Mutual Othering and Sino-Japanese Nationalism:

Perceptions, Themes and Implications on Bilateral Relations

Phoenix Cai | 300032520
Supervisor: Professor Roland Paris

Graduate School of Public and International Affairs
University of Ottawa
March 18, 2020

Abstract

The relationship between Japan and China is important yet fragile, often plagued by unresolved historical and territorial controversies. Adopting a Constructive approach, this essay argues that current bilateral tensions should be understood in the context of a broader process of national identity building in both countries. Specifically, China and Japan play a prominent role as the 'Other' in shaping each other's identity during three key historical periods - the initial period of modernization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Cold War, and the contemporary era since the 1990s. Bilateral interactions in these crucial times of change create long-lasting themes, which in turn shape perceptions, identities and future relations.

In addition to a historical analysis of bilateral interactions, the essay also examines how today's information technology and advanced capitalism reinforce the pre-existing perceptions and themes, and consequently further complicate the management of Sino-Japanese relationship.

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Introduction

The bilateral relationship between China and Japan is one of the most important in today's Asia-Pacific. As the world's second and third largest economies, both countries play a crucial role in regional development and prosperity. Through business networks, infrastructure projects and foreign aid, they are also capable of exerting global influence. Although bilateral trade is among the most dynamic in the world, totalling approximately $328 billion USD in 2018 [1], the overall relationship itself is less than stable and irritant-free. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1972, Sino-Japanese relations have been plagued by a series of controversies. Most recently in 2012, anti-Japanese protests broke out in several Chinese cities in response to the Japanese government's decision to nationalize some of the Senkaku/ Diaoyu islands. Angry protestors destroyed Japanese shops and products, while activists from both sides attempted to land on the disputed islands, leading to clashes with coast guard vessels. Other thorny problems, such as Japan's official visits to Yasukuni Shrine and related issues of 'historical recognition', remain unresolved and resurface from time to time to disrupt bilateral trade and diplomatic relations.

In order to understand this important yet fragile relationship, one needs to examine the origins of Sino-Japanese nationalism. Observers often broadly mention the 'historical issues' as the cause of nationalistic sentiments, or refer to the East Asian theatre of World War II (or the Second Sino-Japanese War) as the main source of bilateral disagreement. Besides that, shocked by irrational Chinese protests and the emotionally-charged language of the communist regime,

[1] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 外交部. "Zhongguo tong riben de guanxi 中国同日本的关系" [China's Relations with Japan]. Last modified May, 2019. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676836/sbgx_676840/

many observers tend to view bilateral disputes as largely triggered by the Chinese government's strategic calculations. In the meantime, Japan is perceived to be passively reacting, instead of as an independent and active source of nationalism itself. Such views on the nature of Sino-Japanese tensions, although not entirely inaccurate, are often over-simplistic and not informed by a more thorough study of the roots of bilateral controversies.

This essay argues that current bilateral tensions should be understood in the context of a broader process of national identity building in both countries. Specifically, China and Japan play a prominent role as the 'Other' in shaping each other's identity during three key historical periods. Bilateral interactions in these crucial times of change produce long-lasting themes, which in turn shape perceptions, identities and future interactions. For Japan, the theme of 'civilization versus barbarism' constantly emerges in its understanding of the Japanese 'Self' and the Chinese 'Other'. On the other hand, China adopts the 'victimhood-perpetrator hood' narrative when perceiving its relationship with Japan. These themes remain present in Sino-Japanese interactions today, albeit with a modern twist, and continue to fuel nationalism on both sides.

What does it mean for their future bilateral relations? This essay argues that these themes, which are deeply embedded in the two countries' national identities, are further reinforced by modern consumerism and information technology. It has become easier, faster and more attractive for citizens to connect themselves and the political events of the day with these repeating themes. The growing significance of popular opinion also has an impact on traditional decision-making mechanisms. With a greater variety of players and factors to take into account, the management of Sino-Japanese relations is now a more complex and delicate matter that

requires political sensitivity and diplomatic sophistication. In this regard, today's market prosperity and technological advancements have a more ambiguous impact on Sino-Japanese relations. Instead of creating stronger ties due to economic interdependence and information accessibility, they may result in the strengthening of nationalism and a more unpredictable future for China and Japan.

Theoretical Framework

By providing an analysis on identities, perceptions and symbols, this paper adopts a Constructivist approach to understanding Sino-Japanese relations. Compared to international relations theories such as Realism and Liberalism, the Constructivist school is characterized by its emphasis on social interactions between state actors with varied identities and interests. In general, scholars in this field understand the structure of international politics in primarily ideational and social, rather than material, terms.[2] Instead of the 'fixed', 'unitary' and 'essence-like', Constructivism focuses on the 'constructed', 'interactive' and 'process-like', in Yosef Lapid's words.[3] Consistent with some of the theoretical fundamentals widely shared by Constructivist scholars, this essay is based on the following assumptions:

Firstly, China and Japan are social actors with their unique identities and interests. They are not merely driven by objective, pre-determined and material interests. Rather, their behaviours can be motivated by how they perceive themselves and what is in their best interest. These identities and interests are constantly evolving, or, in Cox and Lyddon's terms, always in a

[2] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 29-33; Martha Finnemore, *National Interests In International Society* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 6-7; On the variants and common themes of Constructivism, see Hoyoon Jung, "The Evolution of Social Constructivism in Political Science: Past to Present," *SAGE Open* 9.1 (2019).
[3] Yosef Lapid, "Culture's Ship: Returns and Departures in IR Theory", in *The Return of Culture and Identity*, ed. Lapid and Kratochwil, 3-20.

'process of becoming'.[4] They are a variable that depends on historical and cultural context, and are shaped by environmental pressures.[5]

Secondly, identities and interests are formed through social interactions between the 'Self' and the 'Other'. Through 'Othering', or differentiating one's perceived identities and interests from those of an alien entity, social actors develop and adjust their understanding of the political reality and their best course of action. As described by Campbell, identity is constituted in relation to difference, which is in turn constituted by identity.[6] There is no identity, therefore, without the 'inscription of boundaries' between the 'inside' and the 'outside', the 'domestic' and the 'foreign'.[7] The process of 'Othering' is thus a crucial part of ongoing identity construction in China and Japan.

Consequently, policy options are shaped by these constructed notions. For social actors including the nation states, choices are constrained by 'the webs of understanding of the practices, identities, and interests of other actors that prevail in particular historical contexts'.[8] Therefore, Chinese and Japanese behaviours and foreign policy decisions are a product of this interactive process of identity building.

Essay Structure

This essay seeks to provide a different perspective on Sino-Japanese relations, by offering a detailed study on the interactive process of national identity building in both countries,

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[4] Linda M. Cox and William J. Lyddon, "Constructivist Conceptions of Self: A Discussion of Emerging Identity Constructs", *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 10:3 (1997), 204.
[5] Ibid., 208.
[6] David Campbell, *Writing Security : United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 352.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory" International Security 23, no.1 (1998), 177.

particularly at three key historical turning points. Through the following chapters, the essay attempts to address three questions: What exactly are the 'historical issues' that have plagued Sino-Japanese relations? Why are they important to China and Japan in today's world? How will they affect the future of bilateral relationship?

In Chapter 1, I explore Sino-Japanese relations and mutual perceptions in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Faced with a common 'existential threat' posed by Western colonialism, Japan and China had to develop identities that allow them to cope with new challenges in a world of 'nation states'. The two countries adopted different approaches to systemic reform and modernization, with varying degrees of success. As a result, both experienced drastic shifts in their perceptions of the 'Self' and the 'Other'. Japan first developed a perception of China as 'backward' and 'barbaric' compared to itself, a significant deviation from its previous admiration for Chinese cultural and material power. China, on the other hand, began to recognize Japan as a 'model country' that provides important resources for Chinese modernization, as well as, for the first time, a 'threat' of sufficient scale. As Japan emerged victorious in the First Sino-Japanese War, Chinese perception of Japan was coloured by an unprecedented sense of humiliation. By the end of this era, two perceptual themes emerged. For Japan, bilateral controversies were considered to be between a 'civilized' set of ideas and institutions and those associated with the hopeless, corrupted 'old world'. For China, the struggle was one where the Chinese 'victim' seeks to protect its security and identity from the Japanese 'perpetrator' among other colonial enemies.

Chapter 2 focuses on the Cold War era, a period of much ambiguity and possibility for Japan and China. Japan, after its defeat in World War II and occupation by Allied forces, had to

rebuild its national identity in addition to its economy. Divided between the pro-United States, pro-business Conservatives and the more idealist and ideologically-driven 'leftists', Japanese politics were dominated by a grand debate over the country's postwar path and future position. In the meantime, as a result of a long and violent civil war, a new regime was established in China – the People's Republic of China led by the Communist party. Faced with Western 'containment' and unresolved industrialization issues, the 'new China' was in urgent need for a new identity that allows the ruling party to strengthen its legitimacy. In a world divided into two ideological and military camps, Japan and China explored their options when redefining themselves and interacting with each other. As the Cold War concluded, both countries saw the return of the themes of 'civilization versus barbarism' and 'victim versus perpetrator', following a brief period of enthusiasm and harmony.

Chapter 3 discusses Sino-Japanese relations in the 21st century, and how recent controversies continue to be centred around the same themes. Japan, while subjected to greater pressure from China's growing economic and military presence, maintains a sense of moral superiority, this time from its liberal democracy, as well as its role as a 'status-quo' power vis-à-vis the Chinese 'challenger'. This dual image of China as a 'threat' and an 'uncivilized' force serves to reinforce pre-existing movements to 'normalize' Japan into a more independent state with a greater international role. China, driven by its goal of the 'grand rejuvenation', naturally emphasizes its history as a 'victim' of Japanese aggression. Moreover, Japan continues to be perceived as part of Pax Americana, a member of the 'Western camp' that attempts to contain China's rise.

