


What are some significant factors that affect the prejudice between east Asian countries, China, Japan, and Korea specifically?



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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this paper is to discuss factors that affect prejudice between China, Japan, and Korea will be discussed. The primarily negative relationship between these East Asian countries has been impacting the lives of citizens throughout history, especially now, with the help of social media. Harmful stereotypes such as “cold and unreliable Japanese”, “untrustworthy Chinese”, and “culture stealing Koreans” cause discourse such as the Chinese people rejecting aid that the Japanese government sent during COVID-19, the school textbooks that paint each other in a negative light by using “fake history”, and fights that often break out between Chinese, Japanese, and Korean people on social media. Through researching articles previously written on this subject, I found that some factors that might affect the prejudice between these three East Asia countries are views of historical animosity, such as atrocities committed by Japan in World War II and Imperial Japan’s invasions, political needs within the countries, and current military advances including the fight of claim over the Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea. Ultimately, these stereotypes and prejudice are not backed by any scientific reasoning, being mostly motivated by amplified emotions caused by propaganda. This paper seeks to shed light on the prejudices that affect the relationship between Chinese, Japanese, and Korean people and help them understand each other better, which is the first step towards dispelling unreasonable stereotypes. Sources from various East Asian and Western perspectives will be examined in tandem to alleviate the possible bias present in the analysis.

Contribution/ Originality: This research contributes an overview of the mutual prejudice and bias present in the countries of China, Korea, and Japan. It highlights the importance of genuine dialogue among the citizens of these three countries and advocates for future research investigating the impacts of stereotypes on trust between the East Asians.

1. INTRODUCTION

Prejudice, mainly due to negative stereotypes, has long influenced the complex relationships between three East Asian countries: China, Japan, and Korea. Recently, more than ever, the prejudice between these three countries has given rise to incidents such as hate group protests and social media clashes. One of these prominent hate groups is Zaitoku-kai, a hate group based in Japan that focuses on discriminating against Korean people who live in Japan. While they were founded in December 2006, they have already accumulated approximately 13,646 members in Japan as of 2014 (Ito, 2014). Some quotes from their protests in Korean schools, towns, and communities are: "Koreans and Chinese, stop stealing our oxygen!" "Korean residents are descendants of criminals" and "Kill, Kill Koreans" (Ito,

2014). Even though their anger is not based on factual evidence, Zaitoku-kai justifies their claims with rumours created under the influence of negative stereotypes and biases commonly spread within the conservative community of Japan, such as: the crime rate of Korean residents is much higher because they can commit crimes using their “fake names” (Japanese names); China and Korea are morally inferior countries that cannot stop criticizing Japan's past; Koreans have a unique permanent resident status that other nationalities do not have (Ito, 2014). Though all of their accusations are either unproven or untrue, Zaitoku-kai have gained thousands of supporters by feeding into existing stereotypes and amplifying negative emotions with their protest slogans. This is just one of the many examples of prejudice causing discourse in the lives of Korean, Japanese, and Chinese citizens.

Other than hate groups, the trend of rising hate can also be seen through the countless online clashes between the internet users of China, Korea, and Japan. A notable example of a major online clash is the Gangneung Dano Festival controversy. In 2005, when the South Korean government attempted to register the Korean Gangneung Dano Festival on the United Nations' Cultural Heritage list, Chinese internet users accused Korean people of “stealing their culture” by “registering a festival with Chinese origins as a Korean festival” (Jang, 2012). This was a great controversy because while Korea's Gangneung Dano festival shares a name and date with China's Duanwu festival, the festival is distinct in its traditions and activities, being a localized Korean tradition with unique features. The dispute erupted on social media platforms, where Chinese internet users banded together to express their anger and frustration, asserting that the festival was merely a variation of the Chinese Duanwu festival and that China, not Korea, should have the right to submit the Cultural Heritage list application. A common stereotype in China is “culture stealing Koreans,” which accuses Korea of “stealing Chinese culture” because, throughout much of its history, Korea has been greatly influenced by Chinese civilization, borrowing the written language, arts, religions, and models of government administration from China. This stereotype played a great role in escalating the discourse between Korean and Chinese internet users during the controversy. It was commonly brought up by the Chinese side of the argument when they accused Korea of cultural theft, which further fueled existing tensions (Gries & Masui, 2022). In response, Korean internet users, equally offended by the abrasive comments from their Chinese counterparts, retaliated by firing back with their hate comments. The participation of Korean internet users escalated this argument until government officials had to intervene by establishing national policies to protect cultural heritage and promote traditional festivals in China (Jang, 2012).

