

National Mythmaking and the Problems of History In Sino-Japanese Relations

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The Sino-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945 was unparalleled in either country's history of external conflicts with its enormous scale, brutality, and destructiveness. Both nations emerged from the war tragically traumatized, not only in terms of their human casualties and economic loss inflicted but also with regard to the severe humiliation of national pride they suffered. However, for quite a long time since the end of the war historical interpretation of the war never appeared a political issue between Japan and the communist China. It was the eruption of textbook controversy in summer 1982 that marked the beginning of frequent, acrimonious bilateral disputes surrounding the war history. The "history quarrel" not only poisoned popular feelings of each other country but also exacerbated mutual perception of intention and provoked domestic opposition to accommodative foreign policies.¹

¹ On the negative impact of historical legacy on postwar Sino-Japanese relations, see Allen S. Whiting, *China eyes Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Thomas J. Christensen, "Chinese Realpolitik." *Foreign Affairs* 75(no. 5, 1996); William Lee Lowell, "The Inheritance of War: Japan's domestic politics and international ambitions," in Gerrit W. Gong, *Remembering and Forgetting: the legacy of war and peace in East Asia* (Washington, DC: The Center for Strategic International Studies, 1996); Nicholas D. Kristof, "The Problem of Memory," *Foreign Affairs* 77 (no. 6, 1998).

The emergence of history problem as a prominent source of bilateral tension since the 1980s defies two notions of conventional wisdom. One is the belief that time can heal wounds because the longer time has passed since an trauma took place, the more people tend to forget about the pain. The other is that historical grievances should be diluted by present interactions and communications between the relevant parties. But why did China and Japan begin the “history quarrel” not immediately after the war but in the early 1980s when only a small proportion of the population had direct experiences of the war,² and the two countries had not only normalized political relations for ten years but also developed much closer economic links and larger scale personnel exchanges than in the first three decades of bilateral relations?³ This paper attempts to address the puzzle by introducing the historical mythmaking theory. It first outlines the key assumptions and causal mechanisms of the historical mythmaking theory. The following section illustrates the origin of historical myths in Japan and China in the aftermath of the war and explains the causes of the seemingly peripheral role of the history factor in shaping bilateral relations before the 1980s. The next section describes the profound shift in the historical mythmaking patterns in both countries since the 1980s that led to a much more

² According to Chinese census in 1982, only about one fifth of the Chinese population then was over 45 years old (born before the war). See *New China's Population* (New York: China Financial and Economic Publishing House and Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), p. 117. In Japan, only about one third of the total population in 1980 were born before the war. See *Historical Statistics of Japan*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Japan Statistics Association, 1987).

³ Bilateral trade volume increased about six times from 1980 to 1999. See MITI, *Tsūshō Hakusho (White Paper on International Trade, Japan)*; Bureau of Statistics, Office of the Prime Minister, *Nihon Tōkei Nenkan (Japan Statistical Yearbook)*; Institute of Developing Economies, *Trade Statistics of China 1970-1985: Utilization and Appraisal*. Meanwhile, Chinese visitors to Japan and Japanese visitors to China increased 20 times and 17 times from 1980 to 1999. See Japanese Ministry of Justice, *Shunyūkoku Kanri Tōkei Nenpō (Annual Report of Immigration Statistics)*, various years.

pronounced impact of the history factor on bilateral relations. Basically, this paper argues that divergence of national memories caused by elite historical mythmaking mainly accounts for the existence of history problem in Sino-Japanese relations. Before the 1980s mainstream historical narratives of the two countries were less conflictual with one another and the problems of history were subdued because the Cold War structural pressure was so pressing that governments were willing to put aside emotional issues to concentrate on attaining immediate geostrategic interests. When systemic imperatives declined while domestic political considerations came to the forefront since the 1980s, flagrantly nationalistic historical myths flourished and bilateral disagreement on past conflict exacerbated, causing serious political disputes over the history issue. Therefore, it is suggested that the future hope of resolving the problems of history in the Sino-Japanese relations is to a large extent hinged on the bilateral efforts to honest, shared memory that would effectively de-mythify national history.

Theoretical Framework

The significant impact of beliefs and ideas on international relations has been acknowledged in many existing works, particular in the burgeoning literature on “ideas and foreign policy.”⁴ This paper attempts to formulate and test a theory of historical

⁴ But Some characteristic works on policy implications of ideational forces include Judith Goldstein & Robert O. Keohane, “Ideas and foreign policy: An Analytical Framework,” in Goldstein & Keohane eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: beliefs, institutions, and political change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1993); Peter A. Hall, *The Political Power of Economic Ideas: Keynesianism across nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Peter J. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: norms and identity in world politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). As two students of international relations recently claimed, “the issue is no longer whether but rather how and how much ideas matter under different conditions.” See Stephen G Brooks & Wohlforth

mythmaking that purports to reveal how a certain type of idea, historical myth, lead to international political conflict.

National myths are half-truth narratives about the origin, identity and purposes of a nation. They constitute an integral part of the ideological and spiritual foundation for nation and nationalism. According to Anthony Smith, “what gives nationalism its power are myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritage and the way in which a popular living past has been, and can be, rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern nationalist intelligentsias.”⁵ In this paper, I focus on three types of national myths that are particularly pernicious and tend to cause interstate tension.⁶ The first is self-glorification myths that explicitly incorporate inflated or false claims of national virtue and competence. Not only past achievements, but also experiences of victimization can become reasons for self-glorification because they may result in a “cult of national martyrdom” that bestows the nation with moral superiority and self-legitimizes national missions and aspiration.⁷ The second type of national myths, self-whitewashing myths,

C. William, “Power, Globalization, and the End of the Cold War,” International Security 25, no. 3 (Winter 2000/01), p. 6.

⁵ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 9.

⁶ In building the theory of historical mythmaking, I draw on a number of recent studies that suggest a causal relationship between hyper-nationalism poisoned by mythologized national history on the one hand, and international conflict and war on the other hand. They include Stephen Van Evera, “Primed for Peace: Europe After the Cold War” International Security 15, no. 3 (Winter 1990/1991), pp. 23-24; idem, “Hypotheses on Nationalism and War.” International Security 18,4 (Spring 1994); David A. Mendeloff, *Truth-Telling and Mythmaking in Post-Soviet Russia: Pernicious Historical Ideas, Mass Education, and Interests Conflict*, Ph.D. dissertation (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2001).

⁷ The self-glorification role of victimhood myths has been revealed in many works on nationalism.

deny or rationalize past wrongdoing against others. The third type is other-maligning myths, which denigrate others with false accusations of their cultural inferiority, malicious intention, or primary responsibility for past trauma. All these myths are created by political elite to meet practical political needs, such as to enhance regime legitimacy, mobilize public support to government policies, or win factional competition.⁸ If widely purveyed, institutionalized, and perpetuated through textbooks, media, commemoration, and even domestic and international arrangements of post-conflict resolution measures, these myths can dominate national collective memory and shape the core ideas of national identity.

The establishment of mainstream historiography anchored on pernicious historical myths would lead to serious disputes between two countries on their past conflict. They will not only disagree on concrete historical facts of what actually happened in the conflict, but also define historical responsibility in dramatically different ways. Specifically, the two sides will disagree on their answers to the question of “who bear

On the role of victim consciousness in Polish nationalism, see Jan T. Gross, *Polish Society under German Occupation: the Generalgouvernement, 1939-1944* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 4-9; Andrzej Walicki, “The Three Traditions in Polish Patriotism,” in S. Gomulka and A. Polonsky eds. *Polish Paradoxes* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990) pp. 30-35.

On Jewish victimhood, see Michael Wolffsohn, *Eternal Guilt: forty years of German-Jewish-Israeli relations* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1993).

On Japanese victim consciousness, see James J. Orr, *The Victim as Hero: ideologies of peace and national identity in postwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001); Kiichi Fujiwara, “Imaging the past, remembering the future.” *Social Science Japan* (April 1995): 3-5.

On Chinese victimhood and nationalism, see Neil Renwick & Cao Qing, “Victimhood and Identity in China's Political Discourse,” ISA Annual Convention, 1999.

