Perspectives and Biases of Chinese and Japanese Youth on China-Japan Relations: The Influence of Social Identity

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Abstract
This paper analyzes the rationale behind perceived negative sentiments between the youth of China and of Japan. It begins by asking the question why a certain population group—youth—in both countries often respond strongly to interpretations of historical events and maintain antagonistic perceptions of each other. What is the underlying factor that drives such negative attitudes for a generation that has not experienced the horrors of war? The China-Japan case will seek to demonstrate how societal instabilities and increasing interdependence interact to create opportunities for virulent nationalism if the bilateral relationship in question contains differing interpretations of shared historical memory, which becomes a focal point in the formation of nationalistic group identity. As nationalism is, by definition, in comparison to an “other”, there is a clear association between domestic identities and international politics. Under circumstances where relations between two countries allow for significant interactions within a context of past animosities, negative biases tend to develop through mutual comparisons. In the case of China and Japan, it will be argued that this trend, instead of more traditional explanations of economic competition and strategic rivalry, best explains the growing hostilities and nationalistic resentments between the youth in these two Asian nations. That is not to dismiss the importance of economics and geopolitics—after all, it is precisely the cooperation and competition in these areas that allow for more interaction and comparisons between countries—but rather to argue that they are not the seminal motivations for the emotional reactions of the average person and, most especially, of youths to this bilateral relationship. Hence, to truly understand this phenomenon of nationalistic antagonism, the China-Japan relationship is viewed not just through a liberal or a realist perspective, but also through the lens of a constructivist social identity theory.
About the Author

Yinuo Geng received her Honours Bachelor of Arts from the University of Toronto in 2009, where she studied international relations, peace and conflict studies, and philosophy. Her interest in international affairs developed from an early age as a result of living in different countries and cultures. As a current MA candidate at the Johns Hopkins University Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), she analyzes policy options for economic development and increasing energy demand. She is also concerned with the nuanced interaction of culture, economics, and politics in solving global issues.
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There is no doubt that events of the past can and often do haunt the present. Because “a group’s representation of its history can explain how its world has come to be the way it is and justify its responses to current challenges,”¹ that history molds the actions and the perspectives of the citizens of that nation. Given the importance of historical memories, it becomes necessary to question the precise role that history and memory play within national and international concerns. As Edward Said once wrote, “Memory and its representations touch very significantly upon questions of identity, of nationalism, of power and authority. Far from being a neutral exercise in facts and basic truths, the study of history, which of course is the underpinning of memory, both in school and university, is to some considerable extent a nationalist effort premised on the need to construct a desirable loyalty to and insider’s understanding of one’s country, tradition, and faith.”² For countries that share historic ties of animosity or antagonism, the influence of history on bilateral relations is especially affected by the interpreted consequences each country places on their shared past. Hence, any two nations wanting to achieve friendly relations must seek an understanding of how past events and current realities work together to shape beliefs and perspectives.

This paper, using the case of China-Japan relations, demonstrates how domestic societal instability and increasing bilateral interdependence interact to create opportunities for virulent nationalism if the bilateral relationship in question contains differing interpretations of shared historical memory, which then becomes a focal point in the formation of in-group identities. Group identity, as a socially constructed concept that is essential for feelings of belonging and of self-worth, formulates and is formulated by representations of historical memory. When that

identity is destabilized and undergoes transformation as a result of changes within society, the need for a continuous positive self-image—as posited through Social Identity Theory—can often lead to nationalism. As nationalism is, by definition, in comparison to an “other,” there is a clear association between domestic identities and international politics. Under circumstances where relations between two countries allow for significant interactions within a context of past animosities, negative biases tend to develop through those comparisons. In the case of China and Japan, it will be argued that it is precisely this trend, instead of more traditional explanations of economic competition and strategic rivalry, which best explains the growing hostilities and nationalistic resentments between the youth in these two Asian nations. That is not to dismiss the importance of economics and geopolitics—after all, it is precisely the cooperation and competition in these areas that allow for more interaction and comparisons between countries—but rather to argue that they are not the seminal motivations for the emotional participation of the average person and, most especially, of youths.

Because the current generation of youths in Japan and China did not witness the historical events that are at the heart of tensions between the two countries, their perspectives and the underlying motivations for those perspectives are hypothesized to be different from those of the older generations. Their views are also indicative of current and future trends. In fact, with the increasing importance of economic ties and regional stability, and the fact that the memories of war, as well as the people who lived through it, are diminishing with the passage of time, one would hope and expect that the current generation of youths in each country would, more and more, view the other as a positive partner. This has not been the case.

Due to the complexity of China-Japan relations and their far-ranging effects on the region and on the international system, there are many dimensions of this relationship which can be analyzed: regional, international systemic, economic, socio-cultural, and strategic. Generally speaking, bilateral political and economic relations between any two states fluctuate depending on whether their strategic interests and diplomatic maneuvers align or conflict. However, in the case of China and Japan, there is an additional volatility due, in large part, to emotional reactions by youths and citizens on a societal level. While the problematic issues are known clearly, it is less easy to make sense of why youths feel so strongly about them. There has been much economic cooperation between the two nations since the diplomatic normalization of 1972 and, despite varying degrees of political coldness depending on government policies, there is a sense
of economic consistency in the relationship. Nonetheless, underlying unresolved issues continue to surface intermittently, serving to promote mutually negative perceptions. It is most worrying that these negative perceptions frequently and greatly affect the views of younger generations. Thus, this paper is, first and foremost, a discussion of the barriers and biases dividing Chinese and Japanese youth. It centres on the history issue and involves an empirical analysis and theoretical exploration of the formation of divergent perceptions. The barriers to mutual understanding are significant because of China and Japan’s increasing importance to the political and economic stability of East Asia. The bilateral relations of the “neighbours separated only by a strip of water”\(^3\) are essential not only to their own prosperity but also to the international system as a whole.

This paper is divided into several sections. First is a summary description of the interviews conducted during the data collection phase. Then, with the awareness that the past affects current interactions and perceptions, the historical background is detailed through a description of China-Japan relations through the years, with an emphasis on the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), which is the focal point of current tensions. Next is an analysis of the views and standpoints of today’s youth in China and Japan, using various statistics and interview data. As an important factor in bilateral relations, the current strategic interests that have lead to economic interdependence and geopolitical rivalry are then reviewed using a realist approach. They are found lacking as the actual causes of tensions—at a minimum, they form the current environment for an investigation of youth perspectives. Following this, from the descriptions and analysis of youth perspectives, the theory of social identity is then employed through a constructivist lens to explain the reasons behind the negative perceptions that Chinese and Japanese youth have of each other. An absence of concrete national identities has meant that the mutually constructed negativity between Chinese and Japanese youths goes beyond their countries’ bilateral relations to become an internal struggle for self-classification.

This research began by examining the economic and political reasons for the mutual negativity felt by Chinese and Japanese youth. It quickly evolved into a suspicion that the emotional attitudes and actions of youths toward the history issue of China-Japan relations is a deeper phenomenon than can be explained by economic or geopolitical competition alone. Though economic and strategic considerations in China-Japan relations could explain much

\(^3\) This famous phrase is repeatedly quoted by both Chinese and Japanese politicians.
regarding the decision-making of governments, it is inadequate for analyzing or predicting the social behaviours of youths. I argue that the barriers and biases between Chinese and Japanese youths should be explained not only by the history issue between the two countries, but also by current psychological conflicts of identity within each country, an inherently constructivist approach, in addition to multilateral economic, political, and cultural factors. Based upon such an understanding, I look toward the future and give some thoughts on how the relations between Chinese and Japanese youth can be improved.

Data Review
To achieve a more accurate understanding of the beliefs and biases of youth in China and Japan, I traveled to these two countries in the summer of 2008. There, I conducted interviews and administered questionnaires involving dozens of Chinese and Japanese youths. These first-hand sources, combined with analysis of statistical information and academic research, informed my views on how youth view the history issue affecting their two countries. As the leaders of the future, it is the youths who will lead Japan and China either to closer friendship or aggressive rivalry. Therefore, the objectives are to discover the major perceptions and prejudices of Chinese and Japanese youths, the manner in which they have been formed by national consciousness and perceptions of history, and how they may lead to possible resolutions.

In choosing interviewees, I contacted Japan-China youth organizations based in Beijing and Tokyo universities as well as sent interview requests through friends and classmates to their acquaintances in these two countries. Out of 27 youths with whom I had in-depth discussions in the two capital cities, ten were Chinese undergraduate students, one was a Chinese

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4 Thanks must be given to the many interviewees whose expansive knowledge assisted me in gaining more insights into Japanese and Chinese politics and societies. Significant support was also provided by the Nanking Memorial Museum in Nanjing and by the Japan-China Relations Institute of Japan in Tokyo. Mr. Zhu Cheng-Shan, director of the Nanking Memorial Museum, provided detailed and thoughtful responses to many questions regarding the goals of the Museum in educating youths. Mr. Tajima Junichi of the Japan-China Relations Institute and Mr. Sugimoto Katsunori and Ms. Yamagishi Chiho of Japan’s House of Councillors kindly answered inquiries regarding the Japanese political system and the attempts by civil groups to engage the two countries in dialogue. Such patience and cooperation from so many people on both sides of the East China Sea were invaluable for this research.
undergraduate student studying abroad in Canada, one was a Chinese undergraduate student studying in Japan, 13 were Japanese undergraduate students, and two were Japanese graduate students. Questionnaires were also handed out to interviewees, who passed them on to friends. Forty-two Chinese youths filled out the questionnaire; however, only a handful of questionnaires were returned from Japanese youths and so questionnaire data for the Japanese side were mostly ignored in favour of a focus on a slightly larger number of interviews. Information from surveys conducted by Genron NPO of Japan, Asahi Shimbun, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and the Japan Youth Research Institute were also used to complement the interview data.