Chapter 4 turns from an analysis of historical and political events to the process through which perceptions are converted into policies. These transfer mechanisms include not only elite and official channels, but also the growing influence of popular perceptions on policy-making. With the rise of social media and new forms of entertainment, citizens are more exposed, more interested, and more active in bilateral interactions. Modern capitalism also encourages the commercialization of nationalism, resulting in the popularization and unconscious consumptions of the 'themes' and 'symbols'. In the case of Sino-Japanese relations, greater access to information, faster reaction time and more direct influence for citizens may not lead to a brighter future. Instead, new technologies and the rising consumer culture may reinforce the pre-existing themes and heighten popular sentiments at times of crisis.

In the concluding section, I will offer a brief summary of the paper and discuss potential implications for future Sino-Japanese relations.

Chapter 1. National Identity Building in the 19th and 20th Centuries

In the summer of 1853, the 'Black Ships' appeared at the entrance to Edo Bay in Tokugawa Japan. The commander of the fleet, American Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry demanded that the ruling Tokugawa shogunate end its national seclusion (sakoku) policy that lasted for more than 200 years and open its ports for trade. Shocked and fearful of the American military force, Japan signed the Convention of Kanagawa with the United States in the following year, opening the ports of Shimoda and Hakodate to American vessels, as well as allowing the establishment of an American consulate on Japanese soil.

A little more than a decade earlier, Japan's mighty neighbour across the sea – China, under Qing rule – was defeated by Great Britain in the First Opium War. The Treaty of Nanking forced China to pay a large indemnity, open five ports to foreign merchants, grant extraterritoriality and cede Hong Kong Island to the British. For China, it was only the first of the many 'unequal treaties' the country signed throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

Neither China nor Japan was prepared for the new threat to their territorial control and perceptions of the world. Both once believed in their superiority (whether cultural, technological or religious) and uniqueness. China referred to itself as tianxia, meaning 'everything under heaven', or zhongguo, the 'Middle Kingdom' in a Sino-centric world. Although it was conquered several times during its long history, the Chinese/Han culture persevered and thrived, in turn assimilating the 'barbarian' invaders due to its natural superiority. Japan, when threatened by a Mongolian invasion in 1281, was saved by a 'divine wind' (kamikaze) that destroyed the Mongol's powerful fleet, a sign that the island was blessed by the Shinto gods. Therefore, when

the Western powers arrived with new technologies, cultures and ideologies, as well as their overwhelmingly superior military capabilities and indifference towards the traditional Asian order, China and Japan experienced an 'existential crisis' of unprecedented scale from both the security and identity perspectives.

In the following decades, both countries were preoccupied with finding a solution to their existential crisis. As they came to perceive themselves as 'states' in a modern Westphalian sense, and strived to build national identities, China and Japan gradually became each other's 'point of reference'. Culturally and linguistically close, the two countries shared common Confucian values and faced the same Western colonialist threat. This makes one a key subject of comparison for the other during their attempts to reform and cope with new challenges.

Along with the successes and failures during this crucial state-building period of the 19th and 20th centuries, China and Japan experienced major shifts in the ways they perceived each other. As we shall see below, Japan's attitude towards China changed from one of admiration to a feeling of superiority over a nation of largely 'backward' and 'barbaric' characteristics. China also shifted from perceiving Japan as an insignificant, culturally inferior country, to seeing it as an inspiration from which China could draw useful lessons about reforms and modernization, but also as a dangerous enemy that joined the Westerners in scheming against China. China and Japan thus became a key part of the other's 'solution' to their existential crises – the 'Other' that one must either develop 'into' or 'away from' in order to ensure one's own survival and gain international status. These themes became embedded in this period and resurfaced on many later occasions.

Below, I explore these perceptual changes in greater detail and discuss the resulting 'themes', which are still prominent in Chinese and Japanese nationalism today.

Shifting Japanese Perception of China

Until the mid-19th century, China was commonly viewed in Japan as a cultural and economic giant, as well as the greatest military power in East Asia (and in a sense, the world). Besides its traditional impact on Japan's elite samurai class (through training in the Confucian classics and Chinese poetry), influence from Chinese culture was also prominent in almost every other area of Tokugawa life.[9] Complementing this admiration for Chinese culture was a belief in Chinese military superiority. Informed Japanese intellectuals of the day considered Japan a weak nation and the Western countries only 'middle-class' compared to China's advanced governance system and military strengths.[10] For example, Sato Nobuhiro wrote in his *Policy of Coastal Defence* (Bokaisaku), that if Japan was to come into conflict with China, 'the resulting disasters would be far worse [than that of a war with Russia].'[11] China was thus considered a cultural mentor and potentially a powerful threat.

At the same time, some of the Japanese elites also had a sense of Japan's exceptionalism in the world and unique cultural characteristics. Despite briefly sending tribute to the Ming dynasty under Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, Japan constantly rejected the idea that it was a dependent state in any sense. In a widely-celebrated story, Japan's famous ancient politician, Shotoku Taishi, referred to the emperor of the Sui dynasty as 'hi bo-suru tokoro no tenshi' (the

[9] On Chinese influence on Tokugawa ethics, law, ideology, religion, literature and the arts, see Marius B. Jansen, *China in the Tokugawa World* (MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 53–91.
[10] Bob T. Wakabayashi, "Opium, Expulsion, Sovereignty, China's Lessons for Bakumatsu Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 47, No. 1 (Spring 1992), 2.
[11] Sato Kenji 佐藤堅司, ed., *Sato Nobuhiro Bugaku-shu jo* 佐藤信淵武学集 上 [The Collected Writings of Sato Nobuhiro on Military Science: Volume I] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1942), 322.

son of heaven in the land of the setting sun), while calling himself 'hi izuru tokoro no tenshi' (the son of heaven in the land of the rising sun), allegedly infuriating the Sui emperor. The popularity of this story shows that there was a general willingness to believe in Japanese exceptionalism and special status in the Sino-centric tribute system. After the 16th century, Japan largely discontinued official contact with China. In the Tokugawa era, while Chinese influence continued to be significant, a school of thought called 'national learning' (kokugaku) began to develop, with the sole aim to turn people's admiration of the 'Middle Kingdom' into passion in their own culture. By 'naturalizing' Confucianism and emphasizing the purity of a pristine Japanese culture before the Chinese 'contamination', the kokugaku scholars sought to reject Chinese influence and promote pride in Japan's national uniqueness and even superiority.[12]

Even if the feeling of superiority had somewhat existed before the 1840s, Japan's mainstream perception of China only began to radically shift when Chinese and Dutch reports of the First Opium War became available in Japan.[13] All of a sudden, the image of an invincible Qing empire collapsed with Japan's traditional understanding of the world order. China became a 'lesson learnt'. Each of its military losses and the subsequent 'unequal treaties' warned Japan of the consequences faced by a nation that failed to effectively modernize at the earliest opportunity.

In the 1860s and 1870s, concerned Japanese domains (han) such as Satsuma and Choshu formed a military alliance against the shogunate, and overthrew the Tokugawa regime as a result of the Boshin War. The new government under Emperor Meiji started pushing a series of legal,

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[12] Kate Wildman Nakai. "The Naturalization of Confucianism in Tokugawa Japan: the Problem of Sinocentrism," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 40, No. 1 (June 1980); Harry D. Harootunian, "The Functions of China in Tokugawa Thought", in *The Chinese and the Japanese: Essays in Political and Cultural Interaction*, ed. Akira Iriye (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980).
[13] Wakabayashi, *Opium, Expulsion, Sovereignty, China's Lessons for Bakumatsu Japan*, 3.

military, financial and education reforms based on Western models. Japan rapidly transformed from a traditional feudal society heavily dependent on agriculture into an industrialized power. Japan's modernization efforts proved very successful, as demonstrated by its victories over the Qing dynasty in 1895, and later over Tsarist Russia in 1905.

During the period of the Meiji Restoration, as Japan turned to build a new state conforming to Western values, norms and systems of governance, it began to form a new perception of China. Reinforced by Japan's success in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the image of China became increasingly negative. China became the 'Other' that in many ways represented the 'oriental retrogression' that Japan desperately hoped to develop away from.[14] It was now described as 'backward' and 'barbaric', and its behaviours 'resembling those of an unhappy woman' that succumbs to irrationality.[15] In his book *On Leaving Asia Behind* (Datsua-ron), Fukuzawa Yukichi described China and Korea as 'lawless autocracies' and 'bad friends' that Japan needed to distance itself from, in order to protect its own reputation.[16] This new perception of China was also reflected in the popularization of the word 'Shina'. While 'Chuka' and 'Chugoku' (meaning 'Central Grandness' and 'Central Kingdom' respectively) imply certain Chinese centrality, 'Shina' was considered a more neutral name, and later became associated with stagnation and subordination to Japan's modern superiority.[17]

[14] Urs Matthias Zachmann, *China and Japan in the late Meiji period; China policy and the Japanese discourse on national identity, 1895-1904* (London: Routledge, 2009), 27.
[15] Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 212.
[16] Keio Gijuku 慶應義塾, ed. *Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshu* 福沢諭吉全集 第10巻 [The collected Works of Fukuzawa Yukichi: Volume 10] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1969-1971), 239-40.
[17] Tanaka, *Japan's orient*, 212-214.

