

Asia's Reckoning: China, Japan, and the Fate of U.S. Power in the Pacific Century

Richard McGregor

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"Often critical of Washington's 'combination of idealism and arrogance,' McGregor offers detailed, vivid descriptions of America's Asian diplomacy." --*Publishers Weekly*

A history of the combative military, diplomatic, and economic relations among China, Japan, and the United States since the 1970s--and the potential crisis that awaits them

Richard McGregor's *Asia's Reckoning* is a compelling account of the widening geopolitical cracks in a region that has flourished under an American security umbrella for more than half a century. The toxic rivalry between China and Japan, two Asian giants consumed with endless history wars and ruled by entrenched political dynasties, is threatening to upend the peace underwritten by Pax Americana since World War II. Combined with Donald Trump's disdain for America's old alliances and China's own regional ambitions, east Asia is entering a new era of instability and conflict. If the United States laid the postwar foundations for modern Asia, now the anchor of the global economy, *Asia's Reckoning* reveals how that structure is falling apart.

With unrivaled access to archives in the United States and Asia, as well as to many of the major players in all three countries, Richard McGregor has written a tale that blends the tectonic shifts in diplomacy with bitter domestic politics and the personalities driving them. It is a story not only of an overstretched America, but also of the rise and fall and rise of the great powers of Asia. The about-turn of Japan--from a colossus seemingly poised for world domination to a nation in inexorable decline in the space of two decades--has few parallels in modern history, as does the rapid rise of China--a country whose military is now larger than those of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and southeast Asia's combined.

The confrontational course on which China and Japan are set is no simple spat between neighbors: the United States would be involved on the side of Japan in any military conflict between the two countries. The fallout would be an economic tsunami, affecting manufacturing centers, trade routes, and political capitals on every continent. Richard McGregor's book takes us behind the headlines of his years reporting as the *Financial Times's* Beijing and Washington bureau chief to show how American power will stand or fall on its ability to hold its ground in Asia.

Asia's Reckoning: China, Japan, and the Fate of U.S. Power in the Pacific Century Details

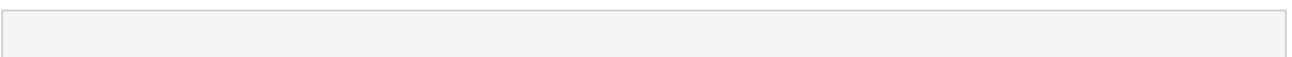
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From Reader Review Asia's Reckoning: China, Japan, and the Fate of U.S. Power in the Pacific Century for online ebook

Trish says

This deeply researched look at the China, Japan, U.S. triangle of strategic alliances is thickly studded with anecdote and new material uncovered in Freedom of Information requests, document declassifications, on-the-ground observation, and high-level meeting transcripts. Even the *Introduction* and *Afterword* are packed with unique material when these areas are more commonly places for overview and summing up. Altogether it is an achievement that will be the backbone for Asia-gazing for years to come.

McGregor looks at the trilateral relationships from the post-WWII period through the election of 2016 when Japan was the first to greet the month-old American president in New York City, not even waiting until Trump reached the White House. "The U.S. withdrawal from T.P.P. was the biggest shock to the alliance since Nixon went to China," McGregor quotes Japan's premier foreign policy commentator Yoichi Funabashi. After Abe had time to sit down with Trump in February 2017 and a joint statement drafted by Abe's team to be delivered from the White House was proffered, Trump only insisted upon one change. "In place of 'Donald Trump,' the president said it should read 'Donald J. Trump.'" So much for substance. "By the way, I love China. I love Japan." Trump protests too much.

The book is arranged by decade until the "The Twenty-First Century," a mammoth chapter encompassing fifteen years of toxic rivalry between the two Asian giants. McGregor has been on the ground in Asia for nearly thirty years and he shares the hopes, dreams, and personalities of leaders in China, Japan and America with the distance and caution good journalists cultivate. Compared with the rest of the world, Asia has been an explosion of good news, economic powerhouses doing what they do best, not waking up each morning, as Obama notes, "thinking about how to kill Americans." (North Korea aside.)

