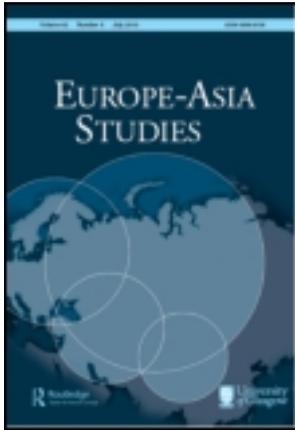


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# Comparing Post-War (West) German–Polish and Sino-Japanese Reconciliation: A Bridge Too Far?

YINAN HE

## *Abstract*

The article argues that the harmonisation of national memories facilitates genuine reconciliation, while memory divergence resulting from national mythmaking hampers reconciliation. After World War II, Sino-Japanese and West German–Polish relations were antagonised by the Cold War structure, and pernicious myths prevailed in national collective memory. Then China and Japan brushed aside historical legacy for immediate diplomatic normalisation, but their reconciliation was impeded by elite mythmaking practices. Since the 1970s West Germany and Poland have de-mythified war history and engaged in historical settlement, paving the way for deep reconciliation after the Cold War.

WHY HAVE SOME FORMER ENEMY COUNTRIES ESTABLISHED durable amity while others remain mired in animosity? Does historical memory matter, and how does it matter in interstate reconciliation? These are understudied but important questions in the field of international relations. I argue that the harmonisation of national memories between former enemy countries can significantly facilitate reconciliation, whereas the memory divergence resulting from national mythmaking tends to harm the long-term prospects of reconciliation. ‘Reconciliation’ is defined by the concept of deep interstate reconciliation, wherein former enemy countries share the understanding that war is unthinkable and hold generally warm feelings towards each other. Deep interstate reconciliation needs to be cemented not only by shared material interests but also by sustainable mutual understanding and trust. Because the enduring memory of past trauma can feed mistrust and emotional distress, nations cannot avoid addressing historical memory when searching for a path to reconciliation.

To capture the influence of historical memory on interstate reconciliation, I formulate a theory of national mythmaking. I argue that ruling elites, harbouring special political–ideological goals, tend to construct historical myths that glorify the actions of their own nation in a past conflict while blaming others for causing the tragedy. These myths cause sharp disagreement between former enemy countries on

matters of historical interpretation. Divergent memories in turn engender negative emotions and perceptions of hostile intention between the two countries. If former enemy countries agree on a basic interpretation of the history of their conflict and take substantial measures to redress the trauma, however, they will be more likely to remove the historical roots of bilateral tension and significantly promote reconciliation.

I evaluate this theory through a comparative study of post-war Sino-Japanese and (West) German–Polish relations. The two dyads are similar in their geographic proximity, traditional economic and cultural ties, and recent history of traumatic conflict; they also faced a similar international structure immediately after the conflict. On the other hand the united Germany and Poland have approached deep interstate reconciliation, while Sino-Japanese relations are still far from that goal. In analysing the case studies, which include both cross-case and within-case comparisons, I mainly follow congruence procedure and process-tracing methods (King *et al.* 1994; Van Evera 1997). I divide each case into four phases: the 1950s–1960s, 1970s, 1980s and the 1990s to the present. The results show that national mythmaking theory fits all but Sino-Japanese relations in the 1950s–1960s, when the lack of politicised memory conflict explains the elite preference for a normal diplomatic tie but not the actual state of political isolation, which was the result of Cold War structural constraints. The final section of the essay provides further observations to explain why a similar historical legacy has been handled so differently in these two cases. It also discusses the policy implications of the findings in general and concrete suggestions for China and Japan to work towards reconciliation.

I resist a simplistic comparison of the European and Asian experiences that treats the former as an absolute model for the latter. The disparity between individual German and Japanese citizens' attitudes to history may not be that significant. Still, several qualitative differences exist, and these are rooted in a multitude of deep sociopolitical and ideational factors that merit serious investigation and reflection. First, the authoritative, institutionalised narrative of national history, mostly embodied in school textbooks, is much more forthright in Germany than in Japan concerning the treatment of the nations' past aggression. Second, the German state puts its remorse on record through repeated and unequivocal official apologies, payment of compensation and commemoration, while Japanese apologies to China, although not few in number, have generally been ambiguous and are frequently followed by domestic backlash. Third, both German and Japanese memories of World War II history continue to be multifaceted, and controversy over history is not uncommon; but in Germany the Holocaust-centred interpretation remains the culturally dominant memory regime, and the 'denial school' on Nazi crimes is largely marginalised. Historical revisionism in Japan, by contrast, still enjoys a prominent status in the political establishment and public sphere.

Historical ideas are not the only force affecting post-conflict interstate relationships. Case studies suggest that international structural incentives are instrumental in initiating a reconciliation process. Both the West German–Polish and Sino-Japanese dyads were initially antagonised by the structure of international relations during the Cold War, and diplomatic normalisation was impossible until the 1970s, when structural conditions improved. A favourable external structure is not itself sufficient

to bring about a state of deep trust and harmony between former enemy countries, however. A critical step is to engage national de-mythification and harmonise historical memories between the two nations. This step is largely a function of internal momentum, though it does become more feasible when there is some degree of compatibility between the two countries' security interests. The trend of historical settlement, once initiated, will prove resilient even when structural conditions deteriorate again (as they did in West German–Polish relations in the 1980s) and will pave a long-term foundation for deep interstate reconciliation. Conversely, some countries choose to cling to national myths despite structurally granted opportunities for reconciliation, as occurred in Sino-Japanese relations in the 1970s and 1980s. When this happens their relationship is likely to remain strained, especially when the structural advantage wanes, because the mistrust and animosity generated by divergent historical memories can exacerbate mutual security concerns. Indeed, structural environment and historical memory interplay in international relations, but the latter is not preordained by the former. The bridge is not too far; as long as they are not locked in antagonistic strategic positions, former enemy countries can take immediate measures to address the past and forge ahead with reconciliation.

*Operationalising the study of interstate reconciliation*

It is almost a truism that peace means the absence of war, so ending war should bring about peace. Yet a world without armed conflicts is not inherently peaceful. Studies of 'enduring rivalries' show that a great proportion of international militarised conflicts is concentrated in a small number of dyadic relationships (Diehl & Goertz 2000). A rivalry becomes enduring not necessarily because the same conflict of interest is not resolved but rather because the psychological wounds suffered in the last traumatic conflict were never treated in a timely and satisfactory manner, begetting new conflicts time and again. Thus sustainable peace is realised through both resolving the actual problems between enemies and 'addressing the emotional barriers that separate them through processes of reconciliation' (Nadler & Saguy 2004, p. 30).

The conceptual framework of deep interstate reconciliation contains two key components. First is 'stable peace', which, in Kenneth Boulding's interpretation (1978, p. 13), means that war has become unthinkable as a means to resolve international conflict. In addition to stable peace, which largely concerns the official dimension, deep interstate reconciliation requires an amicable relationship between the peoples of two nations. As former German Chancellor Willy Brandt put it, 'Understanding and reconciliation cannot be decreed by politicians but must mature in the hearts of people on both sides' (1978, p. 407).

How can interstate reconciliation be operationalised? Alexander George (2000) divides post-conflict interstate reconciliation into three categories: precarious peace, where peace is a temporary absence of war maintained by immediate military deterrence; conditional peace, where general military deterrence maintains a less acute, less heated conflict relationship; and stable peace, where states no longer consider the use or threat of military force. Benjamin Miller (2000) offers a similar typology of peace: cold peace, normal peace and warm peace. Building on George and Miller, I categorise interstate reconciliation into three stages: non-reconciliation, shallow

reconciliation, and deep reconciliation. I use three indicators to measure the official relationship: first, mutual expectation of war is the most decisive indicator, because it crystallises the notion of stable peace; second, national recognition, because reconciliation should begin by satisfying the fundamental aspirations of each party, including their aspirations to national survival and sovereignty rights (Kelman 1999); and third, the state of economic interaction, which signals the level of mutual trust because states fearing the 'spectre of war' are reluctant to develop weighty commercial ties (Powell 1991).

For the popular dimension of reconciliation, public opinion surveys offer an important measurement. While such surveys have been regularly, openly conducted in (West) Germany and Japan, equivalent data from China and Poland were scant until the 1990s. Additionally, even setting aside the effects of political sensitivity in a communist country, the credibility of public opinion polls varies depending on how questionnaires are framed and how data are collected and presented. Still, public opinion polls can demonstrate representative popular beliefs in a relatively straightforward way. I use polling data to discern the conspicuous trends in public preferences and attitudes, and supplement them with qualitative data, including popular media, information on public activist movements and scholarly works on the state of popular relationships.

Combining these categories and indicators, I argue that countries in a state of non-reconciliation hold an imminent expectation of war between them. They lack any formal diplomatic relationship and typically clash over significant sovereignty rights. Due to strong concerns about relative gains, they minimise economic interactions. Finally, their popular relationship is characterised by feelings of antagonism. Countries in a state of deep reconciliation, by contrast, will have developed a common expectation of peace between them, often reflected in close security cooperation and comprehensive, smooth economic interactions. Their governments will fully recognise each other's legal status, and no outstanding sovereignty controversies will exist. Finally, the peoples of the two societies will feel mutual closeness and sometimes affection.

Shallow reconciliation falls in between: expectation of war is moderate, but no consensus has developed that neither country will resort to the use of force. Diplomatic relations are normalised, but sovereignty disputes remain unsettled. Economic cooperation is developed but still limited, and popular tension abates but never disappears. Shallow reconciliation may take two forms: that of friction, which features frequent escalation of political disputes and simmering popular resentment, and that of rapprochement, in which political disputes are deferred but not resolved and an illusory atmosphere of popular friendship is likely, often manipulated by official propaganda rather than based on genuine mutual understanding.

#### *National mythmaking and interstate reconciliation*

National mythmaking theory adopts the assumption of social memory, tracing back to the works of Emile Durkheim and Maurice Halbwachs, that memory is an image of the past collectively constructed by a social group in the present. Different social groups form different memories of the past, and their purposes do not have to be

instrumental. But when politicians are historians, memory tends to follow interests. Because ruling elites have a high stake in political struggle, history becomes a valuable tool for them to win the struggle. As Michel Foucault (1977) says, 'Since memory is actually a very important factor in struggle . . . if one controls people's memory, one controls their dynamism'.

The product of elite manipulation of history is national myths, which are fanciful stories about the origins, identity, and purposes of a nation. They usually contain certain historical facts in order to appear credible and secure public acceptance. Paul Cohen points out that 'even when mythologisation is at its least innocent (and most premeditated), it achieves its effect typically not through out-and-out falsification but through distortion, oversimplification, and omission of material that doesn't serve its purpose or runs counter to it' (1997, pp. 213–14). For example, it is true that China and Poland have suffered enormously at the hands of foreign aggressors, but to portray these nations as victims throughout all of modern history is a myth, because it leaves out those congenial periods of their relations with the aggressor countries, as well as their not-so-benign treatment of neighbouring countries and ethnic or political groups within their own borders. Mythmaking, Cohen explains, is 'fundamentally ahistorical—subjective, one-sided, egregiously incomplete' (1997, p. 214).

Ruling elites tend to create three types of pernicious national myths about past external conflicts: self-glorifying myths, which explicitly incorporate inflated or false claims of national virtue and competence, including myths of victimisation that bestow a nation with moral superiority (Bartov 1998; Orr 2001); self-whitewashing myths, which deny or rationalise a nation's past wrongdoing towards others; and other-maligning myths, which denigrate other nations as inferior, evil, or culpable (Jacobsen 1993). These highly symbolic myths can justify national security policy or address domestic political concerns, such as regime legitimacy, social mobilisation needs, and factional and organisational interests (Van Evera 1994; Kiernan 2001), but national mythmaking is rarely implemented in a strictly linear, coherent fashion, because national memory is constructed through a complex process of contestation. Whether certain myths can become the hegemonic national memory is determined by the larger political opportunity structure, including the balance of power between political groups and ultimately their ability to control the institutional setting of memory construction.

