

# Reconceptualising the Divide



Reconceptualising the Divide:  
Identity, Memory, and Nationalism  
in Sino-Japanese Relations

Edited by

Gerrit Gong and Victor Teo

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P U B L I S H I N G

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# CHAPTER ONE

## BEYOND REALISM: REVIEWING CONTEMPORARY SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS

VICTOR E. TEO

Observers of East Asian International Relations would no doubt agree that the relationship between China and Japan is one of the most important sets of bilateral relations in East Asia. What happens between China and Japan has ramifications beyond their bilateral context that may dictate the tone, texture, and direction of East Asia's political development and economic growth for the foreseeable future. Narrowly divided by a strip of water, China and Japan, two of the world's largest economies, have confronted each other during the last fifteen years over issues ranging from disagreements about history to China's testing of nuclear weapons, military build-up, and human rights abuses. Japan and China have also challenged each other over maritime resources and territory and alleged incursions into each other's Exclusive Economic Zones. The peace in Northeast Asia, as commonly presumed by scholars, is facilitated by the presence of the United States through the Cold War security system of bilateral alliances that the United States has built up over the last five decades.

Most explanations given for Sino-Japanese tensions are of two variants. The first is that China and Japan are contending hegemonies trying to maximize their influence in the Asia-Pacific. The frictions between them are the result of conflicting interests as they strive to maximize their power within the boundaries of international law. The second variant of explanation is that China and Japan have yet to reconcile with each other since the Second World War. Despite the diplomatic niceties in the past four decades, this failure to find other avenues of reconciliation has only served to further exacerbate *realpolitik* tensions between them.

This book seeks to address these core questions: What is it that divides Japan and China? Are the obstacles that stand between China and Japan really *realpolitik* in nature, pertaining to strategic competition over material interests? Does neo-realism as a conceptual lens help us understand the issues and problems between China and Japan? How do we explain the nature of the nationalisms currently prevalent and perhaps rising in China, Japan, and even Korea in the past two decades? How are these nationalisms linked to East Asia's domestic and international politics? What possible steps could China and Japan take to improve bilateral relations and cement their new "partnership"?

An intended theoretical contribution of this book is to focus on "ideational" factors in conceptualizing Sino-Japanese issues. Most, if not all, of the essays frame the theme by problematizing "ideational" factors within the bilateral relationship. By locating the notion of historical memories, identity, values, norms, and interests at the heart of theoretical analysis, the book notes the limits of neo-realism as a complete explanation for contemporary Sino-Japanese relations. Instead, the book argues concepts drawn from recent developments in constructivism add useful analytical dimensions to explaining past and contemporary Sino-Japanese developments.

Secondly, the book examines how nationalism, domestic politics, and identity formation are intricately linked, i.e., how the interplay and complex dynamics of ideational forces constantly redefine politics between China, Japan, and even Korea. Interestingly, each author in his or her own way illustrates how Northeast Asia's complex bilateral relationships are dramatically shaped by identity politics as much as by conventionally conceptualized competing material interests. Each does so by offering empirical substantiation for the theoretical propositions advanced.

The third aim of this book is to explore possible ways forward for China and Japan to co-exist and cooperate in East Asia. Given developments since 1978 (especially in light of events of the past fifteen years), it is useful to ask if and how politicians and others can make a positive difference in Sino-Japanese relations. In particular, how have the experiences of the past fifteen years changed our understanding of Sino-Japanese relations? Leaders in China and Japan have often assumed Sino-Japanese relations are "high level" politics that require no consultation with and little consensus from their respective populations. However, the protests that broke out in China and Japan during the period of Prime Minister Koizumi underscore that without popular support "top down" reconciliation may not work. Despite possible political will in both Tokyo

and Beijing to improve relations, their policies towards each other are not merely “foreign policy” issues to the Chinese or Japanese nations respectively—they are first and foremost domestic political issues.

To the extent that Northeast Asia’s political leadership is seeking to find ways forward based on common ground, an important question the book sets forth is this: Should politicians work to define “ideational” common grounds before seeking to negotiate common material interests? Can leaders and populations define and promote common aspirations, common values, and interests premised on a common identity to build a platform of trust? Or would only talking about differences—different political systems, different national identities and values—widen and perpetuate these differences and the gulf between them? How could China and Japan truly operationalize the spirit and the ethos of the 1978 Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation—and the May 7, 2008, China-Japan Joint Statement on All-Round Promotion of Strategic and Equally Beneficial Relations—to build a strategic partnership that befits the requirements of twenty-first century East Asia?

The contributors of this volume met at a symposium commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship at the University of Hong Kong in May 2008, just after the Hu-Fukuda Summit that brought at least greater nominal normalization to a strained relationship. The discussions were fruitful, and the result is this volume, which provides a thorough and major review of Sino-Japanese relations over the past thirty years and peers into its future in light of recent, significant developments.

Gerrit Gong’s chapter on why history matters sets the tone of the volume by problematizing the role of “memory” in Sino-Japanese relations. By creating history, issues of remembering and forgetting shape future strategic alignment in international relations. Gong’s chapter uses remembering and forgetting as conceptual frameworks to analyze memory and identity in historical international relations and in the transactional international intersection of philosophy, psychology, politics, and policy. It then uses these frameworks to explore three conundrums with a rising China and their implications for Sino-Japanese relations.

