

## **An Alternative Explanation for Anti-Japanese Sentiment in China: Shifting State-Society Interaction in China's Japan Policy**

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*The historical turbulence between China and Japan started from the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, and culminated in Japan's invasion of China during World War Two (the Second Sino-Japanese War) between 1937 and 1945. A series of wars caused huge human and material losses in both countries, and both experienced comprehensive transformations during and after the wars. The impact of this historical turbulence is so long-lasting that it still influences both countries' social psyche. Moreover, it continues casting a long shadow upon the current Sino-Japanese relations.*

*The recent turbulence in Sino-Japanese relations partly stems from the historical turbulence. It is much less violent but can also be emotional and worrisome. It started from the early 1980s (the Japanese history textbook controversy in 1982 and the 1985 anti-Japanese student protests in China), and culminated in the anti-Japanese mass demonstrations in multiple Chinese cities in 2005 (Bush 2010; Gries 2005; Reilly 2012; Stockmann 2010; Weiss 2008). In addition to dramatic demonstrations on streets, there are also other forms of movements, such as war reparations movements, in which Chinese war victims demand reparations from the Japanese state and companies (Rose 2005; Xu and Fine 2010; Xu and Pu 2010). Although the tension has existed for many years and surfaced from time to time, the eruption of the nationwide anti-Japanese movements in China in 2005 still shocked many outside observers.*

*Many scholars have tried to explain the anti-Japanese sentiment within current Chinese society that underlies and drives these social movements. Through careful reexamination of the existing literature, this article proposes an explanation for the anti-Japanese sentiment from a perspective that stresses the shifting state-society interaction in China's Japan policy. Specifically, the totalitarian Chinese state's neglect and suppression of genuine social concerns regarding Japan in earlier years, followed by a relatively liberalized state that tolerates societal participation in Sino-Japanese relations, are an importance source of the anti-Japanese sentiment recently observed in China.*

### **Theoretical Background and Existing Explanations**

Many political scientists attribute the prevalent anti-Japanese sentiment in China to various factors in both Japan and China, including Japan's ambivalence towards its war responsibilities, insincere apologies or conservative domestic politics (Benfell 2002; Berger 2003, 2008; Ienaga 1993; Kristof 1998; Lind 2008; Nozaki 2005; Orr 2001; Penney and Wakefield 2008; Wakamiya 1999), and China's anti-Japanese patriotic education, surging nationalism, or the Chinese gov-

ernment's manipulation of historical issues for instrumental purposes (Barme 1993; Brittingham 2007; Callahan 2006; Coble 2007; Cohen 2002; Downs and Saunders 1998; Gries 2004; He 2007; Mitter 2000, 2003; Reilly 2012; Shirk 2007; Wang 2008; Weiss 2008; Zhao 2004). Among the studies that examine the Chinese side, two major instrumental purposes are found in the Chinese government's manipulation of the anti-Japanese sentiment—domestic legitimacy and diplomatic strategy. They contend that the Chinese government uses patriotic education campaigns, especially historical memories of Sino-Japanese wars, to enhance domestic legitimacy of the Communist Party and to obtain diplomatic leverage in dealing with Japan. This state manipulation results in radical nationalistic sentiment and widespread antipathy against Japan among the Chinese people.

On the other hand, international relations scholars see the reemergence of friction between China and Japan since the 1980s as a result of the shifting international geopolitics (Bush 2010; Calder 2006; Drifte 2002; Emmott 2008; Hughes 2009; Pyle 2007; Sasaki 2010; Söderberg 2002; Wan 2006). A common threat, the Soviet Union, was in decline and eventually dissolved in the early 1990s. New security concerns arose in both countries regarding each other's intentions and behavior. The previously clear-cut roles assumed by the two countries have gradually broken down. In their prior interactions, Japan was the dominant economic power while China had more political advantage. Each country's role used to be clearly defined so it was relatively easy for them to behave in a highly predictable fashion. However, this pattern has changed since the 1980s. Japan has become more active in international affairs and sought to become a "normal" country with political influence commensurate with its economic power. China has grown rapidly since its economic reforms in the late 1970s. It has transformed into a new global economic power and become much less dependent on trade or aid from any particular country. The newly formed conflicting roles as competitors caused old disputes to resurface and new frictions to emerge, thereby fostering resentment against Japan in China. The literature places the two countries into the broader international system and provides us with a useful systemic explanation for the anti-Japanese sentiment in China.