Once institutionalised through school textbooks and other propaganda tools, national myths cause divergent interpretations of past conflict between former enemy countries. Myths that glorify a country's beneficence and virtues, deny guilt for crimes, and blame others for tragedies will harden the perpetrator's claim of its own innocence and the victim's demand for retribution. Divergent historical narratives can impede reconciliation by generating negative emotions and perceptions of intentions. Myths of victimisation and self-righteousness fuel the victim country's grievances, which can translate into a sense of entitlement *vis-à-vis* the perpetrator; other-maligning myths can stimulate the victim's feelings of contempt for the morally despicable perpetrator, especially if that country denies historical responsibility. The perpetrator country's self-glorifying and whitewashing myths will lead to a lack of sympathy for the victim country, and it will develop disgust for and frustration with the victim country, which

will seem to be obsessed with the past. The victim country will also tend to link the unrepentant attitude of the perpetrator to its remaining or reviving aggressive ambitions. Meanwhile, the perpetrator country will find the victim's sense of entitlement unjustified and will see it as merely a disguise for that country's own hostile intentions.

Such negative emotions and perceptions of intentions can worsen the general mood of mutual popular feeling and constrain government policies. Herbert Kelman argues that the 'collective moods' of public opinion that centre on traumatic memories can produce 'powerful social norms' by which leaders are often compelled to choose hostile actions over conciliatory ones (1997, pp. 212–15). Moreover, conviction of the other country's negative intentions will heighten the elite's threat perception, relative gains concerns, and willingness to risk bilateral conflict. Therefore, memory divergence produces formidable psychological and perceptual obstacles to both official cooperation and intersocietal harmony.

In order to attain deep interstate reconciliation, countries should stop making pernicious national myths and forge a 'reconciliation of memory' through historical settlement. Drawing on the literature on transitional justice (Barkan 2000; Borneman 1997; Rotberg & Thompson 2000), I argue that historical settlement consists of two parts: joint history research and restitution measures. Textbook cooperation has been considered a solution to international conflict since the end of World War I (Kondō 1998, ch. 6; UNESCO 1953). The idea is to make a joint effort at truth-telling about a shared traumatic history. It is true that people from different nations have different perspectives and value standards, and even professional historians are not free of biases. However, 'it does not follow that, because a mountain appears to take on different shapes from different angles of vision, it has objectively either no shape at all or an infinity of shapes', says E. H. Carr (1962, p. 9). The production of a singular historical account, identical in every factual detail, is impossible and should not be the goal. Instead, through joint history programmes countries can make improvements and build agreements along the way, eventually reaching a shared, objective interpretation. Successful history cooperation does not mean that memory of past conflicts will disappear from social discourse or that dissenting views on history will be eliminated. People may still actively research and debate about their traumatic history, but they will no longer treat it as a major source of resentment towards their former enemy. This is true in contemporary German–Polish relations, where the old memory battle is still alive but a shared memory about German war responsibility remains the core foundation of their reconciliation while politicisation of history disputes is typically stalled or marginalised.

International restitution measures require reconciliation to include apology and forgiveness, legal accountability and material compensation. To begin with, the victim country's grievances demand an unambiguous, complete apology from the perpetrator country. A vague and partial apology only aggravates animosity because, according to Melissa Nobles, it 'is viewed as an attempt to evade full responsibility, not accept it' (2008, p. 30). An apology should first admit acts of wrongdoing, accept responsibility, and express sorrow and remorse. Apologies that convey regret for harm but accept no responsibility are unsatisfying; as Michael Cunningham points out, 'One can presumably go around being sorry promiscuously about all sorts of things' (1999,

p. 287).<sup>1</sup> Finally, a full apology should promise not to repeat the offence in the future (Tavuchis 1991).

The way in which an apology is delivered also affects perceptions of its quality. Apologies stated publicly by government heads or in official announcements or documents usually have greater political impact than those offered by non-official actors or in private settings. Consistent messages of apology issued by a succession of governments can convey long-term assurance of peaceful intent better than sporadic, inconsistent messages. Additionally, a perpetrator country will appear unapologetic or even alarming if its official apology fails to win the endorsement of the wider society but instead provokes resistance and backlash (Lind 2008, p. 18). Ultimately, apology is about emotional healing, and it is most effective if conveyed in a way that can be mutually understood. Scott Appleby argues that reconciliation concepts ‘must be acknowledged and negotiated’ across cultural and political divides, and to reach harmony the apologetising nation needs to draw on some common vocabulary or core values held by both cultures (2000, pp. 151, 247). The phrase used in China to describe an exemplar apology, *fujing qingzui*, originated in a story in the Warring States period in which the offender carried a rod and asked the offended to flog his naked back. Likewise, German Chancellor Willy Brandt legendarily fell to his knees in front of the Warsaw Ghetto monument in 1970. In both cases, the apology was made through universally appreciated gestures and expressions that prevented its message from being mistaken or muffled by cultural differences.

It is honourable for the perpetrator to apologise because doing so can end national shame and restore clean consciences. An apology shifts the moral burden of forgiveness to the victim. Peter Digeser explains the value of forgiveness: ‘In a world in which what is done at one moment cannot be undone the next, forgiving relieves the burdens created by wrongful actions and unbearable debts. In relieving those burdens, forgiveness presents the opportunity to start afresh or reestablish a relationship of moral equality between victim and transgressor’ (2001, pp. 11–12). By offering forgiveness, Charles Griswold notes, the victim country experiences ‘a change of heart’ and begins to ‘see the offender and [itself] in a new light’ (2007, p. 53).

Still, apology should precede forgiveness to ensure genuine amicability. Psychological studies show that empathy is the central facilitating condition for forgiveness, but the victim will more likely feel empathy towards the perpetrator if the latter apologises (McCullough *et al.* 1997). Forgiveness should not be unconditional or given out as a ‘gift’.<sup>2</sup> At times, governments agree to let go of the past for the sake of political expediency, but a victim country that receives no proper apology becomes fertile ground for elite mythmaking to thrive because in the eyes of the public the perpetrator’s lack of repentance simply reinforces its negative image portrayed in national myths. As we will see, this has been particularly true in Sino-Japanese relations since the 1980s: Japan’s ambiguous apologies, frequently offset by right-wing

<sup>1</sup>See also O’Neill (1999, p. 185).

<sup>2</sup>These conditions, as outlined by Griswold (2007, pp. 62–69), pertain to giving a complete apology to the victim country. Griswold says that the offender must wait for the victim to forgive it and should not demand, insist, or compel forgiveness, because it has no right to forgiveness. Even if the offender country believes that it has satisfied all the conditions, it cannot claim to be forgiven, because it is the victim’s prerogative to grant forgiveness.

backlash, have only exacerbated anti-Japanese feeling and made the Chinese people more receptive to the nationalist propaganda of the government.

In the same vein, true forgiveness will not be forthcoming if even the minimal demand of legal accountability is not met. Blanket amnesty, Digeser says, would completely shut down the pursuit of justice and twist forgiveness into insult because people do not even know 'who is forgiving whom for what' (2001, p. 55). Nonetheless, the fact that historical wrongs can never be completely undone renders perfect justice impossible. South Africa's truth-telling actions in the 1990s, for example, were carried out without prosecuting the guilty, which helped stabilise the process of democratisation. Nelson Mandela expressed willingness to forgive those perpetrators of past crimes as long as they came forward to disclose their behaviour publicly (Berat & Shain 1995). Similarly, in interstate relations, too much retribution only becomes counterproductive revenge. The Nuremberg trials and the Tokyo trials have not only been criticised from a legalist perspective but have also been rejected by right-wingers in the perpetrator states as 'victors' justice' (Luban 1987; Minear 1971; Ōnuma 1997). Historical settlement should focus on seriously investigating past wrongdoings and encouraging free debates about history. If doing so can bring the perpetrator to admit responsibility, legal prosecution may be dropped as a gesture of forgiveness.

Like legal accountability, full financial compensation for loss is difficult to achieve and may spark new resentments if compensation payments destabilise the economy of the perpetrator country. Yet some amount of material compensation is necessary, especially if the victims are in a desperate condition. Still, the issue of moral and legal responsibility must be publicly dealt with before victims will even be willing to accept compensation payments. Some women who were abused as sex slaves in World War II—'comfort women' in euphemism—resisted the compensation offered by a nominally private Japanese fund precisely because it evaded the legal responsibility of the Japanese government for its crimes (Soh 2003).

National mythmaking theory predicts that the more two countries' historical narratives of their past conflict diverge, the more difficult they will be to reconcile, and *vice versa*. Historical settlement through joint history research and international restitution measures is conducive to the emergence of convergent narratives between former enemy countries that honestly represent a prior traumatic conflict and unambiguously define who bears responsibility for that conflict. In the absence of the poisoning effects of national myths on mutual emotions and perceptions of intentions, official cooperation and societal contacts will flourish, and the popular atmosphere will become friendly. The outcome should be deep reconciliation. In contrast, memory divergence is the greatest when the two countries adhere to pernicious national mythmaking that creates 'mirror images' of each other as defensive and righteous and each sees its former enemy as intrinsically aggressive and evil. Such national myths will generate combative narratives, which set a prohibitively high hurdle to reconciliation. The result should be non-reconciliation. Less divergent are conflictual narratives, which still disagree on the interpretation of historical responsibility but selectively blame certain political and social groups in the other country rather than demonise the nation as a whole. These narratives, too, generate negative emotions and perceptions of intentions, but they do not inflame outright confrontation. The result is shallow reconciliation, probably in the form of friction. A variant of conflictual narratives is

quasi-convergent narratives, which exhibit memory divergence but also share some common myths. Quasi-convergent narratives emerge when elites opt to shelve their historiographic disagreement to concentrate on other immediate issues. With quasi-convergent narratives, negative emotions and perceptions of intentions are deeply embedded, but their open expression may be temporarily subdued. The likely result is shallow reconciliation in the form of rapprochement.

*The case of (West) German–Polish relations*

*The post-war age of darkness*

Modern German–Polish traumatic conflict began with the three partitions of Poland from 1772 to 1795 by Prussia, Russia, and Austria. In World War II, over six million Polish citizens were killed, of whom about half were Jews. German Nazis also subjected Poles to mass execution, slave labour, live medical experiments on human beings, and daily terror and political persecution. Following a major-power agreement at the Yalta Conference, after the war the Soviet Union (USSR) annexed Eastern Poland. Germany had to concede to Poland its eastern territories to the Oder–Neisse Line and about 2.9 million Germans were expelled from the area.

Two unique points in German–Polish history are worth mentioning. First, in modern history Poland experienced dual victimisation by Prussia–Germany and Russia–USSR. Following Poland’s eighteenth-century partitioning by its neighbours, Nazi Germany and the USSR again carved up Poland through the notorious Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. In the first two years of the war, before Nazi Germany began the mass annihilation of Jews, the Soviet Union actually killed more Polish people than the Nazis did (Gross 1988). Second, Poland was not a pure victim: during the Holocaust against Jews, Poles largely acted as passive witnesses, but sometimes they were also Hitler’s willing helpers (Gross 2001; Polonsky & Michlic 2004). For a long time, Poles ignored this dark side of their national history.

In the wake of World War II, negative structural conditions blocked West German–Polish reconciliation. These included both inter-bloc antagonism due to the two nations’ conflicting alliances with NATO and the Warsaw Pact, respectively, and two problems of direct mutual conflict: the frontier issue and the division of Germany, the so-called German Question. For more than two decades, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) rejected the Oder–Neisse Line as Germany’s eastern border with Poland and precluded any compromise over the legitimacy of socialist East Germany, with which Poland had a formal relationship. Meanwhile, ruling elites in both countries purveyed pernicious national myths. In West Germany, the country’s Western-oriented strategy and domestic political agenda drove the Adenauer government of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) to cover up Nazi crimes and emphasise German victimhood instead. Chancellor Konrad Adenauer’s first post-war public statement in Cologne, a city devastated by Allied bombing, and the establishment of a ‘national day of mourning’ in 1952, encouraged Germans to think of themselves as victims. Textbooks minimised coverage of Nazi aggression and the Holocaust but gave extensive treatment to wartime German suffering and the post-war expulsion of Germans from Eastern Europe (Borries 2003; Pagaard 1995). They also

perpetuated the Weimar myth of Poles as an inferior nation and used emotive language to accentuate the self–other enmity between the righteous Germans and the despicable Poles who had annexed the ‘lost territories’ and brutally expelled Germans (Becker 1978, pp. 262–63).