All youths involved with the interviews and questionnaires were between the ages of 18 and 29. All were university students studying a broad range of majors within the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and engineering: about half were in science and engineering majors and about half were in economics and politics, but majors such as law and tourism were also represented. Interviews lasted two hours on average, depending on the interests of the youths themselves. Interview questions were divided into five categories: identity and culture of one’s own nation and of the other nation, events in history, current economic and political bilateral relations, media portrayals, and education systems. As a framework, the five categories inquire about the symbolism and emotions tied to various images and ideas, individual explanation of the Sino-Japanese War and the definitions of victims and aggressors, the quantity and quality of present-day bilateral interactions, whether or not media sources and cultural institutions in the two nations distort facts, and the extent and the depth to which China-Japan history is formally taught in schools. The first two categories sought to grasp a clear sense of the individual’s sense of self and emotions toward the other. The third category was to obtain an idea of what is perceived to be crucial in current interactions. The last two categories questioned how the ideas and beliefs of the former sections were formed. This was an outline, but the interviews tended to develop a life of its own as questions often led to discussions outside of the planned framework. While the plan was to focus equally in these five areas, the reality was that interviewees had more to discuss in areas involving identity and culture, history, and, to a lesser extent, current relations. More importantly, the planned framework for interviews centred on a comparison of bilateral relations; actual interviews tended to shift toward conversations about the internal consequences and rationale for certain reactions toward bilateral incidents. This nuance will be further explained and developed in latter sections of this paper.
The Historical Background

China and Japan have had a long history of relations extending back centuries. During much of this relationship, especially during China’s Tang and Song dynasties, Japan focused on China as a source of cultural inspiration. Since then, the relationship between China and Japan has soured and turned into one of competition. It was in the mid-nineteenth century that Japan overtook China in terms of modernization, as Japan’s Meiji Reformation succeeded where the reforms of China’s Qing dynasty failed. As a result, at the turn of the twentieth century, China-Japan relations took a drastic turn with the first Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895. This war saw the decline of China and the rise of Japanese militarism. Then, from 1937\(^5\) to 1945, the second Sino-Japanese War (part of the Second World War from 1939 on) had a far-reaching influence on the memories and psyches of the Chinese and Japanese people and became the foundation of the current dispute of history between the two nations.

It is commonly known that, during this war, the Japanese military committed brutal atrocities against much of the rest of Asia as Japan attempted to expand throughout the continent. Perhaps the most infamous event of those fifteen years of war is the Nanking Massacre of 1937, when the Japanese Army slaughtered, raped, plundered, and destroyed on a massive scale. Exactly how many civilians and soldiers were killed and how many women and girls were raped in Nanjing are heatedly contested. The Nanking Massacre Museum in Nanjing states that 300,000 people were slaughtered;\(^6\) the Tokyo Trial determined that the Japanese army killed 200,000 Chinese civilians and POWs;\(^7\) and some in Japan believe the number to be only 50,000.\(^8\) Moreover, the Nanking Massacre was not an isolated event. Young girls and women were forced

\(^5\) The Second Sino-Japanese War is usually viewed as officially beginning with the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of 7 July 1937; however, tensions and conflicts have been occurring since 1931 (and so many in China view the war as beginning in 1931).

\(^6\) On the wall to the entrance of the Nanking Massacre Memorial Museum, “Victims 300000” is carved in large font in 11 languages.


into prostitution as “comfort women” for Japanese soldiers. Civilians were exploited for cheap labour. As Japan developed germ and bacteriological warfare to be used in battles, civilians were taken by Japanese Army Unit 731 to Manchuria and used as human guinea pigs in dehumanizing experiments.⁹ Most people in China, Japan, and the rest of the world accept these to be accurate facts. However, there is a group of right-wing politicians, scholars, and citizens in Japan who present an alternative view of the war not only by disputing the scale of civilian deaths and the factuality of certain atrocities, but also by arguing that the war was one of liberation instead of aggression. This view is further promoted by the unsatisfying conclusion of the Tokyo War Trials, which is often discussed in Japan as a “victor’s justice.”

While radical Japanese revisionism of history is not mainstream, such commentaries do receive widespread attention and, hence, do affect bilateral relations between Japan and China. There is certainly a separation of interpretations of the war between China and Japan such that the attitudes of the two countries toward the history issue have become arguably the most prevalent sources of tension. Furthermore, the tense relations are also of noted concern elsewhere in the world and there are far-reaching effects. Canada’s Parliament formally called on Japan to apologize to former comfort women in November of 2007.¹⁰ Similar formal requests for Japanese apologies have also been issued by the United States, the Netherlands, and the European Parliament in 2008.¹¹

This brief outline of history reveals the focal points of negativity in China-Japan relations. Emphasized facts and accepted interpretations of the war differ between the two countries and those differences affect the emotional responses of the citizens. Which interpretations of that great war are accepted, moreover, influence and are influenced by other factors in the current interactions of Japan and China. In situations when the issue under discussion is one of

⁹ The research was kept secret for a period of time after the war as the United States granted immunity from prosecution to the Japanese doctors in exchange for their data. See Nicholas Kristof, “Unmasking Horror—A Special Report; Japan Confronting Gruesome War Atrocity,” The New York Times. 17 March 1995.
sensitivity, it is imperative to begin with an accurate awareness of the beliefs and viewpoints regarding that issue. We now turn to the youth perspectives on the war.

**Analysis of the Perspectives of Youths**

As often stated, the volatile and highly charged emotional nature of China-Japan relations manifests itself most evidently, and sometimes violently, in the competing interpretations of Japanese aggression during “the unhappy period” in the twentieth century, particularly the last Sino-Japanese War (also known\(^\text{12}\) as the Asian theatre of the Second World War, the War against Japanese Aggression in China, and the Greater East Asia War in Japan), and the post-war responses of the two countries. Many of the disagreements and misperceptions occur because China tends to emphasize the atrocities committed by the Japanese army while Japan tends to avoid or downplay them. These two circumstances feed off each other—the more the Chinese emphasize the need for an apology for the atrocities committed by the Japanese army, the more the Japanese become annoyed at something that they perceive to be in the past; and the more the Japanese disregard the issue, the more the Chinese feel angered at the perceived lack of remorse. This is especially apparent for the youth of the two countries, who are emotionally involved in the debate yet have no first-hand experiences or memories of the savagery of war. While there is a distinct and clear sense of injustice and lack of closure for the victims of the Second World War, China’s current intense need to receive a sincere apology and Japan’s wavering willingness to give one is influenced by the complex development of national identity within each state, which instigates strong sentiments of nationalism and ethnocentrism.

Youth are the leaders of the future, and their beliefs, views, and biases will greatly affect China-Japan relations in the years to come. It is the current generation of youths who will face these bilateral tensions, which risk political and economic consequences in the future. That is one of the foundations for the establishment of the 2007 Japan-China youth gatherings. In June 2007, a Japanese youth friendship delegation visited China and was met by Chinese youths and Chinese president Hu Jintao.\(^\text{13}\) In April of the same year, a delegation from the All-China Youth

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\(^{12}\) The various names attributed to this conflict conspicuously indicate the varying perspectives toward it.  
\(^{13}\) “Chinese President encourages youth delegation to deepen China-Japan friendship,” *People’s Daily Online*, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200706/20/eng20070620_385864.html
Federation visited Hiroshima and met with the Soka Gakkai youth division.\textsuperscript{14} Along with the development of the Japan-China-Korea Youth Exchange Program, there is an acknowledgement by both Japan and China that youth exchanges can lessen antagonism in bilateral relations.

Since the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan in 1972, cultural exchanges and personal interactions between Chinese and Japanese people have increased significantly, particularly between students. By 2005, there were 114,899 Japanese nationals residing in China (including Hong Kong) and, by 2006, there were 519,561 Chinese nationals residing in Japan.\textsuperscript{15} There were 18,874 Japanese students in Chinese universities in 2005, and 89,711 Chinese students in Japanese universities in 2006.\textsuperscript{16} Furthermore, in support of the youth gatherings, 2008 was proclaimed Japan-China Youth Friendship Exchange Year by both governments to promote the exchange of youths between the two countries. Four thousand students will have participated over the following four years and “it is expected through such exchange programs that mutual understanding between young people of Japan and China will be further deepened and a solid foundation laid for the development of Japan-China relations.”\textsuperscript{17}

Yet the increased contact does not necessarily translate into better understanding and mutual respect. In fact, increasing contact often creates a decrease in positive comparisons as reality differs from expectations. One Japanese member of the Jing Forum, an organization for students at Tokyo University and Beijing University to discuss matters of importance between the two countries, commented that “sometimes misunderstandings occur more often when youths [of the two countries] first start to have more contact, but there is not a deeper understanding yet.”\textsuperscript{18} Hence, one must be aware of the problem of close contact without a lessening of social psychological distance. Resentment may occur, as seen in October of 1985 when the first group

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} “Japan-China Youth Friendship Exchange Year,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, August 2008, http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/exchange08/index.html
\item \textsuperscript{18} Yamauchi Kazuma and Nakatani Eri, personal interview, 2008.
\end{itemize}
of Japanese youths in recent times was invited to visit China by the Chinese government. These Japanese youths had romanticized stereotypes of China as being a highly cultured and charming place, but, as they came from very modern cities, they became visibly astonished at some of the conditions in developing China. Their negative reactions created resentment on both sides.\(^{19}\)

Familiarity, then, does not necessarily lead to mutual understanding; it can also breed contempt. Consequently, in spite of an increase in exchange, there are still significant cultural misunderstandings and societal distances. It is, therefore, not only important to lessen tensions through communications between youth, but also essential that the intensity and rationality of youth views on both sides are clearly known—to each other and to themselves. Only with this as a basis can one then seek to explain those views and, in the final step, attempt to ameliorate bilateral relations through mutual cooperation.

**Chinese Youth Perspectives**

In April 2005, for three successive weekends, thousands of people joined in anti-Japanese demonstrations on the streets of China, both to respond to Japan’s approval of new school textbooks which seem to downplay Japanese atrocities in the Second World War\(^ {20}\) as well as to oppose the Japanese bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. A large number of these protestors were university students. This was the event that brought China-Japan tensions to the fore of international media coverage. The demonstrations, unusual for a country that rarely allows such protests, decisively revealed the brewing resentment that many Chinese feel toward the Japanese.