These explanations contribute greatly to our understanding of the anti-Japanese sentiment in China, but they do not constitute the whole story. There are some limitations in these explanations. First, the studies stressing state manipulation in the formation of the anti-Japanese sentiment depict Chinese society as easily susceptible to state manipulation and see the anti-Japanese sentiment as a recent phenomenon. In Sino-Japanese relations, the Chinese state and society do not always have the same goals and seldom agree with each other. This inconsistency has been noticeable since the 1950s, as argued below in the present study. Especially, the Chinese state's Japan policy in earlier years diverged greatly from what the society had hoped for. This divergence sowed the seeds for the anti-Japanese sentiment that naturally resurfaced later when the political environment became less repressive.

Second, the existing studies also neglect the independent nature of emotion within the bilateral relationship. They play down or gloss over the emotion (mostly grievance) regarding Japan that has long been visible in the Chinese society. The manifestation of this emotion may be made more observable due to shifting geopolitics in international relations or the state's political manipulation, but its roots should not be reduced to such factors. Actually, this emotion existed long before the start of patriotic education or changes in international geopolitics. This anti-Japanese emotion has not been properly dealt with for a long time in China's Japan policy. Due to the long-term neglect and suppression by the Chinese state, this emotion resurfaces in a dramatic way later and is susceptible to controversy, political manipulation and mythmaking.

## The Main Argument

This article provides an alternative explanation for the anti-Japanese sentiment prevalent in current Chinese society. The key elements in my proposed explanation are the state-society relationship, emotion, and temporality. First, it is important to examine the state-society interaction over the years to understand the development of the anti-Japanese sentiment. Political forgiveness by the state and minimally satisfied justice felt by the society are two important conditions for the victimized country to accept the perpetrator country after a war, especially a long and traumatic one. Political forgiveness by the state cannot justifiably supplant or displace the pursuit for justice by the society (Clawford 2000; Digeser 2001; Long and Brecke 2003), and would only invite more trouble in the future if the demands for justice within the society are not “at least minimally satisfied” (Digeser 2001, 5). Promoting reconciliation without appropriately dealing with societal concerns only creates “new rifts and resentments” (Minow 1998, 23). In the case under study, political forgiveness by the Chinese state in the early period precluded societal pursuit for justice, which exacerbates the public’s feeling of resentment against Japan.

I propose that one important source of the prevalent anti-Japanese sentiment is the Chinese state’s suppression of public concerns about Japan’s aggressive past and the long-time exclusion of the society from the making of China’s Japan policy in the previous period. Before the 1980s, the totalitarian state, dominated by unchallengeable leaders, especially Chairman Mao, virtually excluded public discussion and participation from Sino-Japanese relations. As a result, popular concerns and grievances deep-rooted in the Chinese society were not properly handled in China’s diplomacy with Japan. When the state started political reforms and expanded personal freedoms in the 1980s, the previously suppressed grievance against Japan naturally reemerged among the public. It had been latent and the new political environment made its resurfacing possible. The long-term neglect and suppression only made it reemerge in a more dramatic fashion.

Second, we cannot neglect the emotional dimension in the Chinese public’s involvement in Sino-Japanese relations. The social movement literature has been dominated by the mobilization and collective action perspective, and the emotional dimension, such as resentment, frustration and grievance, has drawn much less attention. The emotional dimension in social movements used to be an important focus of the social movement literature, and its return should be welcomed (Goodwin, Jasper, Polletta 2001; Jasper 2011; Walder 2009). Scholars in international relations have also begun bringing emotion back into the study of international relations (Clawford 2000; Gries 2005; Long and Brecke 2003; Mercer 2005). Emotion plays a prominent part in Sino-Japanese relations (Bush 2010; Gries 2005; Rozman 2004), and has “a reality that is independent of and sometimes poses a challenge to the government” (Bush 2010, 199). There has been genuine resentment against Japan within the Chinese society. It is true that China’s patriotic education and diplomatic instrumentality since the 1980s may have reinforced this resentment (He 2007; Mitter 2000, 2003; Wang 2008; Weiss 2008; Zhao 2004).<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, we should also note that this resentment has survived and likely been exacerbated by long-term neglect and suppression by the Chinese state well before patriotic education started in the 1980s. This emotion was not addressed properly by the Chinese state in its diplomacy with Japan in earlier years.<sup>2</sup> Similar to many existing studies, I also argue that the Chinese state is at least partly responsible for this widespread public antipathy against Japan, but the mechanism stressed in this article is different. Instead of simply blaming the state’s manipulation, I stress its previous suppression and neglect of genuine and legitimate concerns regarding Japan within the Chinese so-

