The importance of ‘Othering’ in China’s national identity: Sino-Japanese relations as a stage of identity conflicts

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Abstract Recent studies have increasingly argued that the Chinese leadership uses Japan’s imperialistic past as a tool for domestic and political bargaining. However, this argument fails to appreciate the embedded nature of negative memories within China. This article forwards an alternative argument by situating Japanese militaristic history within Chinese national identity. By examining a wide range of Chinese primary sources often underutilized by International Relations (IR) analysts, it moves beyond narrow, elite-centred explanations. The article argues that modern China’s national identity has been characterized by an acute sense of ‘victimhood’ arising from its turbulent interactions with International Society, and that Japan plays an important role as an ‘Other’ which enhances China’s self-image as a ‘victim’. Furthermore, it claims that Japan’s emergence as an ‘Other’ in China’s national identity is a by-product of China’s attempts to regain its social and moral legitimacy within a post-Cold War International Society increasingly dominated by the Western powers. By highlighting the deeply entrenched nature of Japanese imperialist history in China’s national identity, the article also shows that history is more than just part of a ‘toolkit’ that can be rationally utilized by the political elite, and that states are moral agents that are deeply affected by history.

Keywords Sino-Japanese relations; ‘Self–Other’; International Society; national identity; Chinese foreign policy.

Introduction

On 27 April 2005, the Japanese daily Asahi shimbun reported that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had announced its intention to analyze textbooks from twenty different states, including China and Korea, with particular...
attention being paid to their discussions of Japan. Machimura Nobutaka, the then Japanese foreign minister, stated that the reason behind this move was Japan’s concern that close links existed between Chinese anti-Japanese demonstrations and patriotic education (Asahi.com 2005a, b). This view echoes that of recent studies on Sino-Japanese relations which (as discussed below) assume that history can be rationally used by political decision makers as a political tool.

These explanations do provide us with important insights into the role which history plays in Sino-Japanese relations. However, they also fail to satisfy: they not only portray (by implication) the Chinese populace as pawns that can be easily manipulated by the elite, but they also trivialize the embedded nature of negative memories of Japan’s imperialist history within Chinese society. This article contends that these arguments narrow our understanding of an important bilateral relation in East Asia. It argues for an approach that not only takes historical memories more seriously (cf. Jervis 1976; Kaufman 2001; Khong 1992) but also moves beyond elite-centric explanations.

This article then seeks to address these issues by utilizing the ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ debate of identity formation to examine how China’s national identity is formed, and what role Japan plays in this process. The article provides a broader survey of Japan’s role in Chinese national identity. It scrutinizes a range of elite- and popular-level literature (including the Renmin ribao, Chinese academic works, Chinese textbooks and populist works). While this is by no means a definitive survey of Chinese popular perceptions, it moves beyond the overly elite-centric approaches which have characterized many works on Sino-Japanese relations. It gives a broader view of how Japan is ‘Othered’, which is important in furthering our understanding of a China where foreign policy decision making increasingly has to take account of broader popular sentiments.

By situating the negative history of Japanese imperialism within the frame of China’s national identity, this article demonstrates three points. Firstly, it shows that states and their peoples are moral agents. Their behaviour is strongly affected by historical memories (cf. Halbwachs 1992; Olick 1999). Negative images of Japan in China are deeply embedded, rather than being a product of manipulation, as recent theories have implied. Secondly, this article highlights China’s ambiguous social position within International Society, where it is often viewed with suspicion as an ‘Other’ which is at odds with International Society’s rules and values. Finally, it argues that Japan’s emergence as an ‘Other’ in China’s national identity is a by-product of China’s attempts to assert its ‘victimhood’ and regain its social and moral legitimacy within an International Society still differentiated between its ‘core’ and ‘periphery’.

A number of caveats are in order here. Firstly, as discussed below, the formation of self-identity is a highly complex dynamic. It is a deeply social phenomenon and results from interacting with multiple ‘Others’ which play
a different role in the emergence of multiple, overlapping ‘Selves’ which can be based on class, ethnicity, or gender, and neither are the lines which demarcate the ‘Other’ always clear-cut. While Japan does play an important role as an ‘Other’ which enhances China’s ‘victim’ identity, it goes without saying that other states such as the United States and Soviet Union have (and often continue to) filled these roles in different periods. Japan is an important ‘Other’, but by no means the exclusive one. Furthermore, China’s ‘victim’ identity is not reducible to international influences alone, and can be produced through domestic political processes as well (Renwick and Cao 1999). The formation of Japan as an ‘Other’ in China’s national identity formation constitutes only one part of this process. The argument presented here is, in short, that the ‘Othering’ of Japan supports China’s national identity as a ‘victimized’ state.

Finally, this article focuses on how (nation-) states can become ‘Others’ in the process of China’s national identity formation. The space in which this takes place is a society where states are primary actors, and this study therefore adopts the analytical framework of International Society. The utility of this approach lies in its assumption that international politics is an inherently social realm where states that share some common norms and goals are the main actors. Furthermore, it is within this social sphere where states’ identities and interests are formed intersubjectively through their interactions with each other (Dunne 1995: 376). An International Society has been defined by Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (1984: 1) as:

... a group of states (or, more generally, a group of independent political communities) which not merely form a system, in the sense that the behaviour of each is a necessary factor in the calculations of the others, but also have established by dialogue and consent common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations, and recognize their common interest in maintaining these arrangements.

The article begins by exploring how the role of history has been interpreted in the literature of Sino-Japanese relations, and discusses its shortcomings. A brief overview of the theoretical literature of the ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ debate is forwarded, where the case is made for the importance of understanding the intersubjective nature of national identity formation and the role of the ‘Other’. Following this, China’s self-identity as a ‘victim’ is discussed, as is the role that Japan and its imperialist history plays in forming this particular identity.

The role of history in Sino-Japanese relations: conventional explanations

The role of (imperialist) history in Sino-Japanese relations has been a well-explored topic, with broadly two arguments forwarded. The first explanation posits that the traumatic experiences resulting from Japan’s invasion on
Chinese soil has left a deep scar on the Chinese psyche which remains to this very day. Manifestations of this can be seen in China’s strong reactions—a ‘knee-jerk response’, as Allen S. Whiting once put it—to any perceived ‘revival’ of Japanese imperialist ideology or symbols (Whiting 1989; Whiting and Xin 1990: 115–20). There is much to support this argument, as there are many in China who remember the cruelty inflicted by the Japanese armies, and it seems quite reasonable that to many Chinese any actions by ‘historical revisionists’ smack of Japan’s failure to face up to its past.

