursuit of full integration and high rate economic growth has magnifies its increasing necessity of riding on appropriate regional process. Thus Beijing's request for the regionalization has been raised to the higher level than the 90s. As the most resources hungry economy in the world now, China wishes that it is able to take up a bigger share in ASEAN countries' mining and forestry industries. Meanwhile, intensified regionalization will notably profit Beijing's huge exporting machine. Regionalism has also been adopted as an approach to deal with globalization by certain centers of globalization. Contrary to Japan, Beijing definitely uses different regionalist approaches to counteract the impacts of globalization. Japan has been long concerned with its lack of regional bodies except for loosely structured APEC as the second largest world economy. Its endeavor to accelerate the formation of Asian regionalization has been driven by its request to strengthen economic competence with regard to the emerging NAFTA and EU. China's regionalist approaches were overwhelmingly driven by its fear and worry to be ideologically purged by the West and contained strategically by the US. Now, the vibrant improvement of relations with the most of regional members has greatly gave it an easy breath. Beijing has never been less concerned with the immediate possibility of the US posed "encircling" or "containing" policy for the time being since the end of Cold War.

Conversely, Beijing's method to counterweigh the negative impacts of globalization rests on its "go-out strategy"(zouchuqu zhanlue). The strategy has been vividly manifested by China's global searching for crude oil, raw material and recourses to feed its huge appetite for them. Remarkably improved relations with Asian neighbors are merely part of such "go-out strategy", even relatively smaller part. Now Beijing has achieved a great deal in the implementation of such global covered "go out strategy", and will tirelessly move on with them. Such strategy will, more or less, reduce Beijing's passion and energy to engage in the regional process. How to make the balance between keeping East Asia as solid footprint in the political and economic terms and fulfilling its global reach to recourses would be uneasy job for Beijing. And what regionalization in East Asia implies

its “resources diplomacy” is worth further exploring.

### **Second, ASEAN versus Industrialized powers**

China’s policy of “becoming friends and partners with neighbors”(yulinweishan, yilinweiban) has .prioritize its regional diplomacy on the ASEAN countries since earlier the 90s.<sup>17</sup> It largely depends on its desirability to court ASEAN countries not to favor America’s possible contemplate to contain China and its increasing flexibility to insert itself into nascent multilateral organizations. Of course, Beijing has been greatly encouraged by ASEAN’s pretty positive response since then, and enjoyed its increased maneuverability by launching “charm offense” and displaying Beijing respects and admires ASEAN as a major player in the regional process. As a result, China has played the bigger role in expanding the established venues, such as the ASEAN plus 3 process. Obviously, one of the ingredients for an enhanced China-ASEAN relationship is their increased economic and political entanglements since early the 90s. China-ASEAN relationship has become one of the most successful elements of Chinese diplomacy in recent years, and their relations have produced remarkable improvement. Christopher Hill said, “China’s most dramatic diplomatic, political, and economic gains of the past few years have been in Southeast Asia.”<sup>18</sup>

China-ASEAN FTT is not their profound economic incorporation, but the representation of their robust political partnership. China’s regionalist approaches, by the standard of its political calculation, have leaned obviously towards the ASEAN, its new political ally in the region. China will undoubtedly continue to capitalize on ASEAN political resources to work on its priority in the regional process while seeking for the intimate collaboration with the ASEAN countries. Thus, Beijing will not divert its focus from “ASEAN plus 3” mechanism over to the EAC, an ambiguous and controversial speculation yet. However, the stance will also challenge Beijing’s simultaneously improved relationship with Australia and India. Both of them have strong will to apprehend the EAC institutionalization. In short run, Beijing will continue to take the “ASEAN plus 3” as a leading vehicle to undertake the regional process and will not feel compelled to push for the enlargement strategy. This is not to say that Beijing has not see any imperative to further its ties with Australia, New Zealand and India. But it intends to address their expanded request for better relationship bilaterally rather than multilaterally.

### **Third, interest community versus value community**

Unquestionably Beijing has put its policy priority on interest community building rather than rest on democracy based value community. China believes that the new East Asian regionalism should find its embryonic structure in ASEAN. The sub-regional organization provides a unique way—the Asian Way—to bring all countries of diverse backgrounds and different socio-economic systems—gradually integrated together.<sup>19</sup> East Asian regionalism should also transcends their

---

<sup>17</sup> See “Full Text of Jiang Zeming’s Report at the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress,” Xinhua, November 17, 2002, available at <http://china.org.cn/english/>.

<sup>18</sup> Statement by Christopher R. Hill, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, “Emergence of China in the Asia-Pacific: Economic and Security Consequences for the United States,” Senate Foreign Relations Committee, June 7, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Zhang Yunling, “New Regionalism and East Asian Community Building,” in Zhang Yunling, ed., *Emerging East Asian Regionalism: Trend and Response*, Beijing: World Affairs Press, 2005, p. 9.

diversity and tolerate their probably distinctive qualities in the political, judicial, economic and even cultural terms. Moreover, China has been embarrassed by its political system with “Chinese Characters”. That’s congenial flaw facing the country even if its regional influences expand quickly. So Beijing’s preference is absolutely to put aside their value disputes and entertain overall interests that flock out of their intensified economic links. Along the line, Beijing has been able to make the regionalization to its advantages.