⁸ Van Evera, “Hypotheses on Nationalism and War,” pp. 30-32.

what kind of responsibility to whom for having done what during the past conflict.”⁹ Pernicious historical myths that glorify their own states’ beneficent behavior and fine qualities, deny guilt for committing wrongdoing, and falsely blame others for all the sufferings will create enormous gap between two nations’ perceptions of the nature, magnitude and scope of responsibility for the traumatic conflict. Such historiographic disagreement tends to undermine the fulfillment of various obligations rendered by the historical responsibility, including acknowledging and apologizing for moral guilt, amending historical injustices with political rehabilitation and material compensations, and bringing culpable actors to legal justice. Unfulfilled obligations will then harden the perpetrator side’s claim of their own innocence and the victim side’s demand for payment of historical debts. So mythmaking begets mythmaking and the gap between their national memories becomes wider, reinforcing and perpetuating bilateral conflict over the historical issue.

However, historical mythmaking does not automatically result in historiographic clashes. It is possible that under certain political circumstances states may make national myths that converge with one another. That is, two sides may agree on a false narrative of the past conflict. Or, states may deliberately cover-up or slight their disagreement on historical interpretation in exchange for more imminent political interests. In both situations, the problems of history can be suppressed or shelved temporarily but not

⁹ This is a formula delineating the key parameters of traumatic conflict responsibility. I derive it from existing writings on war responsibility, mostly published in Japan by progressive intellectuals concerned with this issue. For example, see Ishida Takeshi, *Kioku to Bōkyaku no Seijigaku (The Politics of Remembering and Forgetting)* (Tokyo: Akiishi Shoten, 2000), p. 165; Ienaga Saburo, *Sensō Sekinin (War Responsibility)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000), pp. 29-35; Mochida Yukio, “Sensō Sekinin. Sengo Sekinin’ Mondai no Suiiki,” in Awaya Kentaro, *Sensō Sekinin & Sengo Sekinin (War Responsibility and Postwar Responsibility)* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun Sha, 1999).

eliminated. When historical mythmaking patterns changes in new political environment, bilateral convergence on false historical interpretation will break down and previously concealed divergence will be exposed to public attention, making serious historiographic disputes hard to avoid.

To resolve the problems of history and foster mutual understanding and trust, states should stop historical mythmaking and build honest, shared historical memory about their past conflict. As H. Richard Niebuhr says in *The Meaning of Revelation*, “where common memory is lacking, where people do not share in the same past, there can be no real community, and where community is to be formed common memory must be created... the measure of our unity is the extent of our common memory.”¹⁰ Shared historical memory has to be established first through joint research and dialogue between independent historians of relevant countries, which not only sets straight the historical facts, but also bridges the gap between nationally bounded interpretations of such critical issues as war responsibility.¹¹ Then states need to establish the dominant status of the shared history in public memory through inter-governmental agreements, especially regarding restitution measures. Here restitution refers to a wide range of rectifying means including apology and forgiveness, legal accountability and material compensation that will mollify, but certainly never perfectly undo, the physical and psychological

¹⁰ Quoted in Donald W. Shriver Jr., “The Long Road to Reconciliation: Some Moral Stepping Stones,” in Robert L. Rothstein, *After the Peace: resistance and reconciliation* (Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner Publishers, 1999), p. 210.

¹¹ There is a possibility that two countries may agree on a false narrative of the past conflict. But the following analysis of Japanese and Chinese historical mythmaking will reveal that convergence on false history may suppress or shelve the history problem temporarily but not eliminate it. When the historical mythmaking pattern changes under

damage to the victims. The joint history writing and institutional arrangement of restitution serve to thoroughly settle the historical account between former enemy states and foreclose bilateral disputes on the history issue.

Subdued Historiographic Conflict before the 1980s

The aftermath of Sino-Japanese war saw both countries trying to come to grips with their wartime traumatic experiences. In the process of remembering and forgetting their national past, political elite harboring special political-ideological goals and interests constructed historical myths that tried to glorify or whitewash the actions of one's own nation while blaming others for causing the tragedy. Owing to the powerful penetration of structural imperatives in this process, war memories of the two countries converged on some mythical interpretations while their points of divergence were intentionally limited or covered up. Consequently, despite obvious historical mythmaking of both countries and the general lack of settlement of historical burden during this period, conflict over war historiography between the two countries was by and large absent.

Constructing Historical Myths in the Pre-normalization Years

Myths in Japanese War Memory

After the war ended, three political goals topped the immediate agenda of the Japanese conservative elite: to consolidate conservative control of state power in the face of leftist challenge; to mobilize public support to the policy of recovering business-dominated economy; to justify the international strategy of collaboration with the U.S. that could not only end the occupation soon but also fend off Soviet threat and guarantee

new political circumstances, the bilateral agreement on false historical interpretation will break down and new disputes will follow.

Japan's economic prosperity. Reinventing a national tradition through historical mythmaking to boost the prestige and influence of conservative power became an important political instrument to reach these goals. The principal interest of conservative elite in mythologizing Japan's aggression history was to whitewash the wrongdoing of the conservative government and shift the responsibility to other political forces or countries.

Japanese conservative intention of historical mythmaking to a large extent coincided with the American strategy of propping up a stable conservative government in Japan in order to first use it to achieve occupation objectives and second ensure that Japan would be an important anti-communist ally in Asia. The interactions and mutual compromises between the Japanese conservatives and American occupation authorities shaped the key parameters of mainstream Japanese war memory. First is the "myth of military clique," which admitted that the war was an aggression but only blamed a small group of militarists for causing the war while claiming that the rest of the nation, including the emperor, the majority of the conservative ruling class, and ordinary Japanese people, were duped by the militarists and became victims of the war. Second is the Western-centrist approach that accepted Japan's responsibility for opening hostilities with Western countries and disrupting world peace, but whitewashed its actions of aggression and atrocities in Asian countries. The third is the notion of "sacrifice as hero" that gave the imperial army special honor because they answered the call when the country needed them and have made great sacrifices, or *Gisei*, for the country. These myths were not entirely coherent and mutually supporting. Whereas the first and second myths constituted the staple of the occupation authorities-indoctrinated Pacific War View

of History, the third one embodied inherent contradictions with the Pacific War View of History because if Japan launched a war of injustice, those who fought the war on behalf of Japan could be anything but glorious.¹² Nevertheless, the notion of a glorious imperial army was persistently purveyed by Japanese conservative elite, mainly to domestic audience, to satisfy their nationalistic ego. As long as Japan acknowledged externally that the war was wrong, it mattered little to the Americans what kind of war story it told at home.

Taking advantage of some important institutional tools and with the aid of the occupation authorities, Japanese conservative elite managed to instill these myths into the national collective memory. First of all, postwar punishment of individuals bearing war responsibility perpetuated conservative historiography through legal measures. The Tokyo War Crimes Trial conspicuously avoided any reference to the Showa emperor, ascribed war responsibility to Tōjō and a few top army officers, and devoted the bulk of the prosecution time to Japanese “crimes against peace” in the war with Western powers while downplaying Japanese war atrocities that were committed mostly in Asian countries.¹³ In the realm of history education, supported by the occupation strategy of “indirect rule,” the Japanese conservative government gradually recovered central control of education content through the textbook certification system and publication of

¹² For a succinct summary of the content of the Pacific War View of History propagated by the American occupation authorities, see Yoshida Yutaka, *Nihonjin no Sensōkan (The Japanese Views of the War)* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1998), pp. 31-33.