ciety. A sense of justice and genuine forgiveness are necessary for the realization of stable reconciliation (Bassiouni 1996; McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal 1997; Minow 1998; Tavuchis 1991; Worthington 2006). State suppression and neglect created a sense of injustice in Chinese society and made it difficult to attain public forgiveness of Japan's past aggression.

Third, temporality, or sequence, is also a key element in the formation of the negative public attitude towards Japan. Two types of sequence matter here. First, the previous regime had firm control over society and effectively prevented public opinion from entering policy-making process. Consequently, it was possible for the state to neglect citizens' concerns and advance the Japan policy driven by the "grand strategy" of top political leaders. This totalitarian regime of several decades was followed by one that allows relatively more (though still limited) political and personal freedoms. The domain of foreign policy has become pluralized, and the state now is much more responsive to public opinion in its making of foreign policy. This shift by the political regime creates favorable conditions for public sentiment to be glossed over at first, to smolder over time, and to reemerge eventually. Due to the lack of sufficient historical research and public reflection, a lot of historical facts were lost or morphed into myths, which makes today's discussion on historical issues more susceptible to controversy, political manipulation and mythmaking (He 2007, 2009). This leads to the second important type of temporality. The best timing for addressing popular concerns and grievances has passed, and it is now much more difficult to address the mythologized anti-Japanese sentiment than in earlier years.

### **China's Neglect and Suppression of Social Concerns before the 1980s**

Many scholars and diplomats feel nostalgic about the "honeymoon" period before the 1980s, especially in the 1970s (He 2009; Rose 2005; Wan 2006). The bilateral relationship between China and Japan was smooth and none of the significant issues that haunted the later relationship arose. This nostalgia is misplaced, however, and the "honeymoon" period was a short-lived illusion. China's diplomacy towards Japan was totally dominated by the Chinese state, to the virtually complete exclusion of society. Many societal concerns and grievances, especially those of war-time victims, were simply ignored or even suppressed. Due to geopolitical interests of the state and the "strategic" thinking of the top leaders, China conducted a Japan policy that diverged greatly from the expectations of society. Theories on post-conflict reconciliation (Bassiouni 1996, 18-19) assert that truth, justice, and redress are the three prerequisites for genuine reconciliation and emotional forgiveness. As shown below, none of these three elements were given sufficient, if any, attention in China's Japan policy before the 1980s.

#### **(1) The "People's Diplomacy"**

There was relatively little direct interaction between China and Japan before they normalized their relationship in the early 1970s. Their interactions were hampered by the geopolitical divisions of the Cold War. During most of this period, the Chinese state conducted the so-called "People's Diplomacy" towards Japan. This policy was intended to win the favor and support of the Japanese people, who would in turn put pressure on the Japanese state to improve its relationship with China. In order to successfully carry out this diplomacy, the Chinese state chose to ignore and suppress concerns of citizens regarding Japan.

It is necessary to understand the “People’s Diplomacy” in its historical context. China’s relationship with the Soviet Union deteriorated rapidly in the 1950s after only a short “honeymoon” period. It soon broke away from the Soviet camp. Consequently, China was alienated from both poles of the Cold War. The “imperialist” United States (*Meidi*) and the “revisionist” Soviet Union (*Suxiu*) both became China’s major enemies. China was isolated in the international community. To break free from this isolation, the Chinese state, especially the top leaders, embraced and pushed forward “People’s Diplomacy.” At that time Japan was not perceived as a major enemy or competitor; instead Chinese leaders believed that China could and should be united through the “People’s Diplomacy.” Driven by this thinking, China suppressed serious investigation into Japan’s wartime atrocities, did not stress Japan’s war responsibilities, and were lukewarm in seeking reparations for Chinese war victims.

