Japan Forum

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 0955-5803 (Print) 1469-932X (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjfo20

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To cite this article: Caroline Rose & Jan Sýkora (2017) The trust deficit in Sino-Japanese relations, Japan Forum, 29:1, 100-124, DOI: 10.1080/09555803.2016.1227353

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2016.1227353

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Abstract: Recent years have seen a deterioration in political relations between China and Japan, in particular over the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands and history-related problems. Commentators have noted an attendant decline in trust between the two sides and have stressed the need for confidence-building measures in order to address the trust deficit. This article explores the origins of declining trust between the Chinese and Japanese leaderships. It argues that attempts to build a friendly and trusting relationship in the early post-war and post-normalisation periods began to fail in the 1980s, and have been in a gradual state of decline ever since. Using the concepts of trust and friendship, the article suggests that the lack of trust properties such as empathy, bonding, reliability and predictability have contributed to the deterioration of trust at both elite and popular levels.

Keywords: China, Japan, Sino-Japanese relations, trust, mistrust, friendship, history problem, Yasukuni Shrine, Senkaku/Diaoyu islands

> 'Trust is like a sheet of paper. Once you crumple it, you can never smooth it perfectly.' (Czech proverb)

World history provides a lot of evidence of how trust can facilitate complex trade linkages and stabilize political relations between various states and regions. Trust and good reputation were the cement of the coalitions of the Maghribi traders who operated in the Mediterranean during the eleventh century and faced the problems of asymmetric information and limited legal contract enforceability (Greif 1989, 1993). Trust was the important instrument for solving the contractual problems in the business associations of Tokugawa merchants (*kabunakama*) and trust is thought of as the solid building block in searching for a path to the deep reconciliation between former enemy nations encumbered by the burden of the historical memory (Nadler and Saguy 2004, pp. 37–42, He 2009, p. 2). Indeed, trust is the 'glue that holds relationships together' (Lewicki and Wiethoff 2000, p. 86).

Japan Forum, 2017
Vol. 29, No. 1, 100–124, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2016.1227353

Liberal theories of international relations are usually based on an assumption that building of free trade relations is one of the best and the least expensive ways towards peace between nations. The high level of economic interdependence, however, does not directly contribute to corresponding trust between the trading parties. Indeed, free trade is not the only sine qua non of peaceful coexistence, and there are many historical examples that demonstrate that to guarantee peace nations must trust each other and not simply trade with one another.[1] The problem of control over the territory along the French and German borderline, which had been a bone of contention between these two nations for more than a century is an apt example. Despite the bitter historical experience, the formation of the first European institutions in the late 1950s accelerated the process of trust building between France and Germany – both in the realm of formal diplomacy and on the civic level – and the idea of any potential military conflict in this part of Europe appears to be absolutely unthinkable (Gabusi 2012).

The situation in Sino-Japanese relations seems to be quite different. Despite more than forty years of formal diplomatic relations and intensive economic cooperation – China is the largest market for Japanese products and the most important supplier for Japanese industry – there is a considerable lack of trust between these two countries. The underlying distrust in Sino-Japanese relations stems mainly from the unsolved historical issues which date back to the nineteenth century (and which revolve around different interpretations of the past and Japan's failure to accept full war responsibility), and has descended into a 'vicious cycle of animosity' (Soeya 2013, p. 38), extending now to include concerns over security, not least the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands (the dispute itself now having been incorporated into the history problem).

In an attempt to quell the tension in Sino-Japanese relations linked to mounting difficulties over the territorial dispute between 2010 (when a Chinese fishing boat collided with a Japanese coast guard vessel) and 2012 (when the Japanese government nationalised some of the islands to head off Tokyo's right-wing governor Ishihara Shintaro's attempts to purchase them), efforts have been made by both Chinese and Japanese governments since late 2014 to break the stand-off and return to some sort of normality. This was symbolised in particular with the hotly-anticipated and highly-publicised but 'frosty' meeting between Prime Minister Abe Shinzō and President Xi Jinping at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in November 2014. This meeting was preceded by the joint announcement of a Four Point Statement (see Liff 2014) which aimed to re-set the situation surrounding the territorial dispute. Since then, there has been a resumption of various high-level bilateral dialogues, which had been postponed or cancelled during the stand-off, along with signals from the leadership on each side seeking to reconfirm, signal and reassure the other side of their respective, if still rather distant, positions.

Accompanying the recent vicissitudes has been a fledgling academic, political and popular discourse on trust or, more accurately, distrust in Sino-Japanese

relations. Commentators have noted the widening trust deficit in Sino-Japanese relations, opinion polls have indicated a precipitous decline in mutual feelings of closeness and trust, and politicians have called for the need to rebuild or deepen trust between the two sides. The concerns expressed over the decline of trust reflect the fact that for a number of years both before and after normalisation, opinion polls (on the Japanese side) evidenced positive impressions of China. Thus, questions arise as to, firstly, what was the basis for apparent mutual trust in the early post-war period, and, secondly, why has it gone into decline?

Some consider that the erosion of trust dates from relatively recent tensions in the relationship that emerged during the period of DPJ (Democratic Party of Japan) government from 2009 to 2012 and that have continued with Abe's return to power in 2012. One Chinese academic assessment, for example, suggests that the rapid turnover of Japanese prime ministers, and the changes in foreign policy strategy during DPJ rule contributed significantly to the undermining of a relationship of trust between China and Japan (Zheng 2012, pp. 46–47), although this view ignores the fact that many in the DPJ, and in particular its first prime minister, Hatoyama Ichirō, were in favour of improved relations with China. Other academic analyses have observed more medium-term decline in relations stemming from the end of the Cold War and the ensuing structural changes in East Asia, which in turn lead to a sharp deterioration in Sino-Japanese relations in the early 2000s (Atannasova-Cornelis 2011, Soeya 2013).

This article addresses the question of why, after a period marked broadly by amicable relations, or at least attempts by the leaderships to bring about amity from the 1950s to the 1980s, the relationship began to deteriorate in the 1980s to the extent that the early efforts at trust-building have gradually been eroded. It does so by applying concepts of trust, trusting relationships, and friendship in international relations as a means of tracing, first, the trust-building efforts during the early post-war period, and secondly, the deterioration of the political relationship since the 1980s. The main argument is that both the Chinese and Japanese leaderships demonstrated a willingness and genuine interest in developing a trusting and friendly relationship in the aftermath of their bitter conflict. This was achieved through numerous trust-building initiatives before normalisation in the 1950s, and then during the early period of normalisation from 1972 to the early 1980s. These went beyond rhetorical references to friendship (for example in speeches or treaties) to encompass formal agreements (for example, on trade and investment) and institutions (for example, parliamentary groups and friendship groups) which actively sought to operationalise economic, political and cultural interaction. However, despite these early attempts to rebuild trust on both sides, trust properties were not sufficiently embedded into the fabric of the relationship before being challenged by changes in domestic, regional and international politics from the early 1980s. The article, therefore, outlines the ways in which aspects of the relationship began to be eroded in the 1980s and 1990s as each side questioned or challenged earlier understandings of the status

quo, in this case relating to Yasukuni Shrine and the territorial dispute. The gradual erosion of certain properties of trusting relations, such as empathy/bonding or integrity/reliability has meant that intermittent attempts in the 1990s, the first decade of the 2000s, and again since late 2014 to try to improve relations (for example through reassurances, new written and unwritten agreements and so on) have only proved to be temporary patches.

