

The Place of Historical Memory in Perception of China by Japanese Society

P.V. Kul'neva

Abstract. Despite the strong economic gravity between Japan and China, there are still many social factors that pull the countries apart. One of such factors is the negative image of the partner, which is largely related to the memory of World War II.

The perception of China in Japanese society has been changing over the post-war decades. After Japan's surrender and occupation of the country by the Allied Powers, political, economic, and cultural distance between the two countries grew. This led to a "lapse of memory" related to China among the post-war generation of the Japanese. Interest towards China in Japan started growing noticeably after some time had passed since the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations (1972) – from the late 1980s-early 1990s, as the contacts between the countries on different levels became increasingly active.

The image of China in Japan deteriorated dramatically for the first time after the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, which demonstrated that China was an unsafe country with a repressive state machine. The attitude of Japanese society to China has been worsening since then for various reasons. Starting from the 1990s, as the Sino-Japanese relations were developing and becoming increasingly complex, new problems shaping the negative image of China emerged, including the struggle for geopolitical influence, global competition, negative influence of China on the environmental situation in the region, insufficient quality of Chinese products, problems of communication with Chinese business partners, the growing number of Chinese tourists in Japan, etc. As Sino-Japanese relations became more complicated, the problem

of historical memory was felt more and more acutely. This problem fits into the whole picture of controversies accumulated in the Sino-Japanese relations and intensifies some of them.

Despite the unfavorable perception of China by Japanese society, signs of improvement can be seen in the last few years. In particular, many young Japanese view China and the prospects of developing the bilateral relations positively. Contacts with China give them ample opportunity to understand that country better, and closer economic ties make the influence of political factors less pronounced.

Keywords: Sino-Japanese relations, World War II, historical memory, Yasukuni Shrine, public opinion, China's image, business environment in China, interaction of economics and politics.

Japan and China¹ are among the largest economies in the Asia-Pacific region and are linked by close trade relations, direct investments, active cultural and scientific cooperation, and tourist exchanges. These ties are currently so strong that it allows both the Japanese and Chinese sides to speak about economic “interdependence”. At the same time, it is surprising that, while in the economic sphere Japan and China are strongly attracted to each other, in the social sphere, there are many factors that pull the countries apart. According to a recent sociological survey conducted by the Japanese nonprofit organization Genron NPO, in 2018 only 13.1 percent of the Japanese people felt good about China, whereas more than 80 percent of the respondents did not have a positive attitude towards China. On the Chinese side, the situation was somewhat better: 42.2 percent of the respondents said they had a good opinion about Japan, and 56.1 percent gave opposite answers [Dai 14-kai... 2018, p. 2]. However, as the survey shows, for most of the Chinese respondents, Japan is still not an attractive country.

¹ China in this article refers to the Peoples' Republic of China, or mainland China, unless indicated otherwise.

The above-mentioned Genron NPO survey partly explains the causes of such perception by the Japanese and Chinese people of each other in the section “reasons for [the relevant] attitude to the country”. Thus, for the Japanese the main reasons for the negative perception of China in 2018 were (in descending order of priority) “the periodic invasion of the neighbour into the territorial waters and airspace near the Senkaku Islands” (this reason was indicated by 58.6 percent of the respondents); “inconsistency of China’s actions with the world order” (48.0 percent); “criticism from China regarding historical issues” (41.8 percent). For the Chinese, the negative perception of Japan was primarily due to the fact that Japan “did not repent properly and did not apologize for the invasion of the Chinese territory” (54.7 percent), and also to “the nationalization of the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands and the resulting confrontation” (50.5 percent). The third most important factor was geopolitical – 41.5 percent of the respondents said that “Japan, jointly with the USA, is trying to ambush China from the military, economic and ideological points of view” [Dai 14-kai... 2018, p. 5].

A smaller but rather significant number of the Japanese respondents noted, among other reasons for the negative perception of China, the “constant anti-Japanese publications in the Chinese media” (often touching upon military topics) and fears related to China’s increasing military power. Each of these reasons was indicated by 30 percent of the respondents. In general, analyzing the causes of the negative perception by the Japanese and the Chinese of each other, one can see mutual accusations of nationalism, fears related to the growing military power of the neighbor, and disagreements on world political issues [Dai 14-kai... 2018, p. 5]. The problem of the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, a prominent issue in the mutual perception of the two countries, worsened after their nationalization by the Japanese government in 2012. The situation with the islands was the occasion for China to recall again the Japanese aggression of the 1930s–40s, the interpretation of the military events in Japanese history textbooks, and visits by Japanese senior officials to the Yasukuni Shrine, where, as it is believed, rest the souls of the Japanese soldiers who died for their homeland, with war

criminals among them. The large-scale anti-Japanese demonstrations that took place in China in 2012 were accompanied by relevant slogans and publications in the Chinese media.