¹³ Yasuaki Ōnuma, *Tōkyō Saiban kara Sengo Sekirin no Shisō e (From the Tokyo Trial to Postwar Thoughts on War Responsibility)* (Tokyo: Toshito, 1993); John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co./New Press, 1999), Chapter 15; Steven Benfell, “Selective Memories: Politics, Institutions, and War Memories in Postwar Japan”, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, 2001.

teaching guidelines.¹⁴ As a result, Japanese textbooks in the 1950s and 1960s purveyed “the myth of military clique” and emphasized Japanese victimhood and pacifism, with Japanese historical debts to Asian nations by and large left out.¹⁵ The institutional framework intended by the Japanese government to “bring resolution to the postwar,” *Sengo Shori*, also helped sustain the conservative historiography. The government made swift actions to pay generous compensation to war victims associated with the Japanese military but dragged its feet in providing relief to general Japanese victims of war, and its compensation to domestic victims by far exceeded its reparation to Asia victims.¹⁶ As for war commemoration, official ceremony dedicated to those who sacrificed for the country was held annually on August 15 since 1963, and the government gave tacit support to the enshrining of war dead at the Yasukuni Shrine.¹⁷ Other commemorative activities

¹⁴ For more on how the conservative government gradually gained control of educational institution during the occupation and the early 1950s, see John W. Dower, *Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience, 1878-1954* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, 1979), pp. 348-356; Julian Dierkes, “The Early Postwar Institutionalization of War Memories in Japanese Educational Policies,” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Asian Studies, Chicago, 2001, pp. 8-10.

¹⁵ Robert Fish, “From The Manchurian Incident to Nagasaki in 20 Pages: The Pacific War as Seen in Postwar Japanese High School History Textbooks,” in Edward Beauchamp ed. *Education in Modern Japan: Old Voices, New Voices* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, forthcoming, 2003); Orr, *The Victim as Hero*, pp. 80-83.

¹⁶ Hiroshi Tanaka, “Nihon no Sengo Seikin to Ajia: Sengo Hosho to Rekishi Ninshiki (Japan’s Postwar Responsibility and Asia: Postwar Compensation and Historical Consciousness),” in Taichiro Mitani, et al. *Ajia no Reisen to Tatsu-shokuminchi-ka (The Cold War in Asia and Decolonization)* (Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1993); idem. “Why Is Asia Demanding Postwar Compensation Now?” *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies* 28 (1996), p.9; Orr, *The Victim as Hero*, Chapter 6.

¹⁷ Tanaka Nobumasa et al., *Izoku to Sengo (War Bereaved Families and Postwar)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995); Ōe Shinobu, *Yasukuni Jinja (The Yasukuni Shrine)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1986); Itagaki Tadashi, *Yasukuni Kōshiki Sanhai no Sōkatsu (An Overview of Official Worship of Yasukuni Shrine)* (Tokyo: Tenden Sha, 2000).

highlighted Japanese victim consciousness and unique pacifism, such as the museums and memorial activities surrounding the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.¹⁸

Myths in Chinese Communist Historiography

Political situation was volatile to the CCP regime in the first few years after the PRC was founded. Domestically, a number of “democratic parties” (*Minzhu Dangpai*) possessed influence in the coalition government, and anti-Communist guerrilla forces supported by the KMT regime in Taiwan and the U.S. government still operated in various parts of the mainland. On the international strategic front, the containment strategy of the United States posed significant threat to overthrow the CCP government, either by direct military invasion or through military encirclement in China’s surrounding countries. In order to enhance the power and legitimacy of the CCP regime and rally public support to the grand strategy of countering “American imperialism,” communist ideologues carried out the propaganda campaign that extolled the CCP while blasting the KMT and the United States as the worst enemies of the Chinese nation. So the national identity of the PRC was anchored on the “defining fundamental fissure” between the Chinese Communists on the one hand and Nationalists and their American ally on the one hand, rather than the antagonism between the Chinese and Japanese nations.¹⁹

Accordingly, Chinese communist historiography of the war praised the CCP as the sole leader of the “Great Chinese War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression”

¹⁸ See Satoru Ubuki, *Heiwa Kinen Shikiten no Ayumi (The Steps of Peace Memorial Ceremony)* (Hiroshima: Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, 1992); Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

¹⁹ Rana Mitter, “Behind the Scenes at the Museum: Nationalism, History and Memory in the Beijing War of Resistance Museum, 1987-1997.” *The China Quarterly* 161 (2000), p. 283.

and accentuated the heroism of the CCP-led army and underground resistance campaigns. The KMT was accused of kowtowing to and actively collaborating with the Japanese aggressors in exchange for its own safety and power. The United States was branded as another major threat to the Chinese nation because it sat idle while the Chinese people were suffering and assisted the KMT government to suppress Chinese communism. In the school textbooks published in the 1950s and 1960s, policies of the KMT and CCP were constantly compared and contrasted to drive home the fundamental difference between the traitorous, reactionary KMT and the patriotic, progressive CCP.²⁰ In the meantime, these textbooks greatly emphasized the importance of anti-Japanese base areas set up by the communist armies and guerrillas. Meanwhile, all textbooks of this period clearly differentiated the roles played by different foreign countries in Chinese war of resistance. They generally mentioned the Soviet military aid and its strike at Japan in August 1945 that accelerate Japan's surrender, but condemned the U.S. government for giving large quantities of arms and ammunitions to the Japanese military. Besides

²⁰ The compilation of textbooks is subject to strictly centralized control of the government in China. Generally speaking, the government exercised direct authority over the educational content through Curricular Standards, or called Teaching Guidelines since 1952, which were drafted by the State Education Commission and updated every few years. The SEC then entrusted the People's Education Press to organize textbook authors to jointly prepare official textbooks based on Teaching Guidelines. Up to the mid-1960s totally four editions of official textbooks were produced under four different Teaching Guidelines. The following discussion of Chinese textbook treatment of the Sino-Japanese war history is based on author's reading of these textbooks. For more on Chinese textbook authorization system, see Ye Liqun, "Huigu yu Sikao: Zhongxiaoxue Jiaocai Jianshe 40 Nian 1949-1989 (Review and Reflection: 40 Years of Developing Secondary School Teaching Materials)," in Institute of Curriculum and Teaching Materials Research ed., *Keichen Jiaocai Yanjiu 10 Nian (10 Years of Research on Curriculum and Teaching Materials)* (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1993); Zhang Donggang, "Zhongri Zhongxue Lishi Jiaokeshu Bijiao (Comparison of Chinese and Japanese Middle School Textbooks)," The Journal of Tianjin Education College no. 3, 1992.

textbooks, the government built various memorial sites of Chinese revolution, where the anti-Japanese war was not singled out for special commemoration but treated as one part of the hundred year Chinese struggle against foreign imperialism and domestic reactionary forces that ended with the CCP's ultimate triumph over the KMT in 1949.²¹

Unlike its outright demonization of the KMT and US, Chinese official historiography drew a clear line between “the small handful of Japanese militarists” and the ordinary Japanese people, who were considered as the Chinese people's fellow victim of the Japanese militarists. This “militarists vs. people” theme was consistent with China's diplomatic strategy toward Western allies of the United States. Chinese leaders saw the world not merely dominated by two superpower blocs, but also containing tensions between superpowers and smaller powers. If China could build a revolutionary “United Front” spanning both socialist countries and smaller Western powers, it could erode the international support base of the U.S. and eventually break down the Western political and economic blockade of the CCP regime. Being the most important ally of the U.S. in Asia, Japan was treated as an important target of the “United Front” strategy.²² Differentiating Japanese militarists and ordinary people in remembering war history was useful for increasing favorable impression of Communist China in the Japanese society

²¹ Hung Wu, “Tiananmen Square: A Political History of Monuments.” Representations 35 (1991); Rana Mitter, “Behind the Scenes at the Museum: Nationalism, History and Memory in the Beijing War of Resistance Museum, 1987-1997.” The China Quarterly 161 (2000).

²² For the evolution of Chinese “united front” strategy, see Okabe Tatsumi, *Chūgoku no Tainichi Seisaku (China's Japan Policy)* (Tokyo: The University of Tokyo Press, 1976), pp. 22-39; Wang Jisi, “International Relations Theory and the Study of Chinese Foreign Policy: A Chinese Perspective,” in Thomas W. Robinson and David L. Shambaugh *Chinese foreign policy: theory and practice* (Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1994).

and gradually encouraging Japanese government to abandon the US-Japan security alliance and anti-China policy.