However, a second explanation appears to have won the favour of analysts in recent years. This argument essentially claims that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) strategically and rationally uses the history of Japanese imperialist aggression (Downs and Saunders 1998/99; Shambaugh 1996; Whiting 1995; Zhao 2000). Firstly, history is used to take advantage of Japan’s war guilt and draw out political concessions from Tokyo. Secondly, it is utilized by the Chinese government to take a strong stance against Japan, thus presenting itself as a patriotic force and enhancing its claim to legitimacy (Rozman 2002: 106).

Beijing’s loud demands that Tokyo hold a ‘correct’ view of history and demonstrate sufficient remorse towards the Chinese is therefore seen as a bargaining tool in both international and (particularly) domestic politics. Scholars have pointed out, for instance, that Beijing’s strong reactions towards Japan in the 1982 textbook controversy were partly a result of its need to bolster its domestic legitimacy after failing to stop the United States selling advanced weaponry to Taiwan (Rose 1998; Tanaka 1983). Memories of negative history have also been linked to factional politics, where elites utilize memories of imperialist aggression to ‘coalesce support and weaken opponents’ (Deans 2000: 122–4; Whiting 1995). More recently, Suisheng Zhao (1998: 17; cf. Komori 2003: 154–247) has noted that historical sites of Japanese aggression were utilized by the CCP leaders in their ‘patriotic education campaign’ aimed at strengthening the regime’s claims to power.

This argument has become increasingly persuasive in the context of a legitimacy crisis within China, where the CCP was suffering from ‘three spiritual crises (sanxin weiji)’ in the late 1970s, namely ‘a crisis of faith in socialism, a crisis of confidence in the future of the country, and a crisis of trust in the party’ (Zhao 2000: 17). This problem was exacerbated more recently by the collapse of the socialist Eastern bloc and the worldwide retreat of communist ideology. As a result, the CCP is increasingly seen as dependent on its nationalist credentials for maintaining its support. The historical memories of Japanese imperialism easily arouse nationalist sentiments, and the more the party is seen to be taking a hard stance against any perceived ‘revival’ of ‘Japanese militarism’, the more likely it is to be seen as a patriotic force worthy of the people’s backing.

This argument is a powerful one which does capture an important element of recent anti-Japanese sentiments within China. However, it also
suffers from a number of shortcomings. Firstly, while it is indeed true that the CCP has promoted some form of patriotism to legitimate itself, it does not necessarily follow that anti-Japanese sentiment per se is deliberately disseminated. Although the CCP’s role in defeating Japan did help strengthen its nationalistic credentials and legitimacy among the populace (Johnson 1962), the cultivation of an overtly anti-Japanese patriotism/nationalism does not necessarily make ‘rational’ sense in terms of securing the stability of the CCP regime. Japan remains one of China’s key trading partners and can play a critical role in the latter’s economic development. The CCP’s legitimacy is also linked to raising people’s living standards, and a downturn in Sino-Japanese economic relations could hinder this goal and adversely affect the party’s grip on power (Downs and Saunders 1998/99). Secondly, an image of a fervently anti-Japanese China could also scare the Japanese and motivate them to strengthen their military power with a specific view to a ‘China threat’, thereby contributing to a security dilemma in the region. This is a situation that the CCP would rather avoid. Furthermore, there is a danger that a growth in populist anti-Japanese sentiment could result in the CCP losing its autonomy in foreign policy decision making and becoming a hostage to nationalist demands that could further damage already delicate relations with Japan. Evidence that the Chinese leaders are more than aware of this possibility can be seen by the fact that an editorial published in the Zhongguo qingnian bao (China Youth Daily) in the wake of the 2005 anti-Japanese demonstrations called on demonstrators to express their nationalism in a rational manner, rather than undertake highly emotionally charged demonstrations similar to those which had resulted in the destruction of foreign property (Downs and Saunders 1998/1999; Zheng 1999: 88; Zhongguo qingnian bao 2005).

The second problem with this argument is that by their very ability to utilize historical memories strategically, the Chinese political decision makers are typically assumed to be ‘rational actors who balance the need to maintain domestic legitimacy with the pursuit of longer-term international objectives’ (Downs and Saunders 1998/1999: 123). This implies that the Chinese leadership is somehow autonomous from historical memories and can (almost cynically) manipulate past history to suit its interests, which are implicitly treated as a given. In reality, however, historical perceptions do matter (Jervis 1976), and the Chinese leaders are no exception: many have had some experience of dealing with Japanese imperialism, and it is difficult to imagine their being able to remain detached from their own historical memories.

Thirdly – and more importantly – this argument does not adequately explain why Japan can be used so successfully by the Chinese leadership to whip up nationalism and bolster its legitimacy. While rhetorical statements of Japanese imperialism can indeed be used for regime legitimation (and other political ends), it is important to note that this can work only when the rhetoric has ‘resonance’ or a ‘captive audience’. This approach, however,
'encourages analysts to gloss over the role of historical and situational effects, which are important in explaining why manipulative leaders succeed in some times and places but not in others' (Kaufman 2001: 6). If the broader spectrum of the population did not share some form of anti-Japanese feelings, nationalist sentiment is hardly going to arise from manipulating memories of Sino-Japanese war history. Of course, it would be wrong to assume that scholars who adopt this argument are not aware of this, and Downs and Saunders appear to concede this point when they define ‘nationalism’ as ‘government efforts to appease pre-existing nationalist sentiment and deliberate attempts to stir up nationalist sentiment for political ends’ (Downs and Saunders 1998/1999: 119; emphasis added). However, because this explanation adopts a top-down approach, it is theoretically limited in its ability to capture this important point. Instead, it inadvertently assumes that the Chinese masses are somehow mindless puppets that can easily be manipulated by the elites (Gries 2004). This, of course, begs the question of where this receptivity towards anti-Japanese rhetoric comes from in the first place, but we are left without answers.