Past historical animosities are a prominent factor contributing to hate speech and mistrust. Imperial Japan's involvement in expansionism and colonialism in Asia during World War II left behind a legacy of mutual suspicion so great that it thwarts most attempts at institutional cooperation between Japan and its East Asian neighbours, as demonstrated by Copeland (2000); Kydd (2007) and Wendt (1999). Former South Korean president Kim Dae Jung once said in a 2001 Liberation Day speech: “How can we make good friends with people who try to forget and ignore the many pains they inflicted on us? How can we deal with them in the future with any degree of trust?” (Staff Cbsn. com staff Cbsn. com, 2001). Kim Dae Jung's speech alludes to the fact that most Chinese and Korean people believe that Japan has not apologized sufficiently for their past actions in World War I, World War II, and even older battles that date back to 2nd~3rd Century CE (Gries & Masui, 2022).

In a 2016 survey regarding the views of Chinese and Japanese citizens on whether Japan apologized enough for its wartime actions in the 1930s and 1940s, 50% of Japanese respondents believed their nation had made sufficient apologies. However, the Chinese see this issue differently. Only 10% of Chinese citizens believe that Japan has apologized enough (Stokes, 2016). A 2023 survey on the same issue suggests that this problem only grew more prominent throughout the years, with 93% of Japanese respondents and 63% of Chinese respondents reporting a feeling of dislike and mistrust for their neighbours (Reynolds, 2023). Chinese and Korean citizens likely demand more apologies from Japan because they still live under the fear of a returning militaristic Japan. Though the Japanese government has taken actions to construct friendlier relations with its neighbours, such as donating more than

100,000 face masks to China during COVID-19 and hosting bilateral summits with South Korea (Galic, Aum, & Adewalure, 2023; Liu, 2020) most Chinese and Korean citizens are suspicious of ulterior motives.

This growing divide suggests that efforts to address and reconcile historical issues between the two countries may not be achieving their intended outcomes, and there is a need for continued diplomacy and dialogue to bridge this gap. The same type of miscommunication can also be found in other ongoing debates, such as the border disputes, the argument over the validity of content in history textbooks, and whether visiting Japanese war memorials is respectful to China and Korea.

Kim Dae Jung's speech also perfectly outlines the dilemma between China, Japan, and Korea, because the same issues that thwart institutional cooperation between governments happen to most individuals in these three countries. During exchanges between Chinese, Korean and Japanese people, historical animosities are often raised in order to condemn Japanese people for their past harmful intentions and validate the current suspicions with which they are regarded.

The full extent of these century-long feuds' effect on present issues was evident when, in 2014, Japanese reconnaissance planes and Chinese fighter jets came perilously close to a collision in the disputed airspace over the East China Sea (Beijing Bulletin, 2014). Both sides accused each other of causing a potentially dangerous situation. Still, the Chinese internet users were especially agitated because they believed this was a deliberate act from Japan to "re-live their old dream of victory from 120 years ago (first Sino-Japanese war, Japan won and China had to give up their control of Taiwan and the Penghu Islands)". Some Chinese people also suspected that Japan was preparing for a surprise military strike on the disputed islands of the East China Sea, just like their attack on Pearl Harbor in World War II (Baidu, 2023). After the 2014 jet incident, a poll by Genron NPO and China Daily revealed that 61.8 percent of Chinese citizens view Japanese people as untrustworthy, while 85 percent of Japanese citizens return the sentiment (Chung, 2022). This incident shows how past historical animosities still affect the way that Chinese, Korean, and Japanese people view each other today.