Therefore, compared to the vivid, detailed description of the roles played by the KMT and CCP during the war, textbook treatment of Japanese policies and actions was rather cut-and-dry, rarely providing concrete data or examples. It did not mince words to condemn Japan for its long-time ambition of imperialist expansion. But most textbooks focused their attack not on the Japanese nation as a whole, but on *Ridi* (Japanese imperialism), *Rijun* (Japanese military), or *Rikou* (Japanese invaders). And Chinese official statements throughout this period held that ordinary Japanese people were free of responsibility for the war because they did not want it and suffered tremendously themselves. So Chinese propaganda urged Japanese people to unite with the Chinese people to oppose Japan's strategic collaboration with the United States that it said would drag Japan into another disastrous war.²³

Noticeably, China's differentiation approach to the question of war responsibility largely overlapped with the "myth of military clique" in Japanese conservative historiography. Apart from this point of convergence, however, Chinese official historiography contained critical divergence with the other two building blocks of Japanese historical myths, the glorious image of the imperial army and the Western-centrist perspective that denied Asia victimization due to Japanese aggression. In order

²³ For some examples, see People's Daily Editorial on Japan Being Dragging to the Path of Militarist Revival, November 27, 1959; People's Daily Editorial on No More Manchuria Incident in Asia, September 18, 1961; People's Daily Editorial on the Living Ambition of the Japanese Militarism, February 19, 1965. See Tian Huan, *Zhanhou Zhongri Guanxi Wenxianji (Documents on Postwar Sino-Japanese Relations)* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue, 1996-1997), Vol. 1, pp. 469-472, pp. 590-593, pp. 780-782.

to prevent the rise of national hatred against Japan that would have confused Japan with China's true archenemies, the KMT and the United States, the Chinese government chose to put away its disagreement with Japan but only stress the agreed part. The Japanese conservative campaign to prettify the military, which was something for domestic consumption and considered less consequential to bilateral relations anyway, was basically ignored. Meanwhile, the government deliberately suppressed domestic truth-telling on Japanese war crimes and Chinese suffering. Textbooks rarely mentioned Japanese atrocities and, when they did, they blamed the failure of the KMT defense strategy just as bitterly as their condemnation of Japanese barbarism. Academic research on this topic was suppressed. It is found that in the early 1960s historians at the History Department of Nanjing University already conducted a comprehensive investigation of the Nanjing Massacre, but this study remained unpublished until 1979 when it was only printed for internal circulation. When the Chinese justice at the Tokyo Trial, Mei Ruao, called on more historical research of the Nanjing Massacre in the 1960s, he was accused of "stirring up national hatred and revenge" against the Japanese people.²⁴ Movies on the Sino-Japanese war conspicuously avoided showing the horrifying Japanese atrocities and the tremendous suffering of Chinese people because otherwise they would be disseminating sentimentalism and capitalist humanitarianism that would "dilute our hatred of imperialism" and "lower our morale" against the enemies.²⁵

²⁴ Yang Daqing, "Convergence or Divergence? Recent Historical Writings on the Rapes of Nanjing." American Historical Review (June 1999), p. 858.

²⁵ Chen Bo, "Genggao di Juqi Mao Zedong Sixiang Hongqi, Wei Chuangzuo Gengduo Genghao de Geming Junshi Ticai Yinbian er Nuli (Lifting Higher the Red Flag of Mao Zedong Thoughts, Striving for Creating More and Better Revolutionary Military Movies)," Dianying Yishu (The Film Arts), August 1960, pp. 5-6.

In step with the diplomatic policy to lure Japan to the China side in the international power struggle, the Chinese communist government also refrained from taking a firm stand on the issue of war restitution. The CCP Central Committee decided in late 1955 on two principles of dealing with war criminals: no single war criminal should be executed or sentenced to life in jail, and verdicts of imprisonment should be limited to a very small number of people.²⁶ By then about 1,000 Japanese war criminals were detained in China, of whom only 45 people were sentenced to prison in the 1956 war criminal trials while all the others were pardoned and quickly repatriated. And those sentenced war criminals, except one person who died during the prison term, all were released by March 1964.²⁷ Besides, the Communist government hardly made any request for Japanese war reparations. The Communist government officially reserved the right to demand Japanese war reparation after Chiang Kai-shek renounced it in the 1952 Japan-ROC peace treaty. But what it was really concerned about was Japanese recognition of Taiwan, to protest which it refused to accept any agreements reached between Japan and Taiwan, including that on the reparation issue. Throughout this period, the Chinese side never raised reparation demand as a precondition or bargaining chip during interactions with Japan. Later it gradually moved to the policy of renouncing reparation. A member of a visiting JSP delegation in 1957 asked Zhou Enlai if the Chinese government could adopt a generous policy on the reparation issue similar to its handling of war criminals when the diplomatic relations were normalization. This incident triggered an internal

²⁶ Jin Yuan, *Qiyuan: Yige Zhanfan Guanli Suozhan de Huiyi (Unusual Destiny: Reminiscences of A Director of War Criminal Prison)* (Beijing: People's Liberation Army Press, 1999), Chapter 25.

²⁷ Jin, *Qiyuan*, Chapter 25-27; Tian, *Zhanhou Zhongri Guanxi Wenxianji*, Vol. 1, pp. 716-718.

policy debate over reparation issue among the top leaders in early 1960s, which led to the decision that China would give up reparation to show friendship to Japanese people.²⁸

Collaborated Cover-up of the History Issue in the 1970s

Beginning the end of the 1960s, international power configuration underwent profound transformation as Sino-Soviet confrontation sharply escalated while China and the United States quickly realized political rapprochement. Such profound changes in US-USSR-China triangular relations compelled the two former adversaries of China and Japan to forge a strategic alignment against the common threat from the Soviet Union.²⁹ Eager to secure smooth political cooperation, the two sides were willing to trade less immediate interests, including the need to resolve negative historical legacies. Therefore, instead of seizing the favorable political environment to carry out joint history research and arrange serious war restitution, they used diplomatic gestures to cover up mutual disagreement on war historiography lest it hamper alignment formation.

Symbolic gestures of contrition were not rare in Japanese diplomacy toward China in the 1970s. Even before becoming prime minister, Tanaka revealed his belief that Japan's apology for the war was the first precondition for Sino-Japanese diplomatic

²⁸ The decisionmaking process of Chinese reparation policy from late 1950s to the 1960s is recollected by Zhang Xiagnshan, an important member of Zhou Enlai's inner group on Japan policy, in his anthology published in 1998. See Zhang Xiangshan, *Zhongri Guanxi: Guankui yu Jianzheng (Sino-Japanese Relations: My Humble Opinions and Testimony)*, Beijing: Dandai Shijie Press, 1998, pp. 66-70.

²⁹ For a detailed analysis of the pattern dynamics of the U.S., USSR and China strategic triangle, see Lowell Dittmer, "The Strategic Triangle: An Elementary Game-Theoretical Analysis," *World Politics* 33, no. 4 (1981); Raymond L. Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation: American-Soviet relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1994), Chapters 6-7, Chapter 20.

breakthrough.³⁰ During his visit to Beijing to sign the joint communiqué of diplomatic normalization, he spoke of the “unfortunate period” of bilateral history over which he expressed “deep reflection.” Nevertheless, such an apology was too ambiguous to serve any good purpose in regard to historical settlement. In fact, in his real thinking, Tanaka did not perceive Japan’s actions clearly as aggression. In a Diet session of February 1973, he said that whether the war with China was aggressive or not had to be left for future evaluation.³¹ Nor did the Japanese government have the intention to pay war reparation at the time of normalization.

But the Chinese government was rather quick to accept Japanese superficial apology and concede claims for war reparation in exchange for early diplomatic normalization. Shortly before Tanaka’s visit to China, the CCP Central Committee issued an internal policy document stating that Sino-Japanese normalization would first of all “contribute to the struggle against the American and Soviet hegemonism, especially the Soviet revisionism,” but also useful for opposing Japanese militarist revival, liberating Taiwan, and mitigating tensions in Asia.³² It was clear to China that a quick Sino-Japanese normalization was highly profitable in strategic terms, compared to which settling historical account was considered secondary interest. So at the first of the three

³⁰ Tanaka made this point in his speech at a Diet hearing in March 1972. See Hayasaka Shigezo, *Seijika Tanaka Kakuei* (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1999), pp. 400-401.