In order to achieve post-conflict reconciliation, a sense of justice felt by a society is indispensable (Crawford 2000, 153). However, for the sake of this “People’s Diplomacy,” the Chinese state failed to bring a sense of justice to the public, especially war victims, and left a scar unhealed within the society. As elaborated below, the state’s neglect and suppression of social concerns have several prominent manifestations. First, the Chinese state was overly lenient toward Japanese war criminals. Many Japanese war criminals were allowed to go back to Japan immediately or were released quickly without proper trial or punishment. War crimes trials failed in their function of satisfying societal demands for justice. Second, the Chinese state constructed and propagated a view of the war surprisingly similar to the conservative view of the war in Japan. The war narratives of Japan and China in that period converged on a mythical distinction between “a small handful of Japanese militarists” and the vast majority of innocent Japanese people (He 2009, 135). This superficial division exonerated many Japanese who were actively involved in the war. It also impeded a thorough reflection on the war’s history in Chinese society. Third, in order to push forward the normalization of its relationship with Japan, the Chinese state abandoned claims to war reparations hastily without any consultation with society. As a result, many Chinese wartime victims were not properly compensated for losses incurred during the Japanese aggression. This lack of proper reparations contributed to widespread moral indignation.

## **(2) Mass Clemency and the Policy of Leniency**

Justice demands accountability (Minow 1998, 9). There is usually a natural “desire for revenge” induced by long and violent wars, and war crimes trials help to “heal the wounds of the past” for societies that have been seriously harmed by another country (Crawford 2000, 150-53). When a government adopts a too lenient attitude towards perpetrators and grants amnesty hastily, it sacrifices justice and this approach often fails because injury is not so much forgiven by society as temporarily ignored, “leaving it to fester” (Minow 1998, 15). The overly lenient policy regarding Japan’s wartime atrocities during the Mao period is notable (Cathcart and Nash 2009; Jacobs 2011). The central government, especially top political leaders, showed an “extraordinary” degree of leniency towards Japanese war criminals, consistent with the tenets of “People’s Diplomacy.” The most prominent cases are the Shenyang and Taiyuan trials of 1062 self-confessed Japanese war criminals in the summer of 1956. The Chinese government adopted a policy of leniency, and gave “extraordinarily lenient” sentences to 45 of the worst offenders and pardoned the other 1017. According to Jacobs (2011), the verdicts made by the special military tribunal were “baffling” to the general public and the majority of government officials. Only 45 of the

“most heinous offenders” were formally prosecuted, and even among these “worst ones” none were sentenced to either life imprisonment or death. Prison sentences were between eight and twenty years and only four received 20-year sentences. The majority of the self-confessed war criminals (1017 out of 1062) were released immediately after the trials. Even among the 45 prosecuted war criminals, most were free within a few years and none later than 1964. The treatment of war criminals by China was remarkably far more lenient than the treatment of war criminals in Allied war crimes trials in Europe and Japan. According to the report of the Sentencing Research Small Group assembled by the central government after the sentences, there was “widespread righteous indignation” among the general public, especially among those people who suffered atrocities. Because of societal displeasure with this policy of leniency, the central government had to suppress public discussion and conduct meticulous “explanatory work” to “prepare” the public for this “unyielding” and “manifest counterintuitive show of mass clemency” (Jacobs 2011, 162).

The policy of leniency is considered to be successful in improving Sino-Japanese relations during the Cold War, but the diplomatic success caused a great deal of dissatisfaction among the public concerning the proper way to handle the war’s history. After World War Two, it was common around the world for war criminals to be convicted through various trials. These convictions provided an arguably effective way for war victims to vent their anger towards perpetrator countries. China’s policy of leniency was imposed upon society and did not offer those who suffered during the war a sense of justice being served. Actually, this policy of leniency towards Japanese war criminals was “sorely at odds with the sentiments of the general public” (Jacobs 2011, 152).

This unpopular “policy of leniency” is only possible in a totalitarian country that has the capacity to exclude the society from its decision-making process. Even such a totalitarian state as the Chinese government under Mao had to put in a lot of effort to suppress public sentiment against leniency. Fearing a potential backlash from its own citizens, the Chinese state staged a sweeping propaganda campaign in national the media in 1954 and waves of remarkable social and intellectual campaigns. Intellectuals were instructed to praise the “wise” policy adopted by the top leaders, and public expression of resentment against the policy was criticized as “reactionary.” Indignant accusations of Japanese war criminals almost completely disappeared from public discussion after early 1954 (Jacobs 2011).