This article first explores the concept of trust to determine how it might be applied to the case of Sino-Japanese relations. It augments the concept of trust with recent studies on friendship in international relations as a means of explaining the ways in which Chinese and Japanese leaders attempted to build a new relationship from the 1950s. After considering some key points which best demonstrate this period of fledgling trust-building, the article then turns its attention to the emergence of the history problem in the 1980s and the territorial dispute in the 1990s to show how trust between the two sides has gradually been eroded.

Conceptualising trust

There is a direct link between trust and the peaceful resolution of interstate disputes. However, how should we define trust in the realm of international relations? Currently, there is no single, generally accepted definition of trust. 'Trust, but verify,' said the US president Ronald Reagan, when he welcomed his counterpart Mikhail Gorbachev at the Washington summit on 8 December 1987 (Hoffman 2009, p. 295; Watson 2011, p. 38). This Russian maxim is used also by Andrew H. Kydd at the very beginning of his book on trust and mistrust in international relations. According to Kydd, trust is 'a belief that the other side is trustworthy, that is, willing to reciprocate cooperation' while mistrust is defined as 'a belief that the other side is untrustworthy, or prefers to exploit one's cooperation' (Kydd 2007, p. 3). Thus, trust plays a key role in cooperative relations between two actors, or two larger groups of actors, whose behaviour fundamentally affects each other. Kydd argues that the role of trust in international relations consists of four main aspects. First, cooperation between states always 'requires a certain degree of trust', while the minimal level of the trust depends on various factors, such as relative power of the actors or the costs of potential conflict. Second, although conflict may arise even between trustworthy parties, in principle conflict is 'a sign that one or both of the states are likely to be untrustworthy'. Third, the presence of the hegemon (leading actor) in multilateral settings can promote cooperation 'only if the hegemon is relatively trustworthy', and four, if both sides are in principle trustworthy, they will be able to 'eventually cooperate with each other' (Kydd 2007 p. 5). Thus, in Kydd's interpretation, trust depends mainly on returning cooperation rather than on exploiting it, while mistrust 'is a belief that the other side prefers exploiting one's cooperation to returning it' (Kydd 2007, p. 6).

Aaron M. Hoffman points out that theories which equate trust with the willingness to take risk stemming from the unpredictable behaviour of the counterpart do not provide a marked difference between trust and mistrust. Thus, he associates trust in international relations with 'a willingness to take risks on the behavior of others based on the belief that potential trustees will "do what is right"' (Hoffman 2002 p. 375). He summarises several essential elements that any concept of trust must explicitly or implicitly include. Trust is usually related to the above-mentioned willingness to pass the fate of one's own interests in the hands of others. Since the actor has no means by which to predict the intentions of others, he just has to rely on the belief that the counterpart will not cheat him. Trust is manifested by a trusting relationship, the intensity and the scope of which are not static and may vary depending on the broader context and external circumstances. Thus, both parties usually calculate the risk of the counterpart's mistrust becoming vulnerable to its action (Hoffman 2002, pp. 376–379). A trusting relationship per se, however, is not necessarily based on trust stemming from shared values and norms, but rather on the 'tangible' advantages for both sides in certain contexts of time and space.

Time itself is also an important element of trust, as Barnett and Adler explain:

> Trust does not develop overnight but rather is accomplished after a lifetime of common experiences and *through sustained interactions and reciprocal exchanges, leaps of faith …, trial-and-error, and a historical legacy of actions and encounters that deposit an environment of certitude* notwithstanding the uncertainty that accompanies social life. (Barnett and Adler 1998, p. 414, emphasis added)

These conceptualisations of trust and mistrust are a useful lens through which to view the past and current state of Sino-Japanese relations, not least by considering the extent to which the actors involved have been willing to expose their own interests in order to put aside the past and build a new forward-looking relationship enabling both sides to reduce the risk of conflicts.

Identifying the presence or absence of trust properties is one means by which we can measure levels of trust and trust-building in Sino-Japanese relations. Booth and Wheeler (2008, pp. 234–245) suggest a set of four linked attributes: 'leap in the dark/uncertainty, empathy/bonding, dependence/vulnerability, and integrity/reliability. The leap in the dark/uncertainty attributes refer to the willingness to take a risk in decision-making despite a possible backlash (for example from domestic constituencies) and despite the uncertainty that those in whom trust is being placed will act in ways that may harm you in future (Booth and Wheeler 2008, p. 233). Empathy/bonding takes place when both sides try to internalise each other's hopes and fears, and translate a level of empathy and sympathy into a 'political relationship characterised by positive feeling and the forging of a new collective identity' (Booth and Wheeler 2008, p. 238). A recognition that each side can hold different interpretations of the same situation is one ingredient of this set of properties (Booth and Wheeler 2008, p. 237).

Dependence and vulnerability refers to the need for each side to be prepared to accept vulnerability and risk betrayal (Booth and Wheeler 2008, p. 241). Finally, integrity/reliability means that partners have the confidence that the other will do what is right and behave in a predictable manner over time, which in turn can help to develop common norms and values (Booth and Wheeler 2008, p. 243–244).

Similarly, Larson explains that trust-building requires consistent policies over time, a commitment to match words with actions, predictability and credibility – the belief that 'we can rely on a state to fulfil its commitment and promises' (Larson 1997, p. 714). Costly signals and reassurance are means by which consistency can be demonstrated and trust reinforced. Costly signals can help to kick-start the process of mutual reassurance, while reassurance can take the form of concessions or conciliatory actions in order to persuade the other side of one's willingness to cooperate. Such actions have greater impact if they are non-contingent on reciprocity, are irrevocable, reiterated over time and sustained (Larson 1997, Midford 2002, p. 2). Reassurance can also be provided through written or unwritten agreements to which both sides are expected to adhere over time.

