Paper Title: The Effects of Patriotic Education on Chinese Youths’ Perceptions of Japan

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Abstract
This study tries to address a research question on what effects Chinese patriotic education has on Chinese youths’ perceptions of Japan. The question is raised from a recent discussion on the issue of whether the “patriotic education campaign” since 1989 has led to anti-Japanese sentiments in China. Guided by the research question, this study particularly looks at the impacts of patriotic education in schools on Chinese students’ perceptions of Japan.

While aware of the theoretical arguments and the focus on Chinese historical narrative of Japan in previous research, this study instead serves as an empirical examination on the topic and emphasizes the importance of students’ reactions in determining the effects of Chinese patriotic and history education in schools. This study thus is primarily based on the empirical data collected from fieldworks and surveys. Comparative and content analyses were also employed to examine relevant official documents and the history textbooks in secondary schools.

Based on these empirical and comparative examinations, this study on the one hand concludes that the historical narrative of Japan in Chinese patriotic curriculum, though it has been more negative than positive, has been consistent since 1989, when the Chinese government attempted
to reform and strengthen its patriotic education and emphasized on the history of the “Chinese humiliation century.” In addition, a more comprehensive view of Japan has been introduced to students with a reformed history curriculum since 2001. This study, on the other hand, also discovers that nowadays Chinese youths tend to perceive Japan in a multi-faceted and rational way, that their understandings of Japan and Sino-Japanese relations are not necessarily identical with the historical narrative of Japan presented in the school patriotic curriculum, and that Chinese youths today tend to resist the message likely embedded with the political-ideological indoctrination in the school curriculum. Due to the stronger influences from the Internet and other mass media, the conflicting effects of textbooks and teachers as well as Chinese students’ superficial receptions and “digestion” of the information from schools, this study reveals the weak effects of Chinese patriotic education on Chinese youths’ perceptions of Japan.