The demonstrations in 2005 were not the first anti-Japan protests in the People’s Republic of China. The first major one occurred in 1985 and sporadic demonstrations by Chinese youths and boycotts of Japanese goods have occurred since then. In fact, both governments are often taken by surprise by sudden bursts of societal participation in bilateral relations, particularly through the Internet. In a country like China, where demonstrations are closely monitored and tacitly forbidden, the boycotting of Japanese goods led by Chinese university students is particularly significant with regards to the views of the youths. Chinese youth tend to

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be more emotional and sensitive about the history issue and view it as distinct from politics. It is “above all an issue of attitude, albeit with real implications.”\textsuperscript{21} The Chinese Foreign Ministry also views the “issue of history” in this way by listing it on its website as a separate category distinct from the headings of “issue of war reparations” and “Japanese chemical weapons discard in China.”\textsuperscript{22}

In all my interviews, Chinese youths waver between this emotional outrage and modern pragmatism regarding Japan. There is clear admiration for Japanese technology, Japanese electronics, and Japanese animation. There is also a grudging respect for Japan’s modernization and a realistic understanding of the need for economic cooperation with Japan. In today’s globalizing world and in a nation that has prioritized economic growth, China’s youth have learned to be pragmatic. Currently prevalent in China’s modern society, this mental state can be summed up in Deng Xiaoping’s famous axiom: “No matter if the cat is black or white, it is a good cat if it catches mice.”\textsuperscript{23} Growing up as the first generation to have no personal experiences of the horrors of wars or the confusion of the Cultural Revolution, they are encouraged by their parents to work hard for prosperity and a better life. Competition is fierce and youth, from a young age, study long and hard in a country where the abundance of opportunities is met by a greater population. This pragmatism is revealed when about half of the youth interviewed for this project agreed that while many participate in boycotts to a certain extent, “in reality, it is impossible [to boycott Japanese goods]…so perhaps in dealing with Japanese goods and Japanese attitudes, Chinese youths have two different outlooks.”\textsuperscript{24} Given the importance of economic development and the acknowledgement that the history issue is a major obstacle in China-Japan relations, one interviewee even suggests that the way to ensure friendlier relations may be to simply “avoid the topic of history” for practical concerns.\textsuperscript{25}


\textsuperscript{23} Whiting, China Eyes Japan, 3.

\textsuperscript{24} Zhang Yu Yan, personal interview, 2008.

\textsuperscript{25} Bai Yu, personal interview, 2008.
That pragmatism is obviously balanced by a simmering dislike of Japan for its lack of repentant self-reflection regarding its invasion of and atrocities in Asia. In a survey conducted in 2004 by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 52.6 percent of Chinese people either “do not feel close” to or feel “very much unneighbourly” toward Japan.26 “Of those, 26 percent said they felt the way they did because Japan had invaded China, while 61.7 percent said that it was because, after five decades, Japan has still made no serious self-examination of its invasion.”27 More interestingly, only 0.7 percent felt unneighbourly toward Japan because of personal unhappy experiences or those of family members. These statistics indicate that Chinese people feel negatively about Japan from a historical perspective because of Japan’s current actions. In another Chinese survey in 1996, “Japan’s attitude toward history of aggression” is believed by 93.3 percent to be the biggest obstacle to current bilateral relations.28

The anti-Japan actions of Chinese youths, consequently, are in response to perceived Japanese disrespect. Actions that influence China’s perspectives of Japan include two major factors: the rewriting of history books with regard to Japanese aggression in Asia and the controversial visits by high-ranking Japanese politicians to Yasukuni Shrine. During the years when Koizumi Junichiro was Prime Minister of Japan, relations between the two countries hit the lowest point since normalization in large part due to his visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, where fourteen Class A war criminals from the Second World War are enshrined. These visits are a sensitive matter for Chinese youth: their “feelings are hurt”29 by actions that honour war criminals as heroes. At the heart of the problem is the overt, and therefore political, nature in which some Japanese politicians visit the shrine. It is interesting to note that Chinese youths, while not liking it, do not necessarily oppose personal visits by politicians. According to my questionnaires, out of 42 Chinese university students questioned, seventeen agreed with the idea that Japanese prime ministers should be able to make personal visits to the Yasukuni Shrine without angering other countries, seventeen opposed the statement, and eight were neutral.30

27 Ibid.
29 More than half of Chinese interviewees stated this about the feeling of the Chinese people.
30 I conducted my own questionnaire during the summer 2008 in China and Japan.
Therefore, it is the blatant and political manner of some visits, especially as publicized by the media, that causes anger. As one Beijing University student I interviewed declared, “If one purely visits [personally] in remembrance then it is okay, but it does not seem like the Japanese are taking it to be an innocent act; this impure [political] motive is most annoying.”

With regard to the issue of Japanese history textbooks, the concern stems from the belief held by Chinese youths that “past experience, if not forgotten, is a guide to the future.” As a result, revisions of school textbooks are perceived as signs that Japan is downplaying the atrocities committed by the Japanese army and are, therefore, preludes to possible future militarism. Chinese youths “cannot accept that not only does Japan not apologize but [it] also tries to revise history.” They look down upon Japan’s apparent inability to take responsibility for its past actions and its “childish” act in “covering up” facts. China, then, is seen to be on the moral high ground and the dislike of Japan appears justified. In contrast, there is an awareness that different perspectives of history always exist and, hence, there are necessarily subjective elements and political influences in the writing of textbooks. To counter this problem, Chinese youth support the project in which Japanese and Chinese historians work together to produce a new textbook.

A telling phenomenon of the force of youth nationalism in China is the increasing prevalence of Internet patriotism. Cyberspace discussion has become an easily accessible and highly anonymous form of expression where large numbers of geographically distant people can share similar interests and ideas. As the Internet becomes a commonplace tool, “Chinese cyber nationalism completed the transformation from an ivory tower ideology to a grassroot political movement.” This movement has often generated anti-Japan sentiments in chatrooms and forums among Chinese users, such as the 40-million people online petition to oppose Japan’s

31 Zhang Ce, personal interview, 2008.
33 Gu Mu, personal interview, 2008.
34 Yuan ShengCheng, personal interview, 2008.
36 For an analysis of the background and the implications of this petition, see ibid., 82–86.
inclusion in the United Nations Security Council as a permanent member. Out of China’s 123
million online users, 38.9 percent are between the ages of 18 and 24, while the second largest
group at 18.4 percent includes users between the ages of 25 and 30.37 In total, about 72 percent
of China’s Internet users are below the age of 30,38 indicating a strong correlation between youth
and Internet nationalism. What is also crucial about Internet nationalism is the lack of ability to
totally control the medium. Many have viewed anti-Japan action in China as being supported by
the Chinese Communist Party, but the CCP is at times unable to effectively control Internet
activity. For example, the Chinese government attempted to shut down the “[Chinese] Patriot
Alliance Net (www.1931-9-18.org)” in 200439 and also took precautionary measures to stem the
scope of the 2005 anti-Japan protests by ordering “China’s major universities to block outside
access to their campus BBS, where the fiercest nationalistic sentiment was fermenting.”40 The
latter action did nothing to prevent the continuation of riots and the former resulted in a backlash
of anger directed toward the CCP.

When Chinese youths are asked what can be done to ameliorate China-Japan relations, all
those interviewed promptly reply that the Japanese government should apologize sincerely and
back up the sincerity with actions. The interviewees are aware of apologetic statements made by
various Japanese administrations, but the problem occurs in the wording of these statements and
the impression that Japanese actions (such as visits to Yasukuni Shrine, media attention on
radical right-wing commentators, revision of school textbooks, and election of rightist
politicians) undermine the value of those words. Focus is also placed on the lack of
compensation for the individual victims of the war, including former comfort women and
civilians who were recently injured by chemical weapons left on Chinese soil by the Japanese
army.41 When discussing the apology issue, the Chinese youths ultimately compare Japan’s lack

37 Xu Wu, Chinese Cyber Nationalism: Evolution, Characteristics, and Implications (Toronto: Lexington
Books, 2007), 73.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., 81.
40 Ibid., 85.
41 There is an extensive list of trials by Chinese individuals against Japan in Caroline Rose, Sino-Japanese
of appropriate remorse to Germany’s clear actions. The image of German Chancellor Willy Brandt kneeling in front of the memorial to Holocaust victims in Poland in 1970 is imprinted in Chinese minds. Moreover, “German companies have as of now given billions of dollars to their wartime victims, and Holocaust survivors are still receiving their regular compensation checks.” Chinese youths are very aware of the difference in post-war actions between these two Axis powers and there is a sense of relative deprivation with regards to justice. After all, denials of the Holocaust are outlawed in Germany.

**Japanese Youth Perspectives**

Opinions by Japanese youths on the history issue are generally more varied and less zealous than those of Chinese youths, with some (generally leftist) Japanese youths believing that Japan must reflect on its past and form better relations with its neighbours, which includes taking into consideration the sentiments of other Asian countries, while others (generally rightist) perceive China as becoming involved in Japan’s internal affairs by using the history card as a mostly political tactic. What seems common, however, is fatigue over the persistence of the history issue and the belief that it should be a thing of the past. Japanese youth tend to regard current situations as more important than historical ones in China-Japan relations.

The ambiguity in the attitudes of Japanese youths is mirrored in the contrast between the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and the Yasukuni Shrine Museum in Tokyo. At the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, discussions of the Second World War are tinged with regret and sensitivity. The site of the nuclear bomb blast reflects a sense of melancholic remembrance of nuclear victims and resilient hope for an end to war atrocities. In contrast, the Yushukan Museum on the grounds of the Yasukuni Shrine is defiant and proud of Japan’s military successes. Inside the Yushukan Museum, there is a display of leaders of Asian independence movements including Gandhi and Aung Sun and the English description: “Not until Japan won a stunning victory in the early stages of the Greater East Asia War, did the idea of independence enter the realm of reality [for Asia]. Once the desire for independence had been kindled under Japanese occupation, it did not

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42 About 90 percent of Chinese youths interviewed made some comparison between the post-war actions of Germany and Japan.

It is precisely these ultra-nationalistic sentiments that most provoke Chinese anger.