Gong points out that it is crucial to remember that firstly, victors write history while those defeated remember it. Second, the historical memory of some countries is too short and that of others too long. Third, China and the international system will need to address issues of historical memory and future international identity, especially if China’s historical narrative retains central elements of weakness, humiliation, and self-conscious

nationalistic and civilizational pride, and Beijing continues to emerge as a great power with global influence.

Gilbert Rozman's chapter examines another critical aspect of Sino-Japanese relations as revealed by events in the Koizumi era from 2005-2006. Premising the explanation of the long-term deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations from 1989-2006 on the notion of "values," Rozman notes the current values held by Chinese and Japanese could not have been more disparate. Compared to previous downturns in ties in 1989 and 1993-96, the 2005-06 slide came with much deeper pessimism about the crux of the other country's value system.

Four summits in nineteen months warmed relations at the top, but there were no breakthroughs on matters that offered reassurance about values. Reviewing discussions on historical memory, sovereignty, human rights, middle class values, responsibility for global stability, and globalization, we find some issues may be shunted aside for a time but until they are addressed, the value gaps do not narrow. Despite unmistakable interest of the Hu Jintao-Wen Jiabao leadership and then Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo to improve relations, neither side has had the political consensus needed to make substantial progress on the convergence of their values system, given their national identities. This chapter raises interesting and provocative questions for the challenge of building an East Asian community and the maintenance of regional stability through the cultivation of trust between the Chinese and Japanese people. Unfortunately, Rozman's prognosis is not optimistic: he feels "on neither side can leaders articulate a vision resonant with middle class values" of the other.

Building on the notion of an "ideational" obstacle in this set of bilateral relations, Victor Teo makes the case that the tensions in Sino-Japanese relations are in large part caused by the development of antithetical elements in their respective national identities. Teo argues this divergence in the way the Chinese and Japanese perceive themselves is an unintended consequence and confluence of several factors. First, Cold War exigencies meant war issues were not addressed by the two nations which were preoccupied with economic modernization and strategic alliance against the USSR. Additionally, the Chinese Communist Party's antagonism with the USSR's CPSU meant that, for much of the Cold War, the "enemy" of the Revolution in the hearts and minds of the Chinese people were the Soviets, not the Japanese. This, however, did not mean the amelioration of the latent hostility, the historical memories, or the images of the Japanese in the Chinese mind. The Japanese, on the other hand, had built for themselves through the Cold War an identity (correspondingly also memories, narratives, and worldview) quite different from that of the

Chinese (or even the Koreans) had of them (the Japanese). The Japanese nation perceives itself to be forward-looking and peaceful and, more importantly, to have made substantial progress to the contribution to the global community.

The end of the Cold War and the demise of the USSR had important implications for the ontological definition of the Self and “other” for the Chinese. The chapter argues that the “normalizing” process of Japan and the rise of China will add impetus for their identities to “clash” if they are not properly “construed” or “managed.” While it may not be possible to “reduce” the stress on their respective identities, the Japanese and Chinese governments may find greater common ground if they could agree and come together to “espouse” a common regional identity akin to that of the Europeans. This might actually help bond the countries in Northeast Asia in a significant way. The chapter concludes by arguing that the real problem lies in how China and Japan can get to this stage.

These chapters raise fundamentally interesting questions for Sino-Japanese relations. First, there seems to be a general “trust” problem between Japan and its neighbors (less so for China as Beijing seems to get along with the Koreans and Russia). While scholars may attribute this to contending interests, this highlights a particular problem found in Sino-Japanese relations. The “distrust” that one sees in Sino-Japanese relations may well be a product of identity politics—a theme discussed in depth by Tsuneo Akaha.

Akaha argues that contemporary Japanese nationalists are seeking an intellectual and political restoration of the Japanese people’s pride in their nation through rehabilitation of patriotism at home, consolidation of a state-centric view of Japanese society, and pursuit of a more assertive foreign policy. In this context, China plays a particularly important role in both the nationalists’ understanding of Japan’s wartime and postwar history and in their aspirations regarding Japan’s international status today. Akaha, through this chapter, analyzes how “China” is used by the nationalists to reconstruct an idealized “Japan” through a selective manipulation and articulation of ideas, events, and institutions from Japan’s past. By dissecting the narratives and characteristics of Japanese nationalists, Akaha draws out the major goals of the nationalists and their arguments as they relate to China. The anti-Chinese rhetoric nationalists use in their contemporary discourse covers a wide set of issues, e.g., China’s opposition to Japan’s assumption of a permanent U.N. Security Council seat, history texts, the Nanking Massacre, the Yasukuni Shrine, and comfort women controversies, as well as growing concern about crimes committed by Chinese nationals in Japan. It concludes that even

though the nationalists are by no means the most influential intellectual voice or political force in Japan, the more critical China becomes of Japan's positions on these issues, the more resolute the Japanese nationalists will become in putting forth the idealized "Japan."

In their chapter, Wong Heung-wah and Yau Hoi-yan provide a comparable case study to Akaha's piece by examining the role of Taiwan in Chinese Nationalism and how this pertains to Sino-Japanese relations. An important and sensitive issue in Chinese foreign policy is, of course, Taiwan. Beijing is keen to ensure the Taiwanese independence movement is stemmed. At the same time, Tokyo's position over Taiwan is crucial to the Chinese. First, the Chinese are extremely sensitive to Japan's stance toward the Taiwan issue because Tokyo is blamed for separating Taiwan from China in 1895. Second, given the colonial history that binds Taiwan and Japan, significant goodwill at both the governmental and grassroots levels exists between the Taiwanese and Japanese establishments. Third, as a major world power, Japan's ties with Taiwan are closely watched by many countries, and China fears a change in Tokyo's position could stimulate reconsideration by others. Wong and Yau posit a microscopic examination of how Taiwanese nationalists have tried to reinvent Taiwanese culture through the Japanization of Taiwanese culture in their bid to achieve the separatist dream of an independent Taiwan.