It is not surprising that the anti-Japanese sentiments damaged China's image in Japan, as they seriously undermined the stability of Japanese companies' operation and created an uncomfortable environment for tourists. The consequences for the Japanese business were quite tangible: for instance, the sales of Mitsubishi cars in the Chinese market in September 2012 (during the demonstrations) shrank by 63 percent against the same period of the previous year; sales of the Toyota company decreased by 40 percent in the same month, and the Nissan and Mazda companies had smaller sales as well [Toyota no kugatsu Chūgoku hambai... 2012]. Similarly, serious losses were suffered by Japanese electronics manufacturers: in August 2012, Toshiba sales in Chinese retail chains decreased by 40.3 percent compared with the previous month, Sanyo lost 44.3 percent, Panasonic 23.4 percent, and Sharp 21.1 percent [Nihon kaden mēkā no... 2012]. As a result, the decline in Japanese exports to China became quite visible, and after a while Japanese investment decreased as well.

Being a complex and abstract category, historical memory is undoubtedly an integral part of China's image in Japanese society and, as the 2012 events showed, it is of great importance, among other things, for real indicators of Japan-China economic cooperation. In this regard, it is important to understand how the historical memory of the military events in the mid-20th century is formed; what part it played in Japan-China relations at different stages of their post-war development and why its significance in the mutual perception of the two countries is so great at the present time. In this article, we will try to assess from these points of view the place of historical memory in the perception of China by Japanese society.

First of all, it should be noted that the memory of military events became a burning issue in Sino-Japanese relations fairly recently. When, for the first time since the end of the war, China's image in Japan deteriorated dramatically in the early 1990s, this was not due to

the conflicting views on the historical past but in connection with the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, which showed that China was an unsafe country with a repressive state machine. While in the 1980s about 70 percent of the Japanese had friendly feelings for China [Naikakufu yoron chōsa... 2013], in the 1990s the number of the Japanese with friendly feelings for that country already hovered around 50 percent, and in the subsequent years the situation was only worsening.

Dynamics of perception of China by Japanese society
(1978–2013)



Percentage of people responding that they have friendly feelings for China
According to a public opinion poll conducted by the Cabinet of Japan

This is not to say that the attitude of Japanese society towards China became negative right after the war. According to researchers of that time, the feelings that the Japanese had for their neighbour in the 1950s and 1960s were “a mixture of fear, disdain, and a sense of kinship”, while the feeling of kinship largely softened the hostility caused by fear and disdain [Ōgata 1965, pp. 390-391]. Fear stemmed from uncertainty, because, despite its weakness in the second half of the 19th and early 20th

centuries, China was determined to become a mighty power under the new communist government and, obviously, had internal resources for this. Disdain was inherited from pre-war anti-Chinese education that presented China as a poor, backward country and Japan as the leader of modernization in the region. However, for many representatives of the same pre-war generation, the war enhanced the feeling of “kinship” with China; the country was not completely alien to these people.

The Japanese born after the war found themselves in completely new conditions: these people did not know China in the first half of the 20th century and were not around during the military events. After the surrender of Japan and its occupation by the Allied Forces, the political, economic, and cultural distance between Japan and China increased, while the Western values became much closer. In general, before the relations between the countries were normalized in 1972, there were relatively few contacts between them; interest in China was not high, and for a whole generation of the Japanese that country became actually alien.

A major contribution to increasing the distance between China and Japan was made by the policy of the Allied Forces led by General MacArthur, which was pursued during the seven-year period of Japan's occupation (September 1945 – April 1952). According to the American anthropologist Ruth Benedict, the occupation was perceived by the Japanese people as the “natural consequences” of the mistakes made and as a step necessary for the further development of the country along the path of peace and democracy. Therefore, the Japanese willingly accepted the new constitution developed by the USA and the proposed political and economic models [Benedict 2013, pp. 213-214]. Japan's radical reorientation towards the United States was accompanied by the adoption of American values, which, in the subsequent decades, firmly established themselves in the culture and worldview of the Japanese and still remain there.

The generally accepted view on the events of the military past, which correlated well with the national identity of the Japanese and provided a suitable basis for the reforms of the US authorities, was the idea that the Japanese aggression and cruelty resulted from the incorrect actions by

the country's leaders and that the Japanese people were not responsible for what they had done.

According to US Japanologist Carol Gluck, Japan's occupation by the Allied Forces closed for the country one chapter of history and opened a new one. "In the 'right history', as General MacArthur saw it, the prewar 'feudal' past should be completely abandoned in the name of what the occupying troops considered its historical opposite, democracy" [Gordon (ed.) 1993, p. 66]. The crimes committed from 1928 to 1945 were categorized in the course of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE). Formulating the causes and results of the actions of concrete people during the tribunal, issuing indictments, and punishing those responsible helped to draw a line under the events.