Poland’s communist elite also manipulated national history to bolster regime legitimacy and justify the alliance with the USSR. The official historiography adopted a centuries-old myth of Polish victimhood with a selective focus on a German *Feindbild* [enemy] while omitting the history of Soviet aggression. Polish textbooks portrayed the past 10 centuries as a series of life-and-death struggles of the heroic Poland against Germany’s constant *Drang nach Osten* [Drive towards the East]. They also attacked the FRG as a hotbed of fascism and its policy of territorial revisionism as the worst manifestation of *Drang nach Osten* (Sander 1995); but Poland was silent on anti-Semitic crimes by Poles, and its memory of the Holocaust was essentially Polishised, meaning Jews died because they were Polish, not because they were Jews (Steinlauf 1997, pp. 62–74).

This is not to say that memories in the two countries were uniform or that the official propaganda fully represented popular beliefs. The left-wing German Social Democratic Party (SPD) tenaciously pursued the legal and moral responsibility of Nazi Germany, but the conservative myths prevailed due to the CDU’s control of state power, the widespread public sense of victimhood, and the power of the conservative constituency, especially the expellee organisations (Ahonen 1998). In Poland, a ‘bifurcation of discourse’ occurred, where the official history existed alongside private remembrance of Soviet atrocities and of wartime resistance led by non-communist forces, such as the tragic Warsaw Uprising that the Home Army launched in 1944 (Orla-Bukowska 2006, pp. 178–89). Yet heavy-handed post-war purges and systematic policies of cultural ‘taming’ by the communist government suppressed open questioning of Polish–Soviet friendship. Moreover, even private discourse was receptive to the influence of government mythmaking. As Wiesław Chrzanowski, a Solidarity activist and former *Sejm* marshal, said in 1992, the anti-German propaganda of the communist government ‘fell on the fertile soil of mutual prejudices that had existed for generations’ (Zernack 2007, p. 5).

Thus, West German and Polish historical narratives were mutually combative, ultimately clashing over who should take responsibility for the trauma of World War II and whether the post-war frontier shift and expulsion of Germans were legitimate compensations for Polish suffering or blatant Polish crimes against Germany. Each side stressed its own victimhood but refused to admit any wrongdoing, failed to empathise with the suffering of the other or even of third parties (most notably the Jews), and accused the entire other nation of being aggressive and criminal while ignoring the existence of external perpetrators like the USSR.

The emotional and perceptual consequences of such combative narratives reinforced the structural obstacles to keep the bilateral relationship in a state of non-reconciliation. According to Polish historian Jerzy Jedlicki, ‘It is difficult to imagine more intense feelings of hatred than those that the Poles (no less than the Jews) harbored for the Germans in the wake of the Nazi occupation’ (1999, p. 226). West Germans also thought Poland was an ill-natured nation. They particularly could not accept that a nation they traditionally considered inferior now ruled the former eastern

territories of Germany while the Germans were deprived of old imperial glory, homelands, and power (Becker 1978, pp. 262–63; Kulski 1976, pp. 88–89). Accompanying these negative mutual emotions were mutual perceptions of hostile intentions. West Germany's lack of contrition for the Nazi past and rejection of the new frontier fuelled Polish panic about its revanchist threat; but West Germans, unable to understand Polish trauma and fear, attributed Polish animosity to the expansionist communist bloc.

*Détente, Ostpolitik, and the initial steps to reconciliation in the 1970s*

From the late 1960s, the rise of *détente* relaxed the inter-bloc antagonism and eased the structural pressure on West German–Polish relations. Willy Brandt, the head of the FRG's coalition government of the SPD and FDP (Free Democratic Party) from 1969, was able to carry out an *Ostpolitik* [Eastern policy] that sought more inter-German contacts through closer West German relations with the Eastern bloc countries. The Warsaw Treaty that West Germany and Poland signed in December 1970 stipulated the renunciation of threat or use of force in settling disputes, as well as the inviolability of national frontiers.<sup>3</sup> The two governments also concluded a number of economic agreements from 1970, and within one decade bilateral trade increased sevenfold.<sup>4</sup>

A trend towards historical settlement emerged as a second driving force for West German–Polish reconciliation. Some of the measures would have been unimaginable in the absence of *détente*, but they were also the product of an internal impetus towards both a political and a moral vision of reconciliation. First, national mythmaking began to decline in both countries. Several rounds of German *Bundestag Verjährungsdebatten* [limitation debates] in the period 1960–1979 led to the eventual abolition of the statute of limitations on the prosecution of Nazi war criminals. Also, starting from the early 1960s, Germany increased the coverage of Nazi history in the school curricula (Braham 1987, pp. 8–9). Education reform gained more momentum in the 1970s. One turning point was state legislation passed in North Rhine–Westphalia in 1978 that legally mandated teaching the Nazi history in schools (Pagaard 1995, p. 544). Another catalyst for memory change was the broadcast of the American television series *Holocaust* in January 1979, which was watched by more than half of the adult population of West Germany. The enormous public repercussions of the broadcast directly helped the SPD win the *Verjährungsdebatten* five months later (Zielinski 1980). By breaking the taboo on discussing the Holocaust and other Nazi crimes, the trend of historical rethinking in 1970s West Germany debunked the old myth of German victimhood and increased national awareness of Germany's perpetrator role. The decline of mythmaking also made German society more accepting of the frontier shift, because people realised that the eastern territories were lost and the Germans' expulsion had occurred because Germany initiated the war and committed hideous crimes in Eastern Europe.

<sup>3</sup>The national recognition issue was only partially resolved here because the FRG recognised the Oder–Neisse Line on its own behalf and only for the duration of its existence.

<sup>4</sup>United Nations, *Yearbook of International Trade Statistics*, 1970–1980 data.

In Poland, academic censorship relaxed as the new leader Edward Gierek tried to placate mounting social resentment from the late 1960s. Private discourse flourished in underground publications and even partially entered the public space. For example, in a well-documented 1979 pamphlet titled 'Poisoned Humanistic Studies', the Catholic historian Bohdan Cywinski specified a long list of lies in Polish textbooks regarding Polish history from the Polish–Soviet War in 1920 to the communist accession to power in 1948. Also, from the late 1970s the non-governmental Association of Academic Courses, known as the Flying University, gathered prominent historians to lecture on Polish history in major university cities (Valkenier 1985, pp. 666–72). The liberalisation of Polish historiography contributed to memory convergence with Germany in two ways: a relaxed political atmosphere prepared Polish intellectuals and society for subsequent textbook cooperation with West Germany, and all-out demonisation of Germany declined when people gained the ability to discuss the historical Soviet victimisation of Poland more openly.

Another aspect of historical settlement was West Germany's politics of reconciliation. The SPD leaders believed that democracy, one of the central pillars of post-war German national identity, would not be truly upheld until the nation came to terms with its past. Taking advantage of the relaxed structural environment in Europe, they carried out a moral dimension of *Ostpolitik* as well. Brandt's speechless apology in Warsaw in December 1970 was emotionally powerful in consoling and rehabilitating the aggrieved Polish nation. Another, more articulate apology came in November 1977, when Chancellor Helmut Schmidt spoke at Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland, saying, 'The crime of Nazi fascism and the guilt of the German Reich under Hitler's leadership are at the basis of our responsibility' (Herf 1997, pp. 346–47).

As for war reparations, Poland refrained from raising the issue in the normalisation talks lest it hamper German recognition of the Oder–Neisse border (Jarzabek 2005). Still, in 1972 the two governments agreed on German compensation to Polish victims of pseudo-medical experiments during the war. In 1975, Schmidt and Gierek signed the so-called cash for people deal, which obliged Bonn to pay a large sum of pension funds to concentration camp survivors in exchange for allowing the emigration of ethnic Germans from Poland.

The third aspect of bilateral historical settlement was the path-breaking textbook cooperation. Since 1972, the non-governmental German–Polish Textbook Commission has organised for historians of both sides to meet twice a year to discuss textbook coverage of bilateral history. In April 1976, it published its 'Recommendations on History and Geography Textbooks in the Federal Republic of Germany and the People's Republic of Poland' (Gemeinsame Deutsch–Polnische Schulbuchkommission 1976). The 'Recommendations' not only contributed to 'growing approximation of Polish and German positions', according to Zernack, but also found 'a methodological way to transcend the mere contrasting of divergent viewpoints' (2007, p. 7). The initial responses to the 'Recommendations' in West Germany were uneven. The states controlled by the CDU and CSU (Christian Social Union) opposed them, whereas the SPD-governed states endorsed them as the guidelines for textbook authorisation and reference for classroom teaching. Moreover, the project became the subject of a power struggle between the Left and the Right. The Munich-based right-wing paper *Deutsche National-Zeitung* denounced participating German historians as complicit with

'Pan-Slavist agitation' and as 'masochists of the nation'. Other conservatives criticised the dialogue as being a politically driven 'textbook diplomacy' that sacrificed historical truth for the sake of reconciliation with Poland (Lau 2001).

The debate gradually tipped to favour the Left, however, as a result of the positive changes discussed earlier. From the end of the 1970s, even conservative-dominated states distributed the 'Recommendations', though sometimes only as one type of teaching material. Evidence of their influence on West German textbook content is compelling. According to a 1982 cross-state assessment of 13 editions of history textbooks by the Georg Eckert Institute, German textbook coverage of Poland became, on average, equivalent to that of other major European countries and showed a tendency to further expand. Another study compared three representative German textbooks before and after the publication of the 'Recommendations' and found that more than 90% of the changes in coverage of Polish history were made in the direction advised by the document (Kondō 1998, pp. 129–32).

All these efforts at historical settlement mitigated bilateral popular confrontation. Ordinary Germans' traditional ignorance of and contempt towards Poland could not suddenly disappear, but their bitterness about the post-war expulsion of Germans from Eastern Europe declined due to the growing national consciousness of Nazi crimes. A May 1972 West German poll revealed that 62% of respondents accepted the Oder–Neisse Line, compared to 8% in 1951 and 22% in 1964. Another poll in August showed that 43% of respondents believed that through the Warsaw Treaty a lasting good relationship with Poland could be achieved, compared to only 24% who disagreed (Noelle-Neumann 1981, pp. 460–61).

German expressions of contrition meanwhile mollified Polish grievances and perceptions of the German threat. When Brandt knelt down in Warsaw—a totally unplanned move—his Polish hosts were stunned. The Cold War atmosphere made it difficult for Poles to speak words of appreciation in public, but the next morning Polish premier Józef Cyrankiewicz took Brandt by the arm in their shared car and told him that many people had been deeply moved by his gesture (Brandt 1978, p. 399). Anti-German bias in Polish society remained strong, but now the Polish mass media conceded that there were reasonable German politicians with whom Poles could peacefully coexist (Kulski 1976, p. 288). Poles also spoke confidently of a secure and amicable surrounding environment, as in a newspaper statement on May Day, 1974: 'The tragic history of the Polish nation has changed completely. Never before had Poland such favourable and ethnically just borders as well as such friendly relations with her neighbours'.<sup>5</sup>

True, the bilateral relationship only progressed to shallow reconciliation because *détente* relaxed but did not end the Cold War, the historical narratives of the two countries remained conflictual, and domestic opposition to reconciliation was still formidable. In Germany, the expellee organisations and conservative politicians accused Brandt of abandoning Germany's eastern territories and the cause of national unification. The government pushed the Warsaw Treaty through the *Bundestag* only after narrowly defeating a no-confidence motion by the opposition. The textbook project continued to suffer from ideological and political interference, and sensitive

<sup>5</sup>'East Europe', *BBC Summary of World Broadcast*, 3 May 1974.

topics in Soviet–Polish relations such as the Katyn Massacre and the secret protocol of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact were left unaddressed. Nevertheless, historians began to develop a common language in professional debates that prepared for a higher level of cooperation later on (Müller 2004, p. 442).