However, rather than perceiving Chinese anger as solely the reaction toward ultra-nationalistic rhetoric of certain groups in Japan, many Japanese youths harbour the suspicion that anti-Japan demonstrations in China occur with the tacit approval of the Chinese government as a means to gain leverage over Tokyo. It is pointed out that anti-Japan protests appear to be among the few demonstrations tolerated by officials and, therefore, not immediately subdued by riot police. It is generally understood that China gave up claims to war reparations during normalization negotiations to receive Japanese concessions on other issues; however, such a solution may have been too simple. In the opinion of many Japanese youths, China “often attempts to get benefits by putting pressure on Japan through carefully planned tactics and a well-calculated policy of Chinese ‘cultural diplomacy’.” Furthermore, China is seen as having already manipulated the guilt of older generations of Japanese citizens in order to receive greater assistance in China’s development.

This misgiving is only strengthened when, in 1987, Deng Xiaoping told a Japanese delegation that “Japan is the country most indebted to China.” It is commonly understood that there are two facets to this statement: first, that Chinese influence on Japanese culture was immense; and second, that Japan owes China for “generously” waiving war reparations estimated at $50 billion during normalization negotiations in 1972. Japanese youth have become annoyed at the insistent emphasis placed on events that happened more than 50 years ago. Many also bristle at the claim that Japanese culture and society owe a great deal to former Chinese influence and patronage. Similarly, when Chinese President Jiang Zemin made a state visit to Japan in 1998, he repeatedly and insistently emphasized the issue of history, which “did much to annoy many Japanese, to a considerable extent due to the unfavourable press coverage in Japan.” Resentment, indignation, and exasperation are often the reactions of Japanese youth.

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44 Inscription at the Yushukan Museum.
when discussing such accusations because they believe that the issue should have already been resolved with the 1978 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and China. They believe that Japan has already apologized and that, since the Second World War, Japan has been a peace-loving pacifist country. Therefore, Japanese youth are irritated by and defensive about the anti-Japan protests. Some youth also believe that Communist China is promoting anti-Japan sentiments to “attack Japan” in order to focus attention away from the one-party system and its problems.\(^4^9\) Besides being tacit reparations, one motivation for the large amounts of aid in the form of ODA from Japan to China is to promote democratization through a liberal market. This has not occurred as planned and Japanese youth are very skeptical about China’s communist government: they can often be dismissive of Chinese perspectives as products of government propaganda.

Japanese youths agree that Chinese youths feel antagonism toward Japan—regardless of whether it is a tactic of the Communist Party or not—on a collective level just as most Japanese youths hold varying degrees of bias against China. About 70 percent of Japanese surveyed in the 1980s felt affinity for China, about 50 percent felt affinity toward China in the period 1995 to 2003, and only 37.6 percent of Japanese felt affinity for China by 2004.\(^5^0\) This trend toward increasing animosity is, as will be explicated later, a reaction to both Chinese protests and economic insecurity. The precise views of Japanese youth on China are conflicted since they involve an acknowledgment of China’s role in Japan’s past and future as well as disdain toward the lower standard of living in China. They also realize that Japan is starting to need China more than China needs Japan economically, and thus there is more interest in China, particularly given China’s sustained high economic growth in comparison to Japan’s economic stagnation in the last decade. In fact, “China’s huge market and surging domestic demand for industrial products propelled Japan’s ailing economy out of its decade-long stagnation [of the 1990s].”\(^5^1\)

Despite all this, many Japanese youths seem to understand the anger of Chinese youths and do “feel sorry for [what their] grandfather or great-grandfather’s generation…did [to] people

\(^4^9\) Kobayashi Takeshi, personal interview, 2008.


\(^5^1\) Wu, *Chinese Cyber Nationalism*, 80.
Yet, Japanese youths, as a Tokyo University student asserts, “have a consensus that the past was not good, so they are not trying to ignore [as many accuse], but to move forward, with this consensus in heart.” Many youths argue that, “[while] history should never be forgotten, excessive focus on history is damaging.” One youth also wondered what would be acceptable as a sincere apology from Japan, though several interviewees did acknowledge that there are certain things Japan could do to improve its image in the eyes of other Asian countries. Perhaps a major difference is that Japanese youths, when compared to Chinese youths, feel less emotional about issues concerning the past in Japan’s relation with the rest of Asia. The war is a subject in history classes simply to be learned for exams and, more importantly, the topic of the Second World War in Japanese society concentrates on the war in the Pacific against the United States rather than the war on the Asian continent. In a survey by Asahi Shimbun in 2006 that asked Japanese people how they refer to the war that ended in 1945, 57 percent called it the Second World War (though the Sino-Japanese theatre of war commenced some years before the official beginning of the Second World War); 23 percent, the Pacific War; 10 percent, the Greater East Asian War; 2 percent, the Sino-Japan War; another 2 percent the Asia-Pacific War; and 1 percent, the 15 Years War. In China, the conflict is referred to as the War against Japan’s Aggression. Narratives of the Second World War in Japan focus, rather, on the harsh difficulties in the lives of ordinary Japanese citizens during a period when their government went to war. There seems to be a disconnect between Japan’s war against the United States in the Pacific, when ordinary citizens suffered from bombing attacks, and Japan’s often brutal campaign on the mainland Asian continent. Consequently, the historical events and atrocities of the Sino-Japanese War seem distant from the everyday lives of Japanese youths.

Without a strong focus on past actions, Japanese youths understand the bilateral relations more as a disagreement over interpretations of current rather than past events. While the Chinese government is asking the Japanese government to accept former war crimes by apologizing for

52 Kobayashi Takeshi, personal interview, 2008.
53 Jing Forum Member in Tokyo University, personal interview, 2008.
54 Ibid.
them, some Japanese youths feel like China is asking present-day Japan to act contrite. As one Tokyo University student disputes, “why should I [being a Japanese youth] apologize when I didn’t do anything?”57 This view is certainly not lessened by the fear that China may continue to use this “history card”—regardless of any apologetic gestures from the Japanese government—in politically motivated attempts to direct Japan’s internal state of affairs. According to Japan, China’s challenge against Japanese history textbooks and against the visits of Japanese prime ministers to Yasukuni Shrine ignores the principle of sovereignty and shows China’s intervention in Japan’s domestic affairs. Hence, the more the Chinese complain about the visits to Yasukuni made by Japanese politicians, the more firmly some Japanese youths believe the visits should continue so as to not give in to Chinese pressure. Because most of the 2.5 million war dead enshrined in Yasukuni Shrine are not war criminals and because shrine visits should be a religious freedom, some Japanese youths simply do not understand why Chinese people are so against it. Furthermore, there is also a cultural misunderstanding in that Japanese people believe that when a person dies, the sins dies with the physical body and, therefore, the spirit has no sins. To exacerbate the perception that China is interfering in Japan’s domestic affairs, China requested eight specific points to be changed in a junior high school history textbook in 2001.58 Although the Chinese side deems this action necessary to halt the revision of China-Japan history, the Japanese see this as a blatant intrusion.

Relations between Japanese and Chinese youths can be summed up as generally pragmatic but mutually suspicious and, therefore, extremely reactive to events that hurt the youths’ feelings. For the youth of these countries, there is a mixture of disdain, admiration, rivalry, and practicality toward the other group. “The history of the past is not fully settled in Chinese-Japanese relations, thus creating a structure of China on the higher moral ground and Japan on the lower. The friction and conflict that burst out are temporarily contained but not resolved fundamentally, so [there is] actually [an increased] source for potential frictions.”59 Most of all, there is an instinctive defensiveness when the other nation insists on a historical narrative that

57 Mori Itaru, Murakami Daisuke and Onuma Takuro, personal interview, 2008.
either focuses on bringing old faults to the fore for Japanese youths or disregarding past scars as invalid to current situations for Chinese youths.

Deep-seated patriotism, whether actively experienced or passively felt, is a trait of the youth of both countries. This emotion is often identified as nationalism and used to explain the negative perceptions that arise when the history issue is discussed. What is the fundamental reason behind the mutual suspicion and aversion and the associated need for nationalism in each of the two cases?

**Economic Cooperation, Strategic Interests, Geopolitical Rivalry**

One explanation for the unfriendly bilateral ties is the traditional focus on issues of security and prosperity. In simple terms, as China’s power increases absolutely and Japan’s power declines relatively, it is more than conceivable that there will be issues on which their interests clash. The likeliness of confrontation results from the competition for strategic influence on the Asian continent, for energy sources around the world, for land claims, and for trade ties. On the other hand, possibilities also exist for substantial cooperation in economic growth and development. How these two different paths balance each other is significant for bilateral relations.

From a broader standpoint, China-Japan relations, like all topics in international relations, can be explored using the major frameworks of political science: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Analyses of the interactions of these two Asian countries with regards to geopolitical strategies and economic interests are generally seen through the lenses of liberalism and realism. It is unsurprising that, being two influential nations in the region, the economic and political might of Japan and China are of great consequence to each other’s security and development. A realist perspective views power and security as the ambition of states; hence, given the central role of China and Japan, their strategic balances affect the geopolitical realities of Asia and the international system. Liberalism, with a focus on economic cooperation, seeks to describe and evaluate the increasing trade dependency between the two states. Constructivism, as distinct from the more traditional theories of realism and liberalism, focuses on intersubjective and constructed facts, which are shaped both by human actions and by interpretations of the physical world. The validity of these three interpretations of bilateral interactions needs to be examined.
It will ultimately be seen that, though the realist focus on security and the liberal view on economy do explain some of the recent historical relations between China and Japan, such explanations become problematic when faced with the relentless antagonism and strong sentiments of youths. Moreover, why is there a change in the manner and the strength in which youth in China and Japan express, respectively, their anger and their exasperation compared to older generations? To explain the discrepancies, and to be able to formulate possible ways to improve the sociopolitical situation, this paper will turn to a discussion of identity formation and historical memory.