The mass culture of the post-war period was aimed at mitigating the people's disappointment over the defeat in the war. So, the Japanese cinema of the 1950-60s tried to show more attractive aspects of the military events and avoid acute problems that could adversely affect the self-esteem of Japanese viewers. The Japanese soldiers were most often portrayed as courageous and disciplined and the war as disorderly and unjust. Thus, the soldiers became victims of the system and circumstances, while war criminals, if they happened to be the heroes of a film, were subordinated to the commanders who placed them in a desperate situation. With this course of development of Japanese cinema, the plots of most films during that period were focused not on the war in China, but on other parts of the Pacific War, where it was easier to depict the actions of Japan in a positive way [Wilson 2013, p. 539]. Thus, information about Japan's nearest Asian neighbour was insufficient and its objectivity was disputable.

Of great importance was also the education system, which forms the views of young people about the world around them. In the postwar decades, history textbooks were confined to a rather brief and incomplete description of military operations, and their contents were tightly controlled by a network of textbook review commissions created with the support of the Ministry of Education [Nozaki 2008, pp. 11-12]. A threat to the Japanese state was seen not only in a description of events that could undermine the feeling of patriotism, but also in the influence of Chinese

ideology [Jiang 2003, pp. 198-220], which also affected the knowledge about China, which had been so close to Japan before.

A recent survey of the generation born in 1955-1965 showed that these people do not have a full picture and deep knowledge about China of that period. There are only fragmentary memories associated with some of the most significant events that were covered in the news (Cultural Revolution, the death of Zhou Enlai, etc.), and with the few contacts during events with China's participation (sports competitions, the Expo-70 international exhibition). Many respondents still had childhood memories of the pandas donated to the Japanese zoo to commemorate the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations in 1972. [Hirakawa 2005, pp. 4-6]. So, for many Japanese people, the 1950s-70s became a lapse in memory related to China.

A few years after the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations, in 1978, China launched a series of reforms within the framework of the "reform and openness" policy initiated by Deng Xiaoping. Gradually, with the advancement of market reforms and the creation of an increasing number of Special Economic Zones with a preferential regime for trade and foreign investment, China was becoming an important subject of international economic cooperation. Japan started to play a special part again among the country's partners, as it maintained informal trade links with China even in the 1950-60s, in the absence of diplomatic relations, seeing a lot of potential in them.

The rapprochement with China did not happen immediately. In the 1980s, the influence of American and European culture still prevailed in Japan, and the new popular word "globalization" was still perceived in relation to the countries of Europe and America. There was no mass interest in China, but some of the Japanese who were interested in politics had questions regarding Japan-China relations. Some people were puzzled by the fact that Japan and China could not mark a decisive end to the military events.

At that time, the proceedings, which began back in the 1960s, continued between the Japanese historian Ienaga Saburō and the Japanese Ministry of Education: in 1982, Ienaga filed a third lawsuit

against the Ministry to demand compensation for the damage caused by the rejection of his draft textbook. The process attracted public attention. It is interesting, however, that a contemporary of those events recalled that having learned from the media about Japan's ill acts with regard to the neighbouring countries during the war, she could not associate this information with herself [Hirakawa 2005, p. 6]. This speaks to the effect that during several post-war decades, in the absence of official contacts with China and the Japanese government's policy aimed at strengthening patriotism and forgetting the unpleasant chapters of history, Japanese society distanced itself not only from China, but also from the problems of the military past.

In the 1990s, the situation in Sino-Japanese relations changed. This decade was a period of their rapid development: not only did trade and investment grow, but also tourism, scientific and cultural exchange expanded. The basis for this was the obvious success of the Chinese reforms: the country's economy grew at an accelerated rate, exceeding 10 percent in 1992-1995. The size of the middle class in the developed regions of China was rapidly enlarging. This resulted in an increase in the purchasing power of the Chinese population and the development of outbound tourism. In general, China was beginning to play a more prominent part on the international scene, strengthening its positions in world politics and economy. In the 1990s, China was actively preparing to join the World Trade Organization (which happened in 2001). At the same time, after the collapse of the "bubble economy" in the late 1980s, Japan entered a difficult period of economic depression, which undermined the country's position in the global economy and still affects its business activity and other economic indicators to this day.

All this had dual consequences for Sino-Japanese relations and China's perception by Japanese society. On the one hand, the affinity of the two countries had become unprecedented since the end of World War II, which generated mutual interest and the desire of the two nations to understand each other. The Chinese language was becoming popular in Japan and more and more literature about China was being published. On the other hand, China's growing influence and close contacts with that

country caused apprehension in Japan, which was felt quite strongly and consisted of various components.

In the mid-1990s, there appeared the first signs that China could surpass Japan in GDP, and in 2010, this really happened. This economic breakthrough was not expected by Japanese society and was perceived as a threat, since it meant that China was ousting Japan from the position of Asia's strongest economic power, and the center of power in Sino-Japanese relations was shifting toward China. In general, of growing concern for Japan was China's increasing geopolitical influence, the weight of that country in international decision-making, its nuclear potential and military expenditure. The phasing out of official development assistance (ODA) in the 2000s, which Japan had been providing to China in rather large amounts for nearly 40 years, was largely due to fears of misuse of the funds and the growth of China's military power².