These measures were successful in silencing popular dissatisfaction only temporarily. As Clawford (2000) incisively points out, war crimes trials that fail to bring war criminals to justice generate more problems in the long term, “because promising justice to victims and not delivering it may exacerbate their feelings of resentment and continued vulnerability and promote reprisals and revenge spirals” (153). The lenient treatment of Japanese war criminals by the central government caused deeper resentment and antipathy against Japan in Chinese society.

### **(3) Suppression of War Memories**

The memory of the Sino-Japanese War during the Mao period was monopolized by the strong state. Two major reasons rendered the Chinese state unwilling to take the war’s history seriously before the 1980s. The first reason was the rationale underlying the “People’s Diplomacy” explained above. China was isolated from both the United States and the Soviet Union, and attempted to curry favor with Japan. The second reason was the Communist Party’s attempt to establish its legitimacy and consolidate its power. Although the Communist Party militarily defeat-

ed the Nationalist Party (*Kuomintang*), it still needed to establish itself as the legitimate government of the whole of China. The Nationalists remained a major challenger. The Nationalists were the principal Chinese force resisting Japanese aggression during World War Two. In contrast, the Communist Party grew rapidly during the war period and fought the Japanese on a much smaller scale. Resistance to Japanese aggression weakened the Nationalists while creating opportunities for the Communists to develop. In this sense the Communists benefited from the Sino-Japanese War to some extent. To strengthen its claim to legitimacy and weaken any Nationalists' claims, the Communist Party was reluctant to stress the history of the Sino-Japanese War which would give credit to the previous Nationalist government.

Before the 1980s, instead of reflecting on the aggression of militarist Japan, more attention was given to the depiction of the Nationalists as spineless traitors and antirevolutionary oppressors and the Communists as brave saviors of the nation. Strict guidelines set by the state were imposed on historical studies, which were aimed to promote the heroic role of the Communists and downplay the contribution of the Nationalists. A notable example is the Nanking Massacre, also known as the Rape of Nanking. Investigation into such events as the Nanking Massacre that did not comply with state guidelines was discouraged and suppressed (Waldron 1996; Eykholt 2000; Rose 2005; Yang 1999). For instance, research on the Nanking Massacre by historians at Nanjing University was held "hostage to political ideology" in the 1960s, and was kept classified so as not to focus "attention back on a time of weakness and invasion, thereby drawing away from China's revolutionary progress" (Eykholt 2000, 25-6). The research was not known by the public until 1979, when part of it was published only for "internal circulation" by the Department of History at Nanjing University. During that period it was impossible to have any meaningful public discussion about wartime atrocities such as the Nanking Massacre due to political reasons.<sup>3</sup> As a result, there was a "virtual absence of public commemoration of the Nanking Massacre before 1982" (Yang 1999, 453). The Nanking Massacre was only allowed to be "rediscovered" in China in the 1980s.

Instead of careful investigation into the war's history, the Chinese state constructed a historical view that drew an artificial line between a small group of Japanese militarists and the majority of innocent Japanese people who suffered as much as Chinese wartime victims (He 2009). This historical view sees Japan as a victimized country too and downplays its aggressive nature during the war. The Chinese state imposed this historical view on society and did not actively collect evidence on Japan's war atrocities. Due to this lack of research immediately after the war, many facts were not appropriately preserved or documented, such as the case of the Nanking Massacre discussed above (Yang 1999). This lack of clear documentation later gave ammunition to the Japanese revisionist view in historical disputes, and also gave rise to anti-Japanese sentiment built on controversial myths.

#### **(4) Renouncement of War Reparations**

The exclusion of society from the making of Japan policy culminated in the neglect of public concerns regarding war reparations during the normalization of the China-Japan bilateral relationship in the early 1970s. China's policy-making process at that time displayed two features that assisted in pushing normalization ahead without any consideration of popular concerns—centralization and secretiveness.

First, before the 1980s China's Japan policy was highly centralized. Premier Zhou Enlai was the chief negotiator, but he had to report to the paramount leader Mao Zedong. Mao's view

would brook no challenge. For instance, once Mao decided not to demand war reparations, there was “no dissent in the Chinese Foreign Ministry” (Wan 2006, 99). Only after a certain Japan policy was decided at the top would the public be informed of this decision. The society could not challenge Mao’s great strategic wisdom. Due to the neglect of attention to public opinion, China’s Japan policy made at that time was seldom well received by the general public. The state often had to mobilize its propaganda machine to prepare the society for those unpopular policies.