Applied to Sino-Japanese relations, trust properties of predictability, reliability and empathy began to be actively nurtured in the early post-war period, and both sides demonstrated a willingness to reassure the other of their commitment to certain positions. In China's case, this was the decision to pursue friendship with Japan with a view to normalising diplomatic relations as soon as possible, and took the form of such policies as 'benevolent amnesia', people's diplomacy and friendship trade. Japan, for its part, sought to reassure China, and other Asian neighbours, of its pacifist stance by adopting an exclusively defence-oriented posture, separating politics and economics as a means of re-opening trade channels, entering into the alliance with US (thereby putting the 'cap on the bottle'), and adhering to the peace constitution (Midford 2002, pp. 28–30). While the sort of costly signals described by Kydd (2006, p. 6) in relation to the ending of the Cold War, such as the dramatic gestures made by Gorbachev that helped to dispel Western mistrust, may not have direct equivalence in Sino-Japanese relations, it is nonetheless possible to see evidence of attempts by both sides at certain times to signal benign intent. There is also much evidence of reassurance, for example in the form of a set of written agreements produced to mark key stages of the relationship (and respond to the vicissitudes of political problems, particularly since the 1990s), and referred to as 'the four basic/political documents'. The 1972 Joint Statement, the 1978 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, the 1998 Japan–China Joint Declaration on Building a Partnership of Friendship and Cooperation for Peace and Development, and the 2006 Joint Statement on the Comprehensive Promotion of a Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests together represent the agreed principles of Sino-Japanese relations that are regularly invoked by Japanese and Chinese politicians, particularly at times of tension. One might also add the Murayama Statement (1995) and

Kono Statement (1993) since these also have considerable weight in providing Japanese reassurances to the Chinese side on aspects of the history problem. Furthermore, unwritten and/or tacit agreements have played an important role – in either reassuring the other side of the continued commitment to said agreement, or in signalling a change in opinion, difference of interpretation, or indeed outright denial, as is the case with the recent wranglings over the 'tacit agreements' relating to the territorial dispute and Yasukuni Shrine visits (to be discussed below).

It is also useful to consider the relationship between trust and friendship, not least given the frequency with which the leitmotif of Sino-Japanese friendship has been used in China–Japan discourse since the 1950s. Academic studies of international friendship are, relatively speaking, in their infancy, but offer some useful pointers to identify the ways in which China and Japan 'prepared the ground' to try to rebuild relations based on mutual trust. Oelsner (2014, p. 148) offers a definition of international friendship as 'both a relational and dynamic process made up of regular manifestations of mutual trust, shared affinities, and cooperation'. Furthermore, it is a 'cumulative process of speech acts and institutional facts representing signs of engagement in, and proofs of, friendship' which work across elite and societal levels. The focus on the nature of speech acts and institutional facts is applicable to the case of China and Japan, where, through an accumulative process, both symbolic gestures and concrete, tangible policy initiatives 'work to enhance a reciprocal view of trustworthiness' (Oelsner 2014, p. 148). But such accumulative processes do not necessarily guarantee success in the construction of friendship, and, in a manner similar to the deterioration of friendship in Sino-Japanese relations, Oelsner's study of Argentine-Brazilian relations demonstrates how divergences of policy and changes in regional structures can have a negative, thinning, impact on previously dense political bonds (Oelsner 2014, p. 159).

Finally, Oelsner and Koschut's typology of international friendships is of use in explaining the breakdown of trust in China–Japan relationships. They identify two types: strategic (or 'thin') friendship and normative ('thick') friendship. The former describes actors who:

> refer to each other as 'friends' in political discourse and treaties without it necessarily resulting in a substantial long-term change of behavior or mutual perception among these actors. Such a 'thin' or strategic type of friendship does not permanently alter an agent's behaviour since it is purely based on rational self-interest. It is an entirely instrumental, functional, and oftentimes asymmetrical form of friendship. (Oelsner and Koschut 2014, p. 14)

Normative or thick friendship, on the other hand, develops among actors 'who share high levels of ideational and emotional bonds that permit mutual identification and trust' (Oelsner and Koschut 2014, p. 14). A strategic friendship, as the authors are keen to stress, is not meaningless, but, rather, carries a low- or

middle-order meaning whereby connections between social actors function 'to convey and transport relevant information about the other actors *so that a certain congruence of interests may be achieved*' (Oelsner and Koschut 2014 p. 13, emphasis added). Ultimately, strategic friends may 'rely on each other and yet not trust each other', and because this type of friendship is 'based on the congruence of interests (reliance) and not on genuine trust' they can be unstable and temporary, particularly if and when interests no longer converge (Oelsner and Koschut 2014, p. 14).

By combining the concepts and approaches relating to trust and friendship, the article will argue that while in the early post-war period there were genuine attempts to lay the ground for a trusting relationship based on a diplomacy of friendship and a convergence of interests, by the 1980s the structural conditions had shifted to the extent that Sino-Japanese relations displayed elements more akin to a strategic friendship, which in turn helps to explain the ensuing trust deficit.

Trust and mistrust in Sino-Japanese relations – from friendship to frostiness

Japan and China are, without any doubt, the most powerful actors in East Asia. They account for nearly three-quarters of the region's economic activity and more than half of the region's military spending. Despite their deep economic ties and a doubling of their bilateral trade in the past ten years, their relationship is increasingly strained, with dangerous implications for the region of East Asia and the world at large.

Historically, relations between Japan and China had a long tradition and were clearly structured, since 'one country was always more prosperous and powerful than the other' (Calder 2006 p. 129). Before the nineteenth century it was mainly China who was dominant in the relation, while since the Meiji Restoration, in 1868, Japan has generally been preeminent. However, the prospect that China and Japan could both be strong and powerful and affluent at the same time came to fruition at the beginning of the twenty-first century with China and Japan representing the second and third largest economies in the world respectively. Moreover, China's military modernisation programme and the growth in its military budget has brought it up the rankings of military powers. Although Japan has a relatively low military profile, with its peace constitution and security alliance with the United States, it aspires to be more proactive in the face of growing perceived threats to its security. Thus, both China and Japan are simultaneously striving to carve out a strong position in the region. Such a trend has created new security threats on both sides – Japan watches Chinese ambitions with growing displeasure, while China expresses fears of the renewal of Japanese militarism. In both states, nationalists who intentionally exploit the historical memories of the Second World War are gaining in popularity.