This research project aims to uncover the underlying factors that sustain prejudice and negative stereotypes between China, Japan, and Korea, aiming to dispel these unfounded biases. This paper also seeks to unveil why prejudices persist despite the absence of scientific justification and examines the motivations behind their perpetuation. By dissecting the origins and consequences of these prejudices, this study hopes to clear previous misunderstandings and contribute to a more harmonious relationship between these East Asian nations.

2. HISTORICAL ANIMOSITIES CREATING STEREOTYPES

When talking about historical animosities between China, Japan, and Korea, and their role in sustaining negative stereotypes, two main components must be mentioned.

First, is the historical event itself. These events are at the root of deeply entrenched feuds. Each time they are mentioned in a present argument, they not only escalate the clash but also further reinforce themselves as unchangeable elements in how these countries interact with each other, making it harder for China, Japan, and Korea to move past the grievances. These historical feuds are much like old scars that not only mark past injuries but also become sites of renewed pain whenever they're torn.

This dynamic is exemplified by recent regional disputes, such as the fight for sovereignty over a group of uninhabited islands in the East China Sea, known as the Senkaku Islands in Japan and the Diaoyu Islands in China (S/D). During the arguments online concerning the regional conflict, the Chinese users claimed that Japan's decision to purchase three of the main S/D islands was intentionally provocative because they chose to purchase the islands one week before the 81st anniversary of the Mukden Incident, which marks the beginning of Japan's invasion of China in World War II (Swaine, 2013). While this accusation was far-fetched and lacked concrete evidence, it resonated strongly within the hearts of nationalistic Chinese internet users.

Indeed, it would be very hard, almost impossible, to forget about the past. Historical incidents like World War II and Imperial Japan's expansionism attempts left many issues that people still bring up in present-day arguments, such as the Nanjing Massacre and the comfort women stations.

2.1. Nanjing Massacre

The Nanjing Massacre, also known as the Rape of Nanjing, occurred during the Second Sino-Japanese War, which lasted from 1937 to 1945. In December 1937, the Imperial Japanese Army captured the city of Nanjing, which was then the capital of the Republic of China. During the following weeks, widespread atrocities, including mass killings, rapes, and looting, were committed by the Japanese forces against the Chinese population and disarmed soldiers. Estimates of the death toll vary, but it is generally believed that tens of thousands of Chinese civilians and disarmed soldiers were killed, and many more were subjected to sexual violence and other forms of brutality. Despite the plethora of conflicts with foreigners in modern Chinese history, such as Russia and the UK, it was historical events such as this that were most commonly portrayed by the Chinese media (Ching & East, 2019). Back in 2012, the prime time of Chinese satellite channels, seventy out of two hundred or so TV dramas were about the Second Sino-Japanese War. In Hengdian World Studio, the largest film studio in China and Asia, it is estimated that 700 million Chinese actors who acted as Japanese soldiers died at the hands of Chinese patriots that year alone (Ching & East, 2019). That is an absurd number, considering that Japan has a population of 125 million at the time of this writing. Since most Chinese citizens watch TV shows daily, the mass portrayal of historical conflicts in film further exacerbated tensions between China and Japan.

2.2. Comfort Women

Comfort women is a term that refers to women and girls who were forced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese Army before and during World War II. Though there isn't a specific number, available documents from wartime estimated that around 20,000 to 500,000 women and girls were coerced into becoming comfort women from 1932 to 1945 (Dudden, 2022). These women were often recruited from Japanese-occupied territories, including Korea, China, the Philippines, and other parts of Asia. However, Korean women were especially targeted, making up 80-90 percent of the abducted girls (Dudden, 2022). These women faced psychological and physical abuse in their "comfort stations", where they had to service between ten and twenty men a day without compensation or proper medical care. Around 70 percent of comfort women died before the end of the war, while the rest of them were not able to return to their past lives due to their physical ailments, emotional trauma, and past social stigma surrounding the topic of sex (Dudden, 2022). Historical grudges related to Japanese imperialism and the comfort women issue are often emphasized in Korea, leading to a general mistrust of Japan.