³¹ Yoshida Yutaka, *Nihonjin no Sensōkan (The Japanese Views of the War)* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1998), pp. 138-140.

³² “Guanyu Jiedai Riben Tianzhong Shouxiang Fanghua de Neibu Xuanchuan Tigang (The Internaal Propaganda Outline Regarding the Reception of Japanese prime minister Tanaka), September 7, 1972,” in Mao Zedong, *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao Wengao* (The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong Since the Founding of the Nation) (Beijing: Central Documents Publishing Company, 1987-1990), Vol. 13, p. 316

“Zhou Enlai-Takeiri Meetings,” the preparatory meetings before reaching the joint communiqué, China already offered to forgo war reparation.³³ Disagreements on the history issue did emerge when China took issue with the phrase that Prime Minister Tanaka used at the welcome banquet, “Japan caused trouble to Chinese people,” when referring to the war. While Zhou Enlai managed to have the joint communiqué include a more serious expression than Tanaka’s, he generously pointed out right away that both the Chinese and Japanese people were traumatized during the war.³⁴

These goodwill gestures successfully brushed aside the historical burden and placed political issues such as the problems of Taiwan and anti-hegemony clause at the center of normalization negotiation.³⁵ Strategic interests continued to govern the subsequent peace treaty negotiation, while the history issue was slighted as if it had been satisfactorily settled. The opportunity to reopen the issue did not come until the late 1970s when the Ōhira administration decided to extend low-interest yen loan programs to China. Japanese economic aid was to some extent seen compensation for the historical debt Japan owed to China, but other political and economic interests were actually more important in prompting Ōhira’s decision.³⁶ Moreover, it was just a tacit agreement

³³ Tian, *Zhanhou Zhongri Guanxi Wenxian Ji*, Vol. 2, p. 91.

³⁴ Wang Taiping ed. *Xingzhongguo Waijiao Wushinian (Fifty Years of Chinese Diplomacy)* (Beijing: Beijing Press, 1999), pp. 443-445.

³⁵ For more detailed discussions of the Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization negotiation, see Furukawa Mantaro, *Nitchū Sengo Kankei-Shi (History of Postwar Japan-China Relations)* (Tokyo: Hara Shobo, 1981), pp. 367-392; Tagawa Seiichi, *Nitchū Kōshō Miroku: Tagawa Nikki – 14-nen no Shōgen (Secret Stories of Japan-China Negotiations: Tagawa Diary – Testimony of Fourteen Years)* (Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbun-Sha, 1973), Chapter 5; Tanaka Akihiko, *Nitchū Kankei 1945-1990 (Sino-Japanese Relations: 1945-1990)* (Tokyo: The University of Tokyo Press, 1991), pp. 75-83.

³⁶ Tanaka, *Nitchū Kankei 1945-1990*, pp. 110-113.

between the two governments while no official statement was ever offered to make explicit link between the aid programs and Japanese aggression. Especially the Chinese public never considered that Japan had fulfilled its responsibility to compensation victims.

After 1982: Historiographic Conflict in Explosion

Readjustment of strategic agenda and new situation of domestic power struggle since the 1980s led to reconstruction of national collective memory in both Japan and China. This process involved not only the ruling class elite that controlled the ideological realm in the past but also dissident intellectuals, grass-root social groups and even ordinary people, who tried to sabotage the standard historiography purveyed by state institution with their own recollections and understandings of the history. In the meantime, with the Cold War bipolarity considerably relaxing since the 1980s, the structural incentives for the two countries to cap private memories and restrain mutual disputes on the war history have receded. In result, the artificial basis for bilateral historiographic convergence dramatically weakened while the previous political cover-up of areas of divergence was removed. The two countries were then embroiled in unprecedented conflicts of historical emotions.

Re-negotiating Japanese National Identity

The dominance of old myths in Japanese collective memory was challenged from various directions in this period. First of all, the progressive view of history held by the political left urged Japanese people to face up to Japan's role as a victimizer vis-à-vis many Asian countries in the past war. Although many Japanese had long held guilt

feeling toward China, it was until the 1970s that the Japanese society saw an outpouring of first-hand testimonies of Japanese war crimes in mass media. Most notably, Asahi Shimbun reporter Honda Katsuichi published his book *Chūgoku no Tabi* (The Journey in China) based on his visits to many areas in China where he interviewed surviving Chinese victims of Japanese army's war crimes.³⁷ Honda's writings were soon followed by surging publications of Japanese private war memories that were forthright in presenting both Japanese suffering and atrocities. By the end of the 1980s, such activities had evolved into organized truth-telling campaigns led by progressive citizen groups that involved testimonies by not only Japanese people but also war victims in other Asian countries.³⁸ By highlighting the long neglected Japanese individual and state responsibility for inflicting grave harms to Asian victims and calling for genuine atonement, the progressive interpretation of history actually tried to debunk those old historical myths that only a small number of militarists were guilty, Japan was only sorry to Western countries but not Asian countries, and Japanese soldiers who fought the war were national heroes. Domestic left-wing actions were reinforced by protest of Japanese conservative historiography by other Asian countries like China and South Korea, bringing the issue of renegotiating Japanese national identity to wide international attention. Under concerted domestic and international pressure, the Japanese

³⁷ Honda Katsuichi, *Chūgoku no Tabi (The Journey in China)* (Tokyo: Asahi Bunko, 1994).

³⁸ A noted example was the Osaka-based Association of Remembering and Sympathizing with the War Victims in the Asian Pacific Region (*Ajia-taiheiyo Chiiki no Senso Giseisha ni Omoi o Hase, Kokoro ni Kizamu Shukai*), which holds public hearings on Japanese war atrocities throughout Asia and has put out 12 volumes of these hearing records from 1988 to 1999. See The Association on Remembering War Victims ed., "The Voice of Asia" book series, Tokyo: Toho Shuppan.

conservative government had to take some conciliatory steps in allowing more coverage of Asian victimization in school education. At the end of the 1982 textbook controversy, it agreed to revise the problem textbooks in the future, sent out recommendations regarding the unrevised textbooks, and even promised to “pay full heed to this criticism (from Asian countries about descriptions in Japanese textbooks) in promoting friendship and good will with the nearby countries of Asia.”³⁹

The second trend of challenge was the neo-nationalist view of history. For one thing, it emerged as a backlash to both above-mentioned progressive historiography and the mainstream conservative historiography. Since the 1980s, Japanese far-right elite fiercely attacked the government’s concession to foreign countries to include Japanese war atrocities in history textbooks, which they condemned of spreading a masochistic historical view among Japan’s young generation. The past two decades also saw a succession of “slips of tongue” by Japanese politicians, in which they openly glorified Japanese aggression in Asia and disproved the government’s gestures of contrition. Rather than accepting the Pacific War View of History that the war was wrong and Japan was the victim of the war, the neo-nationalist view took a more radical position that fundamentally disagreed with the aggressive nature of the war. Such a view already existed in the 1960s when people like Hayashi Fusao spoke out to justify Japan’s part in the war.⁴⁰ The view was revived in the 1980s, especially when revisionist assessment of the Tokyo War Crimes Trial flourished in Japan. Nationalist elite called the trial as

³⁹ Rose Caroline, *Interpreting History in Sino-Japanese Relations: a case study in political decision-making* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 113-115.

⁴⁰ Hayashi Fusao, *Daitoa Senso Koteiron (Affirming the Greater East Asian War)* (Tokyo: Bancho Shobo, 1964).

nothing but victor's justice and claimed that Japan should not be singled out for punishment because other Western countries had done the same thing.⁴¹ Their resentment to Western interpretation of the war history clearly reflected the weakening constraints of Cold War structure that had bound Japan to the anti-communist democratic front in Asia.