This chapter demonstrates that prior to the arrival of the Nationalist forces, local culture was very much marginalized. In this view, the recent revival in the 1990s was a political experiment that linked "bentuhua," i.e. localization, with "re-Japanization." Wong and Yau argue that former Taiwan president Lee Teng-hui's pro-cultural agenda cannot be just seen as evidence of pro-Japan's posture or of the regime's attempt to reach out to Japan but really as part of Lee's efforts to cut Taiwan's genealogical ties with the PRC. Inevitably, Lee's cultural policy and his professed affinity for Japan provide a platform legitimizing the purposes of both Taiwanese and Japanese nationalists and anti-Japanese elements in the PRC.

Victor Zatsepine's "Three Nations in Search of Manchuria's Past," frames the issues of nationalism, memories, and identities using a comparative case study approach. By presenting the legacy of the Russian and Japanese imperialist expansion in Lüshun and thereby greater Manchuria, this chapter asks how the history of Manchuria should be interpreted in light of today's regional politics and local dynamics. Zatsepine showcases how very different Japanese, Chinese, and Russian interpretations of history are. Beyond hugely disparate official versions of history, cognitive dissonance between experiences on the ground on one

hand and official narratives on the other still exist in each society. The turbulent history of Russian and Japanese occupation of Manchuria early in the twentieth century deeply affects official and popular perceptions in these countries today. As pointed out, differing narratives in these countries have prevented the Chinese, Japanese, and Russia from agreeing on a united version of events. Such disagreements in fact seem to provide additional basis for the contestation of history. Zatssepine points out that China, Japan, and Russia each tend to select and interpret moments of Manchurian history for nationalist projects and political purposes.

All these point to the perceptual gulfs that exist and will continue to exist amongst these neighbors unless convergence and harmonization of social memories can occur among the three nations. Clearly, academic paradigms need to view common issues through Japanese, Chinese, and Russian eyes. This chapter raises the broader question of whether China, Japan, and Russia could achieve a common interpretation of their convoluted and complicated interaction without stoking nationalism in their respective nations. Even though the chapter hints that common ground may be found, as in the aftermath of the tumultuous Koizumi administration when China, Japan, and Korea came together jointly to publish a history textbook. Nonetheless, one should acknowledge that as long as Northeast Asian countries do not give up utilizing history in their patriotic campaigns, these segments of history will continue as “memories” deeply embedded in the identity and politics of the respective nations.

Transcending issues of history and identity, Frank Ching’s discussion on the “U.S.-Japan Security Alliance: Helping or Hindering Sino-Japanese Relations?” contextualizes the broader development of Sino-Japanese relations against their respective relations with the United States. Utilizing a broad historical framework, Ching assesses the connection between the emergence and convergence of three issues—Taiwan, history, and territorial issues—in Sino-Japanese relations and highlights the importance of the role of the United States within.

Ching argues that discussions of Sino-Japanese relations cannot ignore sometimes passive but often active maneuvers of the United States. If anything, the U.S.-Japan Security alliance is a significant obstacle to better Sino-Japanese relations. From the Chinese perspective, the alliance is a stumbling block towards the cultivation of bilateral trust, which is essential for robust and balanced Sino-Japanese relations. Ching points out the Chinese quietly acquiesced to this arrangement, as President Nixon had pointed out that if the Americans did not “fish” in Taiwanese waters, the Soviets would. While Japan had little choice during the ’50s and ’60s

with regards to its strategic posture, that Japan chose to reaffirm its alliance in 1997 meant the alliance is now a function of a conscious Japanese decision. It also reflects the perennial insecurity Japan feels that the United States may privilege China as its strategic partner in Asia if Japan shows any sign of ambivalence towards the U.S.-Japan Security alliance. Today, the region is witnessing China in what some see may become an unstoppable ascent, coupled with a Japan determined to “normalize” itself. What is clear is that both countries, regardless of whether they call it “peaceful rise” or “normalization” are clearly striving for regional and global influence and prestige.

Leaders in both China and Japan face political pressure to resolve what appear to be insurmountable problems, and often they resort to nationalistic gestures to garner votes in their fight for political survival. Given recent nationalistic outbursts evident in Sino-Japanese relations, it is necessary to reconsider whether politicians alone can make a positive difference in Sino-Japanese relations. Although there is now political will in both Tokyo and Beijing, the recent rush to improve things at the grassroots level registers a new recognition by the governments that the popular sentiments on the ground are crucial to Sino-Japanese relations. Politicians in Northeast Asia frequently talk about finding a way forward based on common ground, but one may ask: What exactly is meant by this? Should politicians work on the “ideational” before finding “common ground” on material interests? Or would only talking about differences—different systems and values—enhance differences and perpetuate divisions? Are there concrete ways to develop a way forward? What steps could be undertaken to improve bilateral relations?