Another component relating to negative stereotypes between East Asian countries is the present attitude toward these historical events. This is largely shaped by state narratives and propaganda, particularly through educational materials such as textbooks. Each country's portrayal of historical events is often coloured by nationalistic perspectives, sometimes omitting or skewing facts to foster a sense of national pride and moral righteousness over perceived historical adversaries. This selective historical memory creates a biased understanding of the past among the younger generations, who are taught to view neighbouring countries through a lens of suspicion and rivalry. Furthermore, political parties and leaders in these countries often exploit these historical narratives to rally support and gain popularity, framing themselves as protectors of national dignity against historical injustices. Highlighting a "mutual enemy" can divert attention away from domestic problems and shortcomings of the government due to the deeply ingrained culture of "nationalism over internal issues" in China, Japan, and Korea (Duan, 2017). This politicization of history not only fuels nationalist sentiments but also makes diplomatic relations and mutual understanding more challenging.

The campaign of Shinzo Abe and the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan in 2012 was a typical example of “government-encouraged imagined identities”, and how that strategy affects what they consider to be a mutual enemy. While other factors contributed to the success of his campaign, such as the widespread disillusionment with the Democratic Party of Japan, the most significant factor was Abe’s ability to appeal to a nationalistic audience. Leading up to the election, Abe took an assertive position on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute with China (Debroux, 2019) which stimulated very negative reactions in China. The discontent of Chinese citizens was further enhanced by a series of inflammatory speeches from the former Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Zhijun, who stated: “Right-wing forces in Japan instigated the farce of the ‘island purchase.’ The Japanese government did not act to stop this. Instead, it deliberately pandered to it and used it. In the past, this kind of dangerous trend [in a rightward direction] had created enormous catastrophe for the rest of Asia. So if the current trend is not stopped—or worse, if it is used, pandered to and condoned out of domestic political needs—then the arrogance of these people will be further inflated and Japan will move further down the dangerous path. One day, it is not unlikely that the tragedies of history will be repeated.” (Cordesman, Colley, & Wang, 2015). This quote exemplifies the suspicion and mistrust that China, Korea, and Japan harbor towards each other, and illustrates how their current distrust is intertwined with historical grievances.

Additionally, Abe launched initiatives aimed at amending Japan's post-war pacifist constitution and history records (Clements & Springerlink, 2018). As a former member of the Nippon Kaigi, a right-wing organization that supports negationist views on Japanese history, including denying the role of government coercion in the recruitment of comfort women during World War II, Abe’s position caused tensions, particularly with South Korea (Hayashi, 2008). The success of Abe’s campaign reflected the growing nationalism in Japan and marked a resurgence of exceptionalist ideologies. The growing nationalism then reinforces the negative stereotypes about Japanese people being untrustworthy and unapologetic about their expansionist past. Consequently, the relationship between the three countries rapidly worsened after the 2012 election and continues to be strained.

3. EXISTING STEREOTYPES

In a 2018 study Clements and Springerlink (2018) data from a workshop were examined to understand how strong relationships could be easily compromised by stereotypes in Japan, China and Korea. This workshop was conducted by the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Otago and the Toda Peace Institute in Japan, and took place between 2013 and 2015 (Kelman, 1998; Mitchell, 1999). The participants of this workshop were academics and policymakers from China, Japan and South Korea. Although the participants all had varying beliefs, they seemed to agree that the economic development of East Asia was crucial. Thus, they were willing to reflect on why individual citizens and their political leaders continue to operate with deep and negative cultural stereotypes (Clements & Springerlink, 2018).

Participants from Korea and Japan shared that in their countries, Chinese people are often viewed with suspicion, and seen as trying to dominate Asia in various ways. There's a belief that China emphasizes the negative wartime history of Japan to foster nationalism and increase government popularity. Additionally, Chinese individuals are perceived as overreacting to disputes over territory and history, lacking empathy, providing evasive responses, infringing on intellectual property rights, and exhibiting rudeness in personal interactions, which some attribute to a sense of national shame and inferiority (Clements & Springerlink, 2018). Since Japanese people believe in the stereotype of a revenge-seeking, unforgiving, and aggressive China, they are nervous that a more assertive China may, in the future, seek revenge for past oppression. Likewise, the stereotypes held by Koreans about China make them express more profound concern about socialist elements in China and China as a potential Cold War enemy (Clements & Springerlink, 2018). Furthermore, Chinese people, who have been taught to believe in their imagined identities by the news, in school, and their communities, end up fulfilling them. Since retelling painful war memories exacerbates the anti-Japanese and anti-Korean sentiments, Chinese citizens respond vigorously and aggressively to recent Japanese political behaviour under the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) administration. Some