Clearly, then, history and the role it plays in Sino-Japanese relations should not be presented as something that ‘matters’ only when used by members of the elite for their narrow political gains. Historical memories are clearly more deeply entrenched in Chinese society, and cannot be reduced to a tool used by the political elite. The question thus becomes one of finding an alternative framework that can better account for the embedded nature of history. Fortunately, some scholars have provided us with some starting points. Chih-Yu Shih argues that Japan played an important role as an ‘Other’ in the psychological foundations of Chinese foreign policy making, which helped consolidate China’s reinvention as a sovereign state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In its interactions with non-Chinese states and peoples, China (as will be discussed below) traditionally identified itself as a cultural entity. This identity remained dominant in Chinese thinking, even when China was subjected to imperialist encroachment by the Western powers. The threat that the latter posed could be differentiated in cultural terms, and (despite an increasing awareness of China as a state among many) this simultaneously confirmed China’s self-identification as a civilizational entity. The shift in China’s self-identification, Shih argues, actually came about in the wake of Japanese imperialism. Japan shared a similar culture with China, and therefore could not be opposed on cultural terms like the Western powers. Japan presented more of a threat to China’s very existence, rather than a menace to Chinese culture. This ‘threat’ thus had to be interpreted primarily in terms of a menace to the Chinese state. In this way, Shih argues, the emergence of Japan as a threatening ‘statist Other’ was crucial in reinventing China’s self-identity as a ‘sovereign state’. This particular aspect of China’s national identity continues to this very day: in Shih’s words, ‘China did not adjust its image of Japan by recategorizing Japan as a waiguoren [foreigner] state. Rather it sees itself as an “un-Japanese” state’ (Shih 1995: 544; cf. Whiting 1995).
Shih’s portrayal of Japan in Chinese eyes is perhaps simplistic (Yamamuro 2001), and his arguments of a China that constantly defines itself as an ‘un-Japanese state’ arguably runs the risk of historical essentialism. However, his use of the concept of the ‘Other’ in its role in identity formation provides us with an attractive analytical framework that opens up interesting avenues for rethinking history in Sino-Japanese relations. For one thing, it gives us a useful insight into the deep-rooted role of Japan’s imperialist history in the emergence of modern China’s national identity. Furthermore, drawing on constructivist insights that states’ identities inform their interests (Jepperson et al. 1996: 33–75; Wendt 1992), if we can demonstrate that Japan’s imperialist history continues to play a substantive role in China’s identity formation today then we may be able to reach a better understanding of why this issue remains such a prominent feature in Sino-Japanese relations. Finally, the ‘Self–Other’ interpretation also provides a vital opening for understanding the ‘resonance’ that anti-Japanese rhetoric (which seemingly has been used successfully by the regime in recent years) seems to have in China today. Does it mean that Japan is still an ‘Other’ that helps to consolidate nationalism? If so, what kind of ‘Other’ is it? Does it, in turn, suggest that China is still imagined as an ‘un-Japanese state’? If not, what does China see as its ‘Self’? What role will Japan play in this? These are all empirical questions, but before we turn to these it is first necessary to survey the theoretical literature of the ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ in IR.

Towards a new theoretical framework: identity, Self and Other

The ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ approach is derived from social theory, and has gained increasing interest within IR theory. Not surprisingly, perhaps, other studies have also adopted this approach (Diez 2004; Gries 2005; Mercer 1995; Neumann 1999; Neumann and Welsh 1991).

One approach, adopted by Jonathan Mercer, focuses more on the internal dynamics of political communities and explores how this might predispose them to certain behaviour in their interaction with others. Drawing on Social Identity Theory, Mercer argues that collective groups’ ‘universal desire for self-esteem’ results in maximizing cognitive differences between out-groups, with negative qualities usually attached to the latter in order to enhance the positive identity of the ‘in-group’ (Mercer 1995: 242).

Mercer has been criticized by other scholars for an overly narrow reading of Social Identity Theory. For a start, scholars adopting a more sophisticated version of this approach have argued that ‘[g]roup categorization and comparison do not inevitably lead to intergroup competition and conflict’ (Gries 2005: 239). Another shortcoming within Mercer’s work is that his arguments generally ‘begin and end with a self which [is] not socially situated, and so [does] not focus directly on the nexus between the self and other’ (Neumann 1996: 144–5). In reality, positive identity must not be conferred only by the narrowly defined ‘in-group’ but must also be given by a broader spectrum of ‘out-groups’ as well (Gries 2005: 242; Wendt 1992: 397–8). But
because this narrow interpretation depicts the social dynamic in which the 'in-group' attains self-esteem too narrowly (the 'in-group' often denotes the nation which identifies with a particular territorial state), positive evaluation runs the risk of being reduced (by implication) to self-congratulatory bravado. However, self-esteem also comes from 'outsiders', and this includes other social groups outside the nation-state (Gries 2004: 30; Klotz 1995: 30).

In order to address these issues, it seems necessary to provide a more socially grounded explanation. One approach is to think of the Self–Other dynamic as a ‘lineation of an “in-group”’ [which] must necessarily entail delineation from a number of ‘out-groups’, and that delineation is an active and ongoing part of identity formation (Neumann 1996: 142). The strength of this approach is that it is explicitly sociological, and can capture the complex dynamics of social interaction which are at play in the process of collective identity formation (Neumann 1996: 142). The shortcoming with this explanation is, however, that it is overly concerned with difference. While the dynamic nature of identity formation is acknowledged, the main focus is on identifying the ‘boundary markers of identity’ and how it is maintained. However the ‘Other’ need not be contrasted in such a stark, contrasting fashion (Wendt 1999: 305). This is not to imply that the process of ‘Othering’ will cease, for ‘identities are always constructed against the difference of an other’ (Diez 2004; cf. Abizadeh 2005). Rather, it is simply to suggest that this interpretation is perhaps a little too rigid in its presentation of ‘difference’, and that we need more subtle explanations. The degree of ‘difference’ of the ‘Other’ is quite susceptible to change and more dynamic (Rumelili 2004). Furthermore, there can be ‘significant Others’, which an actor would like to positively identify itself with rather than actively differentiate itself from (Neumann 1999: 17).¹

This, however, raises a second point. The existence of ‘positive’ others seems to suggest that the degree to which and the manner in which the ‘Other’ is demarcated is contingent on the identity of the ‘Self’. But how do we know what the Self’s identity is in the first place? The answer is simple. Social actors cannot know their identities a priori, and it is only through social interaction that a sense of the ‘Self’ is formed (Olick 1999: 343; Neumann 1999: 13). The significance of this claim is that it highlights the intersubjective process through which identity is formed, as well as the multifaceted nature of identity formation. Interaction with multiple ‘Others’ will result in various, often overlapping, forms of self-identities. Which particular identity will come to the fore depends very much on which ‘Other’ the actor interacts with at a particular given moment. This is not to suggest that stable identities cannot emerge. The point is merely that the identity of the ‘Self’, just like the Other, cannot be assumed, and needs to be subjected to empirical investigation (Diez 2004: 321).