Lam Peng Er’s piece on “The Role of Leadership in Japan’s Relations with China” considers the importance of leadership changes and their impact on Sino-Japanese relations. Lam highlights the role of structure-agency in the continuing debate on the influence of “ideational structure.” By examining the cases of four Japanese Prime Ministers—Koizumi Junichiro, Abe Shinzo, Fukuda Yasuo, and Aso Taro—and Presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao on the Chinese side, Lam demonstrates what critical differences political leadership can bring to bilateral relations. Lam’s chapter highlights the importance of leadership. As he eloquently puts it, “a Koizumi or a Fukuda makes a fundamental difference in Sino-Japanese ties even if the external and domestic structures remain essentially the same.”

Despite mutual claims by Beijing and Tokyo that relations were thawing when Abe succeeded Koizumi, relations remained prickly. Abe adopted an ambiguous “neither confirm nor deny” approach to Yasukuni



Shrine visits, proposed a quadrangular alignment of four democracies (Japan, India, the United States, and Australia) that appeared to target China, and lobbied for a European arms embargo on Beijing. Bilateral relations only improved during the tenure of the Fukuda Administration. Fukuda Yasuo advocated a key tenet of his father's doctrine to Southeast Asia—a “heart to heart” relationship—be extended to China. Fukuda, unlike Abe, categorically stated he would not visit the Yasukuni Shrine. Beijing has reciprocated warmly to the friendly Fukuda Administration. To be sure, the dispute over territorial boundaries and gas and oil resources in the East China Sea remains. Nevertheless, the “Three Ts” (Tibet, Taiwan, and Trade [e.g. tainted dumplings]) are unlikely to rock Sino-Japanese relations. Genuine “normalization” in Sino-Japanese relations will only take place when the burden of history no longer threatens to haunt and disrupt bilateral ties. Even were this happy scenario to happen, “normalization” will probably be a long and winding process beyond the Fukuda Administration and Hu Jintao era.

Shi Yinhong's chapter offers a unique insight into a new generation of China's thinking on international relations in general and Sino-Japanese relations in particular. Shi argues a new approach towards Sino-Japanese relations should be taken as a result of the 2008 Hu-Fukuda summit. Otherwise the Hu-Fukuda communiqué could become the fourth in a series of communiqués which amount to nothing but diplomatic niceties. This chapter raises many interesting questions: Could China and Japan achieve breakthrough on an issue of substance within bilateral relations in the near future? Could China (and implicitly also Japan) make adequate preparations, reflection, and thinking on the principles and understanding contained in the Hu-Fukuda summit? Beyond that, what could the communiqué mean for Chinese and Japanese foreign policy, national interests, and Sino-Japanese relations in the long run?

Shi suggests four main areas for China (and Japan) to operationalize the spirit of the recent communiqué. First, China and Japan must be able to improve the strategic thrust and crisis management between them. Second, China and Japan must build capability in their partnership to help overcome challenges—e.g., environmental issues or public health scares. Cooperation, Shi argues could strengthen Sino-Japanese relations. Third, China and Japan must locate and intertwine their bilateral ties into a larger network of multi-lateral ties within the region. Lastly, Shi suggests both countries increase cooperation in the security arena, which may prove to be the most difficult area for each country.

Masayuki Masuda follows from where Shi leaves off by offering Japanese insights that possible future cooperation between China and

Japan may lie in the realm of security cooperation. Japan and China have been building “strategic relations” for mutual benefit since October 2006. In the process of creating new Japan-China “strategic” relations, defense authorities emphasize promoting not only Sino-Japanese goodwill exchanges but also contributing to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. Masuda argues Japan and China could expand the scope of “defense exchanges” from high-level goodwill exchanges (which are vulnerable to fluctuations in political climate) to the establishment of a crisis prevention/management system premised upon strengthened communication. In fact, China and Japan could consider establishing a direct military hotline. The chapter then outlines how in 2007, China and Japan initiated consultations on possible policy coordination and security cooperation to foster peace and stability between China and Japan, and for the region and the world. By the end of August 2007, Chinese Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan had visited Japan and reached an agreement with his Japanese counterpart gradually to consider possibilities for exchanges in the field of non-traditional security. In April 2008, both countries reached agreements to study possibilities for exchanges both in the field of international disaster relief activities and UN peace-keeping missions. As Masuda notes, this development is largely positive. From the Japanese perspective, if the PLA moves to cooperate beyond symbolic military diplomacy and enlarge its scope for security cooperation, then China could further its desire for a stable international environment. In order to remove the ideational barriers that may hinder Sino-Japanese relations, Sino-Japanese diplomacy could explore multilateral frameworks such as the ASEAN+3, ASEAN Regional Forum, or United Nations.

Jiang Lifeng contextualizes the current climate of Sino-Japanese relations within the long-term patterns in interactions between China and Japan. This chapter argues that the current state of affairs presents the best opportunity yet for the enhancement of Sino-Japanese relations based on substantial cooperation and mutual interests. This chapter outlines why the recent communiqué reached is significant. It systematically compares the Hu-Fukuda summit with previous summits between Chinese and Japanese leaders. Unlike Shi, Jiang is confident recent summit initiatives will improve popular sentiments in both countries. The chapter goes further to outline the different steps both Japan and China can take to improve “strategic cooperation.” This could include innovative suggestions for Sino-Japanese cooperation on space exploration or more conventional energy exploration and exploitation projects.