But American economic and military presence in Asia paradoxically may have kept the Sino-Japan rivalry from resolving, despite their economic bilateral relationship that is among the most valuable in the world. If America packs up and goes home now, forces in Asia could amplify disputes and aggressions unacceptably. In answer to the question posed by Harvard professor Graham Allison whether China and America can avoid Thucydides' trap, the conflict that arises when an established power (U.S.) is challenged by a rising rival (China), McGregor makes the point that Thucydides also said that as dangerous as it is to build an empire, it is even more dangerous to let it go. It is this second point that I worry about more when looking over the region.

McGregor's special skill in this terrifically interesting and detailed reference work is humanizing the figures of government leadership and staff. We learn about the mostly men and few women involved in setting policy, their positions in their own governments, the official face of discussions and the more free-flowing and often contradictory attitudes in prep sessions and afterwards. We learn about specific American negotiators and their preparation [or lack of] for their Asia talks, their likes and dislikes, their knowledge and ignorance, and how these came to influence their official attitudes.

Thirty-seven black-and-white photographs punctuate this history, and illustrate the number of leaders each country has churned through in the past half-century of diplomacy. Both Xi Jinping of China and Shinzo Abe of Japan are long-running formative leaders who will leave deep imprints on their nation's psyches. DJT's presidency is a kind of lacuna in American foreign policy, a gap that will be filled with these two Asian powerhouses.

We all lived through the past eight years when Obama was forming relationships with allies in Asia. McGregor makes us feel as though we missed a lot. While I'd thought Obama was warmly received in Asia generally, we learn here that Obama "did not do chemistry... but he learned to do face." Obama left the stage having made few friends, but he had reassured Japan, negotiated the T.P.P. which would eventually accrue benefit to the U.S., if not necessarily in strictly economic terms.

I hadn't been aware that Abe had floated the idea that Japan would be willing to form a loose alliance among the Asian democracies (India, Australia, the U.S., and Japan) to promote democracy. None of the other countries was enthusiastic, Australia being resistant to being drawn into the possibility of Sino-Japanese conflict down the line.

McGregor reminds us that "forging, building, managing, and sustaining alliances and other partnerships had been one of America's greatest skills in the postwar era." That compliment comes as McGregor recounts the final overseas trip of Ash Carter, Obama's fourth and last secretary of defense.

Asia had lately been touted as the most important region of the world for the United States, but which had gotten the least amount of attention. Obama had been willing to accommodate China's regional expectation of dominance to some extent, for which he got unceasing criticism in Japan. Trump's attitude is that Japan "used to routinely beat China." Therefore, he is said to reason, why defend Japan at all?

The U.S. willingness to accommodate China's ascendancy, and to encourage Japan's increase in defensive weaponry and capability, is part and parcel of "letting go" of America's strong, some might say stabilizing, role in Asia. We're about to find out which is the more dangerous route, and for whom.

This book is available as a Penguin Random House audiobook, beautifully read by Steve West. The audiobook is a wonderful choice to make progress on the book when other obligations are pressing. However, I still liked having the hardcopy to refer to: there is *a lot* of information here, much of it new. You may need access to both vehicles to get the most out of this. It's worth it.

Fmartija says

To understand the complexities in the relationships between the United States, China, and Japan, you have to understand the history that shaped each country's perspective and ethos. While the United States has certainly been involved as a 'middle man' in this complex trilateral relationship, "Asia's Reckoning" really is about the journey of the Sino Japanese relationship and their evolving standing in the Asian sphere of influence. "Asia's Reckoning" takes us decade by decade on the push and pull relationships of Japan, China, and the USA since the end of world war 2. At various points in the last 70 years, the power dynamic has shifted as Japan and China's influence waxed and waned through the decades.

Of particular interest to me was how willing China was in the early decades shortly following world war 2 to overlook Japan's wartime aggression, only to flip that policy 50 some years later in seeking some type of justice for the same wartime aggression. Additionally, despite the treaty alliance between the USA and Japan, there have been times where the USA has been more willing to improve relations with China at the expense of their relationship with their own ally Japan. Finally, as the decades have progressed, we learned how Japan grew into a powerhouse to be feared in the 1970s & 1980s only to see that power wane to a point where they are highly reliant on their alliance with the USA to counter China's newfound assertiveness in southeast Asia.