Accordingly, it seems appropriate to begin the empirical sections below by exploring how the sense of ‘victimhood’ emerged in China’s national identity
by situating its interactions within the social realm of International Society. It will examine why this identity has persisted (albeit in different contexts) to this day, and then see what role Japan plays as an ‘Other’ that highlights this particular identity.

**China’s identity in International Society: the victimized state?**

National identity has been identified by Dittmer and Kim as ‘the relationship between nation and state that obtains when the people of that nation identify with the state’ (Dittmer and Kim 1993: 13). The key emphasis behind this definition is the authors’ interest in ‘what it is with which they [the people] identify’ (Dittmer and Kim 1993: 13), and the examination of China’s national identity thus becomes inseparable from Chinese nationalism. As Benedict Anderson famously claimed, the nation is an ‘imagined community’ and nationalism can be seen as an ideology which furnishes this process (Anderson 1991: 6). If we are to attain a greater understanding of Chinese national identity, then, we need to gain better insights into what kind of nation-state China was imagined to be in order to command the identification of its ‘nationals’ with it, as well as their loyalty.

The discussion of the Self–Other debates above suggests that a sense of what the ‘Self’ is can emerge only through interacting with ‘Others’, and in this sense it is not surprising that the rise of Chinese nationalism is inseparable from China’s encounter with the Western powers, as historians have suggested. While a somewhat vague sense of belonging to the ‘Chinese state’ did exist previously, this was based more on a shared culture, and the ‘nation’ was not necessarily ‘limited’ within certain boundaries. The signing of the unequal treaties and the increased contact with the Western powers which followed, however, had the effect of furthering the awareness of ‘China’ as one state among many, and also spawned a new intellectual class influenced by Western notions of nationalism (Pong 1973). While the term guo, nowadays translated as ‘the state’, was often synonymous with the ruling Qing dynasty, Chinese exposure to Western intellectual influences gradually resulted in the term becoming increasingly identified with the Chinese nation (Harrison 2001: 92–4, 118).

The narrative of Chinese ‘victimhood’ was equally important to the ‘imagining’ of the ‘limited’ but nevertheless ‘timeless’ boundaries of the Chinese state. For a nation-state and nationalism to emerge within this territorial boundary, a nation – a population which ‘possesses’ shared myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members – is needed (Smith 2000: 1), and China’s identity as a ‘victimized state’ played a crucial role in the creation of this nation. Members of the newly emerging elite were deeply affected by the encroachment of China by the Western (and later Japanese) imperialists, and sought to improve China’s fortunes by building a powerful state. National cohesion was seen as essential for this task, and to this end they encouraged the
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The populace to imagine themselves as members of the ‘victimized’ Chinese state in order to provide unified resistance to imperialism, as well as legitimation for their claims to power. For instance, the new elites often claimed that the new Chinese state’s territorial boundaries included those of the Qing’s territory and its ‘tributary’ states, many of which had been lost to the Western powers. The geographical boundaries of the newly imagined political community of China were thus based on territories which had been lost to treaties with the Western powers which ‘were “unequal” and therefore invalid’ (Yahuda 2000: 27). This, in turn, resulted in a particular nationalism which identified China as a ‘victimized’ state, with unsettled, morally just claims against the imperialist powers of International Society, which had robbed the Chinese nation of its territory.

That these endeavours eventually succeeded – although this was by no means a linear process – was the fact that there already was a populace that was significantly receptive to this nationalist agenda that was being propagated. There already existed at the popular level a sentiment similar to what E. J. Hobsbawm has defined as ‘proto-nationalism’ (Hobsbawm 1992: 46, 73), which was an anti-Western sentiment based on fear and resentment towards foreigners, who were seen to pose threats to traditional culture or livelihood (Harrison 2001). This sentiment, alongside very real imperialist threats, served to disseminate and consolidate the Chinese ‘victimhood’ identity (Johnson 1962; cf. Harrison 2001) as well as ‘national salvation (jiuguo)’ as a rallying point for arousing nationalism (Yan 1996: 51). The spread of newspapers and mass education proved crucial in disseminating this sentiment. Constant efforts were also undertaken by both the Nationalist government and public intellectuals to remind the people of China’s ‘victimhood’ by commemorating historical events of ‘national humiliation (guochi)’. By participating in these events, many people identified themselves as Chinese ‘citizens’ who possessed a ‘shared memory’ of national humiliation (Cohen 2003: 148–84; Harrison 2000: 155–7).

The victimized ‘Self’

It was more than a century after the signing of the ‘humiliating’ unequal Treaty of Nanjing in 1842 when Mao Zedong announced that the Chinese people had ‘stood up’. The end of the Second World War had brought about the abolition of the unequal treaties, and following the civil war the unification of China (with the notable exception of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau) under the CCP. However, China’s acute feelings of victimization appear to persist to this very day. While memories of the ‘century of humiliation’ no doubt continue to be important, reliance on this particular memory alone risks falling into the trap of historical determinism (Whiting 1995: 316), and it is important to bear in mind that China’s international environment, its perceptions of it, and its sense of the ‘Self’ have not necessary been static.
The key to understanding the persistence of China’s ‘victim’ identity lies in China’s rocky relations with International Society after 1949. During much of the Cold War years it had been alienated from International Society because of its confrontations with both the United States and the Soviet Union, and this resulted in a very insecure perception that China was under siege from the members of International Society. In recent years, the PRC has to a certain degree gained recognition as a Great Power of International Society through its position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. China has sustained impressive economic growth, and is fast becoming a global economic power. Despite these achievements, China’s social position within International Society continues to be an ambiguous one.

There are three reasons for this. Firstly, the end of the Cold War has meant that the Great Powers of International Society, increasingly confident of their liberal democratic identities and their political and social achievements (Fukuyama 1989), have increasingly labelled China as “the last bastion of communism” and the “remaining Leninist state” standing against liberal democracy and democratization, thus defining China as the “Other” (Zhang 2001: 252). Secondly, the PRC’s poor record of human rights abuses has resulted in continuous criticism and at times outright international sanctions, and its legitimacy as a responsible power has been frequently questioned in an International Society where the Western powers continue (for better or worse) to dominate and set the normative agendas, and have increasingly defined rightful conduct within International Society in terms of a state’s ability to protect human rights (Donnelly 1998; Gong 1984; cf. Clark 2005: 25). Thirdly, the rise of Chinese economic and military power in the 1990s sparked fear among a number of Western observers, and resulted in the ‘China threat’ thesis. China was seen as a ‘revisionist’ power bent on altering the Western-centric status quo of International Society and reluctant to conform to its norms (Bernstein and Munro 1997; cf. Huntington 1993: 45–8; Mearsheimer 2001; Roy 1996). This latter point was often ‘demonstrated’ by the fact that China had been embroiled in a number of political disputes with other members of International Society, such as the Taiwan issue, territorial claims over the Spratlys, and the US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.