The concluding chapter by Soung Chul Kim offers a Korean insight into how Sino-Japanese relations could evolve and take on a dimension

beyond bilateral concerns. As globalization and regionalization intensify around the world, there has been hope and talk concerning the establishment of a regional community in Northeast Asia. In the context of this international environment, Kim's chapter analyzes the international conditions affecting the establishment of a Northeast Asian community. It considers theoretical frameworks for regional cooperation, reviews the positions of the three countries in Northeast Asia—Korea, China, and Japan—and discusses the conditions and issues concerning the regional cooperation among them. Kim also discusses the interdependence of security cooperation and economic cooperation, as well as the Korea-China-Japan Summit and Six-Party Talks as examples of the institutionalization of regional cooperation. The chapter concludes with suggestions on how to establish regional cooperative organizations—giving hope China and Japan could cooperate on issues outside their bilateral framework as a way forward.

# CHAPTER TWO

## REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING IN SINO-JAPANESE AND INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM RELATIONS: THREE CONUNDRUMS WITH A RISING CHINA

### GERRIT W. GONG

#### **Introduction**

As nations create memory and identity past and future, issues of remembering and forgetting shape strategic alignments.

This chapter begins with a brief reflection on two contrasting scenes separated by twenty years. It then offers several frameworks based on issues of remembering and forgetting as a way to analyze memory and identity in structural international relations and in the transactional international intersection of philosophy, psychology, politics, and policy. The chapter's third section uses remembering and forgetting frameworks and analysis to consider alternative future paths for dealing with paradoxes attendant to a rising China for Sino-Japanese relations and international system relations. These paradoxes derive from a Chinese historical memory that often features elements of weakness, humiliation, and victimhood and, at the same time, evidences an emergent Chinese international identity that often includes elements of nationalism, expanding influence, and global prestige.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars are increasingly engaged in identifying and addressing these kinds of “remembering and forgetting” issues and paradoxes. See, for example, Shi Yinong [Professor of International Relations and History, Remin University], “Truth and Reconciliation in East Asia: Historical Obstacles for East Asian Community,” in *2007 Civilization and Peace* (Seoul: Academy of Korean Studies, 2008).

Threaded through this chapter are three conundrums relative to a rising China with self-conscious historical memory and formative international identity.

First, while victors usually write the history, those defeated most often remember it. What implications arise for Sino-Japanese relations and international systems relations from China's paradoxical success in persuading the modern international system to include as part of its master narrative China's self-consciously defined memory of itself as a weak and humiliated victim?

Second, while the historical memory of some countries (e.g., the United States) is too short, the historical memory of other countries (e.g., China) may be too long. What implications arise for the international system from un-synchronized national views of past and future by significant constituent members of that system?

And, third, China and the international system will need to address issues of historical memory and future international identity. Can consideration of alternative futures help address potential disjunctions if and as China's historical narrative retains elements of weakness and humiliation even while its emerging international identity features elements of national and civilizational pride?

## I. Reflection

I recall it as a warm, Beijing summer evening, probably in 1987 or 1988, while I was working at the U.S. Embassy in China. Chinese friends invited my wife and me to join them for a movie. This was the neighborhood theater. The audience was all local Beijing people (*laobaixing*).

The first "short" was an old film (old even then) about the Rose Bowl parade in Pasadena, California. It was narrated in English but didn't need translation since it was primarily about putting hundreds of thousands of flowers on strange looking Rose Bowl floats. The second "short" was a biology class educational film about how to dissect a frog. As I recall, the audience responded with surprise and horror each time the electrodes made the dead frog jump. I have never forgotten what a bizarre window I thought those two "shorts" provided on the West or "outside world" for that local Chinese theater audience.

Then came the main feature: *Hong Gaoliang (Red Sorghum)* by director Zhang Yimou. I do not need and will not detail the scene in the movie where the Japanese troops round up the Chinese villagers to punish them for trampling the sorghum. A Japanese officer compliments the head

Chinese butcher for his skilful skinning of the animal the Japanese troops are roasting to eat, offers him a cigarette, and then directs him “to flay another.” The head Chinese butcher sees a fellow villager still alive but hanging head bowed. The head Chinese butcher will not flay a living human being, so the Japanese troops brutally shoot him. The Chinese butcher’s assistant is brought forward. He has seen the fate of the first butcher. The camera moves away. When it returns, the Chinese butcher’s assistant is covered in blood. He has gone crazy for what he has been forced to do.

Reportedly, this gruesome scene was not originally part of *Red Sorghum*. Director Zhang Yimou was apparently told his movie needed to provide patriotic political education as well as artistic entertainment.<sup>2</sup> The specifically anti-Japanese overlay and the way it was chillingly viewed in the local Beijing theater add interpretative layers of politics; education; cultural, social, and historical memory; and state-popular narrative each time we view films such as *Red Sorghum*.

Now, coming twenty years later, a contrasting Sino-Japanese image emerges. People’s Republic of China (PRC) President Hu Jintao and Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda pose following President Hu’s May 6-10, 2008, state visit to Japan. In Tokyo, the two sign a “China-Japan Joint Statement on All-Round Promotion of Strategic and Mutually Beneficial Relations.”<sup>3</sup>

In many ways, the Joint Statement is framed in the terms of remembering and forgetting. Both sides recognize, “long-term peace, friendship and cooperation are the only choice of both sides,” and pledge, “both sides are determined to promote ... and to realize the lofty goal of peaceful coexistence, friendship from generation to generation.”<sup>4</sup>

Article III of the Joint statement specifically expresses,

Both sides were determined to face history squarely, be geared to the future and constantly open up a new horizon of China-Japan strategic and mutually beneficial relations.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Zhang Yimou and a vibrant group of leading Chinese artists and intellectuals frequently joined U.S. Embassy events during this period. This comment did not come from Mr. Zhang but from another of those present.