The rise of neo-nationalist view of history was also deliberately encouraged by the conservative government that tried to reform Japanese national identity to achieve new political agenda. Now that Japan had made great success in its economic catch up with other Western powers, Japan's new leaders now sought to aggrandize Japan's international influence and prestige. As Prime Minister Nakasone himself pointed out, "The first necessity is a change in our thinking. Having 'caught up,' we must now expect others to try to catch up with us. We must seek out a new path for ourselves and open it up ourselves."⁴² In support of such internationalist diplomacy, Nakasone advocated "a transformation of national consciousness." In his view, the humiliating defeat in the WWII, seven years of foreign occupation, and Japan's long-time status as a junior partner of the United States stripped the postwar generation of a strong sense of national purpose.⁴³ Therefore, through historical reinterpretation he wished to stimulate Japanese self-confidence and national pride commensurate with Japan's new role of international leader. His intention was manifest in his attitude toward the Yasukuni Shrine issue. His predecessors only worshipped there in an official capacity during the autumn festival or

⁴¹ Yasuaki Ōnuma, *Tōkyō Saiban kara Sengo Sekirin no Shisō e*, pp. 17-66.

⁴² Quoted from Kenneth B. Pyle, *The Japanese Question: power and purpose in a new era* (Washington, AEI Press, 1992), pp. 90-91.

⁴³ Pyle, *The Japanese Question*, pp. 94-101.

as private persons on August 15, the end of war day. But in 1985 for the first time Nakasone made an official visit to the shrine as a prime minister on August 15. Shortly before the worship, Nakasone openly expressed his disagreement with Tokyo War Crimes Trial that he believed had “spread throughout Japan a self-torturing belief that our country was to blame for everything.” “I’m against this.” he proclaimed, “whatever happens, the state must continue to exist. It is the people who inevitably either bask in glory or are exposed to disgrace, because they are the people. Casting disgrace aside, advancing forward in the pursuit of glory – this is the essence of the nation and of the people.”⁴⁴ For him, official worship at the shrine was an important symbolic gesture to encourage the Japanese people to walk out of the shadow of the disgraceful war and embrace a new national identity based on historical self-glorification.

In the 1990s, internationally oriented grand political vision still drove the cultivation of nationalist emotions by the conservative government. The focus of this period was to mobilize public support to a more active policy on Japan’s military involvement overseas, which was triggered by the lack of international appreciation to Japan’s generous financial contribution to the Gulf War effort. But it was no easy task,

⁴⁴ Nakasone’s appeal to the Japanese people to “cast disgrace aside” did not advocate ignoring the issue of Japanese war responsibility completely. Rather, he argued that some important “political accounts” must be settled before Japan can embark on the quest for economic and political leadership in the world. In fact, Nakasone made some statements of apology more straightforward than any of his predecessors had to Asian countries. Nevertheless, Nakasone did not intend to carry out thorough settlement of historical debts with other countries. He believed that once the apology was made, no further actions of historical settlement were necessary. As he said in a newspaper interview in 1997, “we have been apologizing, and the act of contrition has been performed. It is all over and done with.” For Quotes of Nakasone’s statements, Wakamiya Yoshiyumi, *The Postwar Conservative View of Asia: How the political right delayed Japan's coming to terms with its history of aggression in Asia* (Tokyo: LTCB International Library Foundation, 1998), p. 171, p. 182.

given the deep-rooted anti-militarism in Japanese society that feared the increased role of armed forces would again threaten peace and democracy in a way similar to that in the past. In order to restore public trust in military organization and win their support to the new international activism, the conservative elite continued to gloss over the past war of aggression. In the meantime, nationalistic historiography was also useful to salvage falling prestige and power of the conservative force. Fierce factional struggle, failing economy, and most importantly, rampant political corruption since the beginning of the 1990s shook the legitimacy foundation of the conservative regime. After losing power in 1993, the LDP managed to return to office in one year, but it no longer possessed power monopoly but had to form coalition government with a few small parties. As the conservative government was unable to score points in the aspects of economic and political system, it gave tacit consent to right-wing rhetoric that it hoped would boost nationalistic morale and divert public complaints to the government policy.

So the 1990s saw many Japanese cabinet ministers and diet members visit the Yasukuni Shrine on every anniversary of the end of war. Hashimoto Ryutaro even resumed prime minister's worship in July 1996, nearly a decade after Nakasone's last visit. Recently, Monbusho has retreated from a limited tolerance of the progressive historiography in school education. Textbooks approved in year 2000 markedly deleted or watered down descriptions of military atrocities.⁴⁵ In year 2001 the Monbusho even

⁴⁵ Asahi Shimbun, September 10, 2000. Many of these changes were caused by the so-called "voluntary restraint" of textbook publishers during the textbook screening process, which was actually the result of political coercion by the Ministry of Education and the Office of the Prime Minister. See Tawara Yoshifumi, "Junior High School History Textbooks: Whiter 'Comfort Women' and the 'Nanking Massacre'," Sekai (The World), November 2000.

let the internationally disputed textbooks compiled by the ultra-nationalist Japan Society for History Textbook Reform through the textbook screening.

Old and New Myths in Chinese Historiography

Changing Patterns of Historical Mythmaking

The Cold War constraints on Chinese foreign policy also began to wane since the early 1980s. At the 12th Congress of the CCP in September 1982, China formally endorsed the so-called “independent foreign policy” that had a trifocal approach of improving relations with the Soviet Union, continuing good relations with the United States but to avoid getting too close to it, and reinvigorate solidarity with the Third World.⁴⁶ Emphasizing that China was not forming strategic alignment with one superpower against the other, the “independent foreign policy” was an explicit strategy of nonalignment that sought to disengage China from the superpower struggle. In the 1990s, the Soviet collapse and American victory in the Gulf War seemed to have transformed the international system from loose bipolarity to a structure close to “unimultipolarity,” and some even predicted the eventual rise of multipolarity in the near future.⁴⁷ In this process of systemic transition, states faced a highly uncertain world that

⁴⁶ James Chieh Hsiung, “Introduction,” in Hsiung ed., *Beyond China's Independent Foreign Policy: challenge for the U.S. and its Asian allies* (New York: Praeger, 1985), pp. 3-4.

⁴⁷ See Christopher Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise.” International Security 17, no.4 (Spring 1993); Charles A. Kupchan, “After Pax Americana: Benign Power, regional Integration, and the Sources of a Stable Multipolarity.” International Security 23, no. 2 (Fall 1998); Barry R. Posen & Andrew L. Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy.” International Security 21, no.3 (Winter 1996/1997). The exception is William C. Wohlforth, who argues that the post-Cold War international system is characterized by the U.S. unipolarity, which is not only unambiguous but also durable. See William C. Wohlforth, “The Stability of A Unipolar World.” International Security 24, no.1 (Summer 1999).

warranted the lack of consensus whatsoever on most essential questions of their national security, such as what the major purposes and objectives are, where the threat comes from and who the friends are, and how to strive for the major purposes.

Absent of clear systemic pressure, the decision-making process of domestic and foreign policies were mainly shaped by domestic political agendas. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the pragmatic Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping and his protégés gave primacy to modernization programs, the success of which were largely hinged on a general strategy of reform and opening to the West, including Japan. But the reform-oriented strategy confronted resistance from communist old guards. Economically, party conservatives like Chen Yun showed skepticism towards reform principles of enterprise autonomy, free market mechanisms and private sectors. In the area of defense, senior military leaders criticized Deng's military modernization program of mistakenly emphasizing "pragmatism over ideology" and reducing the role and prestige of the People's Liberation Army.⁴⁸ These military leaders found allies among party elders who blamed the reform leaders for the laxity in ideological indoctrination in general that had given rise to increasingly widespread, dangerous intellectual criticism of the party leadership and petition for political reform.⁴⁹

In order to build a broad support base for the general strategy of reform and openness to the West, Deng had to make compromises to conservative communist leaders, especially on the political and ideological fronts. Deng's move was not merely a

⁴⁸ Rose, *Interpreting History in Sino-Japanese Relations*, pp. 72-77.