Second, the policy-making process of China’s Japan policy before the 1980s was also highly secretive. For instance, only a few people in the inner circle of the top leadership knew about the forthcoming diplomatic normalization. When the top leaders made up their minds, they informed the public of drastic shifts in Japan policy. Even the majority of government officials were taken by surprise. Diplomatic policies were made secretly, thereby allowing no time or space for public discussions. If the public were involved in the process, the ordering of priorities in China’s diplomacy with Japan would surely have been different. Many public concerns regarding historical issues would have been on the agenda instead of being swept under the rug for political expediency.

Thanks to China’s secretive and centralized policy-making process, Japan did not have to take Chinese public sentiment seriously. This exclusion of Chinese society helped China and Japan normalize their relationship swiftly in 1972. A brief “honeymoon” period followed the normalization. However, the “honeymoon” period was doomed to end as soon as China allowed more public participation in its policy-making processes. Diplomacy in the 1970s did not meet the minimal expectations of Chinese society and failed to address many problems left by the war. Despite a façade of affinity at the state level, the Chinese public did not accept Japan emotionally in the early 1970s. In this sense, China’s Japan policy in that period sowed the seeds for the anti-Japanese sentiment that would grow into an insurmountable hurdle for later Sino-Japanese relations.

The Chinese state’s neglect of public concerns is most clearly seen in its hasty renouncement of any claims for war reparations. When China and Japan normalized their diplomatic relationship, China abandoned official claims for war reparations in their 1972 joint communiqué. This decision to renounce war reparations was reached without consulting with the public and without any public discussion. Without war reparations directly paid to war victims, China and Japan lost another opportunity to offer the Chinese society a sense of justice.<sup>4</sup> Since the Chinese government adopted an unpopular lenient policy in war crimes trials, reparations could have been an alternative approach to bring some sense of justice to society. Moreover, reparations also have a symbolic dimension. They “express implicitly or explicitly an apology for wrongdoing” and “provide a more tangible reminder that the perpetrators have apologized” (Minow 1998, 112). With proper war reparations, the “apology” issue would be less likely to haunt later bilateral relations. If the Chinese state had allowed the participation of society in its diplomacy, the issue of war reparations would have to be seriously considered before the two countries normalized their relationship. It would likely have arrested the growth of the anti-Japanese sentiment that had been simmering for years.

### **China’s Pluralized Japan Policy since the 1980s**

China’s reforms in the late 1970s and the 1980s eased political constraints on society and facilitated much broader discussion of Sino-Japanese relations. The reforms of Deng Xiaoping and his



successors “decreased the degree of direct politicization of society and provided greater space for intellectual debate, cultural creativity, professional expertise, and economic entrepreneurship” (White et al. 1996, 26). As a result, China’s foreign policy-making has become more pluralized (Lampton 2001; Mertha 2009). “The broadening and deepening of bilateral relations to include individuals and groups below the level of the state” (Rose 2005, 28) has been a prominent feature in Sino-Japanese relations since the 1980s. This increased participation of society is reflected in two aspects. First, Chinese intellectuals are allowed more freedom to conduct research on Sino-Japanese relations, especially war-related historical research. They still must be aware of the political limits tolerated by the government, but “there is no question that the boundaries have broadened over time” (Bush 2010, 192). Research conducted by intellectuals and research institutes also has an increased influence on China’s foreign policy (Glaser and Saunders 2002; Shambaugh 2002). Greater academic and political freedom gives researchers more opportunities to access archives that were inaccessible in the past and to reinterpret the events of the war free of the previous constraints imposed by the government (Rose 2005, 11). In particular, Chinese scholars have begun to study the war’s history in a relatively more independent way, and many studies that would not have been published previously reach the public through various media. These academic studies help the spread of the emotion stemming from historical issues. Combined with the suppression of war memories and the neglect of public concerns in the past, the emergence of “new” findings gives rise to a sense of indignity and sensitizes the public to unsettled historical issues.