Unfortunately, mutually beneficial economic dealings alone are not effectively soothing these tensions. In such a situation the best way to reduce the risk of conflict, and prevent hostilities that could last decades, would be to strengthen mutual trust. This was, in fact, the case in the early post-Second World War period when China and Japan re-established links after their bitter conflict and for some time an emphasis on friendship prevailed. These positive sentiments were also reflected in the regular opinion polls conducted by Japan's cabinet office, which showed that friendly sentiments towards China were very strong among the Japanese. In the 1980s, the polls showed that more than 75 per cent of Japanese had positive feelings about China. This started to change in 1989 after the Tiananmen Square massacre, and by 2005 only 23 per cent of respondents felt warmly towards China (Calder 2006). In the last decade this has deteriorated further with a record 93 per cent of Japanese respondents and 86.8 per cent of Chinese respondents (this was a slight improvement on the previous year's 90.1 per cent) reporting that they held a 'bad impression' of the other country (Genron NPO/China Daily 2014). While many opinion polls have tended to focus on questions relating to how close people feel or feelings of friendship, recent surveys have directly addressed the question of trust or trustworthiness. For example, the Yomiuri Shimbun and Xinhua's Oriental Weekly ran a joint poll in 2009 which reflected rather low levels of trust by respondents on both sides. In 2009, 69 per cent of those polled in Japan felt that China was not trustworthy and 63 per cent of the Chinese respondents felt Japan was not trustworthy (Yomiuri Shimbun, 2009). In an October 2010 survey (after the Senkaku/Diaoyu collision incident), 84 per cent of the Japanese respondents did not trust China (Yomiuri Shimbun, 2010).

Re-building trust after the Second World War

In order to understand how trust has declined in Sino-Japanese relations since the late 1980s, we first need to understand how trust was built after the Second World War between the two former enemies. China's civil war and Japan's period of occupation kept the two countries apart for the latter half of the 1940s, and the decision on the part of the United States to recognise the Republic of China over the People's Republic of China in 1952 put further distance between the two countries.

This distance was mitigated, however, by the determination of both governments to seek some means of informal contact, which developed in the 1950s through private trade agreements and, albeit limited, cultural exchange. Such contact was prone to disruption at times of domestic political problems in China (the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution), or when Japanese leaders took a pro-Taiwan position (for example, Prime Ministers Kishi Nobusuke and Sato Eisaku), but when the global and regional environment began to change in

the early 1970s with Nixon's decision to recognise the PRC, Japan and China were in a good position to normalise their relations quickly.

There are several examples of ways in which both the Chinese and Japanese leaderships took steps to re-build trust between the two countries in the early post-war period, both through speech acts and through tangible policy initiatives (see, for example, Soeya 1998, Itoh 2012), but this section will briefly discuss two aspects in particular which demonstrate some of the trust properties outlined above and the means by which the leadership on each side sought to reassure the other of their 'benign intent': the period of China's 'benevolent amnesia', and the negotiations in the run up to normalisation in 1972.

China's position of 'benevolent amnesia' towards Japan from 1945 to 1982 emerged almost in the immediate aftermath of the war when the Guomindang (GMD) under Chiang Kai-shek and then the Communist party under Mao Zedong adopted a lenient approach to Japan's wartime atrocities. Indeed, the long history of friendship between the two countries before 1894 (the first Sino-Japanese War) was intoned to emphasise the need to put the (wartime) past in the past. The friendship discourse was important in attempting to re-connect the two countries through empathetic means. Premier Zhou Enlai explained to a delegation of Japanese Dietmembers in 1954:

> The history of the past sixty years of Sino-Japanese relations was not good. However, it is a thing of the past, and we must turn it into a thing of the past. This is because friendship exists between the peoples of China and Japan. Compared to the history of a few thousand years, the history of sixty years is not worth bringing up. (Cited in Reilly 2011, p. 469)

China's benevolent approach could be seen in the leniency with which both the GMD (in 1946–1949) and the Communists (in 1956) conducted military tribunals of Japanese personnel (see Cathcart and Nash 2008, Kushner 2015), and in the general suppression of discussion of Japanese atrocities, which continued into the 1970s. Friendship diplomacy was by no means a one-way street, nor did the Japanese seek to avoid issues relating to the war. For example, the head of the Economic Planning Agency Takasaki Tatsunosuke offered his apologies to Zhou Enlai for Japan's actions during the war during a meeting at the Bandung Conference in 1955. Zhou's response – that both the Chinese and Japanese people suffered from the actions of Japanese militarists (Hattori 2015, pp. 14–15) – reinforced the empathetic view that the Japanese people as a whole were not to be held responsible, but had themselves been victims of the war.

This is not to ignore the role of strategic interests that were also at play during this period. In the 1950s, China was keen to 'balance against the United States by seducing its ally to China's side' (Shirk 2007, p. 158; Hattori 2015, p. 14). While Japan was not 'seduced' to China's side, it nonetheless benefited from, and indeed actively sought, to keep links with China open, not simply for commercial purposes (which was of limited worth in the 1950s and 1960s anyway),

but as an early engagement strategy (Drifte 2003, p. 14). Thus, both sides were keen to secure tangible advantages according to the prevailing structural conditions.

Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong's position of 'generosity' from the 1950s remained intact in the 1970s as demonstrated in the negotiations in the run up to the signing of the 1972 Joint Statement, which were marked by a distinct lack of lengthy discussion on issues that have since become highly contentious – the wording of the apology, reparations, and territorial issues. The nature of the discussions can also be seen to have been informed by strategic factors – with other realpolitik-related issues at the forefront, such as the emphasis on the anti-hegemony clause in the 1978 Peace and Friendship Treaty with China seeking balance against the Soviet Union (Reilly 2011, p. 469), but the transcripts of the talks leading up to normalisation provide evidence, on both sides, of a willingness to make concessions and provide reassurances in the interest of securing peace. On the Chinese side, for example, Zhou Enlai agreed that the joint declaration would avoid mention of the Japan–US Security Treaty (which China had opposed), and that China would not seek hegemony. On the Japanese side, Tanaka offered reassurances that Japanese militarism would not be revived, and the two sides liaised on the wording of an appropriate apology (see Ishii *et al.* 2003).

The role of individuals as well as the structure of decision making in China is important here too – Mao, Zhou and later Deng Xiaoping had an 'unchallenged authority' (Shirk 2007 p. 158) by virtue of their nationalist credentials, and all were firmly in control of foreign policy decisions. They were relatively unencumbered by factional politics or the need to secure their own legitimacy and credibility as would be the case with the next generation of leaders. The relationship also benefited from strong bonds between individual Chinese and Japanese pro-friendship politicians, diplomats and business leaders, which in turn helped in the development of predictable and trustworthy relations. The 1972 Joint Statement and the 1978 Peace and Friendship Treaty set the tone and discourse for the paradigm of friendship diplomacy for the next decade, marked by goodwill and mutual cooperation (Watanabe 2015). China's 'generous' approach was reciprocated by Japan's 'cooperative and conciliatory policy', which enabled it to pursue its interests in commercial relations, while taking an accommodative posture regarding the history issue, and avoiding security competition with China (Mochizuki 2007 p. 746–748). In this way, both sides recognised and accommodated each other's interests.