*Continuing efforts towards historical settlement in the 1980s*

The structural environment deteriorated from the late 1970s when *détente* ended. Also, the Polish government suppressed Solidarity in December 1981. Participating in Western sanctions against Poland, Chancellor Schmidt turned down Polish appeals for economic aid. Bonn also failed to criticise Warsaw for imposing martial law or to establish contacts with Solidarity, which alienated the Polish people (Garton Ash 1993, pp. 305–6). Moreover, Helmut Kohl of the CDU, who became chancellor in October 1982, put more emphasis on *Westpolitik* than on *Ostpolitik*.

Despite these setbacks, contacts at the societal level remained warm. After martial law was imposed in Poland, ordinary German citizens expressed their support for the Polish people by sending packages to Poland and political forces sympathetic to Solidarity formed a Working Group for Eastern Europe in the name of the Green Party to provide Polish workers with both moral and material assistance (Feldman 2010b; Kenney 2002, p. 98). Due to the resounding success of *Ostpolitik* in the 1970s, moreover, German politicians were convinced that maintaining dialogue and cooperation with Eastern Europe would benefit European peace and the FRG's security. Hence, the SPD carried out a shadow Eastern policy, or a 'second *Ostpolitik*', to maintain a channel of communication with the communist governments in Eastern Europe, particularly Poland and East Germany (Garton Ash 1993, pp. 312–42). Also, from 1984 Kohl began a reconciliation with Poland, starting with economic diplomacy. In March 1985, the German–Polish trade agreement was renewed, and bilateral trade soon recovered to the level of 1980 (Davis 1991, pp. 215–18).

The continuing trend of historical settlement also sustained bilateral cooperation. From the mid-1980s, active public debates on war memory broke out in West Germany, first sparked by the Bitburg Affair in 1985.<sup>6</sup> Most significantly, President Richard von Weizsäcker made a world-famous *Bundestag* speech on 8 May 1985, that straightforwardly acknowledged Germany's collective responsibility for Nazi crimes (Herf 1997, pp. 355–59). In the *Historikerstreit*, or the historians' quarrel, that began in 1986, liberal intellectuals sharply criticised the apologetic views of several conservative historians about the Nazi past (Knowlton & Cates 1993). Following these public debates, a national consensus emerged that German democracy and international status must be premised on a candid attitude about the nation's war responsibility.

In Poland, the Solidarity revolution sparked a 'truth-telling' campaign about national history; even after imposing martial law, the government was unable to resume its prior degree of crude political manipulation of history. Two themes stood

<sup>6</sup>The controversy started when Kohl invited American President Ronald Reagan to attend a memorial service to mark the 40th anniversary of VE Day at the Bitburg military cemetery, where the notorious Waffen-SS soldiers were also buried.

out in the truth-telling campaign. First, there was an increasingly open discussion about Soviet atrocities during World War II. Second, the silence regarding Polish–Jewish relations was broken. In particular, a 1987 essay by Jan Blonski entitled ‘The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto’ unleashed heated debates among Polish intellectuals about Poles’ moral responsibility for the Holocaust (Steinlauf 1997, pp. 98–99, 109–10; Polonsky 1990, pp. 9–11). Poland’s critical self-reflection was helpful in narrowing the memory gap with Germany, because only when Poles realised that the Soviet Union was as blameworthy as Germany and that they themselves were guilty of persecution of Jews, did they stop posing as absolute victims and treating Germans as the sole villains.

Meanwhile, bilateral textbook cooperation continued. On 26 April 1985, under public pressure generated by the Bitburg Affair, Kohl issued a statement acknowledging the contribution of the Textbook Commission to German–Polish reconciliation and expressing his official support (Kondō 1998, p. 127). Through cross-national dialogue, German historians incorporated their Polish colleagues’ research into the key scholarly debates, and Polish historians began to discard their traditional Polonocentric narratives and the communist discourse on national history (Müller 2004, pp. 439–42).

Overall, despite the end of *détente*, West German–Polish relations remained in a state of shallow reconciliation as mutual agreement on territorial *status quo* continued to hold and economic and societal interactions grew steadily. The legacy of *Ostpolitik* from the *détente* years, efforts by non-state actors, and the continuing trend of historical settlement all contributed to bilateral cooperation.

#### *Approaching deep interstate reconciliation from the 1990s*

German–Polish relations advanced towards deep interstate reconciliation in the 1990s. A frontier treaty signed in November 1990 permanently settled their sovereignty controversy. Poland’s entry into NATO, with crucial support from Germany, provided a further guarantee of peace. The two countries also reached a state of high economic interdependence, and their popular relationship improved significantly. All of this took place in the context of a rather indeterminate international structure. After the Cold War, Poland felt once again sandwiched between Russia and Germany and feared becoming a frontline state in future NATO–Soviet conflict (Asmus & Szayna 1991). Germany, too, stood at a crossroads: with the collapse of the Soviet threat and Germany’s subsequent reunification, it became an option for Germany to leave NATO and again expand its sphere of influence to the east (Duffield 1999, p. 767).

Uncertain structural conditions notwithstanding, two other factors propelled German–Polish reconciliation. First, German leaders realised that a frontier settlement was the price Germany had to pay to ease the fear and mistrust neighbouring countries felt towards the possibility of a unified Germany; they also understood that Germany’s newly gained power had to be ‘tamed’ by ‘multilateral, institutionally mediated systems’ (Katzenstein 1997, p. 4). Hence, Germany permanently renounced its former eastern territories, remained in NATO and championed the eastward expansion of the European community.

The second contributing factor was their converging historical memory. German unification incurred a new danger of history disputes because East Germans had been indoctrinated with communist myths but lacked self-reflection on German war responsibility (Herf 1997, chapters 5–6; Ruge 1997). Additionally, expellee organisations in Germany resumed their campaign for the recovery of the eastern territories, which again raised the spectre of German revanchism in the eyes of Poles (Wolff 2003, pp. 156–57). But over the years, most Germans had come to embrace a national memory focusing on German war responsibility instead of German victimhood. The 1995 commemoration of World War II in Germany signified the triumph of this version of national memory: on 27 April, together with the former Israeli President Chaim Herzog and the President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany Ignatz Bubis, Chancellor Kohl attended an assembly at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp to memorialise the Nazi victims. Other concentration camps also held memorial services on the anniversary of their liberation (Herf 1997, pp. 369–70).

Several new debates over German war responsibility occurred, including the controversy over Daniel Goldhagen's book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (Eley 2000), the *Wehrmacht* exhibition in Hamburg that began in 1995, the 1998–1999 debate between Ignatz Bubis and the revisionist German writer Martin Walser, and the 1999 *Bundestag* debate on the construction in Berlin of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews in Europe (Fuchs 2002; Niven 2002, chapters 6–8). Also, in 2000 Erika Steinbach, the leader of the Federation of the Expellees (*Bund der Vertriebenen*, BdV) and a CDU representative at the *Bundestag*, created a foundation to back the creation of a Centre against Expulsions, which would commemorate German victimhood during the post-war expulsion. German elites quickly came out to oppose the initiative, and German leaders repeatedly reassured their Central-Eastern European neighbours that the government did not support it. All of these debates stimulated cathartic public discussions in which the progressives eventually prevailed and consolidated a hegemonic position in German national memory (Langenbacher 2005; Lutomski 2004).

German restitutions to Poland were also remarkable in this period. One of the most emotional moments of reconciliation occurred at the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising on 1 August 1994, when German President Roman Herzog apologised in front of Polish President Lech Walesa and many foreign dignitaries: 'Today, I bow my head before the fighters of the Warsaw Uprising, as before all the victims of war. And I beg forgiveness for that which was perpetrated by Germans against each and every one of you' (Davies 2003, p. 609). Later, Herzog was widely praised by Poles and German commentators, who compared his speech with Chancellor Brandt's visit to Warsaw in 1970.<sup>7</sup> Regarding war reparations, the two governments established a reconciliation foundation through which Germany would pay DM500 million to Polish war victims (Hofhansel 1999). After Gerhard Schröder of the SPD took power in 1998, German government and industry reached an agreement on a \$5-billion fund to compensate former slave and forced labourers. As many as 500,000 Poles, the largest group among all the beneficiary countries, were eligible for the compensation.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Press Association, 2 August 1994.

<sup>8</sup>New York Times, 15 December 1999; 7 July 2000; 29 June 2001.

In Poland, the post-communist government ended censorship of mass media and launched reform of the history curriculum. The Basic Curriculum, signed into law in 1999, gave prominent coverage to the inglorious aspect of Soviet treatment of Poland during and after World War II and to Polish–Jewish relations, both previously taboo topics. In fact, the Basic Curriculum adopted the recommendations made by a Polish–Israeli Textbook Commission in 1995 on the treatment of Polish–Jewish relations in textbooks (Parker 2003, pp. 185–86, 191–204).

After 1989, the German–Polish Textbook Commission remained a major forum for formalised dialogue between German and Polish historians, now joined by historians from the former East Germany. From the mid-1990s, the commission began to examine topics related to Germany and Poland's relations with internal ethnic minorities and the peoples of neighbouring countries (Kondō 1998, pp. 139–48). A new teachers' manual published by the commission in 2001 spelt out its broader commitment to 'encourage a common European future based on universal values'.<sup>9</sup>

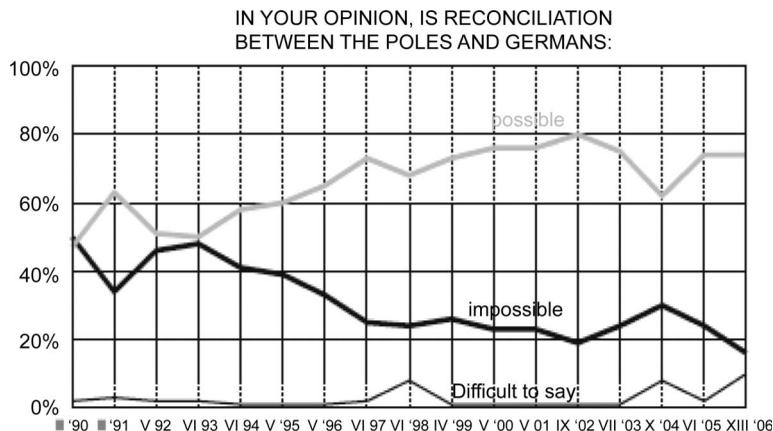
As a result of all these efforts, German and Polish memories have shown a high degree of convergence. This does not mean that Germans and Poles hold identical interpretations of every historical event. Actually, since the Cold War, German and Polish historians have had more debates than before, but because historians can be more outspoken and less 'tactical' in their dialogue, these debates have produced better cross-national understanding. Academic debates aside, German and Polish historians have joined hands in opposing renewed attempts at national mythmaking. For example, in response to the controversy over the Centre against Expulsions, the Polish–German Commission of Historians issued a joint declaration in September 2003 to support joint study of the expulsion issue in a broader European context (Müller 2004).