extreme nationalists also attack anyone who uses Japanese and Korean brands by saying they are "traitors of their own country" (Vekasi & Nam, 2019). The extremists' tendency to bring up past historical animosities during present debates, such as bringing up the Sino-Japanese War during arguments about the S/D islands, also plays into Japan's stereotype of Chinese people being unforgiving.

Conversely, from the perspectives of Chinese and Korean participants, Japanese people are sometimes seen as having a sense of superiority over China and Korea, boasting about their economic and technological advancements, denying full responsibility for wartime actions, and making political statements that are seen as unreliable due to their cultural concept of "Honne" and "Tatemae" (Clements & Springerlink, 2018). In Japan, "Honne" refers to a person's true feelings and desires, and "Tatemae" refers contrastingly to the behaviour and opinions one displays in public. Thus, the saying 'Honne Tatemae' alludes to the fact that Japanese people dislike exposing their true feelings and thoughts to people outside their personal circles (Genelyn & Trinidad, 2014). Given this Japanese expression suggests it is common to hide true feelings, China and Korea mistrust Japanese claims of peace. They always suspect that Japan might return to its imperial and militaristic past, because what Japanese people believe might be very different from what they claim in public, which were hopes for peace and reconciliation. Furthermore, Korean and Chinese participants worry that Japan will abuse its close ties with the US and dominate the East Asian region as they had before during their expansionism days (Clements & Springerlink, 2018). This was reflected in a survey conducted in 2023, where Chinese citizens were interviewed on their opinions of China's foreign relationships. Japan and the US were tied as the least trustworthy nations and the most likely to engage in military conflict with Beijing in the next decade (Author, 2023).

These stereotypes also hindered Japan's ability to recognize the wariness with which China and Korea viewed them. This is because, while the Japanese people's imperial nostalgia is linked to a perception of a declining Japan, it generates uneasiness in China and Korea (Clements & Springerlink, 2018). For example, when Japanese people reminisce about Japan's rapid economic growth in the post-World War II era, the conclusion they often reach is that Japan's economy will never recover from the financial crisis that followed after the rapid development. This introspection, however, can be misunderstood by Chinese and Korean observers as a veiled sense of pride in Japan's former military advancements. The misinterpretation is further compounded by the Chinese and Korean perception that Japan's expressions of regret over past military aggressions often lack sincerity. Many Chinese and Koreans feel that these apologies come across as forced or perfunctory, rather than stemming from guilt and an understanding of the pain they inflicted on neighbouring countries (Chun, 2015). Hence, Chinese and Korean participants considered Japan as an oppressive imperial power seeking revenge. Meanwhile, Japanese participants noted that many in Japan see their country as a once-great empire now in decline, and thus don't share their neighbors' fears of a resurgent colonial Japan (Clements & Springerlink, 2018).

As for the views on Koreans, participants from China and Japan noted stereotypes in their countries portraying Koreans as nationalistic, overly sensitive to criticism from outsiders, and having a complex mix of inferiority towards Japan and superiority towards Southeast Asian countries (Clements & Springerlink, 2018). However, while China was a rising but ambivalent regional power, Japan considered Korea a former colony with a possible revenge mentality and a China-leaning regional power. This caused the Japanese to constantly fear that their two neighbours would work together and seek revenge for Imperial Japan's atrocities. However, this was different from what Koreans thought. Since Korea thought of itself as a former tributary country to China and a former colony of Japan, Koreans are relatively defensive and unconfident because Japan and China have historically exerted significant influence and control over the Korean Peninsula (Clements & Springerlink, 2018).