Sowing the seeds of mistrust: 1982 to 1989

After a brief 'honeymoon period' that accompanied diplomatic normalisation and the resumption of formal trading relations (see He 2009), the vulnerability

of the previous trust-building attempts began to be revealed as domestic and international changes took place. By the early to mid-1980s, tensions over the content of Japanese history textbooks and the Yasukuni Shrine issue emerged and tested the strength of Sino-Japanese trust and friendship.

The diplomatic tension between China and Japan which erupted during the summer of 1982 over the alleged 'beautification' of history in Japanese high school textbooks was resolved fairly quickly with the Japanese concession to insert a clause in the textbook guidelines urging authors to pay attention to the feelings of neighbouring countries (Rose 1998). However, this turned out to be a temporary fix, since the roots of the problem – the diametrically opposed interpretations of the war in China and Japan, which began to emerge after a revision of Communist party history in the early 1980s, and the ongoing domestic struggles in Japan between the progressive and conservative views of the war – were not addressed. As a result, the textbook issue has continued to pose intermittent problems between China and Japan ever since, re-surfacing when right-wing textbooks are authorised, or when the Japanese Ministry of Education revises the curriculum guidelines.[2]

The relationship was tested again in 1985 when Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro paid an official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine on 15 August, and the situation deteriorated further when student-led anti-Japanese demonstrations broke out in cities across China in September (Weiss 2014). In fact, this was not the first visit to the shrine that Nakasone had made during his time in office, but it became a flashpoint in the bilateral relationship because he attended in his official capacity as prime minister. Furthermore, this was the first official visit of a Japanese prime minister since the souls of Class A, B and C war criminals had been enshrined at Yasukuni in 1978. Aware of the potential response from the Chinese government, Nakasone had dispatched Noda Takeshi, member of the Japan–China Society to China in July to try to seek China's understanding. The Chinese leadership, via Sun Pinghua, head of the China–Japan Friendship Association clearly indicated, however, that it could not agree with such a visit because of the presence of the souls of the Class A war criminals (Hattori 2015, p. 57).

The anti-Japanese protests that later followed Nakasone's Yasukuni Shrine visit were ostensibly aimed at Japan's 'second economic invasion', that is the influx of Japanese products, which symbolized Japan's economic power, while also being directed at the Chinese government. Kokubun (2013, p. 162) argues, however, that the root of the problem lay in the lack of mutual trust between the two sides. This is reflected in Zhao Ziyang's comments, made at the opening ceremony of the Japan–China Friendship Committee for the Twenty-First Century, on 15 October 1982, 'that Japan should do more things to benefit the two countries' friendship and strive to avoid things that hurt the people's feelings and *obstruct mutual trust*' (Weiss 2014, p. 96, emphasis added).

The demonstrations certainly showed that the friendship espoused by the Chinese leadership in the previous decades had not trickled down to the Chinese

public, who instead were becoming suspicious of Japan's economic ambitions in China. Weiss suggests that Nakasone's actions as a whole (for example, his wish to strengthen the US–Japan alliance) also had a deeper significance in that he 'challenged the status quo on more than the issue of Yasukuni'. Specifically, the Chinese saw his actions as upsetting the 'pattern of compromise and conciliation' that had characterized the relationship since normalization (Weiss 2014, p. 85). Nonetheless, Nakasone worked hard to try to put the relationship back on a stable footing. He agreed to Chinese requests to refrain from future visits in his capacity as prime minister, in the interests of Sino-Japanese friendship in general, but in particular to avoid undermining his friend and pro-Japan CCP Secretary General Hu Yaobang (Zakowski 2011, p. 6). However, the fact that Hu Yaobang was later ousted from power was a clear signal that the Chinese leadership under Deng Xiaoping was moving away from the pro-friendship strategy, and that the previous position on putting the past in the past had changed.

Nakasone's decision to refrain from further official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine held firm (whether this was based on a tacit agreement or not is discussed below), and could be seen as an example of an expensive signal given the potential audience costs for Nakasone in taking a U-turn on the issue of prime ministerial visits to the shrine. Furthermore, the decision was upheld by subsequent prime ministers – with the exception of Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō who made a visit in 1996 (on the occasion of his birthday). Thus, a new status quo (on the Yasukuni Shrine) was established and remained in place until Koizumi Junichirō came to power in 2001 (Griffith 2012). However, the history-related problems that came to the fore in the 1980s, and the actions/reactions of both governments were a sign of things to come. The foundations of trust began to be undermined before they had been fully established.

1990s/2000s: the trust gap widens

Changes at the international and regional level in the 1990s impacted upon Sino-Japanese relations, as both countries sought to recalibrate their positions in the post-Cold War environment. Domestically, both countries were undergoing significant political and economic transitions too. China's rapid economic growth, military modernisation and the relatively smooth political succession from Deng Xiaoping to Jiang Zemin by the late 1990s contrasted with Japan's economic problems and a period of political change with the (temporary) ousting of the LDP in 1993 and the advent of coalition governments.

Japan's changing security identity in the 1990s, from pacifism to active internationalism was accompanied by a conscientious attempt by the elite to tackle the 'perpetual trust gap in East Asia' (Soeya 2013, p. 39). This was reflected in a series of statements relating to Japan's past aggression, and expressions of remorse and apology by various (LDP and non-LDP) prime ministers, efforts

that were made 'publicly and officially, despite the well-known opposition or even antagonism from conservative forces in Japanese society and politics' (Soeya 2013, p. 39; also Midford 2002). For Soeya these efforts represented an 'equilibrium point in post-war Japan's relationship to its past' (Soeya 2013, p. 40). Yet, while individual attempts to address the past were generally welcomed in China (the Murayama statement in particular), the reiteration of statements and apologies did not have a cumulative effect of providing reassurance or building trust. Progressive voices in Japan on the history problem were being drowned out by a revisionist trend backed by members of the LDP, and attempts to reconcile the past through compensation cases were rejected in Japanese courts. In China, Deng Xiaoping's attempts to restore socialist spiritual civilisation (and reinforce the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party) later developed into Jiang Zemin's patriotic education campaign, which, although not an anti-Japanese movement per se, nonetheless had the effect of shining a bright light on Japan's brutal role in China's century of humiliation.

In general then, the 1990s saw a gradual deterioration in Sino-Japanese relations amidst rising threat debates on both sides. In the security sphere, China's nuclear tests, tensions in the Taiwan Strait, and Chinese concerns about the strengthening of the US–Japan alliance contributed to the uncertain environment. To exacerbate matters further, changes in the structure of Sino-Japanese relations meant that the pro-friendship constituencies on both sides were becoming less influential – this included friendship groups, China/Japan experts, the 'China school' in the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pro-Japan or pro-China parliamentary groups or factions, the business lobby and trusted individuals and so on.

