

### What do the Chinese think of Japanese?

Many Chinese I talk to don't seem to understand the difference between Japanese soldiers who invaded China during WW2 and the average Japanese person of today.

I've heard "I hate Japanese" so many times, and usually I try offer my opinions on the dangers of racist generalisations only to be met with a brick wall. I've used Germany as an example and how educated people in the west don't generalise Germany as a bunch of Nazis.

But still, many Chinese remain stubborn on the matter. "It's in their blood." Another common phrase when referring to their neighbours.

I understand the terrible things that have happened before and I would never suggest someone forgive and forget such atrocities, Nanjing being the most common example.

But haven't more Chinese people died under rule of its own government (The Great Famine, Beijing massacre)?

Is there any polite way to discuss these points with the Chinese in hope they adopt a new point of view?

How is it on the other side? Do the Japanese generalise the Chinese?

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Answer (Updated Dec 22, 2016):



By [Foster Winans](#), Ghostwriter, "The Man on Mao's Right," (2008)

As ghostwriter of a book about China, I suggest that if you want to understand why the Chinese dislike the Japanese, just imagine how the rest of Europe and the US would feel toward the German people if Germany had refused to make an abject and complete apology for the systematic extermination of Jews and other minorities. Imagine that Chancellor Merkel of Germany paid regular visits to a shrine honoring Nazi leaders. Imagine if German textbooks portrayed World War II without mentioning the atrocities committed by the German army, or glossed over the crimes that Germans committed against the rest of Europe, or blamed others.

Now, imagine what would have happened if the Japanese had instead gone to Beijing to formally apologize at the end of the war. Imagine if there had been war crimes trials, like those at Nuremberg, where Japanese military and political leaders were tried, convicted and hanged. Suppose the Japanese had set aside funds to compensate the people of Nanjing and elsewhere for the atrocities committed by their armies. Imagine if the next generation of Japanese spoke and wrote about the guilt they feel about the sins of their parents. Do you think the Chinese people would still hate the Japanese as they do today? [...]

The Japanese in WWII were engaged in genocide, subjugation, enslavement, and economic exploitation. The Japanese committed unspeakable atrocities everywhere they went during WWII, including Nanjing where babies were bayoneted and people were tossed into steam engine boilers to be scalded alive. We in the West know the headline events. What we don't know is that the Japanese routinely strafed civilians and bombed residential neighborhoods. They used flamethrowers to burn to death women and children hiding in caves in the mountains. I have interviewed the children of those victims and they cry today over events that took place 75 years ago. This is a very deep wound in the Chinese culture that the Japanese have failed to acknowledge.

It is naive and foolish to trivialize how the Chinese people feel about the Japanese. These are feelings that began long before World War II. They go back centuries, reflecting a long period of exploitation of China by foreign powers, including Japan. The Japanese occupied the province of Taiwan long before WWII and the Japanese were trying to control China in the early 20th century by recruiting Chinese scholars to the Japanese view of the world.

Let us also recall that Japan provided the U.S. with land for bases and other support during the Korean War and all the Cold War activities, including efforts to assassinate China's Premier Zhou Enlai. Remember that the US proposed carpet-bombing Manchuria during the Korean War with atomic weapons, which would have been launched from US facilities in Japan.

A very high-ranking Peoples Liberation Army general from WWII visited Boston many years after the war and watched the reenactment of a battle between the British and the Revolutionaries. He asked why the Brits would willingly reenact an encounter they lost. It was explained to him that we're friends now, and "Maybe someday the Chinese and the Japanese will reenact their conflict." "Never!" the general shouted. "It can never happen." The Chinese are going to hold that grudge for generations and, as far as the Chinese are concerned, the Japanese governments have done too little too late to try to salve the wound.

There are two principal international issues that run deep in the Chinese psyche: resentment and paranoia about being exploited; and return of Taiwan, a province of China, to the control of the People's Republic (sometimes known as mainland China).

To underestimate either is to fundamentally misunderstand China's goals and aspirations. These two issues are what drive its military ambitions, not imperialism. It's the "never again" instinct. Can you blame them?

**22 June 2012**-Interesting news item:

84% of Japanese have a negative impression of China and 64.5% of Chinese have a negative impression of Japan, according to an annual bilateral survey translated by Japan Real Time's Yoree Koh. [...]

**Oct. 29, 2014:** [The New York Times](#) reports that well-meaning Japanese who have uncovered and drawn attention to long-buried evidence of war crimes—such as the hidden graves of starved and murdered Korean slave laborers—have been threatened and labeled as traitors.

*Coming to terms with its militarist past has never been easy for Japan, which tried to set aside the issues raised by the war as it rebuilt itself into the peaceful, prosperous nation it is today. But pressure to erase the darker episodes of its wartime history has intensified recently with the rise of a small, aggressive online movement seeking to intimidate those who believe the country must never forget. [...]*

**December 22, 2016: SINO-US RELATIONS ARE DETERIORATING RAPIDLY** even before Donald Trump is sworn in, a result of what would appear to be a radical change in US policy that China's leaders can only interpret as a provocative betrayal. In his final press conference, Pres. Obama showed how well he understands the issue. He said the reunification of Taiwan is for China, "as important as anything on their docket. The idea of one China is at the heart of their conception as a nation. ... the Chinese will not treat that the way they'll treat some other issues. ... This goes to the core of how they see themselves..."

Meanwhile, the US president-elect is surrounding himself with advisors whose study of history seems to have ended in about 1960, talking about reunification as a "bargaining chip" for trade concessions. He and his advisors have a cartoon view of history and don't seem to realize that in Chinese culture, words matter and disrespectful words matter a lot. As an amateur historian, I believe that one day this will be written about as the moment when China became a true world power and the US lost its authority to play the bully in the Pacific Rim zone. Interesting times would appear to be ahead.

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