Second, the general public has grown more vocal and become more involved in issues related to Sino-Japanese relations. It has been noticed that public opinion has been increasingly influencing China’s foreign policies (Bush 2010; Shirk 2007). Individuals and social groups have an increased degree of freedom to voice their views on a variety of policy issues, and Japan is the issue that draw the most public interest. Chinese citizens often take a much stronger stance against Japan than the Chinese government, and have undercut the flexibility of the government’s Japan policy (Gries 2005; Shirk 2007; Wu 2007; Yang 2009). Public opinion regarding China’s relations with Japan sometimes gives rise to movements and protests that are a genuine reflection of popular feeling. The formation and consolidation of public opinion are facilitated by the growth of China’s media outlets. Mass media have proliferated since the 1980s and operate more and more according to commercial criteria. In particular, the widespread use of the Internet greatly facilitates the formation and diffusion of public opinion and activism (Yang 2009; Wu 2007).

Due to the increasing participation of society, the Chinese state has lost its monopoly on Japan policy. It has come under pressure from a society that has been long ignored, and has started to face the unintended consequences of its prior Japan policy. The suffering of war victims was not acknowledged through the war crimes trials or taken into account in state-level discussions about reparations in the 1970s. Many Chinese feel that historical issues have not yet been fully resolved. To make things worse, today’s Chinese state remains defensive of its past Japan policy, instead of acknowledging or rectifying it. It maintains an ambiguous attitude towards anti-Japanese sentiment within society. It is more convenient to put the blame on the Japanese side and to overlook its own neglect of public concerns in earlier years.

This ambiguity can be best illustrated by its attitudes towards the civil movement that seeks war reparations from Japan (Xu and Pu 2010). Since the early 1990s, many formerly silent wartime victims, including former comfort women, forced laborers, and others who suffered during the war as well as after the war (such as those killed or injured by wartime weapons aban-

done by the Japanese), have started their struggle for reparations from the Japanese state and companies. This struggle developed into a social movement (*Suopei Yundong*) in the mid-1990s. Social activists not only mobilized victims and supporters, but also petitioned and urged the government to support their claims (Rose 2005). The Chinese government knows that it already abandoned all official claims to war reparations during the normalization of the bilateral relationship. The reparations were renounced without consulting society, however. The Chinese government has largely adopted a “hands-off” approach in civil compensation cases, while creating hurdles for the reparations movement in establishing non-governmental organizations within China (Xu and Pu 2010). It does not allow Chinese war victims to take legal actions against itself while tolerating these legal claims against the Japanese government or companies. Many lawsuits have been lodged in district or higher courts in Japan but have met very little success. Victims have been largely unsuccessful in obtaining compensation or apologies. Every time Japanese courts use the 1972 Joint Communiqué signed by the two governments to reject Chinese victims’ cases, public opinion in China becomes more negative. The current Chinese state’s ambiguity regarding its past Japan policy further adds to the negative emotion towards Japan within Chinese society.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

As measured by the degree of involvement of society in Sino-Japanese relations, China’s Japan policy can be roughly divided into two phases—the period before the late 1970s and that after the late 1970s. In the first phase, China’s Japan policy was decided at the state level to the exclusion of society. This state monopoly can be clearly seen in the suppression of historical research and war memories, overtly lenient war crimes trials, and the diplomacy normalizing bilateral relations (especially hasty renouncement of war reparations). Hence, all three prerequisites for genuine reconciliation—truth, justice, and redress—were given no serious attention. All these policies were very unpopular with the general public and failed to offer society a sense of justice. Even so, the state was still able to effectively advance these policies and brush aside potential backlash from society, thanks to its strong control over the society and the policy-making process. In contrast, during the second phase, political liberalization brought more personal freedom and China’s Japan policy became far more pluralized. It began to take public voices more seriously and allowed much freer discussion among both intellectuals and the general public about Sino-Japanese relations.

This sequence in the changing pattern of state-society interaction in Sino-Japanese relations is an important source of the widespread anti-Japanese emotion in China. The domination of the state and the exclusion of society in the first phase eliminated the opportunity to solve many problems left by the war. It also reinforced negative public attitudes towards Japan because it created a common perception that justice had not been served. The pluralization of the policy-making process in the second phase provided a favorable condition for unsolved concerns and simmering emotions to surface. These latent issues were suppressed and aggravated in the previous phase, which made their reemergence more emotional and also more “surprising” to outside observers. This emotion manifests itself in prevalent negative public opinion and frequent eruption of mass demonstrations against Japan.