China’s economy is outperforming all regional members. Though Japan still outstrips China in economic terms, its exporting volume to Chinese market has doubted in the past 4 years, and accounts for the biggest share for Japanese economic recovery. China has been less wary of its scarcity of economic and commercial leverages to render its influences regionally. Therefore Beijing equals the advocacy of value community based on shared political liberal democracy, individualistic rights protection to “ideologization”(yihsi xingtai hua), spurring all regional members to go beyond their “political diversity” and respect and preserve “regional pluralism.” In this regard, Beijing wishes that emerging East Asian community identity could conceivably concentrate on “functional interdependence and “institutional identity” without any exceptionalism. Beijing’s political pragmatism genuinely echoes a lot. Almost all ASEAN countries side with China for the “route choice”.<sup>20</sup>

Building interest community rather than value community is the realist core of Beijing’s regionalist approaches. To hold out tactics of building “interest community” without caring too much about the socio-political complexity in the region, Beijing has been apparently more flexible and adaptive to the diversity of FTA partners. Beijing, Tokyo and Washington are pushing different FTA agenda respectively and setting the different timetable to achieve them. Whether regional wide FTA networking could be established remains to be seen. But China has apparently taken a lead in their FTA race. Along with its policy to building an “amicable, tranquil, and prosperous neighborhood”(mulin, anlin, and fulin), its tactical handlings of political, economic and social diversity have worked well in this respect. The complex socio-political processes are usually perceived as the formidable obstacles to impede the holdout to regional cooperation.<sup>21</sup> Now China and ASEAN countries have started off the Action Plan, and they are heading closer to the target of 2010 for China and the original ASEAN six, and 2015 for the others. Activating the China-ASEAN FTA action plan signals Beijing’s determination to go beyond the complexity and reap the comprehensive benefits more than pulling each other closer economically only.

### **Forth, security versus economy**

Despite of Beijing’s strong interest in formulating multilateral security arrangement in the region, in deed, it’s still not highly motivated to bump energy into security regionalism. The Six Party talks has evoked new enthusiasm on regional security cooperation. Many specialists hope that the

---

<sup>20</sup> Simon Tay, “Regionalism and Legalization: Recent Trends and Future Possibilities in East Asia,” Singapore Institute of International Affairs: *Reader*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2004), pp. 20-32.

<sup>21</sup> R. Garnaut and P. Drysdale, *Asia Pacific Regionalism: Readings in International Economic Relations*, London: Harper Educational, 1994; R. Higgott and R. Stubbs, “Competing Concepts of Economic Regionalism: APEC versus EAEC in the Asia-Pacific,” *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1995), pp. 367-379; Glenn D. Hook, “Contested Regionalism,” in I. Cook, M. Doel. And R. Li, eds., *Fragmented Asia: Regional Integration and National Disintegration in Pacific Asia*, Aldershot: Avebury, 1996, pp. 12-28.

Six Party talks may evolve into a regional security organization that can start the process of imposing a multilateral order in the region.<sup>22</sup> Upon the further examination into the regional dynamic, we can easily conclude that it is still premature to pick up security regionalism in East Asia right now. Beijing is highly concerned with any NATO-type organization in the region because it is undoubtedly targeted. The immediate evolution of the Six Party Talks mechanism into some type of concentrated multi-national setting, for example, just equivalently the expansion of negotiated security issue within the framework of multi-national talk, will likely be snubbed by China. Such multilateral security dialogue has existed for years, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and Asian Security Conference in Singapore. Ironically, it has proved that either of them could effectively begin security regionalism in East Asia. Finally, to create some type of all-inclusive multilateral organization in East Asia and imitate European experience to forge a region-wide mechanism, is an attractive idea certainly to China. It is also consistent to Beijing's advocate of "New Security Concept". Unfortunately, no such community of interests currently exists to allow for that type of evolution.<sup>23</sup> Beijing certainly likes to push for security regionalism at East Asia if it favorable to its security concerns. On particular, even burgeoning security regionalism will excuse the US and Japan no reason to spell out the "little NATO" assumption in the Asia-Pacific. But as long as the US takes China as its biggest strategic challenger, Washington will continue to use its strategic power to allow multilateral forums to consolidate and mature as critical cogs in intra-regional development. That strategic approach will not lose ground as China will be hotly spotlighted for a range of issues such as its military expense two digital increase, lack of transparency and missile buildup right across the Taiwan Strait. Beijing, therefore, will not rashly trap itself into the regional security arrange of any forms.