The conclusion that I ultimately arrived at is that the ongoing tensions by China and Japan is ultimately a lever willingly utilized by the CCP to divert attention and domestic 'tension' towards the everlasting enemy, Japan and away from general domestic issues. The CCP is able to increase or decrease the domestic anti-Japan sentiments as needed to maintain their power structure within China. Additionally, we are at a point in history where demographics are both Japan's weakness and China's strength, which makes the USA the ultimate balancing entity maintaining the general status quo between the two antagonists.

Maria says

China, Japan and the United States have a tangled relationship. In just the past 100 years, each of them have separately fought against the other two and aligned themselves together at various points. Economically they are joined at the hip and politically they are at each other's throats.

Why I started this book: Trying to learn more about the country that I am living in and it's history.

Why I finished it: Fascinating behind the scenes access to the leaders of these countries, their political circumstances at home and how that affected their international actions and reactions. Very detailed and a great book at understanding why China and Japan have struggled with their neighbors.

H. says

4.5/5. This was a very dense read. At first it seems impossible that a book that focusses so much on only these 3 countries (there is scant mention of Russia and North Korea), and only glimpses the onset of Trump's presidency, could remain relevant in this crazy time. However, the further McGregor goes along the history of this political triangle, the clearer it becomes that the more things change, the more they stay the same. This holds the million threads of history, names, policies, etc. to its solid foundation. Basically, the story herein is:

The US tries to referee while Japan and China are a dysfunctional couple that will only ever build exponential scars between them over

1. the history wars (what exactly Japan did to China during WWII & how much it should apologize)
2. the Senkaku Diaoyu Islands (whose territory is where & how that's enforced)

Then, jarringly, things change very abruptly at the end when, perhaps, the power dynamic shifts undeniably in China's favor (China's rise to superpower, Japan's economic fading, etc.) and then, almost as an afterthought, Trump is elected. The view McGregor seems to end on is that today a powerful non-democratic China makes the comparatively less powerful democratic Japan much more of an ally and kindred to the west than it ever has been. This is surprising after hundreds of pages of pettiness and anger and power struggles between the two Asian countries. It is persuasive perhaps because of that and, also, because despite very in-depth research little besides the Snowden episode is revealed about intelligence competition between the entities, and almost nothing else negative is mentioned about the US.

I gained a lot of perspective from this book that I had not been able to hear even from my Japanese family. McGregor communicates a lot of wonk-level information smoothly enough for the layman but I think one would still have to be at least entry-level wonk to enjoy it.

Randall Harrison says

Whew! Reading this book was a long, tough slog for me. Glad I read it but...

I have familiarity with the histories of both countries in the modern era given undergraduate and graduate coursework. Despite this knowledge, McGregor's analysis, while thorough, didn't make this complicated subject any clearer for me to understand nor give me any additional perspective.

This book isn't really the general survey I expected. It was more like a text for a graduate seminar analyzing the domestic and foreign policies of modern China and Japan through the prism of the bureaucratic politics paradigm. This book was exhaustively researched and written in great detail. Kudos to McGregor for that. However, I'm not sure all that detail made the narrative more edifying or comprehensive. By his own admission, McGregor doesn't attempt to be prescriptive. We only learn that though in the final chapter.

As an overall analysis, I'm not sure the material lived up to its title. I'm still not sure after finishing what the fate of US power in the Pacific Century is. I clearly have a better understanding of how and why the relationships between/among Japan, the US and China are so complicated and difficult to manage.

However, what is the fate of our power? Do we side with Japan to contain China? Do we re-initiate something akin to the TPP to try keep our allies aligned to our political and economic goals? Do we focus on improving relations with China, work more directly to challenge them when appropriate, or some combination of the two? Is America's foreign policy status quo ante sufficient to manage these relationships in the future? What about the Koreas, North and South? My overall sense is that this book raised more questions for me than it answered.

The scary takeaway from McGregor's analysis is that this is clearly a vexingly complicated process that appears beyond the capabilities of the current administration to manage effectively. What happens in the next 3 1/2 years, and our reactions/responses to it are likely to require another volume by McGregor perhaps titled "What Do We Do Now?"

To be clear, I enjoyed reading this story. However, it left me wanting more. Now I need to seek out prescriptive analyses on the subject to answer the questions that McGregor's book raised for me but didn't answer sufficiently. Evan Feigenbaum's article "China & the World: Dealing With A Reluctant Power" in the recent issue of Foreign Affairs was a good companion piece to start that search.