The warming of popular feeling between Germany and Poland testifies to the effect of historical settlement. In the early 1990s, Polish views about Germans remained largely negative. In a 1990 poll in Poland, as many as 70% of the respondents agreed with a popular Polish saying, 'Never in this world can a German be a brother to a Pole' (Nasalska 2000, p. 55). Prejudice against Poles was similarly strong in the newly unified Germany,<sup>10</sup> but later on, the situation improved considerably. Figure 1 shows that the percentage of Poles who thought reconciliation with Germany was possible increased significantly after the mid-1990s, reaching 80% in 2002. In 1997, the proportion of Poles who had negative feelings towards Germans dropped to 38%, from 53% in 1993. In 1996, most Poles felt no external threat; among those who did, the source of the potential threat was Russia or other former parts of the USSR (combined 57%), not the unified Germany (7%) (Nasalska 2000, p. 54). At the same time, Germans felt more sympathy than animosity towards Poles (Jedlicki 2005, p. 44) and were more willing to live cooperatively with Poles than before.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup>See the website of the Georg Eckert Institute, available at: <http://www.gei.de>, accessed 30 July 2010.

<sup>10</sup>*Newsweek*, 22 April 1991.

<sup>11</sup>*Der Spiegel* (Hamburg), 11 September 2000, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Eastern Europe (hereafter cited as FBIS-EEU).



Source: CBOS (Public Opinion Research Center, Poland), *Polish Public Opinion* (Bulletin), January 2006, available at: [http://www.cbos.pl/PL/publikacje/public\\_opinion/2006/01\\_2006.pdf](http://www.cbos.pl/PL/publikacje/public_opinion/2006/01_2006.pdf), accessed 5 May 2011.

FIGURE 1. POLISH POLLS: THE POSSIBILITY OF GERMAN–POLISH RECONCILIATION

Could such improvement have been driven solely by Poland's integration with the European community? While regional integration indeed nurtured affinity between Germans and Poles, given the heavy influence of historical memory on their mutual feelings, the current amity should be significantly credited to a reconciliation of memory. A 1996 Polish poll shows that as many as 47% of high school and university students thought that World War II history had a large impact on contemporary German–Polish relations, compared to only 10% who thought it had no impact (Nasalska 2000, p. 56). In 2000, 31% of Poles continued to associate Germans with the war and Nazi crimes, but at the same time 58% said they liked Germans.<sup>12</sup> This is because firm acknowledgment of German war responsibility has consoled and reassured Poles. Polish reaction to German commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising in 2004 is a good example. At the monument, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder expressed Germany's shame and appealed for reconciliation and peace. He then spoke at a news conference to oppose the Centre against Expulsions project and the restitution claims made against Poland by German expellees. A subsequent poll shows that 43% of Poles thought Schröder's words met the expectations connected with his Polish visit, compared to 25% who believed the opposite; also, as many as 85% of Poles said they felt no ill-will or hatred towards present-day Germans because of World War II.<sup>13</sup>

To categorise current German–Polish relations as approaching deep interstate reconciliation does not mean that the two nations have completely eliminated their traditional prejudices. Anti-Polish feeling is still strong in parts of former East Germany, ordinary Germans lack interest in Poland, and many Poles continue to view today's Germany through the lens of the past. Several historical issues remain

<sup>12</sup>PAP (Warsaw), 6 December 2000, in FBIS-EEU.

<sup>13</sup>PAP (Warsaw), 4 August 2004, in FBIS-EEU.

unresolved, moreover, including the German cultural property left behind in Poland after the war, the compensation claims by German expellees, and the controversial Centre against Expulsions (Feldman 2010b). The two nations' political relationship particularly soured from 2005, when the populist Kaczynski brothers took power in Poland and Chancellor Schröder was replaced by Angela Merkel of the CDU, who supported the Centre against Expulsions as part of her campaign promise. The Kaczynski brothers responded to Merkel's support of the Centre with a torrent of historically based criticism of Germany and refused to establish dialogue with Berlin to find a solution. History was once again used as a political tool: in a dispute over voting rights in the European Union, for example, Prime Minister Jarolsaw Kaczynski said, 'If Poland had not had to live through the years of 1939–1945, Poland would today be looking at the demographics of a country of 66 million'.<sup>14</sup>

When official ties reached this nadir, however, the foundation of reconciliation built through decades of tireless efforts remained solid. The Merkel government has reassured Poland that it does not support the compensation lawsuit brought by the expellee group Prussian Trust.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, the two societies have maintained a high degree of mutual acceptance. According to a 2006 survey, only 21% of Poles had concerns about Germany, compared to 60% who were concerned about Russia; 72% of Poles believed that Poland should 'aim for cooperation and reaching compromise' with Germany, compared to 20% who were 'determined to protect its own interests'. Also, the majority of Germans no longer see Poland as a backward country but rather as a dynamically developing one, and Germans and Poles are increasingly treated as normal citizens in each other's country.<sup>16</sup> The societal desire for cooperation is so strong that at the height of the official disputes the Polish media criticised the Kaczynski government for creating 'false stereotypes' about Germany and urged it to reopen bilateral dialogue.<sup>17</sup>

Bilateral relations have improved since Jaroslaw Kaczynski stepped down in 2007. The more moderate government of Donald Tusk has put on the table a number of initiatives, including the creation of a Polish–German meeting centre, a joint history textbook, and a World War II museum in Gdansk to be part of the European 'Memory and Solidarity' Network.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Poland stated in February 2008 that it would no longer oppose the Centre against Expulsions and that Polish historians may participate in the project.<sup>19</sup> Recently, this issue flared up again when the BdV insisted on putting Erika Steinbach, the most disliked German in Poland, on the board of the government-sponsored foundation for the expulsion museum. Under heavy pressure from Poland and within the Merkel government, however, Steinbach eventually withdrew her nomination for board membership (Feldman 2010a).

<sup>14</sup>*Spiegel Online*, 21 June 2007, available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,490014,00.html>, accessed 10 August 2010.

<sup>15</sup>*Spiegel Online*, 30 October 2006, available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,445513,00.html>, accessed 10 August 2010.

<sup>16</sup>*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2 August 2006.

<sup>17</sup>*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 11–12 March 2006.

<sup>18</sup>*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 10 December 2007; 15 December 2007.

<sup>19</sup>*Spiegel Online*, 6 February 2008, available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,533503,00.html>, accessed 10 August 2010.

Reconciliation is an open-ended, continuing process in which history will not be forgotten or stop being debated. Its political impact can be minimised, however, if the two sides agree on the fundamentals of a shared memory. Troubles may arise again between Germany and Poland, especially if individuals with strong personal visions like Steinbach or the Kaczynski twins come into play, but they need not derail the track of reconciliation; rather, they could be a 'productive irritant', which could prompt the two sides to reaffirm and authenticate their reconciliation (Feldman 2010b).

### *The case of Sino-Japanese relations*

#### *Historical animosity and post-war isolation*

As in the European case, post-war Sino-Japanese relations unfolded against a backdrop of long traumatic conflict, starting from the first Sino-Japanese War in 1894–1895. This conflict culminated in an immensely destructive war in 1937–1945, in which approximately 10 million Chinese people died and unknown millions of people were wounded.<sup>20</sup> Chinese people have vivid memories of horrendous Japanese war atrocities, including indiscriminate killing, raping, chemical and biological warfare, forced labour, and sexual slavery. In the incident known as the Nanjing Massacre, more than 200,000 Chinese civilians and prisoners of war were killed.<sup>21</sup> As for Japan, the nation lost over 3% of its total population, including 1.7 million members of the military and nearly 1 million civilians.

Today, many wounds from the war remain open. A large number of Japanese chemical shells left in China has killed or injured 2,000 Chinese since 1945.<sup>22</sup> The war also created sovereignty disputes over Taiwan, a former Japanese colony, and the Diaoyu or Senkaku Islands, which had been part of the Taiwan colony. It should be noted that the war was far more complicated than a struggle between Japanese invaders and Chinese patriots: secret diplomacy, puppet governments and numerous petty Chinese collaborators operated under the Japanese occupation. Also, like Poland, China was a victim in World War II, but its national history had inglorious aspects. The communist regime was oppressive and at times violent against the Chinese people, such as in the gigantic famine of 1959–1962 caused by the government's Great Leap policy, and in the tumultuous Cultural Revolution of 1966–1976.

<sup>20</sup>The nationalist government claims total Chinese military casualties to be 3.3 million and civilian casualties approximately 8.4 million (see Yin 1996, p. 384). The communist government traditionally claimed more than 21 million Chinese casualties, including 10 million deaths (see Information Office, State Council, People's Republic of China 1991). In a public speech in 1995, however, Chinese President Jiang Zemin increased the estimate of Chinese war casualties to 35 million (see Tian 1997, p. 948).

<sup>21</sup>The exact death toll of the Nanjing Massacre is still a subject of heated debate. The Tokyo War Crimes Trial put the number at 200,000, while the Nanjing War Crimes Trial held by the nationalist government in 1947 stated that 300,000 Chinese were killed, which is also the official figure maintained by the communist government (see Yang 1999).

<sup>22</sup>*Economist*, 5 April 1997.

After World War II, China and Japan also faced negative structural conditions for reconciliation. As the Cold War unfolded in Asia, China formed a security alliance with the USSR, while Japan signed a security treaty, the *Anpo*, with the United States and a peace treaty with the *Kuomintang* (KMT) nationalist regime in Taiwan, but not with communist China. Thus, the overriding international structure in Asia ruled out normal Sino-Japanese relations.

National mythmaking was prevalent in both countries. In order to boost prestige compromised by their inextricable ties with the wartime government and to mobilise public support for a pro-US international strategy, the Japanese conservative elite centred around the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) constructed three main national myths. The ‘myth of the military clique’ blamed a small group of military leaders for launching the war and asserted that the Japanese people were innocent victims of the war. The ‘Western-centric myth’ held Japan responsible for opening hostilities against the Western Allies but evaded taking responsibility for its aggression and atrocities in Asia. The ‘heroic sacrifice’ myth, finally, honoured imperial soldiers for having sacrificed themselves for the nation but did not discuss the fundamental mistakes of war policy or the atrocities committed by the military (He 2009). Japan’s progressive elites, often associated with the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP), Japanese Communist Party (JCP), and other left-wing organisations, were more forthright about Japanese war guilt, and they practised ‘history as opposition’ against the conservatives (Gluck 1993, p. 70). But their influence on national memory diminished as the JSP and JCP repeatedly lost in the political struggle against the LDP. Even the leftists shunned the question of the responsibility of ‘the people’, or Japan’s collective responsibility, and emphasised Japanese victimhood.

Chinese grand strategy at the time focused on counterbalancing the American threat and opposing the American-supported Taiwan regime. Towards Japan, Beijing carried out ‘People’s Diplomacy’, a semi-official diplomatic campaign aimed at reverting Tokyo’s diplomatic non-recognition. In line with these strategies, Chinese school textbooks magnified the role of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the national resistance campaign against Japan and condemned both the KMT for kowtowing to Japan and the United States for conniving to magnify Japanese aggression.<sup>23</sup> These narratives drew a line between ‘the small handful of Japanese militarists’ and ordinary Japanese people.<sup>24</sup> China’s soft tone echoed Japan’s myth of the military clique. Meanwhile, Beijing deliberately set aside its historiographic differences with Japan lest the Chinese people confuse Japan with their ‘true arch-enemies’, the KMT and America. Thus, ironically, the victim and perpetrator reached quasi-convergence of war memory, which, according to national mythmaking theory, should predict shallow reconciliation.

This prediction only captures the foreign policy preferences of China and Japan, however, not their relationship outcome—non-reconciliation—which is better explained by the realist power factor. At the time, both Chinese and Japanese leaders

<sup>23</sup>See Chuji Zhongxue Shiyong (1950), Chuji Zhongxue Benguo (1950), Zhongguo Xinminzhu Zhuyi (1956), Chuji Zhongxue Keben (1952, 1955), 9 Nian Yiguangzhi (1960), 12 Nian Zhi (1962), and Gaoji Zhongxue Keben (1953, 1957, 1965).