In return, any security regionalism will not even vehemently encumber the US military. It could continually move in the way it chooses, intervening or using force coercion. American military's redeployment based on the new strategic hub-and-spoke design and increased acquisition of the most advanced weaponry in the Asia-Pacific have stiffened Beijing's resolve to update its backward military arsenal in the faster pace to avoid terribly increased gulf between two military. But in long run, Beijing's military development will not genuinely go beyond Taiwan issue when it always emphasizes its determination to prohibit Taiwan from ad jour independence "at any cost". China's military modernization will not stop but by no means overshadow the prospects of security regionalism in East Asia. To fill the vacuum of no multilateral arrangement, Beijing's priority is putting on the bilateral relationship improvement purporting to minimize the numbers of military followers from the region to American hawkish stance against China,<sup>24</sup> while keeping up with the minimalist tactics to hedge against the US.<sup>25</sup>

### **Fifth, regional versus sub-regional**

No body doubts that China's continued desire to foment regional cooperation is key to East Asian

---

<sup>22</sup> Francis Fukuyama, "Re-envisioning Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (January/February 2005);

<sup>23</sup> Michael R. Auslin, "Japan and South Korea: The New East Asian Core," *Obis*, Summer 2005, p. 469.

<sup>24</sup> Australia has drifted slightly towards China in term of its increased hesitation to follow up with the U.S. to militarily intervene into Taiwan Strait. In detailed analysis, please see Purnendra Jain and John Bruni, "Japan, Australia and the United States: Little NATO or Shadow Alliance?" *International Relations of Asia Pacific*, Vol. 4 (2004), pp. 265-283.

<sup>25</sup>

regionalism. Among all the regional members, only China has been fully ready to sketch out for all-out economic regionalization. That posture has taken shape partly for its demographic and geographic quality, and partly for its production capability based exporting market twined with its huge bulk as consuming market. More importantly, Beijing has passionately employed regionalization policy as the stimulus to revitalize its area economies. In that sense, Beijing repeatedly argues that East Asian regionalization should be bolstered by the combination of three kinds of forces: governments, business circle and academia.<sup>26</sup> Now all Chinese border provinces have worked out their own plans, through railway building and subregional cooperation, to create the local access to the region. For example, Yunnan Province at the Southeast part of China declares its big plan to connect it throughout the ASEAN countries by building three inter-state railways in March of 2006. Sub-regional cooperation has been a key part of China's all-round open-up strategy, which Chinese local governments and business society have been highly motivated to take part in.

### **Six, regional membership versus the US**

Beijing's regional approaches did not, and will not be, exclude the US out of the regionalization. It is not because Beijing is ethic enough or more self-restrained, but mainly because the uniqueness of Asian regional politics grants China no chance to pursue it. So far, the regional integration in East Asia has produced much further than meets the eyes. Peter Katzenstein attributes it to the lack of social and political norms that favor informal political and economic networks.<sup>27</sup> Charles A. Kupchan argues that political integration in the region is still at a very low level largely because of tensions and rivalries among East Asia's major states and the extent to which the US remains the main conduit for contact among them.<sup>28</sup> the low level of political integration in the region will not dramatically change in future. The worse ties between China and Japan is a solid case to show how the mistrust among the main player and security reliance on the US will barely melt down. Beijing resolvedly grapples with Japan on disputable Yasukuni Shrine visit steadily signals Beijing's delusion to seek political rapprochement with Tokyo to underline their political and economic integration. As a result, Beijing will not seek to exclude the US from the regionalization, whatever it is, FTA networking or the EAC. Beijing has been fully aware of the fact that any exclusion attempt would complicate regional politics and in return, damage its own national interests to keep on stable and healthy ties with Washington. Beijing

However, Beijing and Tokyo urgently seek their intensified financial cooperation to prevent the financial storms which might be made by the US. China now is opening eyes as widely as possible to prevent falling into the footstep Japan strolled out when it decided to revalue yen sharply in the middle of the 80s. Chinese Prime Wen Jiabao publicly proclaimed that "China will not become the victim of proposed American economic and financial restructuring."<sup>29</sup> Japan and China had an

---

<sup>26</sup> As for such three propellers stipulations, please Ambassador Wu Jianming's Interviews by the Peoples Daily report on November 24, 20005. "*Fazhan Dongya Jingjihezuo Xuyao Sanguanqixia*,"(Developing East Asian regional cooperation hangs on three forces), Peoples' Daily, November 28, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Katzenstein, "Introduction," in Peter Katzenstein and Takashi Shiraishi, eds., *Network Power: Japan and Asia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997, pp. 1-44.

<sup>28</sup> Charles A. Kupchan, "After Pax Americana: Benign Power, Regional Integration, and the Sources of a Stable Multipolarity," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Fall 1998), p. 63, footnote 61.

<sup>29</sup> *The Peoples' Daily*, March 20, 2006.

excellent dialogue at the financial ministerial level in March of 2006. Japan dispatched almost all high ranking financial officials to talk with Chinese counterparts on a range of issues. Two months later, financial ministers from “ASEAN plus 3” agreed to examine the usefulness of creating regional currency units, the Regional Monetary Units (RMU), as one their channels to deepen economic integration in the region.<sup>30</sup> Beijing and Tokyo now have great imperative to stand on the same front to defend them from the US posed financial and economic damage. At least, they want issue-related steady unity to press for America’s less assertiveness in the financial and economic aspects.