First, however, the political and economic conditions must be examined as they provide the foundation upon which the present relationship is based. Many analyses of China-Japan relations have focused on the economic cooperation, geopolitical considerations, and strategic calculations between two great powers vying for influence in the international system as the real catalyst for increasing tensions that often find outlets through disputes on history. China and Japan are involved in a game of increasing their gains from economic interdependence while competing with each other over strategic geopolitical situations. However, their circumstances are rather divergent: Japan has had a decade of economic stagnation, though still maintaining a most powerful and technologically advanced economy; China is growing at unprecedented rates, though still with internal weaknesses. As such, the geopolitical and economic structure is changing in China-Japan relations. With this changing power structure in Asia, the two countries are entangled in a delicate act of power balancing. Some scholars have “called Japan’s China policy ‘a change from commercial liberalism to reluctant realism’”60—an arguably accurate description of this bilateral relationship in recent years. The realist interpretation is that it is this resulting tension that produces negative images.

For years after diplomatic normalization, the two governments have focused on economic exchanges and avoided topics that could deadlock relations. For example, when “Deng Xiaoping proposed that the territorial dispute had better be ‘shelved for a while,’”61 it was a tactic to avoid stalling the negotiations for the 1978 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between China and Japan

by openly ignoring the continuing disagreement over ownership of the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands. Since then, the relationship between the two countries has centred on economic interdependence and the volume of trade has grown rapidly. And problematic issues—even significant ones—can sometimes be set aside.

On 23 April 2008, Japan announced that mainland China had become its largest trading partner, replacing the United States for the first time since the Second World War (though this milestone was already reached by China in 2004 if the economy of Hong Kong is included along with that of mainland China for total trade calculations). Japan is now China’s third largest trading partner, after the United States and the European Union. Trade relations have been very complementary because of the gap in the level of economic development: Japan provides capital- and technology-intensive products to China while needing China’s large expanding markets and cheap labour. Trade between the two states has increased 61-fold in the 32 years from 1972 to 2004 and continues to increase, reaching US$236 billion in 2007. Foreign direct investments from Japan to China have also been consistently growing and Japanese business leaders view the Chinese market as “the most prospective market with the most investment opportunities.”

These statistics reveal the importance of the two powers to each other. The mutual benefits of a stable relationship for economic prosperity have, for many years, overcome the simmering anxiety with regards to unresolved tensions surrounding the Sino-Japanese War. The result has been a bilateral relationship often characterized by “cold” politics and “hot” economy. Then, in China’s 1998 National Defence White Paper, economics was linked to politics by the claim that “economic security is becoming daily more important for state security…in international relations, geopolitical, military security and ideological factors still play a role that cannot be ignored, but the role of economic factors is becoming more outstanding, along with growing economic contacts among nations.” This claim is an ominous one for the status quo situation of promoting economic prosperity regardless of political animosity. As both countries

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63 Wan, Sino-Japanese Relations, 45.
65 Peter Drysdale and Dong Dong Zhang, Japan and China (Australia: Paragon Printers, 2000), 2.
66 Drifte, Japan’s Security Relations with China since 1989, 134.
seek to become political and economic superpowers in Asia and the world, they have developed competing strategic objectives with economic repercussions. The contentious debate over ownership of the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, for instance, is actually politically and economically motivated for both countries in an attempt to control the valuable oil fields surround the island. Japan also hopes to contain China’s military might and to keep China interested in a multilateral political setting in Asia, while China seeks more opportunities to increase its presence on the international stage. Competition is causing tensions in bilateral relations which reflect the security dilemma—as China seeks more security, Japan becomes insecure and responds by increasing its own state security. The result is a spiraling trend of reaction and counter-reaction. Thus, in a certain sense, changes in the mood of the relationship are signaled by whether economic gains or strategic interests are the more important factor in governmental policy.

Japan is cautious of China’s sustained high rate of growth and its ability to continue developing because, “with ten times the population of Japan, the Chinese economy will overtake the Japanese economy in terms of size, if not sophistication, once China’s per capita GDP reaches one tenth of Japanese per capita GDP.” For a country that has been in economic stagnation since the 1990s, this certainly feels threatening. By 2000, China was the world’s seventh largest trading nation with a 3.9 percent share of world trade and the second largest destination for foreign direct investments after the United States. GDP growth for China was 9.5 percent during 1980–1990 and 10.3 percent during 1990–1999. In comparison, GDP growth for Japan was 4.1 percent during 1980–1990 and 1.2 percent during 1990–1999. Such a contrast in economic growth is one of the reasons for Japan’s increasing assertiveness in regional stability. Japan has cooperated with the United States for the joint development of a theater missile defense (TMD) system for Northeast Asia. Furthermore, in the 2005 US-Japan Security Consultative Committee, Japan prioritized the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan Strait issue and

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71 Ibid.
its bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council—both topics of great significant to China.\textsuperscript{72} At the same time, Japan’s assertiveness regarding Asian security prompts China’s concern regarding a resurgence in Japanese militarism. After all, despite Article 9 of Japan’s Constitution, Japan’s “self-defence” force is, in effect, a technologically advanced army with a large military budget. There is, hence, greater political and security tension since their bilateral relations had always been based on economic ties and a lack of security alliance.\textsuperscript{73}

From these descriptions of calculated interests and politics, it may appear, as some researchers argue, that the “[anti-Japan] mass protests [in China in 2005] simply reflected an ‘underlying [economic and political] tension in the relationship that had been slowly building.’”\textsuperscript{74} Nevertheless, this realist analysis, while providing much insight, explains very little about the intensity of emotions on both sides. In this framework, the debate over interpretations is focused on the use of history by governments as an ideological tool to pursue goals that would promote the interest of their states. The history issue, then, simply becomes a social manifestation of the rivalry and competition of China and Japan. Although this realist approach may work between governments, it certainly leaves no room for an explanation of the intense emotional and psychological reactions of citizens, particularly youths, to China-Japan relations and the prominent role that the history issue plays in their mutual perceptions. After all, governments have often been caught by surprise at the uncontrollable outburst of nationalist sentiments. In fact, the potentially unmanageable aspect of societal participation can cause problems for governments who would rather have a freer hand in deciding when to cooperate and when to compete based on cold calculation rather than emotional conviction.

An expert on China-Japan relations once pointed out that “historical animosities between nations or ethnic groups do not lead to a military conflict in themselves, but they make it more likely under certain circumstances since they can easily serve as convenient justifications for bellicose actions; they will also make such conflict [and various other forms of competition, whether strategic, geopolitical, or economic,] more deadly when it does occur.”\textsuperscript{75} Therefore, it is not so much that this realist interpretation is inaccurate, but rather that it misses the whole story.

\textsuperscript{72} Hsuing, \textit{China and Japan at Odds}, 16.

\textsuperscript{73} The US-Japan security alliance being a cornerstone of Japan’s foreign policy.

\textsuperscript{74} Hsuing, \textit{China and Japan at Odds}, 16.

\textsuperscript{75} Yang, “Mirror for the Future,” 14.
When the focus is on a generation that tends to be politically apathetic and economically pragmatic, the misperceptions and preconceptions that Chinese and Japanese youths have of each other require a deeper psychological analysis. In other words, it is less that the economic and geopolitical situation affects opinions regarding history, and more that the biases of historical memories increase competition instead of cooperation in geopolitical strategic concerns.

For better or for worse, China and Japan are, have been, and will continue to be intertwined. With such a complex and uncertain relationship as the background, the biases and misperceptions between Chinese and Japanese youths can be understood and explained to a certain degree using the theories of realism and liberalism. Yet, for a comprehensive insight into the views of youths in China and Japan, it is necessary to understand how their opinions of each other and of themselves are constructed. Moreover, as economic and political catalysts affecting bilateral relations occur only when there is a motivation, any attempt to reduce friction through economic interdependence can only be short term. For peace and stability and goodwill to exist, problems must be resolved for the long term and involve the alteration of perceptions. Therefore, constructivism becomes a better lens through which the shifting patterns of perceptions between youths of the two countries can be explored. More specifically, the influence of nationalistic sentiments can be better attributed, not to objective changes in politico-econonmical interactions, but to socially constructed convictions about intentions and beliefs—which, when given the opportunity through political and economic friction, can lead to explosive consequences.

Identity, Memory, Nationalism
In recent times, the lure of nationalism has gripped the imagination of many around the world. China and Japan are no strangers to this phenomenon of increasingly fervent outpourings of emotions in support of one nation over others. But what does nationalism derive from and how does it develop? For China-Japan bilateral relations, it is easy to contend that it comes from the disputed historical issues of the past or the evolving economic and geopolitical rivalries; but this cannot be the full story for the biases and barriers between the younger generations of China and Japan,. In fact, many youths in China and Japan, like youths around the world, are not exceptionally knowledgeable regarding politics and diplomacy, and the strong opinions and negative sentiments tend to be the result of social perceptions rather than of concrete situations. Therefore, it is proposed that such nationalistic sentiments are supported by the psychological
need for a stable well-developed national identity, which is missing in both countries. This is particularly striking in my interviews with Chinese and Japanese youths because those conversations generally transform from dialogues on bilateral events and bilateral interactions to discussions of internal political struggles and internal societal uncertainties. Hence, both countries do view the conflict through self-centred lenses.

National identities are formed through the creation of historical narratives that act as the basis for national unity. These narratives are created through selective interpretations of certain significant events for the collective memory of the nation. The narratives, then, define the boundaries of the in-group versus the out-group. Therefore, those historical memories that are crucial for a national identity must be protected. At the same time, in the creation of collective memory, historical events are not only deliberately drawn upon, but also selectively interpreted to fit into the framework that best ensures the unique nature of the in-group. In this manner, nationalistic sentiments are formed to satisfy our emotional needs, as human beings, both in belonging to a group and in perceiving that group as unique. Because interpretation of historical memories is inherently subjective, though based on objective facts, it is influenced by two interrelated factors: the internal need for a unifying narrative (particularly when faced with economic, social, or political instability) and the external pressure of opposing interpretations of the same historical events. Interpretations, thus, can be fluid.