4. THEIR IMPACTS

The influence of stereotypes on interpersonal relationships between Chinese, Korean, and Japanese individuals was evident in a 2022 study (Chung, 2022). A series of trust games and trust surveys were conducted in the study to

evaluate the moralistic and strategic trust that Chinese, Korean, and Japanese participants have towards each other if the only information they have of their counterparts is their nationality. While categorizing trust levels, moralistic trust is defined as a "subjective belief of the other's ethical character" (Chung, 2022). In contrast, strategic trust is defined as a "calculative belief that other actors will exhibit cooperative behaviour because they have a rational interest in building or maintaining a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship" (Chung, 2022). One person can strategically trust someone because they believe that person is reliable enough to engage in business with, yet do not moralistically trust the same person because they assess this person as unethical.

Moralistic trust

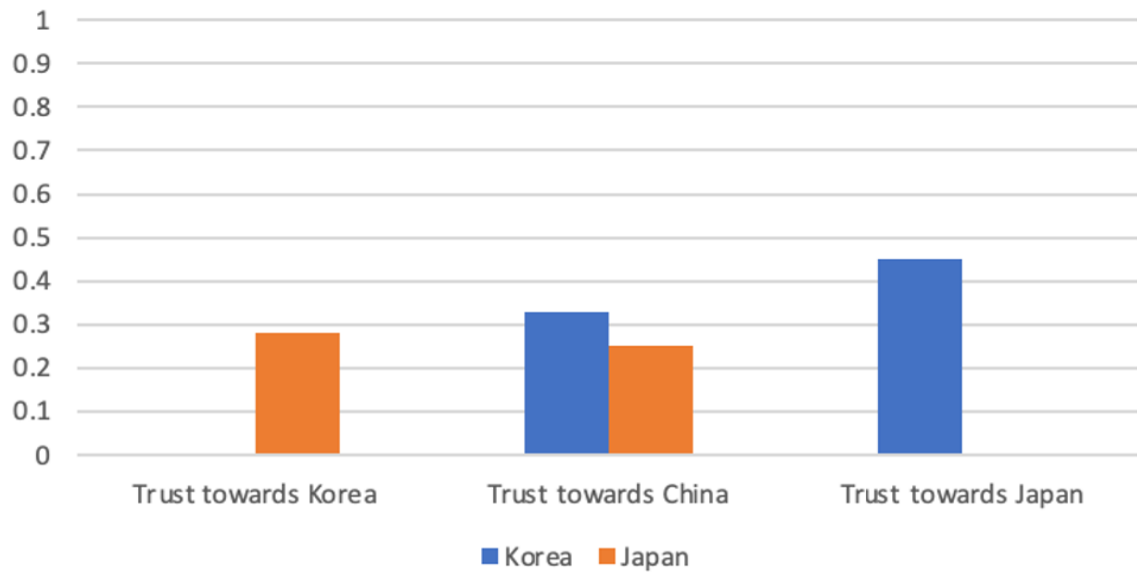


Figure 1. Trust game results of strategic trust levels between China, Japan, and Korea.

Therefore, the data for moralistic trust was collected by conducting direct surveys that entailed no reward or loss for the survey respondents, while the data for strategic trust was collected from the trust game results because it simulated institutional cooperation in international relations (Chung, 2022). The moralistic trust survey was not conducted in China due to local restrictions, but the strategic trust survey was conducted. The results of these trials are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Strategic trust