⁴⁹ For waves of Chinese intellectual demands for political democracy in the 1980s, see Merle Goldman, *Sowing the Seeds of Democracy in China: political reform in the Deng Xiaoping era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994).

tactical retreat but also a strategic choice because Deng himself was afraid that too much freedom in ideological domain would undermine the power and prestige of the CCP. Related to his ideological conservatism was his ambivalent attitude to the West. Deng accepted international economic interdependence, but he also insisted on protecting national essence and autonomy from excessive foreign influence, especially if such influence seemed to threaten the ruling foundation of the CCP regime. So a mixture of what Michel Oksenberg calls “confident nationalism” and “assertive nationalism” was fostered in China.⁵⁰ Chinese nationalism was more or less confident and affirmative in the economic sphere where it acknowledged the importance of Western technology and investment, but it remained rigid and assertive in the ideological and cultural spheres where it depicted the Western powers as a negative out-group that threatens the interests of the in-group, the Chinese nation. The “assertive nationalism” was not only useful to appease communist hard-liners who opposed open-door economic reform, but also could strengthen national cohesion and divert the public attention away from negative side effects of economic reform, such as social inequality, officials corruption, and failure of welfare policy. With the popularity of communist ideology in steady decline following the crackdown of democratic movement of 1989, assertive nationalism further ascended to be the spiritual cornerstone of regime legitimacy. Through the 1990s, state propaganda accentuated the conflict of interest between Chinese nation and other nations and claimed the inseparability of the nation from the party, which served to stimulate patriotic emotions among the general public and rally the public around the CCP government.

⁵⁰ Michel Oksenberg, “China's Confident Nationalism.” Foreign Affairs 65, no.3 (1987).

Reflecting the above shift in political environment, the patterns of historical mythmaking in Chinese official historiography experienced considerable changes. Most obviously, the new historiography is no longer centered on the ideological and political conflict between the CCP and KMT. Now that the re-embracing of Taiwan, a former Japanese colony, had become a lofty cause of restoring national glory, the KMT that represented anti-independence constituencies in Taiwan was an important political ally rather than enemy of the mainland government. Rather, the “fundamental fissure” defining Chinese national identity now shifted to the conflict between the Chinese nation and those foreign nations that had invaded and humiliated China in the past, the most ferocious one being Japan. Since mid-1980s, patriotism education using past history of resisting foreign aggression prevailed in Chinese schools.⁵¹ The war of resistance against Japan was an indispensable source material of this education campaign. Rather than being buried in the long history of “revolutionary struggle,” the war was singled out as China’s most important external conflict because “China could claim its first complete victory against foreign invaders.”⁵² While continuing to praise the leading role of Chinese communist party in winning the war, the new narrative gave considerable credit to Chiang Kai-shek, stating that Chiang had never given up military resistance and even admitting that the KMT and CCP shared common interest in countering foreign aggressors and reinvigorating the Chinese nation. Textbooks published according to the

⁵¹ For an overview of the government policy on patriotism education in Chinese schools since the 1980s, see Pu Weizhong et al., *Aiguo Zhuyi Yu Minzu Jingshen (Patriotism and National Spirit)* (Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe, 2000), pp. 75-84.

⁵² See “Jiang Zeming’s Speech at the Veterans’ Symposium Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Victory in the War of Resistance against Japan, August 25, 1995,” in *ZZGW*, Vol. 2, p. 939.

1986 Teaching Guideline for the first time introduced detailed treatment of the conventional military campaigns fought by KMT-led troops. Meanwhile, war movies began to portray the Nationalist government in positive light. The movie *Xuezhan Taierzhuang* (The Sanguinary Battle of Taierzhuang) particularly stood out as the first film made in the mainland that broke the taboo on military resistance campaigns by the KMT troops.⁵³

With the negative presentation of the KMT's role considerably toned down, what got highlighted in the new historiography was the deplorable actions of the "vicious Japanese imperialist aggressors." Since late 1980s, textbooks covered a more comprehensive range of Japanese war crimes than before, providing vivid descriptions, concrete figures, pictures, and even naming individual villages or persons victimized by Japanese atrocities.⁵⁴ War movies made since the 1980s also shed considerable light on Japanese brutality and Chinese suffering.⁵⁵ Such a phenomenon was unthinkable in the past when celebrating revolutionary heroism was the dominant theme and any art works

⁵³ “‘*Xuezhan Taierzhuang*’ Diaoyan Yishu Zhongjie (Summary of Director Art on *Xuezhan Taierzhuang*), *Zhongguo Dianying Nianjian (The Yearbook of Chinese Movie)*, 1987, pp. 3/12-3/16.

⁵⁴ See the junior high school textbook *9 Nian Yiwu Jiaoyu 4 Nianzhi Chuji Zhongxue Jiaokeshu Zhongguo Lishi* (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1992), Vol. 4; the high school textbook *Gaoji Zhongxue Keben Zhongguo Jindai Xiandai Shi* (Beijing: People's Education Press, 1992), Vol. 2.

⁵⁵ For example, a number of films made in this period were particularly dedicated to the Nanjing Massacre, including the documentary film *Nanjing Datusha* (Nanjing Massacre) released in August 1982, and feature films *Tucheng Xuezheng* (Bloody Testimony of Massacre in A Captured City) and *Nanjing Datusha* (Nanjing Massacre) produced in 1987 and 1995 respectively. The Chinese government also partially subsidized the production of a horror film that was shown to the public around 1988, *Hei Taiyang 731* (Men Behind the Sun), on the germ warfare conducted by the secrete Japanese Unit 731 in mainland China during the war.

reflecting national suffering were denounced as preaching defeatism or bourgeois humanitarianism.⁵⁶ At the same time, war commemoration in China brought Japanese brutality into the center of national memory. A memorial for victims of Nanjing Massacre was completed on the 40th anniversary of the end of the war, with Deng Xiaoping's handwriting inscribed as the name of the building. On the front wall inscribed "VICTIMS 300,000" – the official Chinese estimate of killed victims – in Chinese, English, and Japanese language. Many other museums were also constructed since mid-1980s at various sites of Japanese atrocities, and almost all of them were designated as sites of patriotic education for school children, youths, and soldiers.⁵⁷ The academia was also encouraged to conduct deeper investigations of Japanese atrocities in China. For example, the past two decades saw an unprecedented amount of academic works and released government documents on Nanjing Massacre, as well as a number of international academic symposiums on this historical event.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Luo Yijun, "Fan Faxisi Dianying Fasilu (Reflecting on Anti-Fascism Movies)" and Hong Qi, "Shijie Fan Faxisi Ticao Dianying Yantaohui Zai Nanjin Juxing" (Conference on World Anti-Fascism Movies Held in Nanjing), in *Zhongguo Dianying Nianjian (China Film Yearbook)*, 1996 (Beijing: Zhongguo Dianying Chubanshe, 1996).

⁵⁷ See Yang Daqing, "Contested History: The Nanjing Massacre in Postwar Japan and China," in Fujitani Takashi et al., *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific Wars* (Durham, N.C.: The Duke University Press, 2001); "Yizhi, Jiuzhi, Jinian Sheshi (Ruins, Old Sites, and Memorial Facilities), in Zhang Shaosi et al. Eds., *Zhongguo Kangri Zhangzheng Dacidian (The Dictionary of Chinese War of Resistance against Japan)* (Wuhan: Wuhan Chubanshe, 1995).

⁵⁸ For examples, see *Qinhua Rijun Nanjing Datusha Shigao (Historical Narratives on the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Military Invading China)*, Nanjing: Jiangsu Guji Chubanshe, 1987; Zhu Chenshan ed., *Qinhua Rijun Nanjing Datusha Xincunzhe Zhengyanji (Testimonies of the Survivors of the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Military Invading China)*, Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1994; Chinese Second National Archives in Nanjing ed., *Qinhua Rijun Nanjing Datusha Dangan (Archives on the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Military Invading China)*, Nanjing: Jiansu Guji Chubanshe, 1997; Chen Anji ed., *Qinhua Rijun Nanjing Datusha Shi Guoji Xueshu*

Societal Challenges to Official Myths

The new official focus on Japanese brutality and Chinese miserable experiences during the war stimulated an outpouring of victim consciousness among the Chinese public vis-à-vis Japan. Ordinary Chinese people resented the government for covering up the real horror of the war and felt disgusted with state propaganda on Sino-Japanese friendship. While differentiation between Japanese militarists and ordinary Japanese people was still maintained in official historiography, it was blurred in Chinese popular understanding of the war. Best-selling books, internet chat rooms and other private discussion forums on the war history commonly attributed the Japanese action of aggression to Japanese national characters and traditional culture, including its narrow-minded egoism, emperor worship, and bellicose Bushido. So it was not just the small group of militarists but the entire Japanese nation that was considered brutal, aggressive, and unrepentant.⁵⁹

Hence, parallel with the government endeavor to adjust some of the key elements of the official historiography, public cynicism toward the official historiography swept the Chinese society. Not only that the dual approach to Japanese militarists and ordinary Japanese people has lost its appeal, but other parts of the orthodoxy propaganda were also

Yantaohui Lunwenji (The Anthology of the International Symposium on the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Military Invading China), Anhui Daxue Chubanshe, 1998. For a comprehensive introduction of Chinese historiography on Nanjing Massacre, see Yang, "Convergence or Divergence?"