This overall negative shift in relations was perhaps exemplified in Jiang Zemin's visit to Tokyo in 1998 and the subsequent signing of the Joint Declaration on Building a Partnership of Friendship and Cooperation for Peace and Development. Jiang's visit, originally scheduled for earlier in the year, was postponed until November due to the floods in China. The timing was perhaps unfortunate since it followed hot on the heels of a successful visit by President Kim Dae-jung, who managed to secure a written apology from Prime Minister Obuchi in return for a pledge to put history in the past. Jiang hoped to secure a similar arrangement, and put the history problem at the top of the agenda. Unfortunately, his dogged handling of the issue, seen as an attempt to play the history card, 'aroused Chinese public opinion, and, in turn, virtually unified the Japanese people against the Chinese president' (Rozman 2002, p. 111). Thus, unlike the agreements reached in 1972 and 1978, the 1998 Joint Declaration, despite its cheery title and promises of a new era of Sino-Japanese cooperation, stemmed more from an atmosphere of animosity and suspicion than friendship and trust. In an attempt to repair the relationship after Jiang's visit, China initiated 'smile diplomacy' in 1999, and friendship returned as a key theme in

Chinese media coverage of Japan until the turn of the century (Rozman 2002, pp. 113–123).

If we accept Soeya's argument that the 1990s marked a point of equilibrium in Japan's relationship to its past, this was to change in the first decade of the 2000s when the rise of conservative forces challenged the 'internationalist interpretation and handling of history' (Soeya 2013, p. 39). The period of Koizumi's leadership (2001–2006) is seen as a turning point. While economic relations between China and Japan boomed during this period, diplomatic tensions increased over a number of issues including the perennial problem of right-wing Japanese history textbooks, and Japan's pursuit of a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Koizumi's persistent visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, however, were the main problem, and 'became a symbol and even a litmus test for China and South Korea over Japan's attitude toward the past' (Soeya 2013, p. 39). In 2005, the Chinese accused Koizumi of having abandoned a 'gentleman's agreement' between Tokyo and Beijing, agreed in 1985 after Nakasone's visit, to the effect that China would condone visits by officials *other than* the prime minister, foreign minister and chief cabinet secretary. Koizumi flatly denied the existence of the agreement. By the second decade of the 2000s, security and sovereignty issues had returned to the fore in the shape of the territorial dispute. In this case too, squabbles over the nature, or very existence, of a tacit agreement contributed to the tension, and called into question the level of trust between the two sides.

Broken promises and cheap talk: tacit agreements on the Yasukuni Shrine and Senkaku/Diaoyu issues and the breakdown of trust

Tacit agreements (*anmoku no ryōkai* in Japanese) or gentleman's agreements (*junzi xieding* in Chinese) on the shelving of the territorial dispute and on Yasukuni Shrine visits can be seen as examples of secret (or perhaps semi-secret) reassurances. Yarhi-Milo describes these as private diplomacy or secret agreements among adversaries undertaken 'without the knowledge or consent of the public or other members of the government' when leaders face significant domestic opposition (Yarhi-Milo 2013, pp. 2–3). While the agreements discussed here are not between adversaries as such, they were nonetheless negotiated at times of particular tension in the relationship when public costly signals were perhaps not appropriate or possible. In contrast to the emphasis in the trust literature on '*public* commitments as costly signals that help foster cooperation' and where private diplomatic assurances might be seen as costless signals or cheap talk, Yarhi-Milo argues that secret agreements have the benefit of avoiding lengthy bureaucratic process and domestic and/or international pressure, and 'enables leaders to manage audiences' expectations until they are convinced of the adversary's sincerity and willingness to cooperate' (Milo 2013, p. 3, emphasis added).

Yasukuni Shrine 'agreement(s)'

Koizumi's apparent abandonment of an informal agreement made by Deng Xiaoping and then Foreign Minister Abe Shintarō in the wake of Nakasone Yasuhiro's official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine became a bone of contention in 2005 (Shirk 2007, p. 163).[3] The claim that such an agreement had been reached was made public by Chinese Ambassador Wang Yi in 2005, after Koizumi's fifth visit to the Yasukuni Shrine. The claim was refuted by Koizumi himself, and indeed by Nakasone (*Japan Times*, 29 April 2005; Hattori 2015, pp. 73–74).[4] Wang Yi's attempts to rekindle the alleged agreement with Japan in 2005 fell on deaf ears. Indeed, by making the existence of such an agreement public and demanding that Koizumi stop visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, 'the Chinese government made it impossible for Koizumi to acquiesce without looking weak to his own domestic audience' (Shirk 2007, p. 163).

In fact, Koizumi's trustworthiness was already in doubt as far as the Chinese leadership were concerned after his second visit to the Yasukuni Shrine in Spring 2002. This visit took place a few months after Koizumi's symbolic trip to China in October 2001 when he issued an apology (along the lines of the 1995 Murayama statement), visited the Marco Polo Bridge and the nearby Museum of the War of Chinese People's Resistance Against Japanese Aggression in Beijing. These actions had the effect at the time of reassuring the Chinese leadership that Koizumi could be trusted *not* to make a return visit to Yasukuni Shrine. When Koizumi made the sudden visit, Shirk suggests that President Jiang Zemin 'appeared to feel betrayed', hinting that 'Koizumi had promised not to go to the shrine again' (Shirk 2007, p. 169). Griffith also indicates that 'Jiang believed that there was a *junzi xieding*, or a gentlemen's agreement, between the two leaders that the shrine visit would not be repeated' and that he did not expect a second visit (Griffith 2012, p. 16).

As Booth and Wheeler (2008, p. 242) point out, 'to trust to any degree is always to risk betrayal'. Integrity plays a part too, implying that in taking the risk to trust, 'partners have confidence that the other will do what is right' (Booth and Wheeler 2008, p. 243). The 'right' action, however, is highly subjective, or 'slippery' in Booth and Wheeler's terminology. The Chinese clearly saw Koizumi's actions as a betrayal, and were particularly surprised by his visit because they were in stark contrast to his behaviour and actions in the preceding month when he had praised China's economic development at the Boao forum, and had even hinted at the possibility of a non-religious memorial in place of Yasukuni (Kokubun *et al.* 2013, p. 208). Koizumi's 'betrayal' on an individual level is also of note here. Not only are Japanese prime ministerial visits to the Yasukuni proscribed by the Chinese because they 'hurt the feelings of the Chinese people', in this instance Koizumi also allegedly broke a promise to his counterpart, thus undermining his credibility and integrity further – he did not

live up to his words (as interpreted by Jiang). As a result, there were no further summit meetings during Koizumi's time in office.