One explanation for the shift in the China perception is that Japan 'internalized' the European 'standards of civilization' through the Meiji reforms.[18] In an attempt to defend Japan's decision to go to war in 1894, Uchimura Kanzo argued that it was to protect Korean independence, as 'the world's most backward nation is grasping it in her benumbing coils, and savagery and inhumanity reign there when light and civilization are at her very doors'.[19] Japan's understanding of civilization (bunmei) was essentially Westernized, and its China perception showed a striking resemblance to 'orientalist' discourse in the West.[20]

The shifting perception also reflected anxiety about Japan's own position and future in the new world order. In many ways, the processes of 'proactive adoption' of Western standards and 'conscious distancing' from Asian values were simultaneous and interconnected. As a recent member of the industrialized nations, Japan still faced potential security threats in a geopolitically complicated region. To strengthen its new-found position in the 'civilized' world, Japan avoided being bundled together with China, whether as a common 'threat' or a common 'prey' for the Western powers.[21]

However, as Japan's new identity gradually stabilized, it became more willing to play a leadership role in Asia. As opposed to the 'weak' and 'backward' China, which represented part of the old, corrupted Asian order, Japan was a more suitable leader in the new era, as demonstrated by its modernization and military successes. With this self-image as a pioneer and 'steering wheel' came a sense of obligation to guide and lead Asian modernization efforts. This leadership role seemed more credible after Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War. As the

[18] Zachmann, *China and Japan in the late Meiji period*, 4.
[19] Suzuki Toshiro 鈴木俊郎 et al., eds., *Uchimura Kanzo Zenshu 3* 内村鑑三全集 3 [The Collected Works of Uchimura Kanzo: Volume 3] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1980-84), 43.
[20] Zachmann, *China and Japan in the late Meiji period*, 27.
[21] Ibid., 26.

first country to successfully challenge the presumed supremacy of the white race, Japan was considered a model nation that inspired others in their anti-colonial struggles.[22] The rise of a Pan-Asianist tendency in Japanese foreign policy would later contribute to the development of the 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere' (daitoa kyoeiken) during the 1940s.

Shifting Chinese Perception of Japan

China's shifting perception of Japan arose partly from Chinese evaluations of Japan's modernization process. Japan had traditionally been perceived as a minor player that was inferior to China in both material power and cultural sophistication. Besides the understanding of Japan as a tributary state and occasional piratical threat (wokou in Chinese, meaning 'dwarf pirates'), Japan was never perceived to be of sufficient significance to deserve China's attention and military resources. Given Japan's history of 'learning from China' through political and religious missions to the Sui and Tang dynasties, Japan was viewed as a 'student' country that simply borrowed Chinese best practices. Any original characteristics of the Japanese culture was considered evidence of their 'failure to model themselves upon the Chinese more perfectly', rather than a result of any cultural creativity or uniqueness.[23]

In the 1870s and 1880s, however, China suffered a series of losses at the hands of the Western powers, while witnessing Japan's rapid transformation into a modern state. For the informed Chinese of the day, Japan became a subject of great interest because of the two countries' cultural proximity and common status as militarily inferior states striving to survive in

[22] Alexander Bukh, *Japan's National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan's 'Other'* (London: Routledge, 2010), 24.
[23] Samuel C. Chu, "China's Attitudes toward Japan at the Time of the Sino–Japanese War", in *The Chinese and the Japanese: Essays in Political and Cultural Interaction*, ed. Akira Iriye (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 88.

an increasingly Western-dominated world. Unlike Japan's path of complete westernization, China experimented with incremental adjustments in a much more conservative manner. Instead of adopting Western institutions, China's Self-Strengthening Movement focused on learning Western technologies, simply as a 'tool' (yong) to serve the same traditional, Chinese 'essence' (ti). Thus, despite being militarily and politically challenged by the West, China's sense of cultural superiority and uniqueness still persisted to a degree during this period.

Although many Chinese scholars recognized and sometimes praised the rapid transformation of the Japanese society as a result of the Meiji reforms, they largely remained skeptical of Japan's decision to fully westernize and to abandon the traditional Confucian (and thus the 'Chinese') way. Wang Tao, like many of his contemporaries, argued that the Meiji reforms were too quick and extreme, and that Japan had recklessly adopted 'many [values and institutions] that it need not, and others that it ought not to copy [from the West]'.[24] This feeling of relative superiority continued until the First Sino-Japanese War, contributing to Japanese frustration and the image of an arrogant China. In his memoirs *Kenkenroku*, Japanese Foreign Minister (1892-1896) Mutsu Munemitsu described the two countries' mutual representation at the time as follows: "Japanese students of China and Confucianism were once wont to regard China with great reverence. They called her the 'Celestial Kingdom' or the 'Great Empire', worshipping her without caring how much they insulted their own nation. But now, we look down upon China as a bigoted and ignorant colossus of conservatism. She, in turn, mocks us as a

[24] Shen, Yunlong 沈云龙, ed., *Fusang Youji* 扶桑游记 [A Record to Travels in Japan] (Taipei: Wenhai, 1971), 130.

tiny island of barbarians who have recklessly and impudently rushed forward in a mad effort to imitate the external trappings of Western civilization."[25]

The First Sino-Japanese War became the turning point that changed mainstream Chinese views about Japan. When China suffered a surprising and humiliating defeat by Japan in 1895, the lingering pride of the old 'Celestial Kingdom' was in peril. For China and Japan, the war was in effect a 'contest' between the two after a generation of modernization.[26] Based purely on the result, Japan's complete victory over China proved that the Meiji Restoration was more effective than the Self-Strengthening Movement. Moreover, there was a strong feeling of humiliation that cannot be fully explained by material loss under the Treaty of Shimonoseki. The war reversed the traditional power relations in the region and signaled to China that it had lost control over the surrounding security environment. To a degree, China never fully recovered from this feeling of humiliation. It became a repeating theme in the upcoming decades, linking China's past suffering and failure to a need to reclaim the central kingdom's former glory. In the 21st century, this sense of loss would be built into the rhetoric of 'grand rejuvenation'. The First Sino-Japanese War thus left a much greater impact on the public consciousness, compared to any of the previous defeats at the hands of foreign powers.

The result of the First Sino-Japanese War also triggered immense Chinese anxiety and a sense of urgency to reorient its modernization efforts. Japan played a dual role, functioning as both the 'inspiration' and the 'threat'. Reformists like Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao resumed their advocacy activities for more thorough changes, leading to the Hundred Days' Reform in

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[25] Munemitsu Mutsu, *Kenkenroku: A Diplomatic Record of the Sino–Japanese War, 1894–95*, trans. Gordon Mark Berger (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 27-28.
[26] Immanuel Hsu, "Late Ch'ing foreign relations, 1866–1905," in *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 11: Late Ch'ing, 1800–1911, Part 2*, ed. John K Fairbank and Kwang-Ching Liu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 129.

1898. Arguing against the technological orientation of the Self-Strengthening Movement, they advised Emperor Guangxu to learn from Japan and pursue more substantial political reforms.[27] Even after the Hundred Days' Reform failed, officials and scholars continued to study the Japanese experience closely, and attempted various reforms, including a constitutional one, based on the Japanese model during the New Policies (gengzi xinzheng) period. None of these reforms led by the Qing court was fruitful. Japan, however, remained the most important source of inspiration for Chinese modernization efforts, until the Xinhai Revolution in 1911 and beyond.

On the other hand, as an increasingly powerful Japan entered the colonial competition with the Western players, China perceived Japan more and more as a strong enemy (qiang di) that was, in many ways, even more dangerous than the Westerners.[28] This image of Japan as an enemy entity had certain moral connotations. Japan, as a country that previously faced the Western threat like its Asian neighbours, now joined the international community of 'imperialist perpetrators' in scheming against China, its former teacher. Compounded by the feeling of humiliation, China began to develop a sense of 'victimhood' in response to this new perception of Japan. Later on, as China gradually re-established itself as a modern state (resulting in the weakening of Japan's more positive, 'inspiration' role), China and Japan clashed more frequently over territorial control in the region. The Japanese 'threat' thus began to dominate the Chinese perception of the country. Eventually, with the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War in

[27] Hao Chang, "Intellectual Change and the reform movement, 1890-1898," in *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 11: Late Ch'ing, 1800–1911, Part 2*, ed. John K Fairbank and Kwang-Ching Liu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 295.
[28] Marius Jansen, "Japan and the Revolution of 1911," in *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 11: Late Ch'ing, 1800–1911, Part 2*, ed. John K Fairbank and Kwang-Ching Liu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 339–74.

1937, the image of Japan as an enemy solidified, and, for the next decades, remained prominent in Chinese national memory.

Chapter 2. Redefining National Identities in the Cold War Era

In 1937, military tensions between China and Japan, due to the latter's expansionist policy in Manchuria, turned into a full-scale war. The Second Sino-Japanese War, also known as the War of Resistance in China, lasted for eight years before Japan surrendered in 1945. The conflict became part of a larger World War between the 'Axis countries' and the 'Allied Powers' following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. In the summer of 1945, after the United States dropped two atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's unconditional surrender and thus defeat in the Pacific War.

After the war, Japan was occupied by Allied forces led by U.S. General Douglas McArthur. The Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP)/General Headquarters (GHQ), primarily consisting of American bureaucrats and military personnel, directed Japan's postwar policies until the San Francisco Peace Treaty took effect in 1952. The SCAP/GHQ implemented a wide range of political and economic reforms, with the goal of democratizing and demilitarizing Japan. For example, a new constitution was drafted and ratified, to create a parliamentary democratic system and guarantee fundamental human rights. The constitution also includes a 'peace clause' (Article 9), by which Japan 'renounce(s) war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes'.[29] Besides that, efforts were undertaken to deconcentrate Japanese economy (although some of them were later reversed), allow unions, redistribute land, and dismantle the military industry. As a result of the U.S.' major role in shaping Japan's postwar institutions, as well as the geopolitical reality of the

[29] The Constitution of Japan, available at https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html

Cold War, Japanese politics became centred around its relationship with the U.S, even after the country reclaimed its sovereignty in 1952. As tension grew between the U.S.-led 'free world' and the Communist bloc, ideologies, nationalisms and visions for the future clashed, both within Japan and in the Asia-Pacific region. It was amidst all the domestic and international changes that an acute need to redefine the Japanese 'Self' emerged. Different perceptions of neighbouring China, now representing an alternative possibility that some passionately pursued while others strove to avoid, were salient in the most fundamental political debates of the day.