This understanding of nationalism is associated with the theory of constructivism in the field of political science. The constructivist conception of the world views identities and social groups, as the name indicates, as constructed. Therefore, identities can change and the social norms and histories we hold are not objective. This explains how identities and history, while perceived as objective, can develop and be constructed into issues of security at different times for different societies. In fact, constructivist analyses perceive agent and structure to be mutually constituted such that each affects the other. In other words, “constructivism is the view that the

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76 The discussions of internal issues, whether with Chinese youths about China or with Japanese youths about Japan, tended to be more enlightening and fascinating as youths know more about and care more about the situations in their own countries. In contrast, discussions on China-Japan relations often involved similar replies regarding the emotions of citizens of the two countries.
manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world.”

The “serious, sometimes bitter inquiry into the authenticity of certain memories” occurs because interpretations of the Sino-Japanese War have become closely linked both with each population’s evolving sense of identity and with the act of social comparison. It may be the evolving uncertainty about the Chinese and the Japanese identities that accentuates hard stances on differing interpretations of the historical narratives—narratives that become increasingly confrontational as they derive from nationalistic values. A society’s emotions and sense of identity should not be underestimated. In an environment where China-Japan relations are of great importance, the perceptions and biases of the current generation of youths are formed by the societal changes within their own state. Both societies, in response to the lack of a clear modern identity, use nationalism to form markers that separate “them” from “us” while providing links to ensure a sense of belonging within the “us” group. However, this need for an identity has developed into ethnocentric nationalism for both countries (actively in Chinese society and passively in Japanese society). As Edward Said established: “Because the world has shrunk…and people find themselves undergoing the most rapid social transformations in history, ours has become an era of a search for roots, of people trying to discover in the collective memory of their race, religion, community, and family a past that is entirely their own, secure from the ravages of history and a turbulent time. But this too has provoked very sharp debate.”

Nationalism, therefore, is often most prevalent when a society is undergoing transformation. China’s search for a modern voice is a struggle between developing into an advanced industrial society like that of the West while also retaining traditions of the past, a struggle which causes many young Chinese to become sensitive to perceived harm against their country. Japan is involved in an identity crisis where there is “an insubstantial sense of self that is experienced by individuals in the society with deep uneasiness as the emptiness of life,” which results in a desire to feel more pride in one’s country. Understandably, it is youths who, on

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78 Said, “Invention, Memory, and Place,” 241.

79 Ibid., 243.

their path to adulthood, are most affected. With this sense of uncertain identity, both Chinese and Japanese youths engage in comparisons between their own country, the other country, and the rest of the world (particularly the Western world as represented by America due to its political and economic might). These social comparisons place China and Japan in unique psychological positions vis-à-vis each other.

This evolving and confused sense of identity is the root cause of nationalism and, as the Social Identity Theory warns, can lead to malignant ethnocentrism. In forming the Social Identity Theory as a psychological explanation of inter-group discrimination, Turner and Tajfel proposed four components that can lead one group to view another group negatively in order to gain a positive in-group image. First, social categorization is a division of the world so that one can order and label people into groups. There is an obvious division of the world into nations and nationalities. Second, social identification is when people associate themselves with certain groups (their in-groups) and their concept of the self results from the emotional value of this association. In other words, recognizing oneself as being Japanese or being Chinese or being Canadian involves an aspect of pride in that group. Third, social comparison is the process of comparing the characteristics of the in-group with those of the out-group(s). For countries, there are comparisons of economic development, military might, government structures, cultural influence, etc. And fourth, psychological distinctiveness is a desire to identity the in-group as both distinctive and positive in the comparison with the out-group(s). This often causes biases when a group seeks to feel pride in its identity and history at the expense of the other group. Hence, the need for psychological distinctiveness when comparing interpretations of history between countries can lead to nationalistic confrontations. While comparisons can occur between any two groups or, in this case, any two nationalities, the long relationship and the geographic nearness between China and Japan have made them the natural target of each other.

Theories of ethnonationalism often point the finger at policies of leaders who seek to encourage nationalistic fervour for personal political gain, but the actions of the Chinese and

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Japanese governments do not reveal direct support for strong nationalistic fervour.\textsuperscript{82} In fact, the actions of governments can be seen as both shaping and being shaped by the strident nationalism in certain parts of the national psyche. For China and Japan, there is ambivalence in the relationship that is produced by contradicting sentiments of superiority and inferiority against the other by each in-group. Nationalism is experienced as the result of attempts to enhance the feeling of superiority against that of inferiority. The reason for doing so, for Chinese youths, is to use the memory of the past to form a psychological distinctiveness from Japan that is a basis for their emerging role in the world: As China searches for a modern voice, the focus on history is a unifying force for a Chinese society in the midst of huge changes as China attempts to play modernization “catch-up” with the Western world. For Japanese youths, the need to enhance feelings of superiority is a result of Japan’s current crisis of identity. Japanese society’s attempt to carve a place for itself between its Western status and its Asian roots compel its youths to place less focus on the past, leading to a lack of continuity of identity and a desire for conscious pride in the nation to overcome the recent economic stagnation. With the changes in both societies, the need for a stable identity that is psychologically distinct influences the social comparison between countries.

\textit{China’s Search for a Modern Voice}

The Chinese people are proud of their culture and long civilization; however, in recent history, China has suffered a series of crushing defeats and ruthless exploitation by foreign countries. In the last few decades though, and particularly over the last few years, China has rapidly modernized and developed at a rate that has astonished many observers. This rapid growth has allowed China to reclaim its position as a major power in the world, an accomplishment that causes much euphoria for the Chinese people and a source of astonishment also for the people who are living through the changes in China’s cities. For Chinese students who lived at boarding schools, returning home every few weeks in the 1990s always came with surprises as the

\footnote{A number of scholars have worked on analyzing the tension between Chinese nationalists and the Chinese government, as well as on analyzing the role of the Japanese media in shaping public perceptions and nationalistic sentiments in Japan. See Wu, \textit{Chinese Cyber Nationalism}, for an account of the Chinese government’s opposition to cyber-nationalistic actions taken by Chinese citizens.}
childhood neighbourhoods were modernized into high-rise districts before their eyes. The thousands of Chinese immigrants who moved to foreign countries in search of opportunities experience culture shock when they go back home to a dramatically altered city and country. City streets now have so many cars that traffic jams are the norm in a country that was famous for its bicycles. And the current generation of youth that grew up in this environment desires the kind of fashion, music, food, and lifestyle that have been markedly influenced by Western culture. Modernization comes in a storm that changes the landscape, the attitudes, and the dreams of China.

This incredible development is not without costs; for Chinese youths to engage in social identification, their concept of “China” has slowly changed from the views of the older generations. The drive toward modernization has meant the replacement of many old buildings and heritage sites with high-rise architecture, as well as changes in beliefs and value systems. Furthermore, economic growth has brought Western influence in lifestyles and thoughts, especially to the younger generations who feel distant from some of their parents’ ideas. An uncertain identity for Chinese youth exists in this whirlwind of rapid change for China. Should China copy the successes of the developed world or try to find its own modern voice on an uncertain path? After all, the concept of modernization itself contains an aspect of Westernization.

This current state of uncertainty creates, for the same reasons, a state of instability. And, to control and limit any instability that could threaten economic growth, “the Beijing government now bases its claim to rule less on communist principles than on the promise of continued increase in prosperity (and the avoidance of social chaos), combined with appeals to nationalism”84—though this, at times, backfires as societal nationalism is difficult to contain or control. Societal stability is best achieved when the people trust in and believe in their identity as a nationality despite unrest caused by crises in social security and a great divide between the rich and poor. Most Chinese youths believe that it is best to “maintain economic progress which means controlling stability”85 and placing the development of the country before individual

85 Bai Yu, personal interview, 2008.
desires. Perhaps this is necessary. As Premier Wen Jiabao famously stated, “no matter how small a problem is, multiplied with 1.3 billion [that is, China’s population], it becomes a huge problem; no matter how remarkable financial and material resources are, divided by 1.3 billion, it becomes a very low average level.”

Chinese youths who observe the destruction of centuries-old building feel “sadness and regret [but] also resignation because one needs to be realistic: if one wants new things then it is necessary to destroy old things [to make room].” This faith and need for a stronger country promotes sentiments of nationalism.

In addition, as China’s youths seek a place for a stronger China in the world, they feel the need to stand up for their nation and prevent exploitation by other powers. Chinese youths are sensitive to and resentful of the Western media’s close attention to China’s problems without a deeper look into the realities and difficulties of a developing nation. One symbol of China’s return to the status of a superpower is the ability of the Chinese people to stand firm against manipulation by other countries. Discourse among many intellectuals “vocally promoted cultural nationalism or an ‘anti-Westernism’ movement [which includes anti-Japanism] by advocating a nativist value system and exploring Western mistreatment of China in modern history and the contemporary era.” In other words, it reveals “a rising tide of nationalistic fervour concomitant with economic growth, and an increasing feeling in the growing middle class to ‘right the wrongs and humiliation’ of the ‘recent past’” now that China is politically and economically stronger. Hence, the ability to regain a sense of pride in their identity as Chinese on the international stage involves a process of defending against foreign exploitation.

Therefore, the search for a modern voice is complicated by China becoming a modern superpower accepted by the rest of the world. The paradoxical attitude toward the West—half admiration and half resentment—is especially strong with regard to Japan, a country that is geographically Asian yet Western in its status as an economically developed country. It is tacitly

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88 Quoted in Rose, Sino-Japanese Relation, 52.
understood that the route to modernization requires a sense of Westernization, which creates the social identity concerns facing China’s youth. The comparison with Japan creates tensions because of Japan’s successful modernization in its Meiji Restoration, around the same time that the modernization revolts in Qing China failed. In the long history of China, Japan has tended to look up its neighbour as a cultural and political centre—such that Japan’s modernization and the consequent assault on China evoke deep hostility and become the focal points for China’s current anger. Historical novels, TV series, films, and various popular forms of media dealing with the War of Resistance against Japan continue to be popular. Japan’s invasion of China is cited as a reason for China’s prolonged underdeveloped nature. Japan’s current actions are also reminders about a past when China was too weak to defend itself. The combined nature of hopes for China to become a superpower and defensiveness toward the Western world’s hypocrisy certainly flames nationalistic values for Chinese youths. Nationalism becomes a cry for vindication of the “century of humiliation” at the hands of Western powers in general and Japan in particular. This psychological reason for the negativity toward Japan results from the comparison that Chinese youths make between their country and Japan and the Western world.