<sup>24</sup>Premier Zhou Enlai’s toast speech at the welcoming banquet for Prime Minister Tanaka, 25 September 1972 (Tian 1997, pp. 103–4).

desired diplomatic normalisation, but concerted pressure from the United States, Taiwan and the Taiwan lobby in Japan prevented Tokyo from recognising the Beijing regime. Furthermore, the Cold War structure rather than historical memory accounted for the poor popular images China and Japan held of one another. Chinese public opinion was largely manipulated by strategically oriented government propaganda, although reinforced by war memory, whereas Japanese feeling was shaped by disgust with the communist ideology, fear of Chinese power, and concerns about war entanglement (He 2009).

*The 1970s: a lost chance for historical settlement*

Again similar to the European case, a favourable international environment for reconciliation emerged in the 1970s when the Sino-Soviet split and Sino-American rapprochement turned China and Japan from adversaries to quasi-allies facing a common Soviet enemy. China and Japan normalised diplomatic relations in 1972 and signed the Peace and Friendship Treaty in 1978. Bilateral trade grew nine-fold in one decade, and Japan's low-interest loans to China starting from 1979 brought China much-needed capital and advanced technologies.<sup>25</sup>

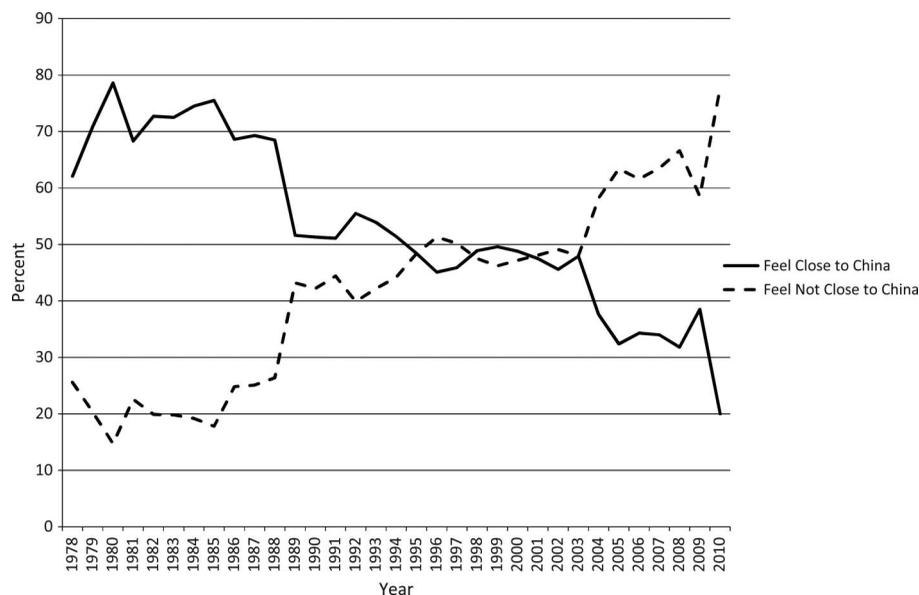
Yet overall, the bilateral relationship progressed only to shallow reconciliation–rapprochement, falling short of deep interstate reconciliation. Mutual expectations of war became moderate but never disappeared, because China was constantly alert about the Japanese military threat, and Sino-Japanese security cooperation was kept at a minimal level. The nations' economic interdependence was also limited, as Japanese foreign development aid to China was negligible and trade in strategic areas was virtually absent. The two governments temporarily compromised on the Taiwan controversy and suspended the Diaoyu–Senkaku Island dispute, but they did not solve them permanently. At the popular level, prior Japanese antipathy to communist China was replaced by a feeling of closeness (see Figure 2). The shortage of Chinese opinion data and absence of free public discussion make it difficult to gauge the feeling of ordinary Chinese, and one could make the case that they merely kept negative emotions to themselves in the face of the sweeping government propaganda in favour of Sino-Japanese friendship.<sup>26</sup> At least one thing is certain: despite many high-profile gestures of goodwill following normalisation, genuine mutual understanding was lacking. Popular friendship, if any, was built upon romantic imagination and manipulation of propaganda rather than personal judgment.

Several factors account for these limitations in bilateral cooperation.<sup>27</sup> Unlike West Germany and Poland, which took the golden opportunity under *détente* to address

<sup>25</sup>Japan Ministry of International Trade and Industry (1949 onwards), *Tsūshō Hakusho* (Tokyo, Ōkurashō Insatsukyoku), cited 1972–1981 data.

<sup>26</sup>Zhou Enlai revised an 'Internal Propaganda Outline for Receiving Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka to China' drafted by the Chinese Foreign Ministry in August 1972, and had it circulated to the party organisations above the county level and verbally explained to every family in about 20 cities before or shortly after Tanaka's visit (see Wan 2006, p. 100).

<sup>27</sup>Other restraining factors include Japan's fear of provoking the USSR by forming a tight security relationship with China, the pro-Taiwan lobby in Japan, and the CoCom (Coordination Committee for Multilateral Export Controls) restrictions on Japan's trade with socialist countries.



Source: Cabinet Secretariat of the Japanese Prime Minister, *Seron Chōsa Nenkan* [Opinion Polls Yearbooks] (1978–2010) (Tokyo, Okurashō Insatsukyoku).

FIGURE 2. JAPANESE PUBLIC FEELING OF CLOSENESS TOWARDS CHINA, 1978–2010

their mutual historical legacy, China and Japan were satisfied with a façade of friendship and made no historical settlement. When visiting Beijing to seal the normalisation deal, Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei spoke of ‘deep reflection’ on the ‘great trouble that Japan brought to the Chinese people during an unfortunate period’ in history, but he did not say what exactly happened during that ‘unfortunate period’ or use the word ‘apology’.<sup>28</sup> Regarding war reparations, China waived all claims against Japan upon normalisation. This agreement, reached for the sake of political expediency, created great legal challenges later when the question resurfaced. Moreover, all Japanese prime ministers during the period 1972–1981 worshiped at the Yasukuni Shrine, a Shintoist temple in Tokyo dedicated to the spirit of Japanese war dead, which suggested Japan’s refusal to accept the inglorious acts of its soldiers. In China, history textbooks published in 1978 continued to glorify the role of the CCP during the war and condemned the KMT (Quanrizhi 10 Nian 1978). The myth of the distinction between Japanese militarists and ordinary Japanese people remained intact and was now used to justify diplomatic normalisation. Finally, no cross-national

<sup>28</sup>Prime Minister Tanaka’s toast speech at the banquet hosted by Premier Zhou Enlai, 25 September 1972 (Tian 1997, p. 105). The Sino-Japanese Joint Communiqué of Diplomatic Normalization also used the word ‘deep reflection’ (Tian 1997, pp. 110–11).

textbook cooperation efforts took place. Overall, Chinese and Japanese war narratives remained quasi-convergent.

As old myths persisted, so did Chinese grievances and mistrust towards Japan, which were evident in Beijing's uneasy acceptance of Japanese defence build-up and *Anpo*. In his first secret visit to China in July 1971, US National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger took pains to promise Beijing that Japanese rearmament was in response to the Soviet threat and was not intended to threaten China (Christensen 1998, pp. 33–34). In an interview with journalist James Reston shortly afterwards, Premier Zhou Enlai nonetheless continued to express concern about Japanese power and blamed the United States for propping up Japan and placing it on an expansionist trajectory.<sup>29</sup> US President Richard Nixon had to reassure Beijing in his 1972 visit that it was in the common interest of China and the United States to maintain an American military presence in Japan (Nixon 1978, p. 567). Even after diplomatic normalisation, Chinese political elites remained alert for Japanese militarism. Zhou's internal party report of March 1973 crystallised China's paradoxical attitude towards Japan:

If it [Japan] becomes completely reliant on America's military protection, it is clear that America will hold the economic throat of Japan. Therefore Japan has no choice but to develop its own military power. But with military buildup there is the worry that Japan may walk down the old path of militarism!<sup>30</sup>

Historical grievances also spoiled the atmosphere for economic cooperation. Chae-jin Lee observed in his seminal study of the Baoshan Steel project, a symbol of Sino-Japanese friendship in the late 1970s, that anti-Japanese bias was obvious among China's economists and high-ranking economic bureaucrats (Lee 1984). When China unilaterally decided to cancel the contracts for the second-phase construction in 1980, the Japanese government had to put together a loan package to keep the project going. Beijing believed Japan's concession was natural, given that Japan owed China a historical debt for its wartime aggression (Tanaka 1991, p. 114).

#### *The 1980s: the re-emergence of estrangement*

During the 1980s, the Soviet threat to China and Japan persisted; Soviet pressure on China only receded from 1988, when the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev began to remove what Beijing saw as the 'three obstacles' to Sino-Soviet rapprochement.<sup>31</sup> Japanese–Soviet relations were also strained by heavy Soviet military deployment in the Far East and by their territorial disputes. Despite the continuity of a common threat, Sino-Japanese security cooperation was further downgraded (Glaubitz 1984, p. 231). Chinese official statements retracted earlier support for *Anpo* and Japanese military build-up (Cheng 1984/1985, p. 96). When Japan broke the 1% GNP ceiling for defence spending in 1987, the Chinese media warned that it was seeking the status

<sup>29</sup>*New York Times*, 10 August 1971.

<sup>30</sup>Shū Onlai Kokusai Jōsei ni Kansuru Himitsu Ensetsu', *Chūō Kōron*, November 1976, p. 174.

<sup>31</sup>The three obstacles were Soviet military deployment in Mongolia and along the Sino-Soviet border, support for Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia, and military intervention in Afghanistan.

of a military great power (Yasuda 1987, p. 97). Sovereignty disputes over Taiwan also flared up, particularly in the *Kōkaryō* incident in 1987.<sup>32</sup> Bilateral trade volume doubled during 1982–1985, yet from 1985 Beijing began to politicise the issue of China's trade deficit with Japan. Additionally, anti-Japanese student demonstrations erupted in China in 1985–1987, and around 1986 Japanese popular feeling of closeness to China dropped for the first time since 1982 (Figure 2). Generally, post-normalisation cordiality was replaced by frequent political disputes and simmering popular antipathy, indicating a downturn from rapprochement to friction in the stage of shallow reconciliation.

The main cause of the deterioration was the advent of bilateral memory disputes. In this period, Japanese conservative elites continued national mythmaking to shake off the war stigma and justify a more muscular international strategy. Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro's official worship at Yasukuni on 15 August 1985, exemplified their desire to restore national pride using history as a tool, but the conservative historiography encountered strong domestic and international objections. The political battle was particularly intense over history textbooks. In order to suppress leftist influence, the conservative *Mombushō* tightened the textbook authorisation process. At the end of June 1982, Japanese media reported that *Mombushō* had issued instructions for whitewashing the historical record in textbooks, thus eliciting formal protests from China and South Korea, and launching a textbook controversy.

In the meantime, the Chinese government faced post-Cultural Revolution socio-economic difficulties, a burgeoning democracy movement, and political cleavages within the CCP. Beijing seized the opportunity of the textbook controversy to boost patriotism at home and appease the conservative faction within the CCP (He 2007). After the incident, Chinese school education shifted from emphasising CCP–KMT confrontation to considering the conflicts between the Chinese nation and those foreign nations that had invaded China in the past, especially Japan. Meanwhile, the government passed a lenient verdict on Mao Zedong's legacy and covered up the CCP's atrocities against innocent Chinese people (Friedman 2008). Although the two governments still maintained the old myth of the military clique, their memory disagreements, especially regarding Japanese war crimes, Chinese suffering, and the role of the Japanese military, were publicised. In this way, Sino-Japanese historical narratives became no longer quasi-convergent but instead openly conflictual.

The increasing divergence in memory worsened mutual popular feelings. Chinese student demonstrations against Japan were largely provoked by the textbook controversy and Nakasone's Yasukuni visit. Chinese protests in turn elicited frustration among the Japanese public, who remembered the war as a miserable experience for themselves but largely filtered out the memory of Japan's wrongdoings in China. Allen Whiting suggests that the decline in favourable Japanese attitudes towards China between June 1985 and October 1986 was evidence of Japanese resentment of the anti-Japanese fervour in China (Whiting 1989, p. 196).