Zak says

A riveting account of Sino-Japanese relations since the end of WWII. McGregor takes us behind the scenes right where the action is. Featuring extensive blow-by-blow coverage of the fraught relationship between a once economically and militarily superior Japan (which occupied large parts of China during the war) and a newly rising China, you will be made privy to the numerous clashes between top officials and diplomats of both countries through each successive administration as they wrestle for Asia Pacific supremacy.

Through it all, the book makes clear that domestic politics played an outsized role in why the two sides could never come together to create an Asian 'sphere of peace and prosperity'. The three main obstacles ie. Japanese military aggression and brutality during the occupation, the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands and

the Yasukuni shrine visits, have festered for decades and seem forever insurmountable. McGregor covers these three issues in extensive detail.

My only complaint about this book is that, despite its title, there is scant analysis or discussion of 'the fate of U.S. Power in the Pacific Century'. Perhaps the writer thinks we can pretty much deduce the end result for ourselves given the material presented. As China continues flexing its muscles and applying pressure on its neighbours while the U.S. stands by, a former U.S. naval intelligence officer says cannily in the book "the heat in the pool just keeps going up one degree at a time".

Hadrian says

The funny story is that this trilateral relationship between China, Japan, and the United States, which is so tensely wound-up, was not so even after the establishment of the people's republic. Mao Zedong himself even made a perverse joke to a visiting Japanese delegation, *thanking them* for invading China, without which the establishment of his state and the dismantling of the Guomindang would not have been possible.

This study, written by a Financial Times correspondent, as well as a well-established author (see *The Party: The Secret World of China's Communist Rulers*), takes a closer look at this most complicated relationship, and how these three countries have become further entangled over the past 40 years. It is an intricate and scholarly work of journalism, from both the strength of its facts, but also the biographical portraits of political figures.

While both Japan and China are wealthy countries today, it is difficult to overestimate the depth of their mutual distrust, even loathing, spurred on by trade issues, territorial disputes, or even disagreement over historical events. One employee of the U.S. State Department, after seeing an angry negotiation between the Japanese and South Koreans, said he'd rather go back to working with the Bosnians and the Serbs. Economic ties have done nothing to quell these resentments - the Chinese government and the people both cry out for a tone of perpetual repentance from Japan after the invasions from 1931-1945. Periodic apologies are undermined by Japanese prime ministers visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, where a few dozen war criminals are commemorated along with millions of other soldiers.

In the 1980s, Japan was viewed as the rising economic superpower and therefore the greatest threat to the United States - it presaged American feelings of suspicion towards China today. The much ballyhooed 'pivot' to Asia under the Obama administration had been in the works for decades, and had been interrupted by the years of invasions and quagmires in the Middle East. Yet as the succeeding administration bolted from the TPP trade deal, it stoked fears of inconsistency and weakness among American leadership.

McGregor's study is useful for understanding the recurring fault-lines of diplomatic tension, and understanding the personalities which have managed or stoked these fears. An excellent and useful volume for anyone with a serious interest in the field.

Nathan Partridge says

A phenomenal play-by-play look at the ups, downs, and intricacies of the diplomatic relationships between China, Japan, and the United States. I found McGregor's writing to be stellar, avoiding the dullness present

in other books on similar topics, as well as bringing out the character of key figures and events in this field over the past half-century in a way that is evocative without dipping into caricature. Largely an exercise in contextualizing the goings-on in three-pronged relations and illustrating the connections between their central moments, McGregor is largely objective in tone- helped, I assume, by his outsider status as an Australian with experience in all three countries- but nevertheless does not shy away from highlighting the corrosive effect that stubbornness on all sides has held on ties. Ending with a tight reflection on the current state of affairs in the Trump era, this book is well worth a read for anyone looking to gain a concise but comprehensive look at these fraught diplomatic relationships with both a footing in precedent and an eye towards an uncertain future.

Matt Schiavenza says

An exceptionally interesting, well-reported book on the world's most important trilateral relationship: China, Japan, and the United States. This is not a mere piece of punditry: McGregor makes judicious use of diplomatic cables, historical knowledge, and his own reporting during his years as a Financial Times correspondent to present these relationships in astonishing detail. In addition to understanding the strategic position of the three countries, the reader also gleans how domestic politics influence foreign policy outcomes.