China went down a completely different path after the Second Sino-Japanese War. It was already evident by the mid-1920s that the Kuomingtang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) could not coexist. Despite a brief period of half-hearted collaboration in fighting against the Japanese, the Chinese Civil War resumed almost immediately after Japan's surrender in 1945. This struggle between the KMT government headed by Chiang Kai-shek and the CCP led by Mao Zedong lasted for three more years, and resulted in the CCP's victory and the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. The communist 'new China' was faced with numerous challenges, including the adoption of a different economic model, the modernization of its military industry, and the advancing of its position and interests in the Cold War. In the process of developing a new sense of 'Self', Japan – again closely associated with the industrially advanced yet imperialist Western camp – continued to play a crucial role as a key point of reference and subject of comparison.

For both Japan and China, the Cold War was a period of ambiguity that powered the search for new national identities. Many options were explored, as various ideas, perceptions and systems of governance competed in an increasingly divided world. In the end, new identities

solidified, and the search temporarily concluded with the return of the 'civilization/barbarism' and 'victim/perpetrator' narratives, albeit with a new twist.

Competing Perceptions of China in Postwar Japan

The Treaty of San Francisco in 1951 marked the end of the American occupation of Japan. However, it did not end American influence on Japanese foreign policy. Nor did it put a hold on the long-standing debate over Japan's postwar identity. At the core of this debate was a fundamental disagreement over what the country's relationship with the U.S. should be. In this context, those with competing views were divided into the political 'right' and 'left'. The right, represented by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), was generally in favour of close alliance with the U.S. and prioritizing business and trade. The political left, a broad classification that includes the Socialists, Progressives and Communists, was concerned, albeit to varying degrees, by the LDP government's 'over-reliance' on the U.S. and pro-big business economic policies.

Although the U.S. was a key focus in the discussions, China played an equally important role, as it represented the other possible path for Japan – a path of greater foreign policy independence, cultural pride and social equality. China, with its drastically different ruling ideology and institutions, became a 'mirror image' that both political camps used to support their proposed identities for Japan. A wider disagreement over the legitimacy of the postwar state was thus reflected in the left-right split on the 'China problem'.[30]

[30] Robert James Hoppens, *The China problem in postwar Japan: Japanese national identity and Sino-Japanese relations* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 43.

The leftists were initially enthusiastic about Japan's postwar developments, following the SCAP/GHQ's democratic reforms. However, they quickly became disappointed by the 'revisionist' policies that came after and the fundamental 'inequality' in the Japan-U.S. relationship. Even after the end of the Occupation, the U.S. maintained direct and indirect influence on Japanese life, through its military bases across the country and the policies of the pro-U.S. LDP. To the leftists, this was the result of a series of 'unequal treaties' signed by the Japanese government, including the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. Japan's postwar path was thus characterized by such humiliating concessions to the U.S. The government, bowing to American pressure and domestic business interests, not only allowed the damage done to national sovereignty, but even aligned its foreign policy with those of the Western countries, which were at times aggressive or 'imperialistic'.

Compared to their assessment of the Japanese establishment, the political left perceived China in a much more positive light. China, unlike Japan, created its own path after the civil war that encouraged national pride and independence. This self-imposed identity was based on China's unique cultural characteristics, and allowed the country to determine its domestic and international policies in the pursuit of progressive ideals. Moreover, for the Japanese Communists believing in the 'stages of history' in the Hegelian sense, China was a more advanced nation, and the meant-to-be leader in Asia's revolt against Western imperialism.[31] China thus became the 'idealized Other' for Japanese leftists, who often used the image of a free, independent and morally superior China to criticize the Japanese government's weakness and corruption.[32]

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[31] Ibid., 52.
[32] Noriko Kamachi, "Japanese Writings on Post-1945 Japan-China Relations," in *Japan's Relations with China: Facing a Rising Power,* ed. Lam Peng Er (New York: Routledge, 2006), 63.

On the other end of the spectrum, the political right, represented by the ruling LDP Conservatives, considered close alliance with the U.S. and the Western bloc essential to Japan. The Yoshida Doctrine, a strategy developed under Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru, dictated that Japan should focus on economic growth and pursue a pacifist foreign policy enabled by its security alliance with the U.S. The decision to emphasize ties with the West was also supported by the LDP's ideological consistency with the anti-communist, market-oriented 'free world'. Prime Minister Yoshida himself and some of his successors were known for their vehement distaste for Communism.[33] In addition to that, many LDP leaders retained close personal associations with the KMT in Taiwan.[34] In his memoirs, Yoshida reiterated the LDP's commitment to the Western democractic camp. Linking Japan's rapid postwar recovery to American assistance and the democratic institutions, Yoshida argued that Japan's future 'lies in the fullest possible co-operation with the free nations'.[35] The LDP thus saw Japan's postwar identity as the 'bastion of peace and liberty' in Asia and the world – a goal that can be achieved through strengthened alliance with liberal democracies and allies of the West.[36] The PRC, on the other hand, represented chaos, radicalism and other 'barbaric' communist qualities as understood by the LDP. The Chinese 'Other' was therefore a security threat to Japan by nature, and a political alternative that the Conservative right strove to avoid.

To conclude that the LDP perceived China as simply an adversary, however, would be a gross generalization. As the ruling party, the LDP's China policy was unavoidably complicated by various pragmatic economic and strategic considerations. This was demonstrated by

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[33] Wolf Mendl, *Issues in Japan's China Policy* (London: Macmillan, 1978), 3.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Shigeru Yoshida, *The Yoshida Memoirs: The Story of Japan in Crisis*, trans. Kenichi Yoshida (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1974), 291.
[36] Ibid.

continuous Sino-Japanese trade throughout much of the Cold War. In fact, since the 1950s, a policy to 'separate the politics and the economics' (seikei bunri) was adopted, to justify Japan's simultaneous trade with China, Taiwan and the U.S.[37] From 1949 to 1971, Japan signed five rounds of trade agreements with China, and encouraged hundreds of industrial experts and technicians to visit the country.[38] China's potential as a market, as well as its strategic significance to Japan, produced a sustained interest in closer relations that was consistent with the LDP's 'economy-first' foreign policy. The LDP Conservatives, while generally in agreement with the U.S, had their doubts about the strategy of 'containment' against China. Rather than 'containing' China, there were certain optimism that China could be 'persuaded' away from Communism, a concept that was originally foreign to Chinese society, if Japan was to play a more substantive role in connecting China with the international community.[39] This desire for rapprochement, although largely held back by Japan's commitment to its American and Taiwanese allies throughout the Cold War, persisted and eventually contributed to the LDP's decision to normalize relations with the PRC in 1972.

The 'left-right' split over Japan's postwar status and the 'China problem' would eventually end in Conservative triumphalism and leftist alienation, in Hoppens' terms.[40] Japan's high-speed economic growth in the 1950s and 1960s resulted in greater national pride and international recognition. In 1964, Japan was admitted to the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and held its first Olympics in Tokyo, which for some

[37] Chalmers Johnson, "The patterns of Japanese relations with China, 1952-1982," in *Sino-Japanese relations: history, politics, economy*, ed. Caroline Rose (Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge, 2011). 405.
[38] Amy King, *China-Japan Relations After WWII: Empire, Industry and War, 1949-1971* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 2.
[39] Johnson, *The Patterns of Japanese Relations*, 3.
[40] Hoppens, *The China Problem*, 167.

was a symbol of the country's 'rehabilitation in the international community'.[41] Japan's economic miracle seemed to prove the effectiveness of the LDP's policies and strengthened its position vis-à-vis the left. Once again, the Japanese became interested in their nation's unique characteristics that enabled this success. Japan's sense of cultural and institutional superiority was also reinforced by China's perceived failure during the Cultural Revolution, signified by sheer poverty and political chaos.[42]

In addition to the LDP's strengthened legitimacy due to economic growth, the leftists were further alienated during and after the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations. Following Nixon's visit to China in February 1972, Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei visited China in September and signed the Japan-China Joint Communique, establishing official diplomatic relations with the PRC at the expense of Taiwan. Immediately after the normalization and during the 'honeymoon' period, the political left became increasingly sidelined in the China-related discussions.[43] The idealistic leftists were also disillusioned by the PRC's willingness to abandon the revolutionary ideals in order to establish deeper ties with the U.S. and counterbalance the Soviet Union.[44] With the end of the Cold War, the postwar leftists and their future visions became largely marginalized in an era of economic development and growth. Their discontent with the Japanese weakness and corruption remained, however, after their break with the 'new China' and the ideals it once represented. As will be argued in the following chapter, this discontent would take another form in the 21st century, this time targeting China as the 'bullying' power, just like the U.S.

[41] Ibid., 58.
[42] Ibid., 200.
[43] Ibid., 167.
[44] Ibid., 227.

Moreover, the post-normalization period of optimism and hope would not last much longer. Unlike the leftists that shared some of the CCP's goals and ideals, the Conservatives' attitude towards China was based on more realistic commercial and geopolitical calculations. As controversial issues resurfaced in the 1980s and 1990s, immediate enthusiasm about the future of bilateral relations quickly waned. By the end of the Cold War, in response to rising Chinese nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiments, China once again became associated with irrationality and, in a sense, ideological and institutional 'backwardness'.