What effect, then, has this ‘Othering’ by International Society had on China? It may be recalled at this point that it was argued that the ‘Self’ cannot be assumed a priori but must be understood through the existence and presence of ‘Others’. How has the way the West has treated China affected the latter’s identity? And how, in turn, has this coloured the way the Chinese undertake their own process of ‘Othering’? The empirical examination will now turn to a consideration of these questions.

Emergence of the ‘Self’ as a victim in the post-Mao era

While the labelling of China as an autocratic and potentially destabilizing ‘Other’ may serve to reinforce the identities of the Western members of
International Society as ‘democratic’ and adhering to rightful conduct in an International Society increasingly coloured by humanitarian norms, a similar process can also be observed from the Chinese side. As noted above, China has been coloured (through its torturous interactions with International Society) by a deep sense of ‘victimhood’, which undergirds a powerful sentiment that the ‘Chinese nation deserves a much better fate than that which it has experienced in the modern world’ (Levine 1994: 43). The Western powers of International Society have instead labelled China as a negative ‘Other’, characterized by autocratic governance and a potentially dangerous rising power unwilling to play by International Society’s rules. While the analogy should not be stretched too far, this process is not dissimilar to nineteenth-century International Society (Suzuki 2005). Then, International Society consisted of a core of ‘civilized’ European states and ‘uncivilized’ states, and the latter were regularly portrayed as ‘Others’ to reaffirm the ‘civilized’ identity of the European peoples and states. In the post-Cold War era, the Western powers are confirming their identity as democratic states that respect human rights – a benchmark of ‘civilized identity’ today – by labelling China and demarcating themselves from it. While International Society is frequently portrayed as a homogeneous Society of states characterized by sovereign equality, International Society arguably was, and to an extent remains, dualistic: it consists of a ‘core’ of industrialized, democratic states (Buzan and Little 2000: 105–6), which marginalizes socialist China as its ‘Other’.

This comes as a shock to many Chinese, who are aware of the time when China was humiliatingly labelled an ‘uncivilized’ entity and denied equal status with the Western powers. As Jia Qingguo notes, ‘[b]y dealing with China in a special way, the Western media allocates China to an international pariah status. Chinese who identify with their country naturally feel insulted’ (Jia 2005: 20). It also, in Chinese eyes, amounts to bullying by the Western powers, and results in the re-emergence of the ‘victim’ identity. The ‘China Threat’ theses, for instance, created a strong sense that China was being unjustly treated within International Society (but see Liu 1994: 119–20; Zhang 2001: 247). Many believed that ‘the proponents of the “China Threat Thesis” are in fact unwilling to see an independent, powerful, prosperous China stand proudly in the East’ (Xing 1996: 20; Zi and Xiao 1997: 286–9), and that China was being targeted because ‘Westerners often subconsciously judge whether a nation is a friend or enemy by its racial or cultural attributes and national power’ (Shi 1996: 11; Xing 1996: 20; Zheng 1999: 96–7), just as they had in the nineteenth century, when they unfairly humiliated China based on racial and civilizational characteristics. Recent events such as Beijing’s failure to host the 2000 Olympics (Zhao 1998: 290), the US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, or Japanese nationalist denials of war atrocities have also served to strengthen popular perceptions (regardless of government manipulation and education, although this is by no means unimportant) that China was and continues to be persecuted by the Great Powers of International Society (cf. Gries 2004: 4–5).
China thus identifies itself as a ‘victim’ in a world where it is surrounded by ‘victimizing Others’: the Western powers. Deng Xiaoping (1993: 358) noted in November 1989, when China faced international condemnation and sanctions for its brutal suppression of the demonstrations at Tiananmen Square:

I am Chinese, and understand the history of foreign invasion of China. When I heard that sanctions against China had been decided in the G7 summit, I immediately thought of the time when the eight-country allies [sent to suppress the Boxer Rebellion] invaded China in 1900. With the exception of Canada, all countries, with the addition of Tsarist Russia, were all members of the allied forces.

By using the historical analogy of the ‘hundred years of humiliation’ to understand the international situation that the PRC faced in 1989 (Khong 1992: 20), Deng’s interpretations imply that China continues to suffer from the interference of Western powers in its internal affairs, just as it had 100 years ago, and in this sense he contributes to strengthening China’s ‘victimhood’.

Although it is tempting to dismiss Deng’s statements as self-serving rhetoric, it is more difficult to do so in the case of popular perceptions. In their reactions to the bombing of the Chinese embassy, many Chinese expressed their ‘ethical “outrage” or “indignation”, which was based on the assumption that China had been ill-treated by the United States, and was “designed to rectify injustice” (Gries 2004: 103). Similarly, many Chinese nationalists believed that Japan’s ‘refusal’ to atone for its past war crimes was because ‘Japan still lacks respect for China’ (Zheng 1999: 135), thus depicting Japanese victimization of China not only as a past phenomenon but also something which continues to this very day.