<sup>3</sup> See “China-Japan Joint Statement on All-Round Promotion of Strategic and Mutually Beneficial Relations (Full Text),” *Xinhua Domestic Service*, Wednesday, May 7, 2008, T23:12:05Z.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

The document lays out future-oriented directions. These include specific policy direction such as,

[B]oth sides will constantly enhance mutual understanding and mutual trust, expand mutually beneficial cooperation, enable the direction of the development of China-Japan relations to be in keeping with the trends of world development, and jointly create a beautiful future of the Asia-Pacific Region and the world.<sup>6</sup>

The Joint Statement affirms Japan's positive step:

In the past 60 years and more since the end of the war, Japan has persistently taken the road as a peaceful country and has made contribution to world peace and stability by peaceful means and the Chinese side spoke positively of this.<sup>7</sup>

The "dialogue and cooperation framework for carrying out cooperation" includes "constantly enhancing mutual understanding and friendly feelings between the people of the two countries, especially between teenagers." The two sides will

extensively carry out exchanges between the media, friendship cities, sports organizations and nongovernmental organizations and carry out rich and colorful cultural exchanges and exchanges between the intellectual circles between the two countries.<sup>8</sup>

The Joint Press Communiqué on Strengthening Exchanges and Cooperation<sup>9</sup> elaborates an action plan based on the Joint Statement. Again, remembering and forgetting issues are central features, as the two sides agreed to continue high-level strategic dialogue and efforts to enhance mutual understanding between the people of the two countries and to continue China-Japan joint historical research and youth friendly exchanges.

In a real sense, issues of history help frame the Joint Statement and Joint Press Communiqué. The contrast is sharp between the Japan visit of the previous PRC President Jiang Zemin (where Sino-Japanese tensions

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> See "Joint Press Communiqué on Strengthening Exchanges and Cooperation Issued by the Chinese Government and the Japanese Government (Full Text)," *Xinhua Domestic Service*, Saturday, May 10, 2008, T03:37:35Z.

rose over issues of history) and the more recent Japan visit of PRC President Hu (where Beijing and Tokyo took a long-term diplomatic approach to issues of history). Heading the first PRC state visit to Japan in a decade, Hu clearly sought to handle the overall bilateral relationship constructively, including deftly dealing with issues of history.

But questions remain. Are social and collective memories at the official and popular level genuinely amenable to adjustment by official declarations or government action programs? (Note, for example, how mid-level officials on both sides—bureaucrats—are targeted for exchanges.) To what extent do contemporary Chinese and Japanese statements regarding history reflect Hobbesian *realpolitik* calculations, thereby stating current and future political alignments and interests? (Note, for example, Statement and Communiqué language regarding strategic security and defense dialogue.) To what extent do they reflect Grotian or Kantian analysis of transactional conditions which may evolve semi-independently of official government policy (as with all other forms of people-to-people exchange and interactions across generations and backgrounds)?

Such questions bring us to the second part of this chapter—remembering and forgetting frameworks.

## II. Frameworks

Three philosophical traditions underpin international relations theory: Hobbesian, Grotian, and Kantian. Each begins with its own premises and derives its own implications.<sup>10</sup>

In classical great power theory, military victory over an established great power is a necessary prerequisite for a rising power to claim itself as a great power.<sup>11</sup> Our first conundrum arises from this point of applied power, including but not limited to war and peace: victors of war or conflict write history, while those defeated remember it (particularly if they perceive or make themselves victims of defeat).

It is human nature for the victorious and defeated to remember and forget differently. Memory (whether defined historically, socially, politically, collectively, or individually) is, of course, itself a conceptual

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<sup>10</sup> Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, edited by Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978).



construction. Yet, even standard Hobbesian analysis of great power relations is infused with issues of remembering and forgetting.

There are for our purposes here two salient features of the system of states that has its origins in Europe. First, while the European countries came to dominate the expansion of that system of states as it extended to become global during the course of the nineteenth century, the European states system was not the sole international system of that time. In Asia, for example, India, China, and Southeast Asia were historically each part of complex international systems with their own defining rules and norms.

Related is a second feature: the rising international system centered in Europe sought to justify the legitimacy of its global expansion on a cosmopolitan basis.<sup>12</sup> Central to this effort was the emergence of an international “standard of ‘civilization’” ensconced in the prevailing international law. At least in international legal theory, “civilization” was not limited to any particular tradition, ethnicity, or geography. Any entity or country could qualify as “civilized” according to what at least purported to be a universal, objective “standard of ‘civilization.’”

Efforts to place a global international system within international law and norms were directed toward non-European countries—that is, countries with distinct civilizations but not of the European tradition. Such was a doubly humiliating political and psychological blow to China, which had defined itself according to its own self-conscious standard of “civilization.” Now those considered “barbarians” from inferior civilizations were calling China “barbaric” and “uncivilized”—and they had the gunboats and international institutions to enforce “unequal treaties.”