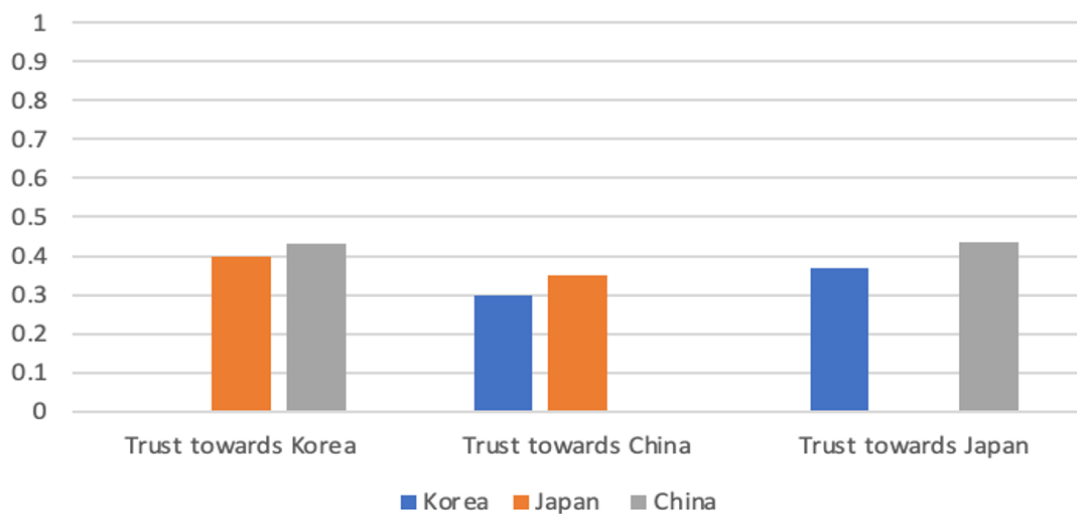


Figure 2. Survey results of moralistic trust levels between China, Japan, and Korea.

4.1. Trust for the Japanese

Leading back to the stereotypes examined in the previous chapter, the perceptions held by Chinese and Korean participants towards Japanese individuals paint them as both arrogant and deceitful, some of the worst qualities one could have in the eyes of their peers (Sun, Neufeld, Snelgrove, & Vazire, 2022). This will no doubt lower the moralistic trust that Korean and Chinese people have towards the Japanese since it is undesirable to work and form a relationship with individuals with bad qualities, no matter how unsupported these claims are (Figure 2).

However, since some Korean and Chinese people's stereotypes of Japan are based on the fact that Japan is economically and technologically advanced, especially in the past when Imperial Japan colonized many of its neighbouring countries, the strategic trust that was reported was much higher than the moralistic trust, averaging at around 0.4025 points (Figure 1). Though Chinese and Korean citizens have an overall negative view of Japan and think they are untrustworthy, they still accept that Japan has a modern economy and would make a good business partner (Stokes, 2016).

A study conducted in 2003 that investigated mutual stereotypes held by Chinese and Japanese undergraduate students reinforces this observation (Kashima et al., 2003). In the study, the majority of Chinese participants agreed that Japanese people are competent but cold and untrustworthy. This suggests that for young Chinese individuals, the perceived strategic advantages in engaging with Japan's economic and technological strength mitigate, to some extent, the reservations stemming from personal and moralistic concerns.

This new finding reveals a direct link between the stereotypes held by Chinese and Koreans and their level of trust in Japanese individuals. More specifically, inherently negative stereotypes cause low moralistic trust, while more neutral stereotypes that may be perceived positively raise strategic trust.

4.2. Trust for the Chinese

This pattern of trust dynamics is similarly reflected in the stereotypes held by Korean and Japanese individuals towards China, which often characterize Chinese citizens as assertive, rude, and indoctrinated by their government (Clements & Springerlink, 2018). These negative perceptions have a direct impact on the moralistic trust that Koreans and Japanese feel toward Chinese people, as shown by the low average trust score of 0.29 out of 1.0 reported in the surveys (Figure 2). However, the strategic trust placed in Chinese individuals is somewhat higher, with an average of 0.325 points (Figure 1). This is attributed to the perception of China as a nation striving to dominate Asia economically, socially, and politically (Clements & Springerlink, 2018).

Interestingly, the strategic trust placed in Chinese individuals was lower than that placed in Japanese individuals, even though Japan is commonly viewed by its neighbours as a nation in its decline whereas China is perceived as a rising regional power (Clements & Springerlink, 2018). This discrepancy can potentially be caused by the significance of past regional conflicts. In the same 2003 study by Kashima, it was discovered that while the Sino-Japanese War negatively predicted the Chinese liking of the Japanese, it also negatively predicted the Chinese autostereotype of competence (Kashima et al., 2003). The history of the wars may remind the Chinese about the humiliation they suffered as a result of military invasions and Japanese expansionism. When Koreans and Japanese perceive this diminished self-view among the Chinese, it might translate into doubts about China's reliability and effectiveness as a strategic partner. Ultimately, despite China's rapid economic development and increasing regional influence, the negative autostereotypes could lead to lower strategic trust from their Korean and Japanese peers.