Further, Chinese elites were seriously concerned about the security implications of the perceived Japanese denial of war responsibility. During the 1982 textbook

<sup>32</sup>*Kōkaryō* is a dormitory building in Tokyo purchased by Taiwan in 1952. Diplomatic friction with China erupted after Japanese courts ruled that Taiwan, not China, owned *Kōkaryō*.

controversy, the Chinese official media voiced concerns about the possibility of a Japanese militarist revival (Tian 1997, pp. 357–58, 371–75). Strategic analysts also linked Japan's history with predictions for the future, as in this statement by He Fang, a leading Chinese expert on international relations:

There has been a flood of great-nation chauvinist sentiments in Japan, personified by the denial of responsibility for the aggressive war, reversion of historical verdict, and even revival of the old dream of 'Japanese Empire' . . . . This trend, if allowed to continue, will not only hamper Sino-Japanese friendship and peace in Asia and damage Japan's international image, but also bring Japan down the road of militarism, the danger of which has been testified to in the past. (He 1987, p. 6)

The Chinese sense of entitlement on the basis of history and Japanese rejection of it were evident in bilateral disputes. In the Taiwan controversy, China held Japan responsible for Taiwan's severance from the motherland and argued that it was Japan's duty to assist in Chinese national unification. In economic disputes, China was inclined to take Japanese concessions for granted on historical grounds. This attitude was reflected in Chinese premier Deng Xiaoping's statement on 4 June 1987, linking China's decision to renounce war reparations to current bilateral economic friction (Kazankai 1998, p. 707).

Is it possible that Beijing did not believe in the connection between history and current disputes but simply used history for purposes of diplomatic extortion? The evidence is mixed. Chinese leaders indeed brought up Japan's past aggression more frequently during bilateral disputes and transmitted the message to the Japanese side, but China's international affairs experts emphasised Japan's historical attitudes across the decade, and their works were published in academic and policy journals meant to advise Chinese policy-makers, not the Japanese government. If bilateral tensions were purely caused by China playing the 'history card', moreover, the Chinese government should have been able to manipulate popular sentiment whenever it was required by diplomatic bargaining. Such was not the case. The anti-Japanese student demonstrations not only condemned 'Japanese economic aggression' but also pointed to the lack of democracy in China as the reason for social-economic problems (Whiting 1989, p. 73). Beijing had to co-opt the students by maintaining a tough position on Japan. At the time, the reformist party general secretary, Hu Yaobang, was eager to obtain Japanese assistance with Chinese modernisation. The abrupt shift to a harsh policy towards Japan would not have been possible if public pressure had not tipped the balance of power to favour his conservative opponents. The deeper cause of Hu's downfall in 1987 lay in the intraparty power struggle, but the student demonstrations exacerbated his political vulnerability and undermined a conciliatory policy towards Japan (Wakamiya 1998, p. 176).

#### *Diverging paths: the post-Cold War era*

The trajectories of the Asian and European cases, which unfolded largely in parallel through the 1980s, diverged after the Cold War. German–Polish relations progressed towards deep interstate reconciliation, while Sino-Japanese relations stagnated in

shallow reconciliation—friction marked by renewed sovereignty disputes over Taiwan, offshore islands and maritime rights; politicisation of Japanese aid policy to China; and a downward spiral in popular image (Green & Self 1996; Wan 2006, pp. 109–10).

*Realpolitik* factors—the collapse of the USSR, uneven growth of the Chinese and Japanese economies, China’s rapid military modernisation, and Japan’s new international activism—all appeared at the beginning of the decade, but the bilateral relationship did not worsen until the mid-1990s. Moreover, mainstream Japanese policy makers and strategic analysts did not perceive China as an immediate military threat (Takamine 2005, p. 443) and Chinese international specialists were largely confident about China’s power advantage over Japan.<sup>33</sup> Neither was the intensity of bilateral disputes warranted by the limited interests at stake. While Beijing and Tokyo’s preferences for Taiwan’s legal status might differ, both desired a stable, peaceful Pacific Rim for sea-lane safety and overseas market access. The disputed offshore islands also lacked economic or strategic significance (He 2008).

These puzzles suggest that other forces, in addition to structural conditions, also mattered. One important factor was the further escalation of the Sino-Japanese memory clash. Japan witnessed a number of political battles over war memory in the 1990s. On the one hand, after the death of Emperor Hirohito in 1989 there was a trend to revisit World War II history and discuss the dark side of Japan’s past more frankly (Hein & Selden 2000, pp. 24–25). On the other hand, any attempts to explicitly acknowledge or apologise for Japanese aggression incurred fierce objections from Japanese conservatives and right-wingers. Japanese officials made a number of apologies during this period, but hedging and prevaricating were common (Lind 2008; Dudden 2008). In August 1993, Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro described Japanese war history using the phrase ‘war of aggression’, but domestic pressure soon forced him to change his wording to ‘acts of aggression’ (Yoshida 1998, pp. 2–5). At the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, Japan’s first socialist prime minister in 46 years, Murayama Tomiichi, admitted Japan’s ‘aggression and colonial rule’ and issued a ‘heartfelt apology’ to Asian nations. This rather impressive apology was overshadowed, however, by vociferous quarrels over Murayama’s initiative to pass a Diet resolution stating an official apology. A compromise Diet resolution placed Japanese colonialism and aggression in the larger context of the ‘modern history’ of imperialism and used the phrase ‘deep remorse’ rather than ‘apology’. When voting on the resolution, half of the Diet members abstained because they either wanted a stronger apology or felt the statement apologised too much (Dower 1995, pp. 8–10).

Japanese textbooks since the mid-1980s gradually increased their treatment of Japanese atrocities and of the war suffering of other Asian people, yet the textbook screening authority and publishers managed to dilute statements about Japanese war responsibility (Barnard 2001; Tawara 2000). The 1990s also saw an upsurge of Japanese historical revisionism that refuted the aggressive nature of the war. A typical manifestation was a controversial textbook compiled by the right-wing Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Tsukuru Kai*), which has been approved for use

<sup>33</sup>Author’s interviews with six government officials, one diplomat and 16 academics specialising in international relations in Beijing and Shanghai, 10–25 May 2006. Interviewees were assured of anonymity.

since 2001. A number of LDP politicians at the national and local levels joined the Tsukuru Kai, giving it a disproportionately strong influence (Saaler 2005, pp. 69–89). As for war redress, Tokyo maintained the position that all war reparations issues had been resolved by post-war international treaties. Even when government responsibility was obvious, as in the matter of ‘comfort women’, Tokyo refused to provide state compensation.

International media publicised the intense memory contestation in Japan, especially the voices of the more vocal and well-funded right-wingers. The official approval of revisionist textbooks and politicians’ remarks glossing over Japanese aggression greatly incited Chinese anger, but the provocation from the Japanese side was only one reason for the rekindling of bilateral history disputes: China also redoubled its efforts to promote a nationalist ideology in this period (Jones 2003, pp. 559–62; Zhao 1998). After its violent crackdown on the 1989 democratic movement, the CCP’s prestige tumbled, and communism lost credibility as China’s official ideology. Chinese popular dissatisfaction with what seemed a corrupt, incompetent state was so intense that it sparked numerous mass demonstrations and even violent riots (Bonnin 2000; Perry 1999). Lashing out at Japan’s historical memory, Beijing depicted Japan as an immoral ‘other’ and thus restored the internal cohesion of the ‘self’, the Chinese nation. Textbooks and war memorials now singled out the Sino-Japanese War of 1931–1945 as the most important military and political conflict in modern Chinese history. Coverage of Japanese war atrocities expanded considerably, providing concrete figures of fatalities, gruesome photos, and even names of victimised villages and individuals (9 Nian Yiwu 1995; 9 Nian Zhi 1996; Yiwu Jiaoyu Kechen 2001; Gaoji Zhongxue Keben 1995; Quanrizhi Putong Gaoji 2003).

Diplomatically, Beijing held fire against Japan when under Western sanctions for its actions on 4 June 1989. High-profile bilateral contacts, culminating in the exchange of visits by President Jiang Zemin and Emperor Akihito in 1992, were critical for Beijing to return to a good footing in international society. But the short interval of Sino-Japanese friendship ended in the mid-1990s when Beijing stepped up patriotic education and resumed history polemics against Japan, for example by attacking Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō’s worship at Yasukuni in 1996 and criticising Japan’s historical attitude when Jiang visited Japan in 1998. The history issue escalated again from 2001, when Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō began an annual worship at Yasukuni. In protest, Beijing suspended mutual state visits and again pressured Japan to adopt ‘a correct historical view’.

The intensifying memory clash exacerbated the nations’ mutual perception of threat. Content analysis of articles and books by Chinese international experts published during 1990–1997 on Japan’s current policy and future trends shows that the history factor weighed particularly heavily from 1995 (He 1998). Similarly, a keyword search in the China Academic Journals database of analytical articles on Japan published in 2004–2005 clearly suggests that a significant proportion of Chinese analysts were concerned about the implications of surging Japanese historical nationalism for Japan’s strategic intentions (He 2008). The Japanese in turn rejected China’s logic on the topic of history, believing instead that a dangerous nationalistic trend was growing in China. The Japanese also felt that China intentionally used the history card either to scapegoat Japan for domestic political reasons or to seize the

high moral ground and relegate Japan to a subordinate position (Miyamoto 1998, p. 145; Yang 2002).

The history issue was one of the main causes of the mutually deteriorating popular image. A 2004 public opinion poll revealed that only 6.3% of Chinese respondents felt close to Japan, while 53.6% felt not close; when asked why they felt not close to Japan, the most selected answers were 'Japan has not done real self-reflection on its history of aggression against China' (61.7%) and 'Japan invaded China in modern history' (26%), compared to only a small portion of respondents (6.9%) who answered 'because Japan formed a military alliance with the US and posed a security threat to China' (Jiang 2004). As for Japanese public opinion, in addition to the post-1989 downturn caused by the 4 June incident, two declines in the Japanese feeling of closeness to China, one in the mid-1990s and one in 2001, coincide with Japanese frustration with the perceived Chinese obsession with history (Figure 2). A 1999 Japanese poll showed that the most-selected policy recommendation for Beijing to improve bilateral relations was to 'put an end to the "history issue" with Japan' (34.8%).<sup>34</sup> In 2005, mass protests against Japanese textbooks and Koizumi's Yasukuni visits erupted in China. In a poll of the Japan Junior Chamber, whose members did business in China and South Korea, 79% of respondents advocated 'not to listen to the Chinese and ROK demands', and 72% faulted the Japanese government for 'failing to take a firm stance'.<sup>35</sup>

The negative public mood translated into pressure on both governments to take a hard-line policy in dealing with bilateral disputes. Due to the rapid opening up of Chinese society from the 1990s, the government paid greater attention to public opinion, presumably to avoid going against the general tide of public sentiment. In the author's interviews with China's foreign policy elites in May 2006, the majority of interviewees expressed caution about what they could say in public about Japan, lest they personally become targets of popular nationalism. As for the Japanese government, while it frequently gave in to Chinese pressure in the 1980s, such 'kowtow diplomacy' suffered greater domestic criticism as public feeling about China deteriorated. A Japanese poll taken shortly after an island crisis in 1996 shows that 45.6% of respondents thought the government attitude was lukewarm and weak-kneed, compared to 26.8% who thought the *status quo* was fine and only 7% who believed Japan should make concessions.<sup>36</sup> Public pressure was also an important reason behind the Japanese decision to overhaul its overseas development aid policy towards China and phase out new loans by 2008 (Takamine 2002), as well as behind diplomatic wrangling with China over the East China Sea gas field disputes in 2004–2006 (He 2008). In September 2010, a new diplomatic row erupted when the Japanese Coast Guard detained the captain of a Chinese fishing boat near the disputed islands. Coinciding with the anniversary of an incident on 18 September 1931, when Japan began its annexation of China's Manchuria, this event once again riled anti-Japanese

<sup>34</sup>Yomiuri national survey, August 1999, in, Cabinet Secretariat of Japanese Prime Minister (2000, p. 492).