From all this, it can be perceived that history is crucial for the Chinese youth, but it is history as a source of nationalistic pride that is key. This facet is manifested in the prominent role of the Nanking Memorial Museum, as described in its informational pamphlets, as an education centre for Chinese youths to promote love for the Chinese nation. This goal of the museum is aimed at a nationalistic sentiment that would encourage loyalty for a country that is ethnically and economically diverse. While its vast diversity is habitually unrecognized in other countries, China’s sizable range of ethnic groups, fifty-six officially, is a point of wary concern for citizens and the government. Aware of the possible problems that may occur with such differences, the need for a secure and nationalistic identity is an internal drive for a stable society. The educational component of the museum candidly targets Chinese youths and citizens to encourage pride of their country, which is deemed to be critical for a healthy society undergoing fundamental change. The development of an accepted narrative that includes a people fighting,
enduring, and ultimately triumphing against a foreign invader is beneficial to a sense of dignity and self-respect. This leads to Chinese youths’ need to defend against wrongful portrayals of the Sino-Japanese War and Japanese youths’ inclination to de-emphasize those shameful acts of the Japanese army. It becomes an internal issue that, for the Chinese youths, complements the conviction that international relations should endeavour to learn from past lessons.

China, then, is searching for a modern voice that the current generation of youths can call their own. Struggling between traditional values and Western influences, between communist ideology and capitalist calculations, between acceptance of the government’s misgivings and hope for more freedom of expressions, Chinese youths are grasping for a sense of identity. The surge in nationalism as expressed in anti-Japan protests reveals that Chinese youths are looking for their present and future identity in their past, to discover their voice from their roots. Not only is the pace of societal change creating an uncertainty in what it means to be a Chinese youth, but this search for a well-defined identity is needed to ensure a stable environment for continued economic prosperity. Furthermore, by looking to the past for a future identity, past aggressions against China are emphasized and nationalistic attitudes propel anger against Japan’s treatment of China. The past is important to the national consciousness of China and it will continue to play a crucial role in China’s modernity; however, the concern results from how to combine that past with China’s contemporary transformation. It is the Chinese youths’ examination of their own identity, in relation to the greatness of the country’s past and the future that the Chinese people desire, which causes a focus on Japan’s past aggressions.

Japan’s Identity Crisis

A Japanese newspaper once published a column that observed: “In our relatively homogeneous society, many people would feel that being Japanese is self-evident and beyond ambiguity. And yet something is missing from our full sense of being Japanese. It seems to me we are carrying some kind of emptiness around.”91 This is an unmistakable awareness of the current crisis of identity that many people in Japan are feeling, a sense that the Japanese identity is incomplete. Before Western colonialism, China had been the cultural epicentre of Japan for centuries. This immense influence penetrated throughout Japanese culture, Japanese literature, Japanese technology, and Japanese society. In admiring China’s superiority, Japan promoted a concept of

“wakon kansai,” or “Japanese spirit, Chinese know-how.” By the Meiji Restoration, however, the industrial might of the West prompted a rapid reversal in Japan’s orientation. Instead of looking toward a weakening China, Japan sought to learn from the West to strengthen its technological and military prowess. And thus, “wakon kansai” turned to “wakon yosai,” or “Japanese spirit, Western know-how.” This change has caused problems that are still prevalent in today’s society, problems of the attempt to merge a Western modernity with an Asian history that has led the Japanese to be neither fully Western nor fully Asian. A speech by Japanese Nobel laureate Kenzaburo Oe adeptly describes this situation where “present-day Japan is split between two opposite poles of ambiguity. [An] ambiguity, which is so powerful and penetrating that it divides both the state and the people…The modernization of Japan was oriented toward learning from and imitating the West, yet our country is situated in Asia and has its own deep-rooted culture. The ambiguous orientation of Japan…resulted in its isolation from other Asian nations, not only politically but also socially and culturally. And even in the West…we have long remained inscrutable or only partially understood.”92 This dichotomy is certainly present in the attitudes and opinions of Japanese youths who, while agreeing that Japan is geographically part of the Asian continent, speak of “Asia” as meaning the Asian landmass from which Japan, as an island, is separated.93 At the same time that Japanese youths view Japan as a Western power in its democratic political system, strong industrial base, and firm alliance with America, they are also aware that their values of collectivism contrast with Western individualism. Japanese youths, then, find themselves caught between being Asian and being Western. A clear and decisive manner of social identification is missing for youth in today’s Japan.

This lack of a concrete identity is a source for the popular concept of “nihonjinron” (the study of the nature of that Japanese spirit), a theory that attempts to define a Japanese person through principles that view Japan as a homogeneous race unaltered throughout history. With nihonjinron, the Japanese culture, people, social behaviour, ways of thinking, and language are necessarily unique. Thousands of books on this topic have been published in Japan in fields from philosophy to psychology, from linguistics to economics; and on topics such as ecological determinism and rice cultivation, mutual social dependency and the idea that only ethnic

92 Speech by Nobel laureate Kenzaburo Oe. Quoted in Nathan, Japan Unbound, 12.
93 Jing Form students at the Tokyo University, personal interview, 2008.
Japanese can speak Japanese fluently. In contrast to Chinese nationalism, nihonjinron is a passive rather than an active nationalism in that it is not an emotional response but a set of accepted value judgments. “Nihonjinron is formulated on the basis of comparison: by comparing Japan with other cultures, one arrives at what is presumably unique to Japan. But this comparison is not objective and is often ethnocentric. It is, above all, a controversial social categorization and comparison that can lead to condescension toward other cultures.

Under American influence in the period immediately after the Sino-Japanese War, Japan tended toward the political left with an emphasis on sustaining peace. However, some feel that “Japan as a society has become too left and so right-wing movements [have been recently able to] gain popularity.” The economic stagnation of the 1990s saw Japanese youth turn away from a left-wing focus on economic quality and progress to right-wing ideas. It is the right-wing nationalists that garner much media attention as they form a “reassessment of Japan’s past and its role as a source of national pride and identity.” Their perspective includes ideas such as Japanese people should love Japan, post-war Japanese discourse has been too left and so has resulted in a distorted and masochistic version of history, Japan does not need to apologize or has apologized enough to other Asian countries regarding wartime events, Asian countries’ anti-Japan sentiments are irrational, and Asian countries are only using the “history card” for diplomatic and political gains. Right-wing nationalists downplay the unfortunate parts of history, which some consider a way to “create anti-China feelings to feel good about themselves.” This downplaying is exemplified in the descriptions at Yushukan (the right-wing museum at Yasukuni Shrine), where the Sino-Japanese War is referred to simply as the “China Incident.” The increased popularity of right-wing rhetoric can be seen as a response to the need to cultivate a national post-war identity that is neither exclusively Asian nor Western.

94 See Harumi Befu, *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies at the University of California, 1993).
95 Harumi Befu, “Nationalism and Nihonjinron,” in ibid., 113.
96 Mori Itaru, Murakami Daisuke and Onuma Takuro, personal interview, 2008.
98 Mori Itaru, Murakami Daisuke and Onuma Takuro, personal interview, 2008.
Seen as an internal issue in Japan, the conflict of interpretations of history between right-wing and left-wing politics and perspectives becomes largely an ideological debate over Japan’s national policies. Within Japanese politics, revisions and dilution of historical memory is merely a small part of right-wing agenda and the blatant denial of Second World War atrocities is pursued only by a small number of marginalized ultranationalists. Indeed, right-wing politics veers toward nationalism because of its focus on instilling a sense of pride for one’s country in the Japanese people in general and youth in particular.\(^9\) In contrast, left-wing politics is focused on liberal economics. Thus, the recent proliferation of right-wing support, as explained by two Tokyo University students, is partly a consequence of the failure of left-wing policies to quickly solve the problems of economic recession and stagnation.\(^1\) In this manner, nationalistic sentiments have been gaining prominence in recent years as Japanese youths attempt to decide for themselves what it means to be Japanese in the current times.

The sense of pride in one’s country is not as strong in Japan as in China or America; in a study conducted by the Japan Youth Research Institute, 15.4 percent of Japanese high school students felt strong pride for their nation compared to 29.3 percent of Chinese high school students. And 13.3 percent of Japanese high school students surveyed felt pride when looking at the national flag compared to 48.4 percent of Chinese high school students.\(^1\) Thus, to cultivate a new national identity, Japanese neo-nationalists (including a few well-known university professors and manga artists) redefine the aim of social identification as “encourag[ing] in schoolchildren a ‘healthy nationalism’ and a sense of pride in their history…[through] the heroes and heroines of Japan’s past.”\(^2\) These people hold the belief that the Japanese government’s acceptance of responsibility for the war has a negative effect on national identity, such that when it comes to social comparison, Japanese youths feel psychologically inferior rather than psychologically distinctive. While there is a strong countermovement to these groups (especially

\(^9\) Jing Form students at the Tokyo University, personal interview, 2008.

\(^1\) Mori Itaru and Onuma Takuro, personal interview, 2008.

\(^1\) See the survey conducted in March 2005 by the Japan Youth Research Institute of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, “The Attitude toward Learning and Everyday Life of High School Students.” Survey provided by Sugimoto Katsunori and Tajima Junichi of the Japan-China Relations Institute.

from the school teachers union), the neo-nationalists have succeeded in publishing history textbooks that treat the Sino-Japanese War insignificantly and often inaccurately. Messages of nationalism are reintroduced into schools in the form of compulsory singing of the national anthem. Many left-wing teachers opposed this move because the worship of the emperor, as described in the national anthem, was a major factor in Japanese militarism in the war. Nonetheless, it has now become a compulsory part of graduation ceremonies throughout most of Japan. This re-examination of Japan’s past has become “an internal struggle often exacerbated by external pressures,” which only strengthens the logic of the right-wing politicians who call for greater internal pride. These forces reinforce the ambivalence of Japanese youths toward their own history.