The dynamics of regionalism in the region have evolved greatly in the past decade. The expectation to the APEC presumably breaks off while the FTA arrangements in the region take the overall shape of regionalization in the medium run. PRC’s regional activism, in the terms of its scope and nature, is generating its new momentum to reinvigorate FTA move with the member states. By holding high its flag of the “friendly neighbors policy” (*muling zhengce*), Beijing created vibrantly improved political ties to underscore closer relationship. By displaying its eyebrow-raised economic capacity, China has developed considerably solid economic linkages with its neighboring countries, which have profound implications for Chinese foreign policy in the region over the coming decades. At the same time, The PRC has been bent on its expanded regional influences, by using the “economic diplomacy”, to increase its room to maneuver about a range of thorny issues like Taiwan, Hong Kong and the touchy ties with the United States and Japan. Obviously, Beijing’s allegiance to regional stability and prosperity will continue and its proactive role as creditably expected. Otherwise, Beijing’s ability to alleviate accumulated problems with its biggest competitor—the US and Japan—will not be assured. But the problem remains intact how far the PRC could engine East Asia regionalization with all regional members on the drive of “win-win” establishment while the growing nationalist thoughts in individualistic countries would not fatally hamper their regionalization defined cooperation. It’s still a formidable test for China and the others in the region as well.

### **China’s Nationalism and its output to its regionalist approach**

China’s rise has been accompanied by a rise of nationalism among its population. Marriage of nationalistic emotions with national ascent is spontaneous. It frequently happened in the world politics. The sense of national pride, highly mobilized national identity and awakened memories to historical glories usually cause the outburst of nationalism. The Rise of Chinese nationalism is remarkably boosted by such components and combines something peculiar to its history. It is the “victim narratives” which largely emanate from its historic suffering and frustration in the imperialist era. It now constitutes a “legitimate grievance” which influences China’s foreign policy making.<sup>31</sup> Considering its historic turmoil incited with extremist nationalism from time to time, Chinese emotional nationalism deserves special attention.

---

<sup>30</sup> “East Asians to Study Regional Currency,” *The Japan Times*, May 5, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Gries, *China’s New Nationalism*, Berkeley: University of Berkeley Press, 1994, pp. 124.

But it is also huge mistake to keep China's nationalism to blame as a impediment to East Asian regionalization. <sup>32</sup>Whatever the description and prescription of China's nationalism are, Beijing has no intention to address the region building in East Asia as a contested socio-political process generating competitive attempts to construct regional and sub-regional identities. Holding on that, Beijing's attitude on nationalism is much complicated: it needs growing nationalism as the glue to add to internal cohesion and increase its ruling legitimate; On the other hand, it is also nervously aware of adverse consequences of unchecked nationalism. Due to a variety of social stress in China, nationalistic sentiments would easily turn to all-levels of governments. Beijing has sought to stay away from any backfire of growing nationalism. It's not an easy job. Sometimes, Beijing finds it moving like even walking on the rope. As a whole, nationalism in China now is pragmatic one: turbulent but controlled. Chinese government is more responsive to public opinions while preventing nationalism from getting out of hand thus far by maintaining their authoritarian power.

33

Nationalistic influence to China's regionalist approaches is mixed. Most of Chinese love to see Beijing's central role in the regional affairs, and favor its proactive diplomacy to increase Chinese regional appeal. But it does not mean that they still dream of sino-centric regional order, which once dominated the region for 2000 years. The likeness of historic tributary system has already gave way to their new regional enthusiasm to jointly live in peace. Neighboring countries are all the tourist attraction for them to travel on. They usually feel very fantastic when they find much of Chinese cultural engravings through history. China-Japan relations are getting worse. On contrary, Japan ranks No. 2, only behind the United States, among all the tourist states that are open for Chinese tourists. A polling shows that culturally similar countries are the places they like to visit most. It is not simply because such cultural hybrid will facilitate their tour, but largely because historic cultural engravings in a foreign country will easily work out the similar identity and the intimate feelings even though they still feel foreign. Actually, in order to attack more Chinese tourists, almost all ASEAN countries and Korea have made very quick and necessary adjustment to the re-emergence of China. In return, Chinese also love to learn languages and cultures differently from them in the region. Now goods and cultural products from Korea and Japan are almost everywhere in China: Korean, Tai, Malaysian and Japanese food, Japanese and Korean movie and TV show CD, Korea and Japan made make-up series, Philippine fruits, Korean and Japanese cartoons. Societal contacts between China and region have significantly bridge them in the way they are not foreign any more. Nationalism in China has yet to specify Beijing's initiations in the region.

If China's huge sufferings and humiliation posed by the West is routinely counted as the main source of its growing nationalism, its regional identity building now is curbing such negative thoughts. Beijing's entry into the WTO once triggered hot debate about its cost/benefit weighing. On the contrary to some domestic opposition to its entry as costly and premature one, almost

---

<sup>32</sup> Gilbert Rozman, *Northeast Asia's stunted Reigoalism: Bilateral Distrust in the Shadow of Globalization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Baogang He, "East Asian Ideas of Regionalism: A Normative Critique," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 1, 2004, pp. 105-25.