<sup>35</sup>*Sankei Shimbun*, 18 April 2005, Foreign Broadcast Information Service Translated Text, available via *World News Connection*.

<sup>36</sup>Poll by Jiji Tsushinsha, November 1996, in Cabinet Secretariat of Japanese Prime Minister (1997, p. 562).

nationalist sentiment in China, which effectively ruled out any concessions on the part of the Chinese government. China's hard-line policy in turn inflamed Japanese popular anger, increased the perception of the threat from China in Japan, and imposed heavy pressure on the Japanese government to stand up firmly against China.<sup>37</sup> Thus, to the present day, historical memory continues to bedevil Sino-Japanese relations, and the two nations remain in a state of shallow reconciliation.

### *Conclusions*

A history of conflict does not doom states to future conflict. Instead, how the memory of the conflict is constructed and manipulated significantly affects the likelihood of reconciliation. In the wake of World War II, a historical shadow loomed over both German–Polish and Sino-Japanese relations. Today, the Germans and Poles have finally approached deep reconciliation, whereas the Chinese and Japanese remain quite far from reaching the goal. Why did Germany and Poland handle the negative legacy in their national histories so differently from China and Japan?

Although similar in many respects after World War II, the two cases differed notably in terms of their domestic political structure (He 2009). Post-war German political institutions were less implicated in war guilt than those in Japan, so government leaders had little personal stake in exposing the Nazi history, and no mainstream politicians would deny Nazi crimes (Herf 2008). In Japan, the purge of militarists was less strict than the de-Nazification campaign in Germany, and after the Cold War began the United States supported a conservative regime that had deep connections to the wartime Japanese government. Another domestic difference lies in the education system. The Allies retained the pre-war federalist education system in the FRG to thwart any renewed totalitarian control of education, whereas in Japan the US occupation authorities failed to decentralise the education system. So from the 1960s, progressive education reform was able to emerge in a few German states and later successfully spread to other states. Such localised reform was impossible under the centralised textbook certification system in Japan.

From the late 1960s, three sociopolitical factors facilitated a trend of historical settlement in West German–Polish relations. First, in pursuit of national reunification the FRG had to secure a friendly relationship with the Eastern bloc countries so that they would tolerate closer connections between the two Germanys. Second, a sizable segment of German elites, mostly Social Democrats, advocated that confrontation with the past was essential to building a solid moral foundation for German democracy. Third, non-state actors in Germany, such as Catholic churches, private foundations and youth exchange NGOs, functioned 'as catalysts, complements, conduits, or competitors' to the state efforts at reconciliation (Feldman 2007). These

<sup>37</sup>A Japanese poll in mid-September 2010 shows that 90% of respondents think Japan should clearly advocate its sovereignty over the islands and 84% say they cannot trust China. See *Yomiuri Online*, 4 October 2010, available at: <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/news/20101004-OYT1T00171.htm?from=top>, accessed 4 October 2010. A survey conducted by the Japanese government in October 2010 also shows that Japanese feeling of closeness to China dropped to its lowest point since the 1970s; see Figure 2.

three conditions were lacking in Japan. Japan was never compelled by a national unification goal to seek reconciliation with other Asian countries. Its left-wing opposition was substantially weaker than the conservative forces and also lacked a distinctive, consistent moral agenda. In addition, Japanese civil society was underdeveloped, and very few Japanese NGOs consciously strove for reconciliation.

In addition, two factors that emerged in the 1990s contributed to the deep reconciliation between the unified Germany and Poland. One was Poland's integration with the European community, which greatly facilitated its exchanges with Germany and fostered their common European identity. In comparison, the Asian regional order remained fragmented. Recent efforts at Asian community-building have been impeded by the failure of major players like China and Japan to resolve their disagreements, including that over war memory.<sup>38</sup> So instead of counting on a regional community to facilitate a shared memory, in Asia regional community cannot consolidate in the absence of a shared memory. Another new phenomenon is that Poland successfully democratised, so the regime no longer relied on national mythmaking to unify and mobilise the nation. Chinese politics from the 1980s onward, on the other hand, combined weak regime legitimacy with internal disunity and social unrest and a highly manipulated marketplace of information and ideas. These have provided a fertile soil for nationalistic propaganda to thrive. It should be noted, however, that democratisation is not the only explanation for the change of historical view in Poland. German politics of reconciliation to a great extent neutralised Poles' obsession with their victimhood and encouraged them to reflect on their own wrongdoing towards other nations and the Jews of their own nation. In contrast, Japan's failure to face up to its past continued to add insult to injury from the Chinese viewpoint and reinforced Chinese national myths 'othering' Japan.

Last but not least, the philosophic and moral inclinations of political entrepreneurs can play a critical role in steering national remembering and forgetting. Case studies show that some government leaders, like Mao, Adenauer, and Koizumi, presided over national mythmaking with little concern about historical truth or its moral and international consequences; other leaders, like Brandt and Weizsäcker, attached great importance to presenting an honest history, upholding justice, and fulfilling the moral responsibility of their nation. The difference between these two types of elites may be ascribed to their personalities, ethical principles, ideologies for nation building, and worldviews.

The main theoretical implication of this study is that international relations scholarship should allow a major role for ideational factors, such as historical memory, in addition to material power factors. So far, the literature on the influence of historical ideas over international behaviour is thin. This study shows that a certain degree of compatibility between states' security interests is useful to enabling the reconciliation process. Even in the European case, the trend of historical settlement did not emerge until *détente* created a more relaxed external environment for the FRG and Poland to develop formal contacts. While shared material interests facilitate deep reconciliation, however, they do not automatically produce it. The Chinese and

<sup>38</sup> *Asahi.com*, 8 March 2006, available at: <http://www.asahi.com/english/Herald-asahi/TKY20060300137.html>, accessed 8 March 2006.

Japanese governments were able to create a friendly atmosphere in the 1970s through propaganda campaigns, but deep interstate reconciliation was lacking because of the persistence of pernicious national myths. In the 1980s, they still faced a common Soviet threat, but their bilateral relationship was seriously strained by the escalation of history disputes. In short, forging memory harmonisation is a critical step to deep interstate reconciliation that cannot be bypassed.

The Sino-Japanese relationship has become warmer in recent years thanks to the restraint of both governments. After the anti-Japanese protests in 2005, a Chinese propaganda campaign of 'recasting Japan' took place, which resulted in considerable expansion of favourable coverage of Japan in both official and commercial media (Reilly 2011). Chinese leaders have also refrained from attacking Japan on the history issue but have instead spoken positively about Japan's contribution to China's economic development.<sup>39</sup> In Japan, no incumbent Japanese prime ministers since Koizumi have visited the Yasukuni Shrine; Hatoyama Yukio and Kan Naoto of the first government of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), created in September 2009, make their entire cabinet stay away from the controversial shrine. The DPJ government has also proposed to create a secular memorial service to honour the war dead.

While government restraint can temporarily insulate diplomatic ties from the history issue, in the long run a fundamental historical settlement is needed to ensure genuine reconciliation. Despite official goodwill gestures, the Chinese and Japanese still lack mutual confidence and a sense of closeness, and the historical legacy is an important cause of this.<sup>40</sup> Within Japan, memory contestation between the conservatives and progressives remains intense, and even the conservatives are split, such as over Koizumi's shrine visits. Koizumi's conservative critics include several former prime ministers from the LDP and the editor-in-chief of the powerful newspaper *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Watanabe Tsuneo.<sup>41</sup> But these critics are concerned more with pragmatic interests than with a long-term vision about reconciliation, and no elite or popular consensus to accept Japanese war responsibility has emerged from the debates. In a 2006 Japanese poll, 31% of respondents reported that they think Japan took part in a war of aggression, compared to only 7% who believe the war was for self-defence, but another 45% answered that 'the war had both aspects'. Most of the Japanese people polled agree that Japan has not apologised or compensated enough for the war damages it caused other countries, yet 63% also 'do not feel uncomfortable' with the Yasukuni Shrine even though it enshrines Class A war criminals, and 50% agree that the Japanese prime minister should visit the shrine (compared to 31% who disagree). Also, 51% think the government should not take the Chinese and South Korean criticism of Koizumi's shrine visits seriously.<sup>42</sup> Polling data demonstrate that Japanese views about the nature of the war and its

<sup>39</sup>*New York Times*, 13 April 2007; *Japan Times*, 5 May 2008.

<sup>40</sup>*Japan Times*, 16 August 2010; also see Figure 2.

<sup>41</sup>*Japan Times*, 23 November 2005; *Newsweek International*, 6 February 2006.

<sup>42</sup>Tokyo Trials Poll, *Asahi Shimbun*, 2 May 2006, available via the Mansfield Asian Opinion Poll Database at: <http://www.mansfieldfdn.org/polls/index.htm>, accessed 20 August 2010.

responsibility are still ambiguous and deeply divided, and the gap between Japanese and Chinese war memory is wide.

Drawing on the lessons from German–Polish relations, it may be suggested that China and Japan would benefit from restitution and joint history study to harmonise their historical memory. Regarding the former, Hatoyama proposed a diplomatic concept of ‘East Asia community’ based on reconciliation that was well received in China and other Asian countries. The DPJ government is also more forthcoming in offering contrition, as evinced in Kan’s apology to South Korea on 10 August 2010, for Japan’s brutal colonial rule of Korea.<sup>43</sup> The DPJ’s gestures remain inadequate, however, for example in lacking any response to the compensation demands of former ‘comfort women’ and forced labourers, and they may again be imperilled by domestic backlash.<sup>44</sup>

On transnational history cooperation, three lessons can be learned from the case studies. One is that joint history projects usually cannot proceed smoothly without government support, either financially or politically, but that the dialogue itself is best carried out not by government officials but by professional historians, who are relatively impervious to pressures towards the instrumental use of history. Second, historians should not just criticise the biases of the other country’s historical narrative but also conduct serious self-criticism regarding the national myths in their own nation’s history writing. Finally, the findings of transnational historians’ dialogues should be incorporated into school curricula in each country to institutionalise a shared memory.

The Chinese and Japanese governments indeed launched a project of joint history study in 2006, which is a significant step forward from the sporadic historians’ dialogues of the mid-1980s that lacked official endorsement. Not ready to write a single narrative, the project committee, made up of historians from China and Japan, decided to have each side submit its own version of bilateral history. The Chinese and Japanese reports released in January 2010 reveal that the two nations’ historical memories remain divergent in many ways, disagreeing sharply, for example, over the number of Nanjing Massacre victims, the causes of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, and their interpretation of post-war history. Also, Chinese narratives of the war place stronger emphasis on Japanese war crimes and Chinese suffering, while Japanese papers focus more on explaining the domestic and international context in which the war took place. Nevertheless, both sides use the word ‘aggression’ and explicitly acknowledge Japanese victimisation of China during the war. Additionally, Japanese reports not only cover the Nanjing Massacre but also mention the three-all policy (kill all, burn all, destroy all) of the Japanese military in China, although they neglect the subjects of comfort women, forced labour, and Japan’s biological warfare. These are encouraging signs showing that memory harmonisation is not an impossible task.

As Japanese foreign minister Okada Katsuya says, ‘Even if there may have been differences in views, especially in modern and contemporary history, I think common

<sup>43</sup>*New York Times*, 10 August 2010.

<sup>44</sup>Japan’s conservative media has characterised Kan’s apology as masochistic. See *Sankai News*, 11 August 2010.

understanding can gradually be nurtured by working on it'.<sup>45</sup> The two sides have agreed to begin the next stage of history cooperation soon. Furthermore, Okada has proposed for China, Japan and South Korea to write a common history textbook, with joint history study being the first step towards this goal. The project will almost certainly be a 'long-term and painstaking' one, considering that these countries have quarrelled over history for decades.<sup>46</sup> If China and Japan are to follow the German–Polish example, however, they need to exercise an extraordinary amount of patience, dedication, and resilience.

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