Koizumi, or the Japanese government, continued to send mixed messages as far as the Chinese leadership was concerned. Hu Jintao urged the Japanese government to 'match words with deeds' in April 2005 at a meeting with Koizumi on the sidelines of the Asian-Africa Summit in Bandung. While welcoming Koizumi's apology to the Conference the previous day for the suffering caused by the Japanese during the Second World War, Hu's reference was to the fact that members of Koizumi's cabinet had visited the Yasukuni Shrine to mark the spring festival on the very same day (BBC 2005, 23 April).

According to Shirk, Wang Yi hoped to do better with Koizumi's likely successor, Abe Shinzō, despite Abe's more nationalist credentials and his Yasukuni Shrine visit as Chief Cabinet Secretary in April 2006. In fact, Beijing appeared willing to accept Abe's ambiguous response to Hu Jintao's question about the Yasukuni Shrine, made during his visit to China in October 2006 soon after taking office. Abe said that he would not be drawn on whether or not he had visited the Yasukuni Shrine, or whether or not he would visit the Shrine. Kokubun *et al.* (2013, p. 224) infer that Abe's decision to make China his first overseas visit (it would normally by the US), and China's willingness to accept a visit with such ambiguity remaining on the Yasukuni Shrine issue represented a big gamble for both governments, and indeed a 'dangerous gamble' for Abe given his need for domestic support.

These costly signals, given the potential for domestic opposition and backlashes in both cases, proved to be the sort of concessions needed to put Sino-Japanese relations back on a more stable footing after the nadir of the Koizumi period. They led to the agreement in 2006 to 'upgrade' Sino-Japanese relations to a mutually beneficial strategic cooperation, demonstrating the positive (or 'leap in the dark') effect that a change in leadership can sometimes bring about in China–Japan relations.[5] As part of this agreement, China made concessions relating to the joint development of the gas fields in the East China Sea, while Abe 'needed only to abstain from Prime Ministerial visits to the Yasukuni Shrine in an ambiguous "don't ask, don't tell" fashion that avoided politicising the issue' (Pugliese 2014, p. 53). During his one year in office Abe managed to build on his initial conciliatory stance, which was further consolidated when Fukuda Yasuo became prime minister a year later. Abe's energetic return to power in December 2012 also saw a return of the Yasukuni Shrine issue to the Sino-Japanese diplomatic agenda. He made a visit to the shrine the following December, amidst a generally poor atmosphere in Sino-Japanese relations stemming from the flare-up of the territorial dispute. Needless to say, his visit contributed to the ongoing difficulties in the relationship and precluded a summit meeting until the situation was eased in 2014.

The Senkaku/Diaoyu agreements

The dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands to which Japan, China and Taiwan lay claim, has caused intermittent problems since the early 1970s (see Wiegand 2009), but has benefited in the main from a tacit agreement made in the 1970s to shelve the issue. This had the effect of establishing a status quo where Japan maintained administrative control over the islands but refrained from making any 'clear display of state sovereignty' (O'Shea 2012, p. 198).

The decisions to leave aside discussions about the territorial dispute were made during the negotiations for the Joint Statement in 1972 and reiterated during the talks in the lead up to the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978. The tacit understanding enabled both treaties to be signed (the latter after some delay) while leaving the door open for 'future generations' to deal with the issue, as Deng Xiaoping announced at a press conference in October 1978 (Drifte 2014).

The flare-up of the territorial dispute in 2010 and 2012 was exacerbated by actions and reactions, and claims and counter-claims on both sides about the existence of this understanding, and, furthermore, about the very existence of the territorial dispute itself. Deng's formula that 'sovereignty remains ours, shelve disputes, pursue joint development' (Fravel 2013) had started to shift in the 1990s as the strategic environment changed and China had embarked on its military modernisation programme. Japan had begun to deny that there had been a shelving agreement, and even that a territorial dispute existed at all in the early 1990s in response to China's promulgation of its law on territorial waters in 1992, which included reference to the Diaoyu islands (Drifte, 2014). Unlike the Yasukuni Shrine agreement of 1985, however, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the gentleman's agreement did exist (Pugliese 2014 pp. 46–47). Japan's particularly vociferous assertions in 2010 that there had been no shelving agreement (and that there was no territorial dispute), in addition to the detention of the captain of the Chinese fishing trawler after the collision (calling into question the 'catch and return' agreement), were of particular concern to China, since they seemed to signal a change in approach (Drifte 2014). The events of 2012 and 2013, sparked by Japan's nationalisation of some of the islands (itself a pragmatic response by the Noda government to try to prevent a deterioration of the relationship had Ishihara Shintarō managed to purchase the islands), took the dispute to a new low with record numbers of Chinese vessels appearing in the waters surrounding the islands, and China's announcement of an Air Defence Identification Zone (including airspace over the islands). The tension over the islands resulted not only in violent anti-Japanese demonstrations in cities across China, but a war of words played out by China and Japan in the international media, a situation far from 'conducive to re-establish[ing] trust and good relations' (Drifte 2014).

In the absence of established conflict-prevention or even conflict-reducing mechanisms in Sino-Japanese relations, efforts to rebuild trust have gradually been taking place since 2013 through some of the 'traditional' pipelines of Sino-Japanese informal diplomacy, such as friendship groups, the business lobby, and a new generation of 'trusted' individuals including former Japanese prime ministers (Fukuda Yasuo, Murayama Tomiichi), and high-ranking Chinese officials with Japan-friendly inclinations (for example, Hu Yaobang's son Hu Deping) (Rose 2015). By late 2014, this 'quiet diplomacy' resulted in a face-saving compromise solution for Xi and Abe. China was seeking recognition by Tokyo that a territorial dispute exists, and 'an assurance that Prime Minister Abe would not make another visit to the Yasukuni Shrine' (Pugliese 2014, p. 94). The resulting statements on the improvement of Sino-Japanese relations issued in parallel in November 2014, with slightly different wording in Chinese, Japanese and English, offered a way out of the impasse, but can only be seen as a very tentative step towards rebuilding trust.