Competing Perceptions of Japan in Postwar China

During the Cold War, the PRC's Japan policy was similarly guided by competing perceptions of the 'Self' and the Japanese 'Other'. On one hand, Japan was considered a recent perpetrator and a security threat. The image of the 'Japanese enemy' remained prominent throughout the first half of the 20th century, and gained new life after it became part of the CCP's greatest source of legitimacy. On the other hand, China's urgent need for industrialization meant that Japan, with its supply of crucial technical expertise and means of production, was of great economic significance to China. In order to ensure commercial interactions with Japan, the CCP was unwilling to adopt a policy of total hostility. China's Japan policy in this period was therefore characterized by a constant struggle between normative values and pragmatic considerations.

Even after the Second Sino-Japanese War ended in Chinese victory, the perception of the Japanese 'threat' persisted. In 1950, China and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance, promising common efforts to prevent aggression from Japan and 'any other state that may directly or indirectly join with Japan'. Japan was viewed not only

as an enemy of the past, but also as part of an ongoing threat of the imperialistic Western bloc. In addition, the image of Japan as an 'imperialist invader' was a founding myth of the PRC. In order to build support and legitimacy, the CCP was faced with the challenge to amalgamate Communism, a foreign ideology, and nationalism that appealed to a greater Chinese audience. The result was a reinterpretation of Chinese history as a grand struggle for freedom and national dignity against international imperialism and domestic suppression.[45] China's national independence and prosperity, guided by Mao Zedong Thought, would thus become 'means' to achieve the ultimate 'end' of universal liberation. Japan, as the most recent and thus memorable 'imperialist', became the antagonistic 'Other' whose aggression helped shape China's new identity as a champion in world revolution.

The CCP was able to not only expand its support base during the war, but also eliminate its domestic rival, the Chiang Kai-shek-led KMT, due to this powerful story.[46] According to the CCP, the KMT's policy during the war was one of 'passive resistance to Japan and active opposition to the Communist Party'.[47] The KMT government thus betrayed the nationalist cause, and became a mere agent of Western imperialism and business interests. Through this interpretation of the war, the CCP was able to claim full credit for 'liberalizing' China from Japanese brutality. As claimed by Lin Biao and other Communists after the war: "The basic reasons [for Chinese victory] were that the War of Resistance against Japan was a genuine

[45] Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 232-33.
[46] Ibid., 107.
[47] Lin Biao, *Long Live the Victory of the People's War! In Commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of Victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japan* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), 1-2.

people's war led by the Communist Party of China and Comrade Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong]".[48]

In addition to its symbolic significance, Japan continued to present a security threat to China. After 1949, there was a prominent belief that modern wars were industrial wars (gongye zhanzheng), and that a nation's industrial capacity would eventually determine its military power.[49] The CCP began paying more attention to science, technology and the civilian economy, as well as their relationship with war mobilization and weapons development. Japan's 'latent' (qianli) economic power was considered threatening in this sense.[50] As demonstrated at the beginning of the century, Japan's economic strengths could be rapidly converted into military capabilities. An economically prosperous Japan, allied with enemies in the U.S. and Taiwan, was thus considered a much more substantive threat.

The impact of such an understanding on modern warfare, however, was two-fold. In order to be prepared for potential wars in the future, there was an urgent need for China to industrialize and modernize its economy. Japan's economic strengths thus provided an opportunity for a largely isolated China. Japanese goods, technologies and industrial expertise were much needed for China's postwar reconstruction. As a rural-based party that was more familiar with fighting guerilla wars than governing urban centres, the CCP needed external models and know-how to guide its industrialization.[51] The Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, while providing material and technical assistance during this process, were in many ways constrained by their structural weaknesses.[52] Japan, due to its geographic proximity, cultural

[48] Ibid.
[49] King, *Empire, Industry and War*, 69-70.
[50] Ibid., 142.
[51] Ibid., 53.
[52] Ibid., 56-57.

similarity and economic legacy in Manchuria (including Japanese skilled workers left behind after 1945), became the PRC's major trading partner and source of technical advice. This need for trade with Japan further increased during the Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1961. With the radicalization of Chinese economic planning, and given tension in Sino-Soviet relationship, the CCP increasingly turned to Japan for its growing industrial needs, in order to meet goals to dramatically expand outputs for steel and grain.[53]

This economic reliance, together with increased hostility towards the Soviet Union, motivated the PRC to seek closer ties with the Western bloc and normalize relations with Japan. After the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1972, China and Japan entered a 'golden age' of flourishing trade and people-to-people exchange. Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA) and business expertise flowed into China, contributing to crucial infrastructure development and the creation of a market economy. Many CCP leaders, including Deng Xiaoping himself, visited Japan to learn about Japanese technologies and best practices. As the CCP began to pursue economic reforms under the policy of 'reform and opening up', Japan was once again perceived to be an Asian success story that inspires Chinese modernization, an image resembling its pre-war role as an 'inspiration'.

The discrepancy between the two perceptions of Japan (as 'threat' or 'inspiration') was not without its problems. Although the CCP encouraged bilateral trade for practical reasons, it never fully let go of the anti-imperialist rhetoric and found it difficult at times to justify continuous trade in spite of political/ ideological disagreements. For example, the PRC suspended all trade with Japan in 1958, to protest Prime Minister Kishi's letter to Chiang

[53] Ibid., 131-135.

Kai-shek reiterating Japan's support for Taiwan. During the 1980s, bilateral relationship was similarly challenged by the re-emergence of a number of controversial issues. These incidents showed that under a de facto policy to 'separate the politics and the economics' on both sides, fundamental differences were never properly addressed. Instead, they were temporarily shelved when trade took priority, and would return if triggered by political calculations or domestic/ international pressure. As the Cold War thawed and Communism as an ideology began to decline, the CCP felt the need to find a new source of legitimacy and basis for popular support.[54] With the re-emergence of the 'victim' identity, supported by wartime memories, Sino-Japanese relations quickly deteriorated. By the end of the Cold War, Chinese perception of Japan once again became dominated by the threat-based rhetoric.

[54] Paul A Cohen, *China Unbound: Evolving Perspectives on the Chinese Past* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 167.

Chapter 3. National Identities and Sino-Japanese Relations in the 21st Century

Sino-Japanese relations since the brief 'honeymoon' can be summarized in the phrase 'cold politics, hot economics' (zhengleng jingre). Consistent with the Cold War policy to 'separate the politics and the economics', Japan and China have generally maintained robust trade ties while the overall bilateral relationship has experienced several setbacks and fluctuations. The current controversies can be divided into two categories: historical (issues of 'historical recognition') and territorial. In practice, the two sets of issues are deeply interconnected. Even the dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, which seems to be territorial by nature, is highly symbolic and full of historical references.

These controversies are prominent irritants in contemporary Sino-Japanese relationship, with the potential to destabilize the Asia-Pacific region as a whole. This chapter briefly reviews major ongoing sources of bilateral tension, and discusses their role in the building and strengthening of Chinese and Japanese identities, as well as their mutual perceptions. Against the broader background of the emerging movements for 'normalization' and 'rejuvenation', Sino-Japanese interactions in these areas of disagreement confirm pre-existing themes and justify both countries' national goals in the 21st century.

Historical Controversies: Issues of Recognition and Remorse

Official visits to Yasukuni Shrine: The Shinto shrine of Yasukuni in Tokyo enshrines the spirits of Japanese war dead, including 14 convicted Class-A war criminals from the Pacific War. In 1985, Prime Minister Nakasone made the first official visit to the shrine, triggering

Chinese criticism and student protests in Beijing. Following Nakasone, Prime Ministers Hashimoto Ryutaro (in 1996), Koizumi Junichiro (from 2001 to 2006) and Abe Shinzo (in 2013) paid official visits to the shrine. During Koizumi's terms especially, his annual visits were met with particularly harsh Chinese criticism. In addition to official condemnation, Chinese citizens were involved in a number of demonstrations and attacks, including the 2001 graffiti incident and the 2011 arson attack at the shrine. Prime Minister Abe's shrine visit in 2013 similarly led to a rapid deterioration in bilateral relations. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi condemned the act, calling it 'a grave provocation to international justice and also ruthless trampling on human conscience'.[55]

The Yasukuni Shrine visits are perceived in China to be a Japanese attempt to glorify and legitimize its previous war efforts, and therefore a sign of 'reviving militarism' within the country. On the other hand, for many in Japan, the visits are a peaceful display of respect, which helps promote Japanese cultural and religious identities in a period of economic stagnation.

Japanese history textbook controversies: Japan's Ministry of Education, although not involved in writing school textbooks, is responsible for evaluating and approving textbooks drafted by private publishers. In 1982, an erroneous report that the Ministry demanded one textbook to be rewritten using the word 'shinshutsu' (advance) instead of 'shinryaku' (invade) to describe Japan's invasion of China triggered Chinese protests. As a result, the Japanese government announced a new textbook authorization criterion, the 'neighbouring countries

[55] "China Attacks Japanese PM's War Shrine Visit." Al Jazeera, December 2013, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2013/12/china-attacks-japanese-pm-war-shrine-visit-20131226425091850 0.html

clause', which requires that the authorization process takes into account the feelings of neighbouring countries.

Despite the new clause, Chinese discontent has continued towards some of the more conservative or right-winged textbooks approved by the Ministry. These textbooks have been criticized for 'glossing over' or 'whitewashing' issues such as the Rape of Nanking, comfort women and biological experiments done by Japan's Unit 731. In 2005, the authorization of the controversial 'New History Textbook' infuriated the Chinese. Combined with ongoing Japanese activities to gain permanent membership status on the UN Security Council, large-scale anti-Japanese protests broke out in dozens of Chinese cities. Protestors shouted patriotic slogans, threw rocks at Japanese shops and cars, and called for a boycott of Japanese-made goods. The history textbook issue reflects a broader debate over the historical facts and how the Second Sino-Japanese War should be understood.