In addition to the geopolitical factors and global competition issues, Japanese society's other concerns are environmental problems, rather low quality of Chinese products, different mentality of Chinese business partners, predominance of Chinese tourists, etc.

Thus, at the present time, Sino-Japanese relations are of complex nature; they are characterized by active bilateral contacts at different levels and a large number of problems that need to be addressed. With the development and complication of the relations, the problem of historical memory has become increasingly acute. This problem can be said to fit into the set of contradictions that have accumulated in Sino-Japanese relations to date, and it not only supplements but also enhances some of them.

The special place of historical memory in Japan-China relations at the present stage can be explained, firstly, by the fact that enough time has passed since the end of the war; many issues have been rethought and attracted attention again; secondly, it can be also explained by the nature of the two countries' relationships: as we said before, owing to

² The problem of the connection between the Japanese ODA and the compensation of military damage to Asian countries, its motives, structure, dynamics, and other issues are discussed quite fully in: [Kovrigin 2012; Kovrigin 2014].

their close ties and economic interdependence any disagreement may affect very painfully the indicators of bilateral cooperation.

We can mention one more reason that added to the importance of historical memory and made its manifestations more visible. Historical problems often become an instrument of pressure and manipulation both in international relations and in domestic politics of states. It is believed that Chinese society became more sensitive to issues of the military past in the 1980s as a result of liberalization and higher living standards. The newly emerging middle class was given an opportunity to express its views more freely than under Mao Zedong, while the country's successful economic development helped enhance patriotism. In this situation, the sensitivity of the Chinese to world affairs concerning China was becoming more pronounced. Moreover, with the expansion of media freedom and the advent of the Internet, public opinion became an increasingly serious concern for the Chinese authorities, and anti-Japanese propaganda was used as a tool to divert attention from internal problems [Zakowski 2012, p. 50].

The situation in the region also developed in such a way that the PRC government needed a new image of an external enemy to consolidate society and increase confidence in the Communist Party (CPC). The mid-1980s saw the emergence in Taiwan of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) opposed to the Kuomintang and advocating the proclamation of Taiwan as an independent state, and the Kuomintang turned from an enemy into a potential ally of the CPC in the fight against the external threat. Social instability and demonstrations in the Tiananmen Square in 1989 created for the CPC an urgent need for patriotic education, the central place in which was now taken by the negative image of Japan. In the 1980s and 1990s, China made adjustments to history textbooks, established new military museums, released numerous feature films which presented China as a victim in the 1937-1945 war of resistance to the Japanese invaders.

Not surprisingly, after the 1980s, China's reaction to many problems related to the military past became more emotional. In turn, Japanese society became more emotionally responsive to statements by Chinese

politicians, publications in the Chinese media and, in general, the anti-Japanese attitude of the Chinese people. Consequently, criticisms from China in relation to historical problems became one of the key factors contributing to the negative image of China in Japan.

It was in the 1980s that the first diplomatic conflicts arose in Japan-China relations over the contents of Japanese history textbooks. At the same time the Chinese government began to make a serious diplomatic problem out of visits by Japanese government officials to the Yasukuni Shrine, a Shinto sanctuary, where the souls of the Japanese who died in the wars are believed to repose.

The problem of history textbooks periodically comes to the fore in Japan-China relations, causing serious concern to both sides. In 1982, China accused Japan of softening the tone in describing the 1937-1945 events, namely, replacing the word *shinryaku* (“aggression” [of Japan in China]) with *shinshutsu* (“offensive”) as instructed by the Ministry of Education. Later it was found out that this amendment was not made [Pyle 1983, pp. 298-300], but the problem received a great response in the media and was widely discussed. In addition to the 1982 conflict, there were three more crises [Fukuoka 2011, p. 85-87] when disagreements over the contents of textbooks arose on the international level. In 1986, the Chinese government criticized the new history textbook approved by the Ministry of Education, considering it biased and not taking into account the interests of Japan’s neighbours. In the 1990s, the situation was relatively stable largely thanks to the fact that, being aware of diplomatic costs, Tokyo took measures to settle it³; however, in the 2000s, there were two more crises, accompanied by large-scale anti-Japanese demonstrations in China.

³ After the first conflict, Chief Cabinet Secretary Miyazawa Kiichi made a statement in which he regretted the current situation and promised that Japan would pay due attention to the criticism. Also in 1982, the Ministry of Education adopted the so-called “Asian Neighbours Clause” which stressed the need for international understanding and agreement with the neighbouring Asian countries when considering events of recent history.

Another reason for China's periodic attacks on Japan is the visits of Japanese political leaders to the Yasukuni Shrine, which for the first time caused a noticeable reaction in the mid-1980s, when, on the 40th anniversary of Japan's defeat in the war, the sanctuary was visited by Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro. The actions of the Japanese prime minister were harshly criticized by the Chinese Foreign Ministry, and in the 1990s, China voiced a protest on behalf of the whole nation [Molodyakova 2007, p. 64]. The problem escalated at the turn of the century, during the rule of Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō. Over a fairly long period of tenure (from 2001 to 2006), Koizumi visited the Yasukuni Shrine every year, each time provoking a negative reaction from Japan's Asian neighbors.