<sup>33</sup> Suisheng Zhao, "China's Pragmatic Nationalism: Is it Manageable?" *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Winter 2005-06), pp. 131-144.

nobody was skeptical to its passionate decision to reach FTA with the ASEAN. In the latter case, Beijing actually made grave concession about free-duty entry of ASEAN agricultural products into China. Compared to the border re-demarcation negotiations with Russia, the ones with Vietnam provoked little of opposition from Chinese public. Obviously, the regional identity which is forming in China helps promoting its sense of national pride and meanwhile, urging Chinese to become a force for peace and common prosperity rather than an avaricious bully. For most of Chinese, such a benign and principled actor could be warmly welcomed and happily acceptable. Two reasons account: one is that there is no historic hatred between China and its neighbors except for Japan. The other is that traditional Chinese ethics code applies that the strong bullying the weak is a intolerable shame. China's war behavior against its neighbors in history eventually does not hurt their present relations enormously. As Bruce Cumings points out, "China is different: its history has been singular, confining its expansion to its near reaches and constraining its choice of means. When China has used force since 1949, it has done so only within its historic region, and, more often than not, judiciously and effectively."<sup>34</sup>

China's regionalist approaches are unlikely to be an economic nationalism. If so, its all-out engagement policy to Asia will gradually but constructively inject new inspiring contents into the country's regional thinking. The result would be astonishing.

Economic nationalism, by its nature of protectionism and bloc competition, easily results in xenophobic feeling and self-conserved economic egoism. Thus it frequently provokes the escalation of regional conflicts.<sup>35</sup> But now, China is desperately using its geographically centered location to reach out to all neighbors in East Asia to channel its commodities out. Market-driven openness, both internal and external, is rewriting its ties with neighbors, and making Chinese well connected to its neighbors institutionally and culturally. If you visit the border areas in Yunnan and Guangxi, the border infiltration are quite massive and border trading is also much booming. Mandarin speaking could be also unstoppably heard. Tai government has asked Mandarin learning as secondary school course in the country. The growing popularity of Mandarin learning in the region is not only the sign of China's escalated importance economically and politically, but also the signal of its growing "soft power". Now "soft power", which now is a key word to catch the eyeballs of Chinese elites. There is the bitter debate on what Chinese soft power could be brewed up and sought? In the sharp contrast to the US and Japan, China can't export liberal democracy, individual liberty and legalism. But China could be widely admirable for its faithfulness, respectfulness, credibility, evaluation of friendship and modest. China now is preparing "the rise discourse", at the heart of which, is liberal version of "partnership". The Chinese literature on "partnership" and "great power diplomacy" is trying to define China's identity in both domestic and an international context.<sup>36</sup>

Alluding to their regional identity, Beijing has been constructing a variety of "partnership" distinct relationship with its Asian neighbors. Chinese people are all following quickly. The identity puzzle,

---

<sup>34</sup> Bruce Cumings, "The Political Economy of China's Turn Outward," in Samuel Kim, ed., *China and the World: New Directions in Chinese Foreign Relations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Boulder: Westview Press, pp. 206-07.

<sup>35</sup> Alison M. S. Watson, *An Introduction to International Economy*, London: Continuum, 2004, pp. 74-88.

<sup>36</sup> Chin-Yu Shin, "Breeding a Reluctant Dragon: Can China Rise into Partnership and away from Antagonism?" *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2005), pp. 755-774.

previously derived from clear-cut line between “*zhonguoren*” (Chinese) and “*waiguoren*” (foreigners), dramatically evolving into the notion of “*zijiren*”(our fellows). It is pretty productive way thus for Chinese to resolve “representation problem”. Quite a few of Chinese nationalists ask for the economic protectionism despite some of them denounces market driven economic reform and wishfully think of China as the European modeled welfare country. There is no contradiction between China’s developmental system and its full integration into the world economy unless someone in China is intentionally insensitive to its economic achievements. Of course, some anti-Japanese bloggers fans the view like boycotting Japan-made goods. But they echo little. Such Chinese *Fenqing* <sup>37</sup> are not fanatical bigots to object reform and opening-up. It is widely and firmly shared consensus in domestic China that opening-up and speedy economic integration are only the way better-off life could be led. Chinese government campaigned against copyright piracy prior to President Hu Jintao’s visit to the US. Many piracy CD and software shops were forced to close and the crowds of street peddlers are outlawed. The campaign violated many young users of copyrights piracy products. Notwithstanding that, it did not detonate any online war against the government. Only 18% of online respondents, according to an revealed polling by the Beijing Youth Daily, express their unhappiness about tougher fight against piracy products while near 72% respondents said that selling piracy products is misdeed. <sup>38</sup>

Nonetheless, Chinese nationalism seldom blasts Beijing’s relationship with most of Asian neighbors. The tragedy of many Chinese Indonesians being group raped, robbed and tortured in Indonesia’s domestic chaos in 1998 infuriated many Chinese. They furiously interrogated Beijing why not respond rigidly and forcefully. Some people even blatantly asked Chinese government to dispatch warships to salvage those suffered Chinese Indonesians. Rebuked as a obdurate person, former Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan was declared as “a sinful man” of all Chinese. However, such furry irritated by the event did not survive longer. Up to the present, almost nobody would tell you that they hate Indonesian government simply due to 1998 massive brutal persecution of Chinese ethnic group in that country. It’s a fully cured scar in their ASEAN consciousness.