China also resists International Society’s ‘Othering’ by attempting to regain its moral power, and the ‘victim’ identity plays a critical role in this. The term ‘victim’ denotes that the particular treatment meted out to China is unjust, and that China is undeserving of such treatment. Consequently, the depiction of the ‘Self’ also involves identifying the Chinese state as a principled, moral actor in international politics. That this was a reaction to the ‘Othering’ of China can also be seen from the fact that these arguments were in part spurred by the appearance of ‘China Threat’ theories and Samuel Huntington’s ‘Clash of Civilizations’, which warned of the possible appearance of a ‘Islamic–Confucian’ alliance aimed against the West (Zheng 1999: 77). Chinese commentators often argue that China practices a uniquely moral foreign policy’ (Roy 1998: 38), based ‘on . . . universal values such as justice and peace’ (Levine 1994: 44). One fairly constant sense of the ‘Self’ within Chinese perceptions is that China stands for peace, which places it on a high moral plane. Chinese history provides a quarry for nationalists and public intellectuals to strengthen their claim to China’s historically benign attitude (stemming from Confucian values) towards its
neighbours (Des Forges and Luo 2001; Johnston 1995). In a discussion of China’s diplomatic strategy in the twenty-first century, Chen Jiehua argues that traditional Chinese philosophy dictated that the Chinese Empire treat the weak with ‘paternalistic responsibility and morality’, and the result of this was that ‘in several millennia of Chinese diplomatic history in Asia, we hardly see any examples of disputes caused by China’s bullying of smaller states’ (Chen 2000: 68). Similar trends can be seen in popular nationalists. In response to the ‘China Threat’ arguments, Zi Shui and Xiao Shi claim that ‘China has been on the receiving end of the fear and bullying of the imperialist powers’ tyrannical policies of enslavement and exploitation; we uphold sovereign independence and peaceful diplomacy (heping waijiao luxian), sovereign equality . . . and have never threatened other countries’ (Zi and Xiao 1997: 286). In their notorious nationalist treatise China Can Say No (Zhongguo keyi shuo bu), Song Qiang et al. also assert that the Chinese have not displayed imperialist tendencies because the ‘Chinese people’s collective qualities’ lack ‘rapaciousness’. China is a peaceful state which will never become a hegemon and dominate the weak (Song et al. 1996: 39).

Another instance of China’s demonstration of its claim to moral power in International Society can be seen in its self-appointed role of championing the causes of developing states (Armstrong 1993: 178; cf. Van Ness 1970, 1993). Chen Zhimin notes that the PRC’s radical foreign policy in the 1960s–1970s was linked with desires to obtain ‘a sense of greater international status through its “thought center” role in world revolutionary movements’ (Chen 2005: 44), and repeated statements are made by the Chinese that the PRC always ‘opposes power politics where the strong bully the weak’ and the ‘interference in another state’s domestic affairs’ (Zhongguo lianheguo xiehui 2000: 157).

The ‘victimizing’ Others

The reproduction of China’s ‘victimhood’ identity also entails demarcating China from ‘victimizing Others’, and this provides a stark and negative contrast to China’s own sense of its moral ‘Self’. In addition to memories of imperialism, the Chinese sense of ‘victimhood’ derives from indignation that China’s identity – that of an ethical, principled actor in international politics – is underappreciated. The identity of the ‘Others’ thus gets closely linked to this particular self-image, and is frequently portrayed as an unprincipled, immoral entity.

China’s identity as a ‘victim’ in International Society is, as discussed above, a product of its interactions with various states, and not limited to Japan alone. Accordingly, in the process of identity formation, China’s ‘victimizing Others’ have been a variety of states within International Society (Whiting 1983). In 1965, at the height of China’s international isolation, then Vice Premier Luo Ruiqing made reference to Chinese suffering under both the
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Nationalists and the United States, portraying the two as the principal ‘Others’ (Lo 1965: 31). Luo likened ‘U.S. imperialism’ to Japanese imperialism, thereby indicating that the two shared a similar characteristic: their desire to torment China (Lo 1965: 35). In post-Cold War International Society the United States has again played a prominent role as an ‘Other’. Deng Xiaoping (1993: 348), for instance, demonstrated this in his meeting with a Japanese delegation in December 1989, when he portrayed the Western powers – particularly the United States – as oppressors bent on victimizing China:

Some Western countries are using the pretext of human rights and the illegality of socialist political systems to harm our sovereignty. Those who engage in power politics have no right to lecture us about human rights; how many people’s rights have they harmed themselves! From the Opium War onwards they invaded China; how many Chinese human rights do you think they harmed! . . . The Chinese people will never accept any actions that go against the rules of international relations, and yield to pressure [from the West].

Japan as the ‘Other’

In a similar vein, the construction of Japan as the ‘victimizing Other’ has not been a static process (Rozman 2002). While Japan can be interpreted as playing a crucial role within Chinese national identity formation, it is simply one of the ‘victimizing others’ which are invoked to confirm the PRC’s ‘victim’ identity at both official and popular levels, just as the United States or the former Soviet Union were. It is also simplistic to argue that the Chinese elite actively incites hatred towards Japan. For a start, PRC depictions of Japan have been more varied than has often been suggested. Secondly, the ideological content of the regime’s various campaigns to whip up nationalist sentiment – often cited as a key cause of anti-Japanese sentiment – do not necessarily target Japan per se. One Chinese-language (yuwen) primary school textbook, for instance, contains three readings (10 per cent of the entire textbook) concerning Chinese/CCP war history, out of which only one story concerns the Japanese (Shanghai et al. 1988). The remaining two concern the Civil War and CCP battles against the ‘Nationalist reactionaries’ (Guomindang fandongpai) (Shanghai et al. 1988: 82). Thirdly, many articles criticizing the ‘recurrence of Japanese imperialism’ are careful in distinguishing between the majority of the Japanese popular opinion and militarists, who are instead seen to constitute a minority (Yu 2005). Furthermore, most Chinese IR and Japan specialists do qualify their remarks with references to post-war developments which have been taking place in Japanese politics and society (He 1998). Although we cannot know precisely the degree to which the views of Chinese IR specialists or the ‘vocal intellectuals’ carry greater
influence within the Chinese leadership and Chinese society, this certainly
does indicate that Chinese views of Japan are not simplistic ‘anti-Japanese’
rhetoric.

At the same time, however, there is no denying that Japan and its history
of aggression do seem to matter. In the Renmin ribao, for instance, 730 refer-
ences were made to the Anti-Japanese War of 1931–45 (Kangri zhanzheng)
between 2000 and June 2005, compared with 285 to the Korean War (Chaoxi-
ian zhanzheng, Kangmei yuanchao zhanzheng) and 181 to the Opium War
(Yapian zhanzheng). Similarly, according to a 1999 Yomiuri/Gallup poll,
when asked what Japan reminded them of, the highest numbers of Chi-
inese (39.2 per cent) were likely to think of the Sino-Japanese War and the
Anti-Japanese War (while Japanese were also most likely to think of these
issues, the numbers were 10.1 per cent). Significantly, these categories also
scored highest among respondents between eighteen and twenty-nine years
of age. Clearly, particular historical memories transcend generational differ-
ence (Okabe 2002: 230).