The above assumption that the increasing role of the historical memory factor in China-Japan relations has to do with the internal situation in China is also confirmed by the fact that the problems of textbooks and Yasukuni Shrine arose much earlier than they became a subject of diplomatic conflicts between the two countries. Controversy over the contents of history textbooks practically did not stop in Japan throughout the post-war decades. When the occupation was over, the influence of conservative forces rose again; they sought to get maximum control over the education system (including the content of the course in history), achieve romanticization of the military events, create a heroic image of Japan, and minimize description of facts that present the country in a negative light. State control in the field of education was opposed by progressive-minded researchers and teachers who insisted on a reliable description of historical facts in textbooks and a wider use of such study aids [Arai 2010]. The most famous advocate of the objective reflection of military events in textbooks was Professor Ienaga Saburō, the aforementioned Japanese historian. Thus, the transformation of historical memory in Japan was influenced by internal forces, and the projection of the problem on China began as a result of the reforms in the PRC and the expansion of its contacts with Japan.

The Yasukuni Shrine issue has even deeper religious, cultural, and historical roots. The sanctuary itself is associated with the *state Shinto*

(*kokka shintō*), a religion that was used by the Japanese ruling circles as a means of asserting power in the period between the Meiji restoration (1868) and the end of World War II. For obvious reasons, associations with the militaristic ideology and the totalitarian wartime regime cause a negative reaction among the nations affected by the Japanese aggression, the more so as the souls of the war criminals convicted by the International Military Tribunal rest in the sanctuary. At the same time, the shrine is part of the historical memory of the Japanese and is of great importance for them as a place of sorrow and veneration for fellow countrymen who sacrificed their lives for the sake of their homeland [Molodyakova 2007, p. 59]. According to Elgena Molodyakova, the complexity and “multidimensionality” of the Yasukuni Shrine issue opens up possibilities for speculations and playing the Yasukuni card in world politics.

Japanese society's assessment of the situation with the Yasukuni Shrine reflects exactly the multidimensionality of the problem. According to a 2013 survey conducted by the Mainichi newspaper, about 60 percent of the Japanese (in both age groups surveyed: from 20 to 30 years and older than 30 years) are not against Japan's prime minister visiting the shrine. At the same time, most of the respondents (56 percent of the 20 to 30-year-old group and 84 percent of the over 30-year-olds) know that war criminals convicted by the IMTFC are venerated in the sanctuary, and about 50 percent of the respondents (45 percent in the first age group and 55 percent in the second) said that they considered the war aggressive with regard to Asian countries. Evidently, people regard the Yasukuni Shrine primarily as a place of grief and memory of the war. It is important that at the same time Japanese society is concerned about the diplomatic problems associated with the Yasukuni Shrine. For instance, 69.8 percent of the Japanese polled on this issue in the same year by *Kyōdō Tsūshin* said that attention should be paid to diplomatic relations⁴.

Reception of the Yasukuni Shrine issue by the Japanese speaks of diverging views on the military events inside the country and abroad.

⁴ Survey data are given in an article by independent Japanese journalist Kimura Masato, who worked at the London office of *Sankei Shimbun*.

A US historian John Dower points out that for many Japanese living in Japan the war is remembered as a tragic “history of losses”, while for people in Asian countries, Britons, and Americans Japan is certainly an aggressor country [Kimura 2013].

Under the influence of Japan’s intrinsic closeness, tendency to shut off from the outside world, and under the pressure of conservative forces, historical memory in Japan ran its own course. It is because of the different perception of the military events in Japan and China that historical memory remains a heavy burden in Sino-Japanese relations.

A serious China-Japan joint study of public opinion on the subject of mutual perception and attitude of the nations towards each other, which started about 15 years ago and focuses on the problems of history, proves that the two sides recognize the urgency of the historical memory problem. In 2005, the non-profit organization Genron NPO (from Japan) and the *China Daily* publishing company and Peking University (from China) published the results of the first joint public opinion poll. Since then, the survey has been carried out annually and much attention is paid to any slight fluctuations in the mutual image and perception. The survey investigates a wide range of issues – from public opinion on security in the region to having friends and acquaintances in the neighbouring country. It is characteristic that all editions of the survey emphasize the importance of the historical memory problem and there is a special section devoted to it. The historical memory problem can also be seen distinctly in the answers of respondents to general questions from other sections, such as “the reason for the negative attitude to China / Japan” or “what, in your opinion, impedes most of all the development of Japan-China relations”.

Over 15 years, the set of “historical memory problems that require solution”, proposed to assess the Japanese and Chinese audiences, has remained unchanged: this is the attitude to the war and its most painful episodes (the Nanking massacre, comfort women), recognition by the Japanese of their guilt and compensation for the damage, coverage of the military events in history textbooks (both Japanese and Chinese), statements by politicians and publications in the media. The distribution of votes shows that these problems carry different weight with Japanese

and Chinese society; however significant groups in both Japan and China agree that they are yet to be resolved (Table 1).