Another case we can have at hand is *Goguryeo* (*Gaogouli*, in Chinese) issue between China and S. Korea in 2004. A group of Chinese historians unleashed their research outcome and asserted that ancient *Goguryeo* dynasty in the Northeast part of China was Chinese local government. Later, Chinese Foreign Ministry website adopted that research outcome. It unsurprisingly angered Koreans because they take that *Goguryeo* dynasty as their venerable ancestors so long. Consequently Beijing sent a high-ranking official Mr. Jia Qinglin to Seoul to alleviate Korean anger and apologized publicly. The event is a timely warning reminder to Chinese that any conceited and careless conclusion, even in the scholarly forms, about across-people/across-border interactions in history, will substantially hinder the friendly ties with its neighboring countries. Probably that event is a unpleasing episode between Beijing and Seoul. But its negative influence to Koreans deserves Chinese sobering consideration. Of course, it is a manifesto that prevailing nationalism in the region is precariously disturbing element in the regionalization in East Asia. Actually people-to-people networks do not lack shared traditional culture at all, but do lack shared

---

<sup>37</sup> A specific term in Chinese especially for those who like to whip almost everything out and always complain.

<sup>38</sup> “*Daji Daoban Renren Youze*,” (Fighting copyright piracy is everyone’s duty”, The Beijing Youth Daily, April 10, 2006.

institutions, and lack shared community sense centered around the norms.

Moderating effects of China's regional approaches to its nationalism would continue in the days to come. They have great potential, as have exhibited already, to convert Chinese ambivalently pragmatic nationalism into liberal nationalism. The drive is notably nested with China traditional national psychology. Usually Chinese dares to challenge the stronger and has no strong willingness to subscribe to the stronger. Meanwhile, its attitude towards the weaker tends to be tender and flexible. But the traditional philosophy of their behaviors about social collectivity and social harmony through covering and at least hiding strong individualistic characters will continue.<sup>39</sup> It will likely increase their "lineup identity", and accordingly, dilute their possible conceitedness as the stronger and confine the artificially swelled hierarchic prestige. The history is a persuasive experiment to indicate the link between such Chinese national personality and its impetus to its foreign behaviors. As David Kang points out, "historically, Chinese weakness has led to chaos in Asia. When China is strong and stable, order has been preserved. The picture of Asia that emerges is one in which China, by virtue of geography and power, is the central player in Asia. And as China's economy continues to develop, it is increasingly a major economic and financial power, as well. In response, Asian nations will adjust to China."<sup>40</sup>

### **China-Japan relationship: only exceptional case for Beijing?**

Beijing's accommodation efforts to its Asian neighbors goes successful but with the exception of Japan. Tensions between two countries regularly flare up over Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine, where, among fallen soldiers of other wars, 1,068 Japanese war criminals of World War Two, including 13 Class A war criminals, are enshrined. Exacerbated China-Japan relations substantively fuel nationalistic sentiments respectively in the two countries. Japanese people mostly oppose the Shrine visit by their prime minister, but favors Mr. Koizumi for its visit as the symbolism of not conducting bow-down diplomacy to China. In contrast, Chinese people fully support their government not to compromise towards Japanese rude and relentless policy against China's justifiable quest to stop visit. Tragically, the historic problem endlessly serves as ammunitions to China's nationalist super-cannon if it is.

In deed, great power rivalry which marks Beijing-Tokyo relationship matters much about China's growing nationalism. But China's growing nationalistic feeling against Japan is reactive in nature, and notably incited by the Japanese rightwing politician's rhetoric to distort the invasion war and war damages to Asian countries. It is inevitably overshadowing regional process in general and disrupting its should-be moving forward in particular. Most of Chinese believe that Japan is not honestly confronting its invasion history and deliberately whitewashing its war atrocity and that a vestige of militarism persists. China's anti Japan sentiments blasted out strikingly when hundreds and thousands of street protesters marched in Beijing, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Shengyang in April of 2005. It peaked tense relations between Beijing and Tokyo in the past years. Japanese prime minister Koizumi's crude refusal of China's demand to stop Yasukuni Shrine visit outrages Chinese and Chinese government. Accordingly it also fuels China's long simmering

---

<sup>39</sup> For more discussion of Chinese collectivity as liberal identity, please see Lin Yu-Sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Antitraditionalism in the May Fourth Era*, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1979.