Territorial Dispute: Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands

The Senkaku/ Diaoyu Islands Dispute: The Senkaku/ Diaoyu islands consist of five uninhabited islets and three barren rocks in the East China Sea, with a total land area of less than seven square kilometres. While Japan took over the islands as 'terra nullius' in 1895 and regained administrative rights from the U.S. in 1972, China has argued that the islands had belonged to China since the Ming dynasty prior to Japan's self-claimed rediscovery.

In 2010, Chinese trawler Minjinyu 5179 collided with Japanese Coast Guards' patrol boats in disputed waters near the islands. Japan detained the Chinese captain, which led to another round of anti-Japanese demonstrations, some of which involving violence against

Japanese property. The Chinese government also severed senior-level contacts and threatened strong countermeasures. Eventually, the Chinese captain was released without charge.

More recently in 2012, the Japanese government nationalized three of the disputed islets. The claim was that this decision, triggered by former Governor of Tokyo Ishihara Shintaro's plan to purchase the islets, was meant to prevent municipal control of the islets and an escalation of the dispute with China. Nevertheless, the decision prompted Chinese outrage and once again resulted in popular protests in China and a diplomatic standoff with Beijing.

The Senkaku/Diaoyu islands have been a constant symbol in nationalistic protests after the Cold War, and have sparked some of the most direct confrontations between the two countries as well as between their citizens. In addition to their symbolic value, the islands are also tied to concrete material benefits (although questionable and largely unexplored): natural resources, shipping lanes and strategic advantages. It is thus easier to perceive the islands as part of the more conventional 'national interests', which motivate and offer practical goals for nationalistic activists.

Japanese 'Normalization' and the China Perception

Within the context of bilateral controversies, Japan's contemporary perception of China has become dominated by increased concerns over the Chinese 'threat' and a returned sense of superiority, albeit in a new way.

Japanese concerns about China's rise are a result of its own insecurity in a changing global environment, as well as increasingly tough and unpredictable Chinese behaviours. In 2010, China overtook Japan as the world's second largest economy. Since the bursting of the bubble in the 1990s, Japan entered a period of economic stagnation, which challenged the

country's postwar identity as an economic 'miracle' and leader in East Asia. China's recent economic rise not only heightened the sense of loss and anxiety, but also created serious security implications. China's rapidly expanding and opaque military spending, as well as its growing air and naval activity in the region, constitute a direct threat to Japan's national security. Increased Chinese economic influence in Asia-Pacific also created fear for Japan's marginalization in the region.[56]

Besides that, the CCP's harsh anti-Japanese rhetoric and tough stance on bilateral disputes also created an image of China as the 'bullying Other'. It is perceived as an overbearing country that plays the 'historical card' whenever convenient to advance its national interests. In contrast, Japan is peaceful but weak, often submitting to Chinese pressure and making diplomatic concessions. In 1985, for example, Prime Minister Nakasone cancelled another planned visit to Yasukuni Shrine following Chinese protest, and immediately expressed contrition for the war in a speech he delivered to the United Nations General Assembly.[57] Such a response to Chinese anger was domestically criticized by many to be weak and 'servile' (hikutsu-na).[58] Prime Minister Koizumi, despite his reputation as a 'hard-liner' on the China issue, was similarly criticized for failing to demand an apology when the Chinese Vice Premier cancelled all bilateral meetings after the shrine visit in 2005. In 2010, the release of the Chinese captain in the Minjinyu 5179 clash was considered a 'diplomatic defeat' for the Kan administration.[59]

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[56] Kamachi, *Japanese Writings*, 61.
[57] Clyde Haberman, "Nakasone, giving in, will shun shrine." *New York Times*, October 10, 1985, https://www.nytimes.com/1985/10/10/world/nakasone-giving-in-will-shun-shrine.html
[58] Shogo Suzuki, "The Rise of the Chinese 'Other' in Japan's Construction of Identity: Is China a Focal Point of Japanese Nationalism?" *The Pacific Review* 28, no.1 (2015), 95-116.
[59] Ibid., 96.

Through these incidents, China has been increasingly seen as aggressive and unreasonable. Its interference in Japan's domestic matters (such as the visiting to Yasukuni Shrine and the legal investigation of the Minjinyu captain), together with the frequent reminders of Japan's imperialist past, are understood by some to be a plot to shatter Japanese confidence and keep the country permanently weak.[60] As argued by Suzuki, similar to the U.S. in the previous decades, China has become a 'focal point' of both left-wing and right-wing Japanese nationalism.[61] In reaction to China's 'unfair bullying', The two political camps are now united in their common demand for a more 'resolute' China policy.

In the meantime, Japan's perception of China is once again shaped by a sense of superiority. This time, it is mainly rooted in Japan's moral instead of material characteristics. China is perceived to be a morally inferior country governed by institutions and values that are more 'backward' than Japan's liberal democracy. The theme of 'civilization versus barbarism' thus re-emerged, albeit in a different sense. In addition to the CCP's political corruption and human rights violations, ultra-nationalistic protests against Japan in recent years also demonstrate Chinese 'ungratefulness' and 'irrationality'. The CCP not only avoids mentioning the fact that it received large sums of Japanese ODA, but also actively encourages if not cultivates grassroots anti-Japanese sentiments. Compared to Japan's 'rational nationalism', which is made possible by its democratic system that guarantees freedom of expression, Chinese nationalism is 'excessive' and thus potentially 'damaging'.[62]

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[60] Shogo Suzuki, "The Strange Masochism of the Japanese Right: Redrawing Moral Boundaries in Sino-Japanese Relations", in *Decoding Boundaries in Contemporary Japan: The Koizumi Administration and Beyond*, ed. Glenn D. Hook (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 37-38.
[61] Suzuki, *The Rise of the Chinese 'Other'*, 99-101.
[62] Mitsuru Kitano, "The myth of rising Japanese nationalism," *New York Times,* January 12, 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/12/opinion/the-myth-of-rising-japanese-nationalism.html

Internationally, Japan considers itself a status quo player and a 'responsible member of the international community' (kokusai shakai no sekinin aru ichiin). Japan has demonstrated, through its ODA contributions and participation in peacekeeping operations (PKOs), its willingness and capability to shoulder international responsibility and uphold the liberal world order.[63] China, by contrast, is viewed as a challenger to the status quo, and has in many cases ignored international law and norms, including through the repeated intrusions into Japanese territorial waters.[64]

Similar to the cases in the 19th century and during the Cold War, there are two sources of Japan's perceived superiority: Its compliance with the 'standards of civilization' originated in the West, and a belief in the uniqueness of Japan (which inspires nihonjinron, a genre of texts on 'Japaneseness'). The strength of modern Japanese democracy, for example, is not only attributed to the Western-style institutional design, but also the Japanese preconditions, such as political liberalism during the Taisho democracy. As described by Prime Minister Yoshida in his memoirs, Japan did not merely copy the Western democratic model, but rather opened the door to 'those democratic concepts that have always been latent among our people'[65].

The perception of China as both 'bullying' and 'morally backward' has contributed to the strengthening of the 'normal country discourse' in Japan. The Yoshida Doctrine during the Cold War, which emphasizes economic growth and defence 'free-riding', has long been criticized for promoting 'perverted, masochistic pride in underachievement and neglect'.[66] Many have called

[63] Ulv Hanssen, *Temporal Identities and Security Policy in Postwar Japan* (London: Routledge, 2020), 150.
[64] Wren Yennie Lindgren and Petter Y. Lindgren, "Identity Politics and the East China Sea: China as Japan's 'Other'", *Asian Politics & Policy* 9, no. 3 (July 1, 2017), 391.
[65] Yoshida, *Yoshida Memoirs*, 285-286.
[66] Hanssen, *Temporal Identities*, 157.

for a greater role for Japan and a more active foreign policy, in order to manage an increasingly complex international environment. In recent years, the intensifying debate over the amendment of Article 9 of the Constitution has demonstrated growing attention to the issue of normalization. Although there is disagreement over whether to revise Article 9 as a means to regain the 'normal country' status, there is a general interest in greater autonomy and responsibility for Japan.[67] The idea of normalization is especially appealing to Japan's younger generation, who have no personal experiences with the war and are not constrained by war guilt. The pursuit of normalcy seeks the rejection of the 'masochistic view of history' and a return of genuine pride in Japan's unique history and traditions. It is motivated not only by the need to mitigate the security and diplomatic risks from China's rise, but also a belief that Japan, with its mature democracy and moral influence, can and should play a more significant role internationally.

Chinese 'Rejuvenation' and the Japan Perception

China's perception of Japan and its self-identity have also been shaped by the bilateral disputes after the rapprochement. Through the interactions with Japan, the CCP was able to assert the country's identity as a victim, which allows the party to strengthen its legitimacy and the PRC to gain moral credibility in international society. The re-emergence of the 'victimhood-perpetrator hood' theme provides a strong moral foundation for the new national goal of 'rejuvenation'. It is a product of both the CCP's deliberate encouragement, and practical concerns over the Western containment efforts, notably the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance.

Japan's role as a former aggressor and adversary has always been present in Chinese collective memory, as discussed in the previous chapters. Nevertheless, when the CCP had to

[67] Ibid., 156.

prioritize economic ties with Japan, first to fulfill its domestic needs and then to support the market reforms, such an image of Japan and the associated symbols were temporarily shelved to ensure smooth diplomatic relations for the purpose of trade. This overall friendly attitude towards Japan changed, however, as the CCP began to face a new set of challenges.

With the end of the Cold War and Deng Xiaoping's 'reform and open up' (gaige kaifang) policy, the CCP experienced a deep legitimacy crisis. The old rhetoric of class struggle was no longer consistent with the government's efforts to promote entrepreneurship and trade. In addition to the decline of communist ideology, the Chinese society also became increasingly divided and complex to manage, as a result of rapid urbanization and growing inequality due to the economic reforms. The CCP was in urgent need of a new source of legitimacy to ensure support for its rule.

