



Translation from Japanese

Opening statement by
former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone
Chairman, Institute for International Policy Studies
at the press conference on April 23, 2008
on the occasion of publishing the recommendation paper entitled:

“A New Chapter in Japan–China Relations”

April 23, 2008
Institute for International Policy Studies

The following is the text of the message expressed by IIPS Chairman Nakasone:

The Institute for International Policy Studies (IIPS) has completed the recommendation paper on the occasion of the upcoming visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao scheduled in early May. We chose this theme because I recognize that the Japan–China relationship is now entering a new era and that it is of extreme importance how Japan and China face each other at this opportunity when they seek co-existence and Asian regional order.

China’s policy changes towards Japan have played a major role in enabling Japan–China relations to face the new age. The driving force for the change is not only China’s interests, but that the regional and international situation has been strongly seeking its structural change. It goes without saying that Japan has hoped heartily that the relationship advance to one stage higher than before.

The paper calls such relations “A Broadly Perceived and Amicable Major Power Relationship.” I think it is necessary that the two sides recognize each other as an influential major power and take responsible actions, and that both countries build mature relations and cooperate for Asia by perceiving the relationship broadly.

The recommendations raised eight (8) basic principles important for developing Japan-China relations. Here I will briefly explain a few points.

The first point is that Japan and China must build “a relationship in which they can frankly say with courtesy to one another what needs to be said.” Given that the world, including Asia, has entered a new era, Japan–China relations also need to change. Up until now, Japan has tried to guard against a backlash over the history issue by refraining from saying much about itself, which has rather brought about misunderstandings and conflicts. A healthy diplomatic relationship is now required in which the two nations can assert views frankly and thereby find common ground.

Related to this, it is important for both sides to resolve conflicts, should any arise, peacefully based on international law and justice. The recommendations points out that the looming energy development problem in the East China Sea is such an example.

The second point is related to history. As I said previously, the main reason Japan–China relations entered a new era is that the age is seeking a change, but the leadership of China’s present administration also took an important role. Especially important is China’s new posture to overcome the history issue with joint efforts of both countries from a broad perspective. Japan should highly evaluate China’s effort to change the policy towards Japan and watch it carefully.

As the subtitle states, “towards co-existence and co-development that overcomes history,” both sides should take measures with two-way efforts to overcome history. More broadly speaking, the efforts of both sides to enhance mutual understanding are considerably insufficient partly due to the long-standing ill feelings coming from history and, with this recognition, the leaders of both countries must take a long-range view and work towards sweeping improvements in mutual understanding. To this end, we recommend both sides to take concrete measures in the important fields such as strengthening personnel exchanges as well as cultural and academic exchanges. Above all, history and education are so crucial that appropriate measures in these fields should be taken by both sides. In this sense, the example of the reconciliation process between Germany and France can be useful for reference.

Third, one of the key words in these recommendations is Asia. I think the time has come for Japan and China take responsible actions for building a regional order from a broad perspective. This is the first time in history both countries have an opportunity of jointly working for the regional order. In this sense, I realize the relationship is becoming “public goods” for Asia and, by extension, for the world. Like the relationship between Germany and France, we have a chance to become a linchpin for peace and prosperity in Asia. The hope that this relationship would mature has been growing among Asian nations including ASEAN countries in particular. It can be anticipated that—just as with the Franco–German relationship—progress on multilateral cooperation will lead the two sides to overcome the past. Related to this, I would like to emphasize the importance of the US cooperation in this region.

Fourth, the importance of the cooperation of the three Northeast Asian nations Japan, China, and South Korea should be emphasized even in the context of Japan–China relations. The progress of Japan–South Korea relations and that of South Korea–China relations will help enhance Japan–China relations. Cooperation by the three nations might help overcome the history issue. It is also important to the problem of North Korea. After the resolution of the abduction issue and abandonment of nuclear weapons, the Six-Party Talks should be examined to be enlarged into a framework for cooperation on security in Northeast Asia. This new framework must serve as a regional safety valve that complements existing security mechanisms in the shape of the Japan–US alliance and the US–Korea alliance.

Fifth and last is the military issue of China. We are asking China to enhance military transparency in the recommendations. It is, above all, important to avoid occurrence of any unexpected military conflicts and enhance a sense of reassurance with the united efforts of the entire Asian region. For this purpose, we recommend the establishment of an effective regional security cooperation framework. Japan and China are neighbors with a strong mutual dependency who still live constantly with the seeds of conflict. Therefore, both countries should put into place mechanisms to prevent military conflicts that may spring from unforeseen events.