Table 1

Historical problems of Sino-Japanese relations
that require solution (2018)*

Problem	Percentage of respondents (Japan)	Percentage of respondents (China)
Japan's attitude to the aggressive war	36.6	62.2
Problem of Japanese history textbooks	21.7	40.9
Japan's reparations, problems of comfort women, forced labour, etc.	32.0	44.3
Japan's attitude to the Nanking massacre	20.6	52.2
Statements by Japanese politicians about China	7.1	37.7
Japanese media's publications on China	14.2	29.4
Japan's insufficient admission of guilt for the aggression	6.6	26.5
Anti-Japanese education in China and textbook content	64.6	12.3
China's attitude to the Nanking massacre	30.9	13.7
Statements by Chinese politicians about Japan	27.2	6.4
Chinese media's publications on Japan	38.8	2.7
Other	2.1	0.0
Don't know	4.3	0.0
No answer	0.3	0.1

* Percentage of respondents from the target group who noted the importance of the problem.

Source: [Dai 14-kai... 2018, p. 24]

The Japanese audience pays much attention to anti-Japanese sentiment in general, including the peculiarities of the Chinese education system and the content of textbooks, as well as China's attitude to the

Nanking massacre, statements by Chinese politicians and representatives of the media. At the same time, respondents are aware of the need to address the historical memory problem on the part of Japan. So, 36.6 percent believe that Japan should reconsider its attitude to the aggressive war, and 20.6 percent – that the attitude to the Nanking massacre should be revised. 21.7 percent of the Japanese respondents point to the need to work on the content of Japanese history textbooks. 32.0 percent of the respondents believe that the issues of reparations and compensation to the victims have not been resolved yet. More than 60 percent of the Japanese participants in the survey consider historical problems an obstacle to the development of Sino-Japanese relations.

Speaking about the fact that historical memory supplements and adds to the other problems existing in China-Japan relations, it is necessary to emphasize once again that it affects economic cooperation. Japanese businesses perceive China as a business partner bearing this factor in mind. Thus, in the China Risk Management Research Association Report of the JETRO organization, anti-Japanese sentiments and historical problems are mentioned as specific risks. It is also noted that Japanese companies are often targeted by the Chinese media [Chūgoku risuku... 2013, p. 43].

Historical memory is certainly a factor of uncertainty and an obstacle to expanding the business of Japanese companies in China. It instills in them feelings of uncertainty, instability and disappointment. For instance, after the 2012 devastating demonstrations, the director of the affected Aeon department store (Qingdao), Orita Fumiaki, expressed regret and frustration, because despite the fact that the company had done so much for China by hiring 3.800 Chinese employees, allocating 15 million yen to Chinese students over three years and making every effort to reach an understanding with the locals, they were repaid with hatred [Gekika suru... 2012].

Currently, the Japanese media are widely discussing the closure of a Takashimaya department store in Shanghai, whose financial problems began with the 2012 anti-Japanese demonstrations. The department store was opened three months after the nationalization of the Senkaku

Islands, and because of material damage and a boycott of Japanese goods it could not achieve the expected financial results [Takashimaya ga Chūgoku tetta e... 2019]. For the Japanese, this means that the historical memory factor must be taken into consideration in long-term planning.

The anti-Japanese sentiment in China worries Japanese tourists as well. Many tourists were afraid to go to China after the demonstrations began, and travel agencies canceled the planned tours [Hannichi demo de... 2012]. Ordinary Japanese people, including tourists, are primarily concerned about security issues. The fear of instability, aggressive attitude, and misunderstanding often outweighs the interest in China that has emerged in recent decades.

However, not all Japanese people were frightened by the situation. An interesting example is a group of students from Meiji University who went on a planned study trip to the PRC in 2012 despite the demonstrations. In their reflections on the trip after returning home, many of them wrote that the visit to China in this difficult time increased their interest in studying the history, culture, and language of that country. Those who had expected a cold welcome were impressed by Chinese cordiality and hospitality. One of the students pointed to the difference between the real situation and what the Japanese media portrayed. Contrary to the opinion existing in Japan, Chinese people at local level turned out to be more benevolent and said they loved Japan. According to another participant in the trip, the interpretation of the Senkaku Islands issue on Chinese and Japanese television was completely different [Kaigai zemi gasshuku... 2012].

This confirms the serious influence of media publications on the formation of the assessment of a country and of specific events, the importance of critical attitude and independent study of an issue in situ, through personal experience. Young Japanese people have more and more opportunities for that.

A good sign is that, according to a public opinion survey conducted by the Cabinet of Japan, among the respondents who have friendly feelings for China and who believe that the situation in Sino-Japanese relations is favorable, there are more young people. In 2017, 31.5 percent of the Japanese aged 18 to 29 had a feeling of neighborhood with China,

and 19.7 percent of the respondents in this age group said that, in their opinion, Japan’s relations with China were “good” or “rather good”.