That said, in Hobbesian terms, the rise of a united Germany after 1871 in Europe and of a Meiji Japan modernizing along European lines after 1868 in Asia decisively challenged the traditional balance of power in Europe and Asia, respectively. Equilibrium in each eventually required the involvement of a power not geographically centered in Europe or Asia—the United States.

European disequilibrium precipitated two world wars. They were world wars because their resolution involved countries across the now-global international system. The post-WWII division of Germany was an immediate consequence of a remembering and forgetting belief that a united Germany could not be incorporated in a stable European equilibrium.<sup>13</sup> Thus far, Berlin has worked carefully to change what its

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Mehdi Mozaffari, ed., *Globalization and Civilizations* (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> Indeed, shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, young Germans confided to me in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany that they felt the weight of historical

European and other neighbors remember and forget about a united Germany. This includes particular German attention to recognition and reconciliation regarding the past, including the Holocaust.

Resolution or reconciliation of remembering and forgetting issues are at a different stage in Asia.

In 1902, Britain and Japan formed the first equal military treaty between a European and Asian country. Consistent with the imperialist age in which it found itself, a modernizing Japan expanded and clashed first with China (1894), then Russia (1904), and finally with the United States (1941).

As Japan's 1868 Meiji restoration and modernization unfolded, the Japanese and others asked how to define Japan's national identity. Was Japan a European, Western, Asian, modern, developed, or otherwise-defined country? This discussion continues. At its heart are answers to Japan's core international role and identity, its dominant attitude toward international alliance and alignments, and in some ways its willingness (or not) to approach issues of remembering and forgetting.

China's modern international narrative begins of course with the 1839 Opium War. Yet, it is its military defeat by its Asian neighbor, "little Japan," in the 1894 Sino-Japanese War, including the humiliating cessation of Taiwan as part of war reparations, that fuels a special Chinese remembering and forgetting dynamic.

Indeed, from Beijing's perspective, many modern foundational aspects of the Sino-Japanese remembering and forgetting dynamic emerge through the interplay of domestic and international developments and realities as they unfolded across the late Qing dynasty, Sun Yatsen and warlord era, Chinese civil war, post-1949 PRC establishment, and the Korean War starting in 1950.

In the process, Chinese identity, popular nationalism, and Communist ideology became intertwined and intensified. Chinese Communist domestic legitimacy drew on strong popular support, coincident with a period of Chinese civil war, that actively and bravely opposed Japan's brutal incursion into China, including the 1931 establishment of Manchukuo through the oppressive occupation of significant portions of Chinese territory after 1937.

The same dynamic encompassed the role and orientation of the U.S. and Japan with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. This development thwarted PRC military plans to resolve the issue of Taiwan, both

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responsibility. "We are comfortable with a divided Germany," they said. "We are not yet sure how to act as Germany is again united."

immediately because of the intervention of the U.S. 6<sup>th</sup> fleet and in the long-term because of the Korean War and post-Korean War build-up of Japan (and later Korea) as U.S. regional military bases with Cold War missions.

As post-World War II settlements became Cold War alignments, Zhou Enlai and other senior PRC leaders, whether consciously or not, allowed Sino-Japanese relations to remain unresolved. Chinese losses in life, property, and opportunity due to Japanese occupation were astronomical. Yet immediate Chinese demands for Japanese reparations seemed constrained. Was this a way to create future Sino-Japanese good-will? A calculation that immediate Japanese capacity to pay reparations was limited? A recognition that history and issues of remembering and forgetting were integrally intertwined with domestic Communist party legitimacy and popular Chinese anti-Japanese nationalism? A convergence of Chinese domestic and international policy willingness or strategy to affect a long-term approach to “contain Japan by guilt” or to “seek Japanese concessions by guilt”?

If manipulated for domestic or international reasons, the national espousal of historical memory can breed cynicism, which can further shape national memories and their purported purposes. This is one reason why many in succeeding Japanese generations have grown impatient with Chinese “containment or concession by guilt” approaches toward Japan. They say such approaches seem increasingly anachronistic.

In this perspective, the future-oriented approach of President Hu and Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda in their May 2008 meetings and Joint Statement seem to offer a more constructive approach. This approach still reflects Hobbesian realist assessments of current and future strategic alignments. But it also includes transactional and hopeful Grotian and Kantian approaches to the building of mutual understanding and trust across societal sectors and generations.

Modern international, intercultural, and interpersonal relations (as reflected in Sino-Japanese relations) reflect both the structural realities of the international system as well as the system’s constantly changing transactional realities. These structural and transactional realities are expressed in and through a wide variety of sources and channels—formal and informal, governmental/official and individual/unofficial. The 24/7 expression of popular and official views in all manner of communication sources and channels is in turn intermediated by constantly changing modern technologies, i.e., internet, cable, television, cell phones, text messaging, newspapers and magazines, etc. And the interplay of communication sources and channels and changing modern technologies

adds a further dimension in the reflection of disparate individual and collective group voices symbolic of myriad forms of ownership and editorial control or message.

Within these textured social, technological, and ownership fabrics, remembering and forgetting issues often form the warp and weave of the official and social narratives regarding what individuals and countries remember and when, as well as what individual and countries forget and why. These are the issues that tell grandparents and grandchildren who they are, give states and nations identity, and channel the values and purpose that direct the future in the name of the past.<sup>14</sup>

A net result of the new technologies is to make cultural opinion popular: rapid, easy to archive, difficult for official bodies or governments to control, generational (often in the hands of the young and the media), both transient and permanent, raising myriad issues of widespread access and personal privacy, susceptible to emotion (through sound, photo, and especially video), easy to spread quickly and with essentially no expense. This necessarily involves elite and grassroots, generational messaging and politicking, which cross traditional regional segmentations.