Presuming that these negative memories do enhance China’s identity as a
‘victim’, we need to address the question of why Japan plays such a crucial
role as an ‘Other’ in the creation of Chinese ‘victim’ identity. It is certainly
true that the effects of recent ‘patriotic education’ campaigns and other
elite-level activities aimed at bolstering CCP legitimacy cannot be ignored
(Renwick and Cao 1999; Rozman 2002: 106; Zhao 1998). As Suisheng Zhao
points out, in recent educational campaigns to inculcate the masses in ‘pa-
triotism’, ‘numerous examples of interference in China’s domestic affairs by
hostile foreign forces were provided’ (Zhao 1998: 297), and Japanese im-
perialism was a prominent feature in this (Okabe 2002: 229). However, we
should also guard against trivializing the importance that Japanese imperi-
alist history and the identity of ‘victimhood’ occupies at the popular level.
Indeed, as Alisa Jones has pointed out, there is a congruence between of-
officially propagated national history and popular collective memory ‘of an
essential, civilized, national “self” which was degraded by the “hundred
years of humiliation”, in spite of the fact that ‘the narrative of legitimate
succession and the inevitability of CPC rule itself is often questioned’ (Jones

A number of tentative explanations should be offered here to explain this
seemingly ‘shared’ view of Japan as the ‘victimizing Other’. Firstly, memories
of Japanese imperialism are the freshest in Chinese minds. While China has
indeed been involved in military confrontations with the United States, the
former Soviet Union, Vietnam and India since 1949, none of these clashes
directly affected and harmed Chinese lives to the extent that the Japanese
invasion did, regardless of the controversies surrounding the number of Chi-
nese victims (which the Japanese ‘historical revisionists’ are wont to dispute).
While memories do change over time and can point to possibilities of re-
conciliation, the fact that many prominent Japanese politicians and public
intellectuals continue to deny their imperialist legacy results in a ‘knee-jerk
reaction’ which reminds many Chinese of Japan’s atrocities and reproduces an image of Japan as a ‘victimizing Other’. Secondly, the stories of ‘historical revisionism’ in Japan or any actions associated with this are given wide-scale publicity, thanks to both the passionate debate it produces within Japanese society and the fact that the ‘revisionists’ themselves are often extremely well-funded and given backing and publicity by certain media outlets (Morris-Suzuki 2000). Thirdly, and following from the second point, there is a high degree of Chinese sensitivity to any form of debate or action that may deny its ‘victim’ identity. The media hype over Japanese ‘revisionist’ history in recent years has thus intensified Chinese attention to Japan and its imperialist history, thus resulting in an arguably lopsided reference to Sino-Japanese war history.

So how is Japan presented as the ‘victimizing Other’? At the official level, the Chinese people’s suffering and torturous history of overthrowing Japanese imperialist oppression is emphasized. A typical example can be found in an article published on the seventieth anniversary of the ‘September 18 Incident’:

There is a song well known to the Chinese people for over half a century called ‘On the Songhua River’. The lyrics of this song say ‘Nine-one-eight, nine-one-eight, from those tragic days . . . ’ The song, accompanied with blood and tears, tells us of the ‘September eighteenth’ incident which Japanese imperialism initiated in 1931. They occupied Northeast China, and started a full-scale war with China, committing the crimes of cruelly plundering the Chinese people. Seventy years have passed, but the Chinese people will never forget ‘those tragic days’, or the criminal history of the Japanese imperialist invasion of China.

(Ding 2001: 4)

The same article then argues with reference to Japanese politicians’ visits to Yasukuni Shrine and the ‘historic revisionism’ in Japan. The columnist argues: ‘In recent years, Japan has continuously increased its military spending, expanded its military, updated its weapons, and constitutes a threat to its neighbours. These facts constitute important steps towards the revival of militarism’ (Ding 2001). By making these sweeping arguments, Japan’s identity as a ‘victimizing Other’ is thus extended to the present, thereby serving to remind the readers of the possibility that China will continue to be bullied in the future if it is not vigilant.

Japanese immorality is further highlighted by Zi Shui and Xiao Shi, who draw a contrast between Germany and Japan. The cover of their book shows German chancellor Willy Brandt falling on his knees in remorse in front of the Warsaw Ghetto memorial, accompanied by the subtitle ‘The Germans can do it, can the Japanese do it?’. China’s principled posture in its diplomacy is juxtaposed to this unethical historical amnesia displayed by the Japanese.
Responding to charges that China incites anti-Japanese sentiment, one Renmin ribao correspondent argues that it is Japan’s historical revisionism that causes this in the first place. At the same time, the article reminds the readers that China did not seek financial reparations from Japan ‘in order to separate a small number of militarists from the Japanese populace’. Furthermore, China has ‘always upheld a friendly policy towards Japan, with the slogan of “using history as a mirror and facing the future”, as evidenced by the fact that Deng Xiaoping himself participated in the negotiations for and the signing of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Friendship’ (Yu 2005).

Another common way of highlighting Chinese ‘victim’ identity is by describing the heroics of the Chinese people during the Anti-Japanese War, although this does not necessarily entail the inciting of simplistic, biased depictions of Japanese society. A Renmin ribao article, for instance, devotes a column to remember the life of ‘Anti-Japanese National Heroine’ Li Lin, an overseas Chinese who returned to China. The article details her life and culminates in a vivid description of her final battle, where three months pregnant, she single-handedly kills six Japanese soldiers before dying as a result of her wounds (Renmin ribao 2005). Meanwhile, a Chinese primary school textbook similarly describes the heroics of the Chinese Communist Army against the Japanese, here referred to as ‘Japanese invaders’ (Rikou), a term which some Japanese commentators find particularly derogatory (Komori 2003: 242).6

‘Comrades! Use the rock to pound them [the Japanese]!’ At once, the rock became as light as a hailstone; carrying with it the determination of the five heroes and the Chinese people’s hatred, the rock pounded down on top of the enemy. The mountain slopes rumbled, and the enemy tumbled down the deep gulley in quick succession . . . Wolf Fang Mountain rang with the heroic slogans of the fighters: ‘Down with Japanese imperialism!’ ‘Long live the Chinese Communist Party!’

(Shanghai et al. 1988: 90; emphasis added)

While the story itself illustrates the heroism of the Chinese people, it is important to note that this heroism is again displayed in the backdrop of victimization by imperialism. There are also expressions that denote a sense of moralistic outrage felt by the people, thus emphasizing that China was a ‘victim’ confronted by an unjust situation it did not deserve. Both heroism and victimhood are interdependent, and cannot be emphasized without the presence of the other.