It is interesting to note that, while the assessment of the relations with China varies depending on the age group, the feeling of closeness with China steadily increases with a decrease in the age of respondents (Table 2). For older Japanese people, China is less close, except for the group of over 70 year-olds (i.e., those who were born in 1947 or earlier): these people are more inclined to perceive China as a close country.

Table 2

Assessment by Japanese society of relations
with China by age group (2017)

Age	Relations of Japan with China are “good” or “rather good” (percentage)	There is a feeling of closeness with China (percentage)
18–29 years	19.7	31.5
30–39 years	15.5	23.0
40–49 years	13.7	20.1
50–59 years	16.5	18.5
60–69	13.4	12.7
Over 70 years	14.3	16.9
Average for all groups	14.9	18.8
Previous year average	12.5	16.8

Source: [Naikakufu yoron chōsa ... 2013]

Judging by the mean value, both indicators improved compared with the previous year, and in general there is positive dynamics in the image of China and Japan-China relations. Japan is fostering cooperation with China in science, culture, education, tourism, trade and investment. All of this requires active human contacts. It is characteristic that although the contemporary generation keeps memory of the post-war problems in Japan-China relations and of everything that formed the negative image

of China in the 1980s and 1990s, the positive image of the neighboring country is created largely due to socio-economic ties, cultural exchange, and tourism. Thus, according to Genron NPO's 2018 report, a positive attitude towards China among the Japanese audience is taking shape due to various forms of Japan-China relations, including travel, interest in Chinese music, literature and history, satisfaction with the economic achievements of the PRC and with the growing standard of living of the Chinese population (which to some extent brings the Chinese consumer closer to the Japanese one). It is also interesting that for nearly 20 percent of the respondents China's positive image was associated with the low cost and attractiveness of Chinese products [Dai 14-kai... 2018, pp. 4-5], whereas previously the opinion of them was very negative.

At the present stage, Sino-Japanese relations are, on the one hand, complex in the areas of activity that they embrace, and also in the diversity of their participants and subjects, and, on the other hand, they are strong and largely driven by economic interests. It can be even said that the activity of socio-economic contacts began to sideline some political problems.

Professor Liu Jianguo of the Tsinghua University in China, who studies the influence of political factors on the Japan-China economic relations, points out that in the 1990s they entered a new stage, when economic ties did not depend so much on the political situation as before. This even led to the fact that, in the early 21st century, during the rule of Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō, which was an extremely unfavourable period for Sino-Japanese political relations (during that period the Chinese side responded negatively to the visits by Japanese senior officials to the Yasukuni Shrine), there emerged an unprecedented situation of "heyday of economic relations with coldness in politics" (*zhèng lěng jīng rè* in Chinese) [Liu 2007, p. 48-86].

Nevertheless, the increasing complexity of Sino-Japanese relations gives rise to new problems and makes the old unresolved ones, including the issue of historical memory, resurface. There is still a lot of work to be done to achieve mutual understanding both at the level of politicians and at the level of Japanese and Chinese society.

References

- Arai Shin'ichi (2010). History Textbooks in Twentieth Century Japan: A Chronological Overview. *Journal of Educational Media, Memory & Society*. № 2 (Vol. 2). Special Issue: Contextualizing School Textbook Revision. Pp. 113-121.
- Benedict, R. (2013). Khrizantema i mech: modeli yaponskoy kul'tury [The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture]. Moscow-St. Petersburg. Tsentr gumanitarnykh initsiativ. (In Russian)
- Chūgoku risuku manejimento kenkyūkai. Hōkokusho [China Risk Management Research Association Report] (2013). *JETRO*. https://www.jetro.go.jp/ext_images/jfile/report/o_7001515/07001515.pdf (accessed: 04 May 2020).
- Dai 14-kai nitchū kyōdō yoron chōsa [The 14th Joint Japan-China Opinion Poll Survey]. 09 October 2018. *The Genron NPO*. <http://www.genron-npo.net/world/archives/7053.html> (accessed: 04 May 2020).
- Fukuoka Kazuya (2011). School History Textbooks and Historical Memories in Japan: A Study of Reception. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*. № 3/4 (Vol. 24). Pp. 83-103.
- Gekika suru hannichi demo – chūgoku to dō mukiau ka [Escalating anti-Japanese Demonstrations – How Should We Face China]. 18 September 2012. *NHK Broadcasting Corporation*. <http://www.nhk.or.jp/gendai/articles/3248/1.html> (accessed: 08 July 2019, no longer accessible).
- Gordon, A. (ed.). (1993). *Postwar Japan and History*. London: University of California Press.
- Hannichi demo de Chūgoku tsuā chūshi aitsugu. Nitchū kōryū, kankō ni kage [China Tours Canceled due to anti-Japanese Demonstrations. Shadow has Fallen on Japan-China Exchange and Tourism]. 16 September 2012. *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*. https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASDG1503D_V10C12A9CC1000/ (accessed: 04 May 2020).
- Hirakawa Sachiko (2005). 40 dai nihonjin no Chūgokukan wo saguru [Exploring the View on China among the Japanese Born in 1940s]. *CORE*. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/46867540.pdf> (accessed: 11 April 2019, no longer accessible).