<sup>40</sup> David C. Kang, "Hierarchy and Stability in Asian International Relations," p. 183.

complaint against Japan. Nothing could march Japan and Taiwan issues to inflame Chinese nationalism. Rightwing Japanese politicians distort their war criminal publicly and even deny that Japanese forces committed atrocities during the wartime. Their public rhetoric heightens Chinese suspicions and ignites Chinese anti-Japanese sentiments. For example, Tokyo Mayor Yishihara publicly called for a war preparation against China over their disputable water area. He even publicly humiliated Chinese by the reference of Chinese as “*shina*”, a previous usage popular among Japanese during its invasion into Chinese territory in the 30s and 40s. Such inflammatory remarks, which were ushered by one of most popular politicians in Japan, eventually stoke their repellent feelings, poison the climate where economic interdependence is going, and horribly push the two peoples in the opposite direction.

A number of factors could be figured out to explain why Beijing and Tokyo turn their back to each other. Generally Japan’s sense of superiority toward the rest of Asia is unchanged. For long, Japanese diplomacy has been its tendency to view its international relations through the prism of its domestic emphasis on status and hierarchy. Although they have experienced tutelage in democratic values, the Japanese people have never achieved a democratic revolution.<sup>41</sup> This drive for status, as a source of national cohesion and purpose, has often handicapped their relations with other Asian countries. On particular, Japan’s stunningly pervasive perceptions of China Threat almost penetrates all corners of Japanese society, and have led the country to maliciously corresponding to a rising China. Japanese elites firmly believe that, as China’s economic power grows, its use of all of the instruments of national power: economic, diplomatic and military, to advance Chinese national interests in East Asia. It will dramatically pull off Japan’s traditionally dominant position in the region and even deadly damage Japanese national interests by controlling the vital sea-lanes which link Japan to resources provision bases and overseas marketing places.

China-Japan rivalry powerfully demonstrates that it’s national security concerns rather than economic concerns that drive the behaviors of states. Escalating tension between China and Japan ultimately animates from their power struggle. Power shifting in the region and competing nature of security concerns inflict East Asian regionalism a plentiful of formidable challenges as it has not ever encountered in the 90s. For example, Japan’s FTA initiation was perceived as a pressure-reduction campaign simply targeting China in a race for who will be the regional leader. Tokyo has no reason to see its lagging-behind China. The Bush Administration now is searching for negotiating with S. Korea, part of ASEAN countries on bilateral FTA, but at the end, the US might be anti-regionalist in East Asia. After entering the 21 Century, the complexity of regional process in East Asia has been widening, and the hardness to carry on the regionalization does not decline in deed.

The dynamic of regional cooperation not only significantly moderated its growing nationalism, but also created new spatial level to underscore its identity reorientation which primitively pertains to the positive, productive and confident contents rather than deepened mindset of historic sufferings that usually called “its Century of Shame”. It is even at the case of China-Japan

---

<sup>41</sup> Kenneth Pyle, “Restructuring Foreign and Defense Policy: Japan,” in Anthony McGrew and Christopher Brook, eds., *Asia-Pacific in the New World Order*, London: Routledge, 1999, p. 123.

relationship. Hence, regionalization in East Asia, albeit for its uneven move, has got to serve as a “invisible hand” to sculpt Beijing’s regional image and normalize its nationalistic sentiments constructively. But it is still too early to say that the liberal mechanism of pace-making economic entanglement, derived from regional economic dynamics, has worked well and decisively changed the security outlook of the region. Conversely, the rivaling ties will negate on economic incentives and revile their political will to intensify their regional cooperation. As far as China and Japan can’t sort out the way to substantiate their crisis management measures over conflicting territorial claim over Sansaku island, disputable gas drilling in the East China Sea and Japanese pro-Taiwan policy, exacerbated confrontation between the two countries will tragically damage the ongoing regional process.

### **Conclusion**

Regionalism, one of many beneficiary aspects of the international system, supports Beijing’s interests genuinely. China stands poised to become a leading and increasingly ascending economy in the region and in the world as well. Basically it hasn’t, and is not going to, respond in the confrontationally nationalist way. Conversely, the deeper engagement into the regional progress has moderated its growing nationalism. Broadened regional engagement has added much to China’s confidence, and Beijing got positively reward by earning itself the prestige, secure sense and new driving force to its local economy. However, Beijing’s status in East Asia has not been thoroughly stiffened. Given growing power relations rivalry with Japan and America’s unshakable superiority in the Asia Pacific, it’s more likely that China will seek to play a bigger role rather than a leading role. In that way, Beijing will continue to enjoy a variety of rewarding while less wary to be targeted.