A similar process of constructing Japan as a ‘victimizing Other’ takes place at the popular level. For instance, in their populist denunciation of Japan, Zi Shui and Xiao Shi assert Chinese victimization by the Japanese by offering an anecdote of an ethnic Chinese student from Malaysia who died of starvation in Japan (Zi and Xiao 1997: 158). After noting the Japanese government’s
refusal to help the student’s family with the funeral costs, the authors warn the readers as follows:

Mr. Yan’s death might be an insignificant incident for some, perhaps. But . . . [his death has left us with an extremely painful lesson. Japan is in fact no longer a ‘paradise for overseas students’ . . . The Japanese government lacks an understanding of the concrete problems foreign students face . . . Many young people who come to Japan with good impressions are faced with merciless and discriminatory treatment by Japanese society.

The image of Japanese victimization of China is further strengthened by depicting Japanese economic and technological assistance as a ‘cherry blossom with a sting (dai ci de yinghua)’, implying that Japan’s assistance has a highly unethical dimension which brings about a certain injury to China. Zi and Xiao illustrate their point by citing apparent Japanese reluctance to invest in high-technology enterprise and transfer technology in China. Japanese economic strategy is alleged to be based on leading China by ten or fifteen years, much to the authors’ chagrin. ‘Economic aid’, they warn, ‘must never be one-sided, but based on mutual gain. If Japan continues along this path, the negative impacts are easily imaginable’ (Zi and Xiao 1997: 299).

Conclusion

This article began by forwarding a critique of recent studies of history in Sino-Japanese relations, and has proposed an alternative theoretical explanation through the ‘Self–Other’ perspective of social theory. This analytical perspective has two advantages. Firstly, it successfully demonstrates the role Japan has played and continues to play in China’s identity formation, and highlights the embedded nature of Japan’s negative history in this process. Rather than simply a tool to be utilized by the political elite, it suggests that the legacy of negative history plays a much larger and deeper role than conventional accounts have given it credit for. Secondly, while some studies of history in Sino-Japanese relations have tended to assume emotional reactions to imperialist history as a product of traumatic memories (Whiting 1989), they have not fully expanded on how and why particular aspects of negative history matter in Sino-Japanese relations, preferring to leave this assumed. By explicitly linking the negative historical images of Japan with Chinese national identity-formation within International Society, the ‘Self–Other’ approach adopted here makes these points more explicit, and helps us better theorize about history in Sino-Japanese relations, as well as address Maurice Halbwachs’ important observation that historical memories are deeply embedded in intersubjective interpretations of the present (Halbwachs 1992: 40).

This ‘present’ for China is, of course, its acute sense of discomfort within what it conceives to be an International Society dominated by a core of
liberal democratic states: the self-appointed ‘civilized’ states of today. While the ‘victim’ identity and its deep connections with China’s deep ‘sense of insecurity’ which arises as a consequence has been noted by some scholars (Zhang 2001: 253), what has been less noted is the flip-side of this ‘Othering’ of China. In order to resist its identity as an ‘undemocratic, human-rights-abusing state’, China has sought to empower itself within an International Society which marginalizes it by forwarding an alternative ‘Self’ as a moral, but victimized, state (cf. Rumelili 2004: 37–9). But to do so it needs a ‘victimizing’ ‘Other’, and Japan emerges as this ‘Other’. It is interesting to note that a century ago Japan also engaged in labelling China as an ‘uncivilized’ ‘Other’ that would resist its ‘uncivilized’ identity and allow it to present itself as a ‘civilized’ power to the European states. This ‘Othering’ of China also gave the Japanese moral grounds for imperialist aggression (cf. Suzuki 2005). This observation provokes several questions for future research. Have modern Sino-Japanese tensions been part of a wider process of China’s and Japan’s politics of identity resistance in International Society? To what extent will China’s continuous ‘Othering’ of Japan have similar destabilizing effects between the two states? Will China’s further socialization into International Society and its acceptance as an equal member with the Western powers produce a less defensive Chinese national identity that will cease the ‘Othering’ of foreign states?

One final normative point. The need to pay greater analytical attention to history has, in this author’s view, acquired a greater urgency in recent years. While all scholarly works which claim that history is utilized as a political bargaining tool are aware and indeed critical of the atrocities committed by the Japanese during the Second World War, in recent years their arguments have unfortunately been increasingly ‘hijacked’ by Right-wing intellectuals in Japan (Ishihara 2005; Nakanishi 2005). By reducing genuine and understandable resentment towards Japanese historical amnesia to CCP manipulation, these individuals downplay Japan’s responsibilities for any deterioration in Sino-Japanese relations or, worse still, implicitly absolve Japan from its responsibilities to face up to its unsavoury past. This is a disturbing development that will be nothing but counterproductive. If Japan genuinely wants to facilitate more stable and amiable relations with its most significant neighbour in Northeast Asia, it needs to take its darker past much more seriously, as well as obtain a more sympathetic understanding of the Chinese ‘Self’.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Duncan Bell, Amrita Narlikar, Joel Quirk, Leonard Seabrooke and Catherine Suzuki for reading through multiple drafts of this article. I am also grateful to the participants of the ‘China and Japan’ symposium at the University of Auckland for their comments. For their help in facilitating my research, I should also like to thank Flemming Christiansen and the Department of East Asian Studies, University of Leeds.
Notes

1 China has not always differentiated Japan as a negative ‘Other’ either: for instance, during the height of the Sino-Soviet split, Japan was at times portrayed as a fellow victim of Soviet hegemonism (\textit{baquan zhuyi}) by Beijing, and in a sense became a ‘fellow Other’ which the Chinese state utilized to confirm its identity as a principled opponent to Soviet ‘social imperialism’. See, for example, Kazankai (1998: 501–2, 516–18).

2 ‘Nationalism’ is defined here (following Anthony D. Smith) as ‘an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential “nation” ’. See Smith (2000: 1).

3 Levine argues that this sentiment is part of China’s ‘informal ideology’, which he defines as a ‘complex of cultural values, preferences, prejudices, predispositions, habits, and unstated but widely shared propositions about reality that condition the way in which political actors behave’ (Levine 1994: 34).

4 Whiting (1983) gives an interesting survey of Chinese expressions of ‘victimhood’ in the 1980s: the ‘Others’ included the United States, Japan, and Britain.

5 I owe this point to Duncan Bell. It goes without saying that changes in memory – in terms of forgiveness and forgetting – depends very much on public acknowledgment of wrongdoing as well.

6 The term \textit{kou}, however, is used in the Chinese language as a generic term for ‘invaders’, and use of the term \textit{Rikou} is not necessarily one based on racial prejudice. My thanks to Yongjin Zhang for this information.

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