- Jiang Xiaojing* (2003). Rekishi kyōkasho mondai wo meguru nitchū kankei [Sino-Japanese Relations as Revealed in the Issues of History Textbooks]. *The bulletin of the Graduate School of the Soka University*. № 25. Pp. 197-220.
- Kaigai zemi gasshuku 2012 sankasha no kansōbun (kikoku repōto yori) [Reflections of the Participants of the 2012 Overseas Seminar Camp after Returning Home] (2012). *Meiji University*. <http://www.kisc.meiji.ac.jp/~asiashi/images/report005.pdf> (accessed: 04 May 2020).
- Kimura Masato* (2013). Shushō no Yasukuni sampai. Asahi no yoron chōsa de mo 6 wari sansei [Prime-Minister's Visit to Yasukuni. 60 Percent Support in the Opinion Poll of Asahi]. 30 December 2013. *Personal Blog of Kimura Masato*. <https://news.yahoo.co.jp/byline/kimuramasato/20131230-00031149/> (accessed: 04 May 2020).
- Kovrigin, E.B.* (2012). Yaponiya – Kitay: ofitsial'naya pomoshch' razvitiyu kak instrument ekonomicheskogo vzaimodeystviya [Japan – China: Official Development Assistance as an Instrument of Economic Interaction]. *Prostranstvennaya ekonomika*. № 3. Pp. 9-33. (In Russian)
- Kovrigin, E.B.* (2014). Yaponiya – ASEAN: evolyutsiya ofitsial'noy pomoshchi razvitiyu [Japan – ASEAN: Evolution of the Official Development Assistance]. *Prostranstvennaya ekonomika*. № 2. Pp. 40-74. (In Russian).
- Liu Jianguyong* (2007). Zhongguo yu Riben. Bianhua zhong de “zhengleng jingre” guanxi [China and Japan. The Changing Relations of “Cold Politics and Hot Economy”]. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe. (In Chinese)
- Molodyakova, E.V.* (2007). Mnogoaspektnost' problemy svyatilishcha Yasukuni [Multiple Aspects of the Yasukuni Shrine Issue]. *Yearbook Japan 2007*. Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies of RAS. Pp. 48-68. (In Russian)
- Naikakufu yoron chōsa [Public Opinion Survey of the Cabinet Office]. October 2013. *Cabinet Office, Government Of Japan*. <https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h25/h25-gaiko/zh/z10.html> (accessed: 04 May 2020).
- Nihon kaden mēkā no hambairyō ga gekigen [Sales Volume of Japanese Home Electronics Manufacturers has Fallen Sharply]. 12 September 2012. *Searchina*. http://news.searchina.ne.jp/dispcgi?y=2012&d=0912&f=business_0912_16.1.shtml (accessed: 04 May 2020).

- Nozaki Yoshiko (2008). War Memory, Nationalism and Education in Postwar Japan, 1945–2007: The Japanese History Textbook Controversy and Ienaga Saburo's Court Challenges. London-New-York: Routledge.
- Ōgata Sadako (1965). Japanese Attitude toward China. *Asian Survey*. № 5 (8). Pp. 389-398.
- Pyle, K.B. (1983). Japan Besieged: The Textbook Controversy. *Journal of Japanese Studies*. № 9 (2). Pp. 297-300.
- Takashimaya ga Chūgoku tetta e. Chūgoku netto de wa “shippai shita gen'in” shiteki suru koe mo [Takashimaya Leaves China. Opinions on the Reasons for its “Failor” Published on the Chinese Internet]. 26 June 2019. *Record China*. <https://www.recordchina.co.jp/b724422-so-c20-d0054.html> (accessed: 04 May 2020).
- Toyota no kugatsu Chūgoku hambai 4 wari gen, hannichi de nenkan mokuhyō mitatsu mo [Toyota Sales in China have Fallen by 40 Percent, Annual Goals might not be Achieved because of the anti-Japanese Demonstrations]. 05 October 2012. *Reuters*. <http://jp.reuters.com/article/JPauto/idJPTY-E89401N20121005> (accessed: 04 May 2020).
- Wilson, S. (2013). Film and Soldier: Japanese War Movies in the 1950s. *Journal of Contemporary History*. № 48 (3). Pp. 537-555.
- Zakowski, K. (2012). Reaction to Popular Pressure or a Political Tool? Different Interpretations of China's Policy Regarding Koizumi's Visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia*. № 11(2). Pp. 47-60.

KUL'NEVA Polina Victorovna – PhD (Economics), Researcher, Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

E-mail: kpoline@list.ru

Russian edition of the article:

Japanese Studies in Russia. 2019, № 4: 103–119.

http://japanjournal.ru/images/js/2019/js_2019_4_103-119.pdf

DOI: 10.24411/2500-2872-2019-10031