More importantly than the national anthem dispute and the history textbooks in formal education, right-wing nationalists have published literature that targets teenagers and university students in the form of manga (Japanese comics). Manga artist Kobayashi’s work Sensoron (translated as On War) emerged around 1998 and has spread the ideas of right-wingers and history revisionists through an easily accessible and highly accepted popular cultural product. Instead of understanding the conflict in East Asia during the Second World War as a war of aggression, Sensoron tells “a story of a ‘just war’ that protected Japan and liberated [Asia] from the ‘white race’…relying on the imagery of ‘our granddads’ as voiceless victims (of the government, media, academics—in short, the elite) [to] shift such a rhetoric from freakish and anachronistic ultranationalism to a common-sense stand by a silent majority wrongly suppressed in the hegemonic discourse of post-war Japan.”

The favourable reception of Sensoron reveals the desire of Japanese youths to feel pride in their country. It also reopens Japan’s internal debate about the Sino-Japanese War and specifically the question of “who was responsible.” The International Military Tribunal for the Far East after the Second World War is seen as flawed and biased in the sense that it was a winner’s justice mostly for America and the Western powers. Because the Tokyo Trials are

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103 Yang, “Mirror for the Future,” 17.
105 Ibid., 82.
considered invalid, the Japanese people have “not yet decided for themselves who is responsible and who is to blame”\textsuperscript{106} for the atrocities of the Sino-Japanese War. In fact, Japanese youths believe that the average Japanese citizens were victims of the war and that they were deceived by their government. Until Japan judges its own criminals, there will continue to be contradicting voices in Japanese society that try to promote a revisionist version of the war. By producing such works as \textit{Sensoron}, the right-wing nationalists have both filled the identity void experienced by many Japanese youths and also given them the opportunity to feel psychologically distinct about the bravery and honour of their nation. Without a clear verdict on the illegitimacy of Imperial Japan’s conquests in Asia, many people are beginning to look back nostalgically to “the comforting certainty of identification with a transcendent ideal embodied by a divine emperor,”\textsuperscript{107} which has led to a re-emergence of nationalism that seeks to erase the current crisis of identity by avoiding a history that can be shameful. Hence, Japanese negativity toward China is formed through comparison to Western values and a lack of a stable sense of self.

With this vague societal discontent, Japanese youth struggle over the debate on how Japan should view its past. Since a universally accepted narrative is essential to resolving Japan’s fragmented sense of national and cultural identity, there has been a movement to focus on the noble aspects of Japan’s past and to amend views of Japan’s wrongs. There is a redefinition of Japan as a totally unique culture and a desire to promote healthy love for the country through comparison with other cultures. As such, Japan’s identity crisis is quickly turning toward anti-China sentiments to nurture a psychologically distinct social identity that can fulfill the need to feel “fully Japanese” without the cultural debt to China or the modernization debt to the West.

\textbf{LOOKING TO THE FUTURE}

How the past of a nation is interpreted and which events are called to attention for nationalistic purposes reveal a great deal regarding the need of a nation to define its identity at any given time. Societies are “primarily interested not in what actually happened in history but in how we remember it.”\textsuperscript{108} For China and for Japan, the importance of the Sino-Japanese War means that it

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\textsuperscript{106} Tajima Junichi and Sugimoto Katsunori, personal interview, 2008.
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\textsuperscript{107} Nathan, \textit{Japan Unbound}, 15.
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is emphasized for emotional outrage in China at the same time that it is avoided for a continuous and positive narrative in Japan. Consequently, it has become constructed as a serious factor for psychological distinctiveness for both states. The attempt to cultivate a stronger sense of identity among Japanese youths allows for the internal need to emphasize Japan’s prouder side of history, while the fervent pride in their nation for Chinese youths has only continued to grow with the country’s modernization and can often become explosive as China navigates its increasingly powerful course on the world stage. The negative tension between Chinese and Japanese youth is caused not only by historical grievances but very much by current mutual suspicions; it is affected not only by economic and geopolitical considerations but also by psychological and emotional needs; and it is not just an issue for China-Japan bilateral relations but also for intertwined multilateral relations with the West. That is to say, China attempts to distinguish itself from the West, specifically Japan (which was able to modernize earlier), as it seeks its own path of modernization (which has often been synonymous with Westernization). Meanwhile, Japan wishes to find an identity of its own that is distinct from modern Western influences and ancient Chinese influences.

The futures of China and Japan are inextricably linked. This is certainly understood by the current generation of youths who are more and more interested in studying the other nation’s language to improve their job prospects. Indeed, a geographical alliance in East Asia similar to the EU or NAFTA is perceived by some youths as a natural progression of China-Japan relations on the international stage. However, given the continued importance of the history issue, the disagreement on the interpretation of the Sino-Japanese war very much influences present and future relations. Harumi Befu wrote that “nationalism is very much a creature of external forces impinging upon a nation-state, which needs to assert its autonomy and identity because there are other like entities with which it must engage in some kind of relationship.” The perceptions of the Chinese and Japanese youth are affected by the actions of each country. Strident nationalism is usually a response to perceived disrespectful and virulent actions by the other, just as friendly actions promote goodwill. It is necessary that the youth of both states engage in acts of goodwill that can decrease negativity.

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110 Befu, “Nationalism and Nihonjinron,” 121.
Hidenori Ijiri summed up the ambivalent attitude between Japan and China as internal conflicts between competing superiority complexes and inferiority complexes with deep roots in the historical, cultural and economic climates. This ambivalence comes from each nation’s domestic search for an identity that is distinct from that of the other’s. Nationalism is a response to a changing China and a changing Japan—the fact that a Chinese or a Japanese nationalistic identity includes an aspect of, respectively, anti-Japan or anti-China sentiments simply exposes the extent and depth of China-Japan interactions. Nationalism can be understood as the promotion of the feeling of superiority over the feeling of inferiority for a stronger and psychologically distinctive sense of identity that can withstand the shock of change. For each country, the other is a reminder of the balance between Western modernization and Asian traditional cultures and, therefore, is a particular focal point of reference in its own search for a stable national identity. This becomes significant for youths who are forming their own individual identities within a national in-group identity.

As China and Japan gain prominence economically and politically, such tensions and conflicts between the two countries can have far-reaching consequences. It becomes essential to grasp the intricacy of the bilateral relations, on both the governmental and societal levels. The complexity, as explained in this paper, results from the intertwined and overlapping facets facing the two countries internally, bilaterally, and multilaterally. While the resolution of the history issue is a great stepping stone toward more amicable relations, it is not a complete solution to the negativity felt by youths toward the other country. More importantly, the history issue cannot be resolved without the understanding that there are greater forces at play—that is, a confusion of what it really means to be Chinese or Japanese. In fact, youths of the two countries are very similar in this aspect as both societies engage in a questioning of their identities within an era of worldwide change, changes through modernization and globalization that require a redefinition of national identity. Therefore, to truly lessen the prevalent dislike that each country’s youth feel for the other country, a multi-faceted approach is needed. Not only is it necessary to seek for an objective (or as close to objective as possible) resolution to the history issue, it is also critical that the youth seek a clear sense of self within each country. Education and intercultural exchange can surely assist in providing youths of both countries with a better understanding of both the problems of their own society and the perspectives of the other society. Increasing

communication and exchange can allow citizens to look at themselves through the lens of the other thereby creating mutual respect and understanding. Analyzing the effects and effectiveness of nationalistic education in either country is beyond the scope of this paper; however, it should be noted that the exam-based format of schooling in both states may deter creative thought and, therefore, make it easier for nationalistic sentiments to gain a loyal following. On the other hand, the ability of education to allow for youth to develop the willingness to know the other side of the story is a crucial tool in any serious attempt to improve China-Japan relations on the societal level. Perhaps more significant are grassroots attempts by various social organizations to increase levels of intercultural exchanges since nationalism often occurs as societal displays of suspicion and anger. One such organization, the Jing Forum\textsuperscript{112} between Tokyo University and Peking University, is an excellent example of youths in both countries initiating contact to lessen antagonism between the two societies. As youth learn more about each other and about themselves, the increasingly in-depth comprehension becomes the first step to creating better relations. With mutual understanding, the other may become viewed not as an opponent but as an ally in the search for a modern identity in this globalizing world. In this manner, positive perceptions between Chinese and Japanese youth can be formed in the near future.

Just as youth are most affected by the current state of affairs in the countries’ evolving sense of identity, they are also the most able to promote changes in that identity toward one that is less detrimental to bilateral relations—and it is objectively beneficial for these two East Asian powers to be on friendly terms. After all, they have the most to gain from the creation of, or most to lose from the lack of, a stable sense of self-awareness which can then promote mutual advantages in terms of trade and lessen any conflicts that do arise. At the same time, it should be noted that while Chinese and Japanese youth focus on the other within their own search for identity—and while this focus is strengthened by a long past relationship—their rationales for the attitudes regarding that same history are divergent. Chinese youth are concerned with how past events are recognized in the present. Japanese youth are concerned about how past actions are judged in the present. Consequently, improved mutual understanding can start with the knowledge that the differences may not be as intractable as they first appear and with the awareness that the other is going through similar societal uncertainties. Moreover, because the

\textsuperscript{112} See the Jing Forum website at http://jingforum.org/jp/index.html.
The power of social categorization is so strong, bilateral relations would also improve when there is a stronger collective identity that is not in reference to the other.

The relationship between Chinese and Japanese youth illustrates how differing memories of shared histories and ambiguous insecurities about national identity can combine to cause nationalistic antagonism between two countries whose changing societies interact to a great extent. Any attempt to develop better relations would have to accept the idea that increasing interaction may first lead to deteriorating perceptions as more opportunities for comparisons allow for those past events to become more pertinent in the development of a collective identity. When those past events instigate hatred or enmity, there would likely be divergent interpretations due to each side’s desire to maintain a positive self-image. Nonetheless, if interaction continues to be fostered, it can also induce a re-evaluation—hopefully a positive re-evaluation dependent upon actions of civil groups and governments—of identity by allowing for a reciprocal approach for self-assessment. Ultimately, the awareness of how and why youth in China and Japan feel so strongly about the other, as analyzed in this paper, is a foundational step along the path toward mutual understanding and acceptance in the not-so-distant future.

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