While there is little evidence of costly signals to bring about a reconciliation in the recent China–Japan stand-off, efforts at reassurance through tacit agreements seem to continue. Pugliese argues, for example, that Fukuda Yasuo and Abe's National Security Advisor Yachi Shōtarō (the architect of the 2006 agreement on the mutually beneficial strategic relationship) were able to reassure their counterparts that Abe would not visit Yasukuni 'possibly until the last days of his mandate', in return for a concession from the Chinese that they would make a 'public appreciation of Japan's post-war path as a pacifist state' (Pugliese 2014, p. 94). On the question of the territorial dispute, there was even less movement, and perhaps even greater (intended?) ambiguity than hitherto. While the Japanese statement refers to 'different views as to the emergence of tense situations in recent years in the waters of the East China Sea, including those around the Senkaku Islands', the Chinese statement notes that 'the two sides have acknowledged that different positions exist … regarding the tensions … over the Diaoyu Islands and some waters in the East China Sea'. Thus, Japan's statement emphasises tensions in waters, not around islands, and neither side refers to sovereignty (Liff 2014, p. 4). While the statements might be seen as a 'masterpiece of diplomatic finesse' (Pugliese 2014, p. 94), they represent another temporary stop-gap in a seemingly intractable problem.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how, in the early post-war period in Sino-Japanese relations, up to and including normalisation in 1972 and the few honeymoon years after the signing of the 1978 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, the leadership on both sides invested considerably in trust-building initiatives. They did this through a variety of means including reassurances, costly signals, and tacit agreements that helped to demonstrate empathy, integrity and reliability. They also

took steps to institutionalise such initiatives through formal economic agreements and political and cultural exchanges. However, this began to unravel in the 1980s, suggesting that the roots of trust were shallow, and not able to take full hold. In fact, far from developing a 'reservoir of trust' in an 'environment of certitude' (Barnett and Adler 1998, p. 414), trust in Sino-Japanese relations appears instead to have deteriorated gradually since the 1980s. This is not to suggest a completely linear progression, however, and there have been frequent attempts to improve the relationship after periods of tension as evidenced by the issuing of the 1998 and 2006 statements. Indeed, the case of China–Japan relations clearly illustrates Oelsner's (2014 p. 159) point that trust, like friendship, 'advances, reverses, fluctuates, expands and contracts'.

Nonetheless, the status quo on sensitive issues – such as Yasukuni Shrine visits and the territorial dispute – that had been achieved/agreed upon (albeit tacitly) in the late 1970s/early 1980s has been seriously undermined in the last two decades as both sides respond to changes in the strategic, economic and political environments. Recent efforts may go some way to restoring relations, but this will require a sustained and long-term commitment, and will need more than rhetorical devices and ambiguous words to achieve substantive results. During a meeting in Beijing in June 2015 with Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli, Deputy Prime Minister Aso Taro called for the strengthening of mutual trust and offered reassurance that Prime Minister Abe is no different to other Japanese prime ministers in his stance on reflecting on the war (*Japan Times* June 6, 2015). This reassurance was tested with Abe's hotly-anticipated statement to mark the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, which ultimately fell short of Chinese hopes for a clear statement of Japan's militarist aggression and a direct apology (Gustafsson 2015).

The goodwill and cooperation that characterised the honeymoon of the immediate pre- and post-normalisation period did not manage to survive the changes in domestic, regional and international environments since the 1980s. And the friendship structures in Sino-Japanese relations, which had the potential to nurture mutual trust and cooperation, have weakened rather than strengthened over time. As this article argues, a number of factors explain the growing trust deficit. In particular, attributes such as empathy and bonding, predictability and reliability have weakened. The empathy/bonding that characterised the early post-war period, marked by amicable relations between the leaders and their attempts to re-build friendly relations were not able to be sustained for long enough to become embedded at inter-societal level. This is, of course, partly attributable to the fact that apart from activities organised by friendship and cultural groups, there were very few opportunities for Chinese and Japanese people to meet until after China's opening up and reform period began. Even though opinion polls in the 1980s recorded (Japan's) highest levels of positive feelings towards China, these dropped in the late 1980s and never really recovered. Starting from the 1980s, the predictability and reliability of actions and reactions started to falter,

along with a divergence in how each side interpreted the past. This was itself precipitated by domestic change in each case (leadership succession, and a re-casting of Communist Party history in China on the one hand, and a renewal of progressive versus conservative clashes of history consciousness in Japan on the other).

In this way, Sino-Japanese friendship as informally constructed from the 1950s, and formally constituted through treaties in 1972 and 1978 corresponds more to Oelsner and Koschut's conceptualisation of 'thin' or strategic friendship, rather than 'thick' or normative friendship. Strategic interests on both sides converged during this period, and produced an emphasis on friendship, not only discursively but also institutionally. The long-term aim may well have been to encourage mutually positive perceptions and shared interests but, once the domestic and international strategic environments began to change in the late 1970s/early 1980s, Sino-Japanese friendship diplomacy began to falter. This is not to deny a genuine interest in, and ongoing commitment to, rebuilding Sino-Japanese relations on the part of leaders, politicians, business and civil groups at the time. But for the strategic relationship to have developed into a 'thick' friendship enjoying shared norms and values, trust needed to be nurtured and sustained over a longer period of time, at both leadership and societal levels.

In an essay published in *Asahi Shinbun* in 2012, Murakami Haruki argued that the Sino-Japanese relationship is affected by some kind of national madness. Murakami likened both countries to two people who get drunk on cheap *sake*:

> When territorial issues cease to be a matter of reality and move to the realm of 'nationalist sentiment', it creates a dangerous situation from which there is no way out. It is like cheap alcohol. Cheap alcohol gets you drunk after only a few shots and makes you mad. It makes you speak loudly and act rudely… But after your drunken rampage you are left with nothing but an awful headache next morning. We must be careful about politicians and polemists who lavish us with the cheap alcohol and fan this kind of rampage.

It is true that effective diplomacy is based on a rational trust-building process rather than on the demonstration of national emotions, but neither China nor Japan currently seem to be prepared to bear the political costs of trust building.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes

1. One example is the relations between France and Germany at the dawn of the twentieth century when strong trading and cultural ties could not avert the war between these two states.

2. Textbooks in Japan are authorized by the Ministry of Education and then selected by school districts. Right-wing middle-school history textbooks, such as those produced by Jiyusha and Ikuhosha have a very low adoption rate, whereas the more centrist Tokyo Shoseki text regularly captures over half of the market share.
3. Togo and Hatano who provide details of the talks between Deng and Abe (2015, p. 66), and Liu who refers specifically to a *zhengzhi moqi* ('political tacit agreement') (Liu 2007, pp. 258 and 319).
4. The existence of the 1985 Yasukuni Shrine agreement remains in dispute. It was again denied in late 2014 in the form of a written Cabinet response to an inquiry from Upper House dietmember Hamada Kazuyuki (*Japan Times*, 5 November 2014). Hattori's description of events suggests that Nakasone had tried to secure a gentleman's agreement, but this did not come to fruition (Hattori 2015, p. 61).
5. The best example of this is the transformation that took place in Sino-Japanese relations in 1972 once Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei had replaced Sato Eisaku, with whom the Chinese leadership refused to deal, given, amongst other things, his family ties with former Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke.

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