Beijing’s regionalist approaches do not ambitiously target presumable regional leadership. Actually, the volatility of its relations with the US and Japan will not disappear over night. Taiwan issue, disputable territorial issues and its unstable domestic situations are daunting ones and will predominantly restraint its capability to lead the regionalization in East Asian in the way it desires. On particular, growing nationalistic sentiments would dangerously backfire the CCP’s government in future. Shrunk regional engagement will certainly produce new national resentment and in return fuel its unnerving nationalism. That is what China can afford. With the essential points of its regional approaches on sound tack, Beijing will likely maintain them in momentum. For example, Beijing has prevented Taiwan from its access to the regional process. If the Pan Blue in the island would win out in the 2008 election, Beijing will seriously take into accounted the possibility to keep regionalization open to Taiwan. In that sense, Beijing will increase the means to affect Taiwan’s future, and also obtain stronger influence. Securing the stability of Taiwan Strait by sinking the two sides into East Asian regionalization would be a productive alternation if both sides could bravely strode that way. But it requires the modesty and intellectual anxiety. We have reasons to believe in that as closer economic integration happening in the past decade has significantly decreased the possibility of outbreak of war. Thus Beijing has feel more confident to properly and firmly address its interests, meanwhile, with little worry to risk wearing out constructive cooperation with the US and Japan. Such externally profitable environment will notably increase the opportunity for China to carry on liberal democratization, and push the

“interest community” building over to “value community” building.

Probably China-Japan relationship would be destined to be touchy. But contrary to that, Beijing strongly feels great incentive to improve relations with Japan. It's not that nationalism matters, but the interests matter. That decides Beijing's fundamentally realist way to deal with Japan. Thus the ups and downs relationship between Tokyo and Beijing is much likely to lie ahead. China will not keep hammering Japan with the historic problem if Tokyo could show flexibility to control its equally swelling nationalism. Instead, economic incentives to keep two sides closer will play out. But there is no way that the two countries would get closer strategically simply because Japan will not low its alert to a rising China. It will be long-term element to test China's nationalism. In that way, China's historic grievance would give way to its great power discourse and Beijing probably would stress its power competition at the regional level with Japan. That would be more dangerous than historic humiliation driven nationalism.

The domination of Chinese nationalist discourse actually is not the genuine guideline for its regionalist approaches, but the reliable source for Beijing to consolidate its power base domestically. Regionalization helps Beijing building nation-state, and helps building its national confidence. Albeit from the weak position comparable to the strong ones the US and Japan take on, Beijing finds out, for the first time, it possible to softly balance the stronger players. At least, through economically closer integration into the regionalization, Beijing has been now drastically less aware of being encircled and even contained by the US. America's failure to contain China as it did against former Soviet Union is the robust improvement of Beijing's strategic surroundings. This is to say that China's engagement policy to Asian neighbors and their positive response, have evolved into its most credible security guarantor. There is no reason that Beijing will downplay East Asian regionalism and instead have a switch tactic.

The puzzling plight facing China is its lack of credential to set the regionalization constantly in motion unless China and Japan could wear out of their confrontations ranging widely from the Yasukuni visit, historic textbook, conflicting territorial claims, East China Sea gas drilling and repellent nationalistic sentiments to each other. September of 2006 would witness the government change. New Japanese prime minister will stop notorious Yasukuni Shrine homage paying and instead help break the impasse between Tokyo and Beijing? Answers remain unclear. Whatever is happening, China and Japan will take the Chiang Mai Initiative more seriously after the functional negotiation at the ministerial level has had breakthrough in 2006. Beijing will also continue down the road after Hu's visit left President Bush with “empty hand” and Chinese Yuan's revalue will be a leading concern on the American side. China-the US Yuan dispute frayed bilateral ties between Washington and Beijing, but its continuation would spur Tokyo and Beijing to vigorously map out the Chiang Mai Initiative. Though in short run, regionalization would not definitely be the equation of stability. In long run, it would be conducive to regional cooperation and develop the regional norms to underpin their cooperation. China's regional activism will certainly entertain its new job as norm setting and norm promoting. Probably it is still too early to carry on that. However, with the ASEAN-China FTA in full play, Beijing will inevitably shoulder the task to implant the regional norms into those underdeveloped ASEAN members. Unless China run into insurmountable domestic hardship, it will slowly but firmly recognize the feasibility of norms

cultivation of all regional members. Presently, its way to address regional identity building is to develop on your own but not with huge contradiction. Beijing's mindset would change drastically over time because one day, sooner or later, it would find China is not free ride any more, but a driver in all the sense.

At the end, it is totally unfair to assume whether Beijing would be "responsible stakeholder" rests with China alone. Along with China's sophistication of its regionalist approaches, and its reasonable shape of nationalistic sentiments, policy outcomes of other regional members and, most importantly, the United States, will greatly affect Beijing's regional activism. Judging from Beijing's basic components of regionalist approaches and its moderating effects to the growing nationalism, we can barely conclude that Beijing's activism would bid for its leadership so that it wants to preserve the regional order in its own self-perceived way. Instead, the regional dynamic would persistently keep Beijing taking an increasingly important but not dominant role. That comports to Beijing's interests at the best. No matter how China moves productively or counterproductively, its influence to the future of region is resting largely on how it could be responded, albeit with its hardly shakable persistence on the regional cooperation. There is little evidence yet that Beijing will not hang its future on East Asian regionalization, which has tarnished its image, convinced its international responsibilities, and most significantly, make it feel more confident and more insecure when confronting the United States.