Generational beliefs and attitude structures can harden over time. An interesting challenge for Sino-Japanese relations is the conceptual need to adjust the national and individual historical narratives of China and Japan in ways that “face history squarely” but that also allow the governments and peoples in both countries to “face the future” in terms of what they remember and forget.

And this brings us to the third section of the chapter.

### **III. China’s International Identity: Alternative Futures and Paradoxes**

The chapter’s third section uses remembering and forgetting frameworks and analyses to consider alternative future paths for dealing with the paradoxes a rising China poses for itself, for Sino-Japanese relations, and for the international system. Central to these paradoxes are two co-existing and potentially contradictory elements: first, a Chinese historical memory that sometimes features elements of weakness, humiliation, and victimhood; and, second, an emergent Chinese international identity that increasingly features elements of nationalism, expanding influence, and global prestige.

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<sup>14</sup> Gerrit W. Gong, “The Beginning of History: Remembering and Forgetting as Strategic Issues,” *The Washington Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (2001): 1.

This intersection of historical memory and international identity, articulated in terms of victimhood, identity, and political power,<sup>15</sup> raises fundamental issues. Can or will China as a rising international power maintain self-conscious memory of historical grievances without assuming it is due, directly or indirectly, accommodation or compensation from other members of the international system for those perceived grievances?

A curious feature in the established international narrative is China's successful insistence in portraying itself as a weak, humiliated victim in modern international relations, especially with its neighbor Japan and to some extent with the earlier guarantors of the international system, Great Britain (*Pax Britannia*) and the United States (*Pax Americana*).

Alternative futures for China's dealing with historical memory and future international identity include four basic scenarios. The first two are pessimistic but arguably unlikely. In contrast, the other two are positive and constructive for China, Sino-Japanese relations, and the international system.

A first alternative future scenario is decidedly pessimistic and, hopefully, unlikely for that reason. It is for a rising China to hold both a historical memory and an international identity such that Beijing perceives its future international relations through a lens of past perceptions of weakness, humiliation, and victimhood. A prickly China overly-sensitive to perceived international slight (whether past, present, or future) could develop international blind-spots, including a possible sense of entitlement. As with Germany prior to the world wars, such international blind-spots and assumptions of entitlement can lead to misunderstanding, confrontation, and military conflict.

A Chinese international past and future centered on assumptions or demand for accommodation, compensation, or recompense can create a self-imposed historical cul-de-sac. Whatever the actual realities of China's international position and prestige, Beijing could find itself reacting to a perceptual mind-trap. Such a perceptual mind-trap could include, on the one hand, bipolar perceptions of past glory and past humiliation and, on the other, bipolar perceptions of future international pride of place and future international slight or denial of rightful place. Over-compensating insecurities for international place and prestige could derive from a perceptual closed loop where past and future chase each other.

An extreme form of the mind-trap is for China to be self-consciously absorbed in rectifying perceived past humiliations, which it views through

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Neil Renwick and Qing Cao, "China's Political Discourse Towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Victimhood, Identity, and Political Power," *East Asia* 17, no. 17 (Winter 1999): 111-143.

a prism of inferiority or victimhood. At the same time, China's neighbors could be worriedly fixated on an ascendant China's potential blind-spots, particularly if Beijing purports to reclaim a potentially exaggerated sense of its past glory, position, and prestige. The perceptual gap between neighbors concerned with a rising China and a suspicious China convinced others are intent on depriving it of rightful place, as allegedly occurred in the past, could be significant.

A second alternative future scenario is also pessimistic, and though a logical possibility, is difficult to imagine in practice. It is that China gradually relinquishes historical memory of perceived international injustices while maintaining central concerns for weakness, humiliation, or victimhood as motivating elements in its future international identity. Again, this is a logical combination of memory and identity, but seemingly an unlikely actual domestic and international outcome.

A third alternative future scenario is more hopeful. Here memories of China's grievances remain part of China's historical narrative but gradually recede as China defines for itself a future-oriented international identity. Given China's recent domestic, ideological, and national history, it seems likely that China's Communist party will maintain its line that it liberated the Chinese people from their oppressed past, opened a bright new domestic and international future, and restored the past glories of Chinese civilization (i.e., Chinese nationalism and civilizationalism).

A calibrated Chinese approach to past and future, to what is remembered and what is forgotten (that is, not consciously made central) could offer Beijing a future-oriented international identity that could remember but move beyond perceived past humiliation or victimhood.

Here a rising China could emerge as a great power with global influence, keeping a sense of history, without making perceptions of historical victimhood central to its domestic or international identity. By taking this path, though difficult, the Chinese government and Chinese people show historical self-confidence and maturity. They assert national interest but in a way that also accommodates the interests of others. They invite by example instead of compelling by economic, military, or cultural force. In cases where China faces unjustified rebuff or wrongful denial of China's place, Beijing and the Chinese people magnanimously (as befits a great power and great people) refuse to create the future by looking through a small backward lens of weakness, self-perceived humiliation, or victimhood.

A fourth alternative future scenario is to recognize Chinese memory and identity centered on a balanced paradox. The Middle Kingdom has been central and ascendant for most of its history, but not always so. The