Emotion plays such an important part in current Sino-Japanese relations that public views in China on any issues related to Japan become emotionally charged. For a long time the Chinese

state brushed aside this public emotion for political expediency. The superficiality of reconciliation in the Sino-Japanese relationship might have been sustained if China had remained a totalitarian state. Conversely, a more sustainable Sino-Japanese reconciliation may have been possible if China were a democracy, or at least a state allowing plural voices, from the beginning, and public concerns would have received serious attention. However, the totalitarian state that dominated Japan policy to the exclusion of society in the first phase, combined with a relatively liberalized state allowing increasing participation of society in Sino-Japanese relations, created fertile soil for the growth of anti-Japanese emotion.

Although this article is on Sino-Japanese relations, its implications go beyond this particular bilateral relationship. There are several lessons we can learn. The most important lesson is that policy makers cannot ignore society and societal emotion in seeking to achieve long-lasting reconciliation.<sup>5</sup> Policies that sacrifice the pursuit of justice and amends for short-term political purposes only invite more problems in the longer term.

First, for two countries that seek reconciliation after being at war, the states must allow the involvement of their citizens in the reconciliation process from the beginning. It is unconstructive for the states to exclude society for the purpose of political expediency. Societies, especially those in victimized countries, have many genuine concerns and grievances that differ greatly from the interests of the state and need to be dealt with appropriately. Bilateral relationships can be improved swiftly through state-dominated diplomacy, but the ignored concerns and emotions of citizens may act as a long-term barrier to smooth relationships. In this sense, a democracy is better positioned to reconcile with other countries, as it has to take public concerns and emotions into account. In contrast, an autocracy cannot reconcile well and the specific reconciliation process hinges on top leaders' thinking. Public emotion is often worsened if an authoritarian state chooses to neglect and suppress popular concerns for temporary political gains.

Second, in order to achieve genuine reconciliation policy makers must take social emotion more seriously. Reconciliation is fundamentally an emotional process in addition to rational calculation (Long and Brecke 2003, 30-31). States' ignoring social emotion for the sake of political expediency only exacerbate negative emotion, which will eventually haunt later bilateral relations. For scholars studying post-conflict reconciliation, it is important to recognize that public emotion is not simply a product of rational calculation by states, an epiphenomenon of shifting international geopolitics, or a social construction created to facilitate collective action. We need to examine it in its own right and pay attention to its historical and social roots. In doing so, perpetrator countries will take popular emotion in victimized countries more seriously, instead of simply dismissing it as a "history card" or diplomatic bargaining chip conspired by the other country; on the other hand, victimized countries will recognize that their own states and societies also share some responsibility in addressing this emotion, thereby ceasing the placing of all blame on the other side. Without dealing with emotion appropriately, the prospect of achieving genuine reconciliation is dim. We should not willfully hope that shifts in structural factors, such as any improved geopolitical environment or state-level diplomacy, would magically reverse the negative emotion of an aggrieved society.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> There are a few notable exceptions that go beyond this state manipulated nationalism in China. For example, Gries (2005) argues that anti-Japanese sentiment in China today has deep-seated popular roots in evolving narratives about the "5000 years of glorious civilization" and the "century of traumatic humiliation," and in long-time debates over the very meaning of being "Chinese." There is some truth in this explanation, but it mixes expressions and narratives of the emotion with the root of the emotion.

<sup>2</sup> To be sure, the way how the Japanese state handles historical issues is also an important source of this resentment (Benfell 2002; Berger 2003, 2008; Hein 2010; Ienaga 1993; Kristof 1998; Lind 2010; Wakamiya 1999). This is not the main focus of this article, however. Here I mainly look at the state and society on the Chinese side.

<sup>3</sup> According to Yang (1999, 853), one notable exception is a call for research on the Nanking Massacre by Mei Ju-ao, the Chinese judge at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal. However, he was soon accused of "stirring up national hatred and revenge" against the Japanese people.

<sup>4</sup> Japan provided China with a significant amount of official development assistance (ODA), which played an important role in funding China's infrastructural projects. However, 90% of this funding is in the form of low interest loans, not grants, and needs to be paid back. Moreover, this funding is offered to the Chinese government, and is not directly paid to individual war victims.

<sup>5</sup> Some recent studies on post-conflict reconciliation in Sino-Japanese relations argue for a policy that "compromises remembrance and justice in service of political reconciliation", because it is "the most effective at promoting reconciliation" (Lind 2008, 8). This policy may achieve temporary political success but will create backlash from victimized countries in the longer term. Under this policy, historical issues will surely come back from time to time to haunt bilateral relations. The present study serves as a counterargument against this "political expediency" argument.