It was within this context that the CCP embarked on a series of patriotic campaigns that emphasize the indispensability of the party's leadership. The CCP's 'essential role' in the Second Sino-Japanese War, as the liberator that brought an end to the century of humiliation, became the dominant source of legitimacy in a post-communist era. With the waning of Maoist internationalism, a more nationalistic discussion of the war began to surface in the mid-1980s, and quickly became the subject of an enourmous number of academic and popular publications.[68] Through official rhetoric, history textbooks and patriotic education bases across the country, the CCP has continuously emphasized its wartime efforts, together with the image of Japan as a perpetrator nation that imposed grave suffering and humiliation on the Chinese people. Bilateral controversies that are closely linked to China's past history of humiliation, including the

[68] Parks M Coble, "China's 'New Remembering' of the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, 1937-1945," in *Sino-Japanese relations: history, politics, economy vol.2*, ed. Caroline Rose (Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 359.

Yasukuni visits and the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute, are thus key issues on which Beijing must act in a resolute manner.

Moreover, new nationalistic slogans, such as 'wuwang guochi, zhenxing zhonghua' ('[Let us] never forget national humiliation and revitalize China'), establish a fundamental connection between Japan's past aggression and China's national goal after the Cold War.[69] The collectivist 'Chinese Dream' is about the nation's rejuvenation and reclaiming of past glory. A tough (or at least seemingly so) position on bilateral disputes is driven by Beijing's need to reinforce domestic credibility, and in turn promotes popular confidence in China's promised rise.

Besides that, the Otherness of Japan is also linked to China's self-identity in an international context. Despite its involvement in international institutions and support for Westphalian sovereignty, China holds a more critical view towards the U.S.-led liberal order and its embedded norms and values.[70] From the Chinese perspective, the international order has not changed in essence, as it continues to be dominated by Western powers that deem themselves more 'civilized' (liberal/ democratic) than the non-West. Their criticisms of China are perceived to be an unfair and hypocritical attempt to prevent China's peaceful rise. Modern Japan, governed by its liberal political procedures and principles, does not share China's position on many international issues. Its close alignment with Western liberal democracies, as well as the security implications of the U.S.-Japan Alliance, make Japan an ongoing threat in addition to a former enemy. Like its position in the 19th century, Japan considers itself part of the 'West' and pursues a similar policy, this time to 'contain' China's rise instead of seeking territorial gains.

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[69] Karl Gustafsson, "Routinised Recognition and Anxiety: Understanding the Deterioration in Sino-Japanese Relations", *Review of International Studies* 42, no.4 (2016), 628-629.
[70] Micheal J. Mazarr, Timothy R. Heath, and Astrid Stuth, *China and the International Order (*Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2018), 26.

Japan's domestic efforts to rebuild national confidence (through the official visits to Yasukuni Shrine, for example) and seek normalization (as demonstrated by the debate over Article 9 revisions) have reinforced its image as a potential perpetrator to China.

By criticizing Japan's 'militarist revival' and failure to properly acknowledge its past aggression, China also seeks to regain social and moral legitimacy internationally.[71] The PRC's position in the international community, although not as isolated as during the Cold War decades, remains ambiguous. Since rejecting democratic reforms in the 1990s, the PRC has been labelled as the remaining 'Leninist state' and the 'last bastion of Communism'.[72] The 'China threat' thesis puts pressure on China to justify its rise and moral credibility. Through the frequent reminders of its past suffering at the hands of Western colonialists and Japanese invaders, China is able to promote its identity as a morally superior, 'victimized' nation, which has always risen, and will continue to rise, peacefully.[73] The Japanese 'Other', as a militaristic threat in both the past and the present, thus plays a significant role in strengthening the new Chinese identity and maintaining popular support for the CCP.

[71] Shogo Suzuki, "The Importance of 'Othering' in China's National Identity: Sino-Japanese Relations as a Stage of Identity Conflicts", *The Pacific Review* 20, no. 1 (March 2007), 32-36.
[72] Yongjin Zhang, "Problematizing China's Security: Sociological Insights", *Pacific Review* 13 no. 3 (October 2001), 252.
[73] Suzuki, *'Othering' in China's national identity*, 32-36.

Chapter 4. Transfer: From Perception to Policy

This chapter explores the process of 'transfer', through which Japan and China's perceptions of each other are converted into foreign policy decisions. It discusses two general transfer mechanisms, namely through elite perceptions and through public opinion. Particular attention is paid to the latter, as I examine the impact of information technology and modern consumerism on grassroots nationalism. It is argued that the citizens' growing interest and involvement in bilateral controversies, as well as their increasingly direct influence over policy-making on both sides, further complicate the management of the already fragile Sino-Japanese relationship.

Transfer: Elite and Popular Channels

It is relatively straightforward to see the connection between elite perceptions and policy-making. The political elites, based on their perceptions of their country and the foreign 'Others', determine the national priorities and potential policy instruments. The personal beliefs of Mao Zedong and Yoshida Shigeru, for example, played a crucial role in China and Japan's foreign policy decisions during and beyond their time. Besides that, elite perceptions also shape policy decisions through factional politics. In Japan's democratic system, the ruling party is checked and constrained by the political opposition, and their policy decisions are constantly debated through channels like regular Diet sessions. Even in China, under one-party rule of the CCP, intra-party factions also influence and limit the leadership's policy options. In the 1980s, for example, the more conservative factions within the CCP used student demonstrations against 'Japanese economic imperialism' to attack their pro-reform rivals, contributing to the fall of the

then-General Secretary Hu Yaobang.[74] Again in 1996, an inter-elite power struggle was reflected in a conflict between the hardline and moderate approaches toward Japan, U.S. and Taiwan.[75] Foreign policy decisions, therefore, are often a product of elite interactions and compromise among different perceptions and policy positions.

In addition to elite perceptions, public opinion is also a key factor in the policy-making process. Politicians in a representative democracy are accountable to their constituents. They are thus motivated to make policy decisions that reflect popular perceptions and sentiments. Although less direct, public opinion also has an impact on policy-making in an authoritarian system like China's. Through a wave of popular mobilization, public (especially nationalist) pressures exert considerable influence over foreign policy.[76] As shown in previous street protests and demonstrations in China, even with an anti-Japan theme, there were groups and individuals that linked their frustration to the government's failure to fulfill its domestic promises. In order to uphold its legitimacy claims, the CCP has to respond to public opinion attentively and takes popular perceptions into consideration when making foreign policy. In this regard, it is constrained by the nationalist sentiments that were originally encouraged by the party itself.

In recent years, public opinion began to carry more weight in policy-making in both Japan and China, as a result of the evolution of information technology. Citizens now have easier access to more information, and can express their opinions on a variety of online platforms. The internet has also connected like-minded citizens, and contributed to the strengthening of grassroots movements. Increased public participation in policy discussions, as well as more

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[74] Phil Deans, "Contending Nationalisms and the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Dispute", *Security Dialogue* 31 no. 3 (March 2000), 122.
[75] Ibid., 122-124.
[76] James Reilly, *Strong Society, Smart State : The Rise of Public Opinion in China's Japan Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 37-39.

timely and salient feedback on official decisions, thus create a greater pressure for the governments to act in accordance with public perceptions.

The increased power of public opinion, however, is not necessarily a positive development for Sino-Japanese relations. Rather, the internet, together with new forms of consumerism enabled by information technology, help reinforce pre-existing stereotypes and symbols, and the recurring themes of 'civilization versus barbarism' and 'victim versus perpetrator'. Below, I explore how social media, popular entertainment and the commercialization of national symbols contribute to the strengthening of nationalism in both countries.

Internet Forums and Social Media: Increased Contact and the Echo Chamber Effect

Information technology enabled the rise of internet forums and social media, through which citizens not only consume information, but also express their opinions more easily. Unlike traditional forms of media, posting thoughts and comments online may not require vetting by editors, or particular educational and professional credentials. Reduced cost of communications, as well as wider information distribution, encourage increased social interactions in the online public sphere, and allow netizens to identify and connect with their like-minded peers more quickly. This may result in the 'echo chamber' effect, which occurs when interactions among those with similar views only confirm and amplify pre-existing beliefs. Rather than participating in constructive discussions that involve diverse and conflicting views, citizens may seek out information that reinforces their positions, and join forces with those who share their beliefs to form more influential interest groups.

In China, online platforms like Tiexue, Tianya Forum and Guanchazhe have become 'echo chambers' for military enthusiasts and hardline nationalists. During the 2012 Senkaku/Diaoyu crisis, heated discussions related to the islands trended on these websites, motivating many to participate in the anti-Japanese street protests.[77] Similarly, online platforms have allowed Japanese nationalistic or far-right groups to attract new members and sources of funding. For example, the Association of Citizens against the Special Privileges of the Zainichi (Zainichi Tokken wo Yurusanai Shimin no Kai), also known as Zaitokukai, was able to expand significantly due to the internet. Through live streaming their activities on Niconico, USTREAM and YouTube, Zaitokukai attracted most of its younger members to its cause of abolition of state welfare and 'special privileges' offered to foreigners in Japan.[78] Zaitokukai members, the majority of which met on the internet, also organize and participate in offline anti-foreigner (notably against the Chinese and the Koreans) demonstrations.