4.3. Trust for the Koreans

The phenomenon of stereotypes affecting interpersonal trust both negatively and positively extends to Koreans as well. Koreans are seen by the Chinese as overly sensitive and by the Japanese as inclined towards revenge, which leads to a lower moralistic trust in them, as evidenced by the survey results (Figure 2).

Despite these negative stereotypes, Koreans received a higher level of strategic trust, surpassing their moralistic trust scores by 0.135 points (Figure 1). The stereotype of Korea being an ambitious rising power contributes greatly to this slightly higher strategic trust. Following the Korean War, South Korea has developed rapidly both economically and socially. The global phenomenon of Hallyu, or the Korean Wave, characterized by the widespread popularity of Korean dramas, K-pop, and films, has played a pivotal role in elevating South Korea's influence on the international stage (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011). Korean soap operas, in particular, have boosted the Chinese public's interest in Korea and created positive national images of Korea. The meteoric rise of Korean companies such as Samsung and LG further added to the stereotype of Korea being an aspiring influential power (Herim, 2024). Therefore, Chinese and Japanese individuals are more inclined to work with Koreans as business partners, recognizing the strategic advantages of such partnerships.

This pattern mirrors the dynamics observed with Japanese and Chinese stereotypes, where strategic considerations can offset negative personal perceptions to a certain extent. The acknowledgment of ambition, possibly linked to economic or technological advancement, suggests that strategic interests can somewhat mitigate the negative impact of personal stereotypes on trust.

5. CONCLUSION

These findings across three distinct data sets showcase the significant influence of stereotypes on the social interactions among Chinese, Japanese, and Korean individuals. Negative stereotypes, such as perceptions of arrogance, deceitfulness, or assertiveness, diminish moralistic trust by framing individuals from the stereotyped group as possessing undesirable personal qualities. Conversely, more neutral or positive stereotypes, particularly those emphasizing economic strength, technological competencies, or ambitions, contribute to an increase in strategic trust. This form of trust is more pragmatic and is influenced by the recognition of potential benefits in collaborations or partnerships, despite any existing moralistic reservations.

A 2013 research paper on forming relationships and preference for other people's traits can help us understand more of the influence of stereotypes on interpersonal relationships (Abele & Brack, 2013). According to the study, desirable personality traits are the most critical aspect when deciding whether to start a communion relationship with another. To gauge the personality of a stranger, people usually introduce themselves or try to start a conversation about their similarities. Therefore, in an environment such as the trust games, where the interacting individuals have no prior acquaintance, and are meeting online anonymously, they most likely initiate conversations by identifying similarities. However, the participants of the trust games knew each other's nationality, which changed everything (Chung, 2022). Due to a long history of animosities, widely taught in schools to create a public enemy, which is only backed by amplified negative emotions and stereotypes and not by any factual evidence, citizens in these three East Asian countries already painted an overall negative image of each other before actual social interactions. They assumed the other would have undesirable personality traits, so they were less likely to collaborate in the trust game than a pair of partners who knew nothing about each other. Instead of looking for similarities, the participants looked for differences in their partners, such as pointing out the past historical animosities between their countries (Chung, 2022).

The insights gained from the trust games can be applied to examine how stereotypes contribute to rising tensions between China, Japan, and Korea. This paper discussed how various stereotypes collectively shape a negative, monolithic perception of individuals from these nations, significantly affecting their willingness to interact with each other openly and without prejudice. Such caution and distrust severely limit the opportunities for meaningful social exchanges. Without these interactions, individuals from these East Asian countries struggle to move beyond the narrow narratives that define their perceptions of each other, allowing stereotypes to persist unchallenged. Ultimately, the scarcity of genuine dialogue and understanding leads to a cycle where miscommunications become more frequent, reinforcing the negative stereotypes that dominate public opinion. This situation is exacerbated when

the predominant narrative, fueled by stereotypes, drowns out the voices of those who might offer a different perspective—such as individuals with personal connections or positive experiences in neighbouring countries. This dynamic establishes a self-reinforcing cycle, where negative stereotypes perpetuate and intensify, making it increasingly challenging to break through the barriers of mistrust and misunderstanding that divide these communities.

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