⁵⁹ For some examples of best-selling books with a sweeping anti-Japanese view, see Song Qiang et al, *China That Can Say No* (zhongguo keyi shuo bu) (Beijing: Chinese Joint Press of Industry and Commerce, May 1996); *China That Still Can Say No* (zhongguo haishi nengshuo bu) (Beijing: Chinese Wenlian Press, October 1996); Sun Keqin, *Containing China* (ezhi zhongguo) (China Yanshi Press, 1996); Xiao Jiwen, *Riben: Yige Bukeng Fuzui de Guojia (Japan: A Country that Refuses to Admit Its Crimes)* (Nanjing: Jiangsu Renmin Chubanshe, 1998)

called into question, especially by avant-garde cultural elite. One of the earliest controversial art works on the war history was the international acclaimed film *Hong Gao Liang* (Red Sorghum) adapted from Mo Yan's novel. Mo actually wrote the novel based on orally transmitted stories in his hometown, so his novel was a ground-breaking work in terms of conveying Chinese private memories of the war that had always been alive but missing from the official narrative. The main characters in the novel were ordinary men and women living in the countryside, who "do not consider themselves to be part of any organized fighting force, nor do they consider themselves to be fighting on the side of righteousness For these fighters there is no PLA, no Communist Party, no Chairman Mao. They fight to survive, they fight for their land, their native soil (*xiangtu*). To be a hero is to fight the Japanese."⁶⁰ Similar stories were presented in other literature works, such as the trilogy novels by You Fengwei,⁶¹ one of which, *Shengcun* (Survival), was later made into a movie, *Guizi Lai Le*, or Devils at Doorstep, by a vanguard Chinese actor-director, Jiang Wen.⁶² Adding his sarcastic touch, Jiang turned the original story to a farce that mocked the stupidity of those Chinese people who held illusion about peaceful negotiation with Japanese invaders without realizing that the Japanese had no conscience but only impeccable ambition, greediness and barbarism. You and Jiang's works exemplify a society-based intellectual attempt to shatter the half-century long

⁶⁰ Words of Mo Yan. See Peter Li, "War and Modernity in Chinese Military Fiction." *Society* 34, no.5 (July/August 1997), p. 86.

⁶¹ For You Fengwei's war trilogy, see Xu Peifan, *Cong "Shengcun" dao "Guizi Laile" (From Novel "Survival" to Film "Devils at Doorstep")* (Beijing, Beijing Chubanshe, 1999).

⁶² A 1999 movie that won Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival, Devils at Doorstep has been banned in China ever since it was completed.

national myth about an honorable and triumphant war. Their narratives also disputed the politicized simple dichotomy between Japanese militarists and Japanese people, and between Chinese patriots and traitors.

Open Conflict over War Historiography

The above-described egregiously nationalistic historical mythmaking in the 1980s and 1990s brought the war memories of the two countries to more direct clash. On the one hand, bilateral convergence on certain historical view was greatly undermined. It is true that both the Japanese and Chinese governments still agreed on the aggressive nature of the war and maintained the old “myth of clique” about the issue of war responsibility. But public support to such interpretation of the war history began to crumble. In Japan, the progressive view of history urged the ordinary Japanese people to admit their individual responsibility in victimizing other Asian people while the ultra-nationalist historiography tried to deny the aggressive nature of the war. In China, the general public no longer subscribed to the government position that differentiate good Japanese and bad Japanese but held an negative image of the entire Japanese nation. On the other hand, bilateral divergence on other questions, including Japanese war crimes, Chinese victimization and the role of Japanese military during the war, became more pronounced than ever before. It is not only because those strategic incentives for the two governments to cover-up or ignore these myths had dissipated, but also due to the great political commotion generated by the process of renegotiating national identity at home and abroad that brought bilateral divergence on these myths to widespread public attention.

Therefore, with or without government manipulation, political conflict over historical memories became unavoidable. In these two decades, textbook controversy and Yasukuni Shrine problem were repeatedly politicized and triggered serious political disputes between the Japanese and Chinese government.⁶³ At the popular level, waves of anti-Japanese student demonstrations erupted in Beijing and many big cities in the 1980s. Though also motivated by public resentment against official corruption and social inequality, student demonstrations revealed genuine anti-Japanese sentiments deeply entrenched among ordinary Chinese people.⁶⁴ In fact, anti-Japan mass demonstration routinely became a political concern for both governments on anniversary days of Sino-Japanese war or times of bilateral diplomatic disputes, such as during the 1996 Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands incident. Besides, societal demands for Japanese official restitution, especially grass-roots campaigns demanding Japanese compensation to individual Chinese war victims boomed since early 1990s.⁶⁵

Like in the past, the two countries took no significant step to build shared, honest historical memory that could have prevented historical mythmaking and mitigate the problems of history. Institutional arrangements of restitution measures were still lacking

⁶³ Hidenori Ijiri, "Sino-Japanese Controversy since the 1972 Diplomatic Normalization," in Christopher Howe, *China and Japan: history, trends, and prospects* (Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 64-73.

⁶⁴ Allen S. Whiting, *China Eyes Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), Chapter 4.

⁶⁵ "Students Demand Japanese War Reparation," FBIS China Daily Report, September 24, 1996; "Indemnity Claims during Emperor's Visit Discouraged," FBIS China Daily Report, October 2, 1992; "Experts Advise Chinese WWII Laborers to File Class Action," People's Daily Online (<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn>), January 15, 2002; "The Hanaoka Incident: Corporate Compensation for Forced Labor," Sekai 684 (February 2001); JOSEPH KAHN "Shouting the Pain From Japan's Germ Attacks," New York Times, November 23, 2002.

in this period. Meanwhile, bilateral exchange boom during this period did not facilitate serious historian's dialogue. The education exchanges held between Chinese Teacher's Union and the non-governmental Japanese Teacher's Union were mostly confined to class visits and teachers' meeting, while discussions on textbooks focused on criticism of Japanese textbooks only.⁶⁶ It is because the Chinese side insisted that Japanese soul-searching is the only solution to the bilateral history disputes while Chinese self-examination in writing war historiography is not really necessary.⁶⁷ Neither did the Japanese government feel obligated to incorporate results of these exchanges in authorizing new school textbooks.

Given the severe impact of the problems of history on current Sino-Japanese relations, the two states are now encountering an urgent task to eliminate historical mythmaking in national historiography. Bilateral relationship can improve significantly if China and Japan can take real steps in writing honest, shared war history and arranging settlement of moral, legal and financial burden of the history, to do which they need long-term vision, determination and to do solid work.

⁶⁶ Hitaka Rokurō, *Nihon to Chūgoku: Wakamono-tachi no Rekishi Ninshiki (Japan and China: The Historical Views of the Youth)* (Tokyo: Nasunokisha, 1995); Wang Hongzhi, "Zhongri Lishi Jiaokeshu de Jiaoliu (Sino-Japanese History Textbook Exchange)," *Lishi Jiaoxue* 1 (1999).

⁶⁷ Amako Satoshi, *Nitchū Kōryū no Shihanseki (A Quarter Century of Japan-China Interaction)* (Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Shinpōsha, 1998), pp. 122-123.