In addition to more frequent contact and information exchange, the establishment of new online nationalistic routines also regularizes the process of assimilation. On Weibo, for example, users participate in annual online commemorations of historical events like the September 18 Mukden Incident, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident and the Rape of Nanking. Through the mass 'retweeting' of slogans like 'wuwang guochi' ('never forget national humiliation'), users reinforce their views about a victimized China and a predatory Japan. In the meantime, supporters of Japanese far-right groups, by 'liking', commenting on and retweeting nationalistic

[77] Pang Hurui 庞胡瑞. "Yulun huyu lixing aiguo gongmin yishi deyi qianghua" 舆论呼吁理性爱国 公民意识得以强化 [The public opinion calls for rational nationalism; civic consciousness is enhanced], *Zhongguo Wang* 中国网, September 17, 2012. http://opinion.china.com.cn/opinion_15_54115.html
[78] Yasuda Koichi 安田浩一, *Netto to Aikoku* ネットと愛国 [The internet and patriotism] (Tokyo: Koudansha, 2015), 44.

posts on Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms, repeatedly confirm their views about China's incivility.

Popular Entertainment: Nationalism with a Greater Appeal

The rise of the internet not only created various interactive platforms, but also encouraged the growth of popular entertainment. Traditional forms of entertainment, such as films and TV dramas, can now be distributed more widely through online video-sharing platforms and streaming services providers. Web manga, video games and other new forms of entertainment were also created to meet increased market demands. These entertainment options allow national histories and symbols to be reinterpreted in a romantic way, and have made nationalism more attractive to a broader audience, including the younger generation. The pre-existing perceptions and stereotypes are presented in a 'softer', more entertaining way, compared to political slogans and conventional propaganda. As a result, citizens find it easier to accept the underlying nationalistic presumptions, even without consciously endorsing the official messages.

In China, a plethora of films and TV dramas that have been produced portray Japanese brutality during China's century of humiliation. In the absolute majority of these works, Japanese soldiers are portrayed as either 'heartless monsters' or 'simple-minded savages'. Compared to their appeal to a general audience, anti-Japan-themed games like *Bloody Lion: Defend China* and *Resistance War* primarily attracted the 'angry youth'.[79] The intensification of the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute also inspired a series of patriotic games, such as *Defend the Diaoyu*

[79] Hongping Annie Nie, "Gaming, Nationalism, and Ideological Work in Contemporary China: Online Games Based on the War of Resistance against Japan", *Journal of Contemporary China* 22, no. 81 (May 2013), 503.

Islands, *Recapture the Diaoyu Islands*, and *Steel Blood: The Battle of Diaoyu Islands*, which task the players with brutally killing Japanese soldiers, samurais, sumo wrestlers and ninjas.[80] Although these games never received broad attention due to their poor quality and depiction of extreme violence, they were popular among the ultra-nationalists, helping to reinforce their hardline attitude towards the Diaoyu issue and encourage anti-Japanese sentiment. The less extreme patriotic web mange series, *The Chronicle of the Rabbits* (Nanian Natu Naxieshi), gained widespread popularity among Chinese youth. The web manga and its later animated adaptation depict nation states as a group of anthropomorphic animals, and offer a romanticized, sino-centric interpretation of key political and military events in history. In the series, the PRC is represented by the harmless, mild-mannered 'rabbit' that only 'bites' when driven into a corner. Japan, on the other hand, is the 'chicken' that is not taken seriously by other animals because of its short legs (a reference to the derogatory ancient name of Japan as the 'dwarf country'), and wears a headband that says 'arch enemy'.

Some of the more patriotic mangas and animes have also become great successes in Japan. Kobayashi Yoshinori's best-selling *On War* (Sensoron), for example, presents the Pacific War as a war of justice with the goal to liberate Asia from white colonialism. In the manga, the Chinese at the time of the war appear as 'uncivilized and cruel', while modern China is characterized by negative images associated with its 'non-democracy' status and 'immature nationalism'.[81] In a more recent web novel-turned anime series *The Irregular at Magic High*

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[80] Zhou Feng 周峰, "Baowei diaoyudao youxi xiajia hou yansheng duoge shanzhaiban" '保卫钓鱼岛'游戏下架后 衍生多个山寨版 [Multiple copycats emerged after game 'defend the Diaoyu islands' was taken down], *Renmin Wang* 人民网, July 12, 2012, http://world.people.com.cn/n/2012/0712/c1002-18499038.html

[81] Rumi Sakamoto, "Will you go to war? Or will you stop being Japanese?': Nationalism and history in Kobayashi Yoshinori's Sensoron," in *China–Japan Relations in the Twenty-First Century: Creating a Future Past*, ed. Michael Heazle and Nick Knight (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2007), 84-85.

School (Mahouka Koukou no Rettousei), the protagonists fought against enemies from the 'Great Asian Alliance' headed by China, which is a political entity that constantly schemes to steal Japan's magic knowledge and carry out terrorism.

Via the medium of popular entertainment, citizens consume nationalistic symbols and unexamined values in an subconscious, un-intelligent manner. With a different logic from academic work on history and politics, entertainment as a consumer product tends to favour simplification, sensationalism and controversy.[82] The collapse of the fiction/reality boundary further contributes to this process of unthinking consumption. Through popular entertainment, fictional creations become personal experiences, resulting in an easier acceptance of the stereotypes of 'civilization', 'victimhood', 'barbarism' and 'threat'.

Commercialization of Nationalism: Other Products

In addition to the entertainment industry, today's advanced capitalism has encouraged the commercialization of nationalism into other products in the market.

In recent years, the Hanfu movement in China has attracted numerous young followers. The Hanfu, or 'clothing of the Han people', is a modern imagination of Chinese traditional costume before the Manchu conquest. Essentially a fashion trend, participants justify the movement by linking it to the greater goal of revitalizing Chinese culture. Through its emphasis on traditions and Chinese authenticity, wearing Hanfu becomes not only a fashion choice, but also an expression of national pride and cultural confidence. Business interests, motivated by new opportunities in a previously unexplored market, further encourage the Hanfu movement through increased marketing efforts and product development.

[82] Ibid.

Similarly in Japan, nationalistic symbols have been converted into consumer products. A 'Japanese language boom' drove the sales of books and other products related to Japanese culture and traditions.[83] Celebrities and pop singers perform Japan's national anthem 'Kimi ga yo' at major cultural and sports events. The Hinomaru flag and other cultural icons such as Mount Fuji, cherry blossom and samurai katana appear on T-shirts, handbags and face-paintings during parades.

Like popular entertainment, these consumer goods make national symbols and their embedded values more fashionable, attractive and accessible. The commercial value of nationalistic sentiments also motivates businesses to participate in and encourage the reinforcement of pre-existing beliefs and themes. As argued by Kayama, modern consumerism promotes a form of 'petit nationalism' – a naive, un-intelligent love for one's country, which is supported by the subconscious consumption of nationalistic values and icons.[84] The commercialization of nationalism, therefore, serves to strengthen, rather than challenge, Japan and China's mutual perceptions at the grassroots level.

In conclusion, citizens and their opinions now play a greater role in the policy-making process, through their participation in the online public sphere and offline mobilization. The increased power of public opinion, however, may further complicate the Sino-Japanese relationship rather than mending it as a result of more frequent cultural exchange. As discussed in this chapter, new trends in the era of information technology and market economy, such as the

[83] Kayama Rika 香山リカ, Puchi Nashonarizumu Shokogun: Wakamono tachi no nippon shugi ぷち ナショナリズム 症候群：若者たち の ニッポン 主義 [The 'Petit Nationalism' Syndrome: Young People's Nipponism] (Tokyo:Chuko Shinsho Rakure, 2002).
[84] Ibid.

rise of online forums and social media, more accessible and creative entertainment, and increased commercialization of national symbols, encourage the 'echoing chamber' effect and unconscious consumerism. These trends bring like-minded nationalists together, and reinforce pre-existing perceptions, including the recurring themes of 'civilization versus barbarism' in Japan and 'victim against perpetrator' in China. The strengthening of nationalistic sentiments at the grassroots level puts the governments under greater pressure to make foreign policy decisions that comply with popular perceptions. The rise of grassroots, internet nationalism thus makes managing bilateral controversies a more complex matter that requires greater sophistication and attention.

Conclusion

The relationship between Japan and China is important yet fragile, often plagued by unresolved historical and territorial controversies. In order to better understand the relationship, this essay adopts a Constructivist approach to understanding the sources of tension and disagreement, and explores bilateral interactions and perceptions during three key historical periods. It argues that Sino-Japanese interactions in these times of crisis and change produce two recurring themes. These themes form the cognitive framework under which popular perceptions are shaped and policy preferences are developed.

In Japan, the theme of 'civilization versus barbarism' first surfaced during the 19th century, when Japanese modernization success was contrasted with Chinese failure in response to colonialism. During the Cold War, the theme emerged victorious in a competition between opposing ideologies and future visions, and was supported by national pride over Japan's democratic institutions and economic power. In the 21st century, increased concern about the Chinese 'security threat' is accompanied by a sense of superiority from Japan's liberal democratic characteristics. The theme re-emerged with a modern twist, and now supports the rise of the 'normalization discourse' in Japan.

In China, the theme of 'victim against perpetrator' is deeply rooted in the century of humiliation, a period during which the nation suffered at the hands of colonialist invaders, notably Japan. Under communist leadership, the theme was woven into the CCP's legitimacy claims, linking the party's success to the defeat of the Japanese perpetrator. Throughout the Cold War, the CCP was torn between the anti-Japanese foundation of its power and the practical need

to trade with its former enemy. Near the end of the 20th century, as the communist ideology declined and the country transformed its economy, the 'victim-perpetrator' theme began to increasingly dominate China's Japan policy. After a brief period of bilateral 'honeymoon', China returned to using the theme as a tool to enhance its domestic legitimacy and international reputation.

Following a historical analysis of bilateral perceptions, this essay further examines new phenomena in the 21st century, as a result of information technology and economic growth. By studying the rise of the internet, popular entertainment and increased commercialization, this essay argues that these modern trends contribute to the reinforcement of popular perceptions and bilateral themes. As public opinion now plays a greater role in the process of policy-making, growing grassroots nationalism will likely complicate and create more challenges for bilateral relations in the future.

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