This is an essential work of history.

Adrian says

To address the first question that inevitably arises from the title, Asia refers more specifically to China and Japan, with the inevitable participant of the USA, with other countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam and the Koreas in a supporting role. As such, the book is really a history of China, Japan and United States relations, and a fine history it is.

Richard McGregor has clearly devoted considerable historical scholarship and behind the scenes investigation to deliver what clearly is a comprehensive account of something that is clearly misunderstood, Japan-China relations.

What one will learn from this book is that Japan-China relations are not as simple as either side would have you believe. Japan-China relations in the Post-WWII era were not uniformly antagonistic, and the poison in the relationship did not really metastasize until the 1990s, with the Yasukuni issue only emerging in the mid 80s.

In a nutshell, founding figures such as Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai were entirely Japan friendly, with Mao himself insisting on the unnecessary nature of apologies. The Deng Xiaoping era receives less attention, though it was just as friendly, however, the real poison in the relationship comes from the mouth foaming Japan baiter, Jiang Zemin.

As such, the book does what any decent history book does, disspel myths and common misunderstanding, chief amongst them, "Japan has never apologized".

Japan has apologized unequivocally on numerous occasions, the poison of the relationship stems from Chinese hair splitting, and Japanese revisionism.

The controversy over Diaoyu/Senkaku issue surrounding their "nationalization" was actually a least worst solution to prevent their purchase by Shintaro Ishihara, the China-baiting ultra-nationalist Tokyo governor, a move made by the most pro-China Japanese government in the latter days of what had been the most pro-

Japan Chinese government.

While one cannot accurately say whether McGregor's book is an effective mirror for the future, it is difficult to be optimistic for future Japan-China relations due to the uncertain nature of the China-US relationship, and the brain washing of the younger Chinese generation from years of poisonous "Patriotic" Education spear headed by Jiang Zemin.

For the curious reader, McGregor has provided a scholarly and penetrating insight into Japan-China relations that is very readable and well structured. It may seem like a slow starter, particularly for those like this reader who are more primarily concerned with recent events, however, perseverance is entirely rewarding.

An essential work on international relations, covering a very important bilateral, and in some ways, trilateral relationship, with ramifications for the wider world.

Nicolette says

There was nothing I didn't enjoy about this: It was comprehensive, compelling, and fascinatingly vivid, though not airbrushed, to the point at which it was difficult to believe that these were politicians in charge of running some of the most sprawling and powerful hegemonies in the world. A forever-student of Japanese history, a Japan-ophile at points, this was a great reminder of the convoluted concepts that exist in other cultures - the idea of face, and that is something that can be lost. Having two countries in which this was a consideration in politics is no trite thing. This filled in many tiny, or not so, caverns in the overarching decades of politics since the end of WWII, and gave better insight into China's ups and downs that I've personally previously researched. This was a thorough account of the political and economic relationships between three powers, and the delicate scale to avoiding intense conflict into the future. It gave me a point at which to start researching more.

Spencer Brown says

Very enjoyable read. McGregor does the difficult by making a non-fiction narrative on diplomacy compelling throughout the entire book, and avoids the normal trap of being too erudite (as these books can be). I'd recommend it for anyone vaguely interested in the Asia-Pacific region, or just diplomacy in general. Not much prior knowledge is needed for this book.

Knut says

Sneak Review; originally published on <http://www.mycountryandmypeople.org>

Richard McGregor, former FT Beijing Bureau Chief and author of *The Party*, a widely acclaimed account on the internal workings of China's ruling bureaucratic apparatus, has completed his next book, *Asia's Reckoning: China, Japan, and the Fate of U.S. Power in the Pacific Century*, which will be available starting this August. His scholarly talk at the Shanghai Foreign Correspondents Club confirmed the global relevance of Sino-Japanese relations not only for the geopolitical future of Far East Asia, but global peace. This is a must read.

McGregor highlights that an understanding of the Sino-Japanese relations since WWII must include the US, since it was the US which set in the 1951 San Francisco Treaty the political architecture for the region; and

although the entire global economy is affected by the present manufacturing concentration in the region, there is little literature on the Sino-Japanese relations. An entire college industry writes in the UK about the relationship between Germany, France and Great Britain; a similar college industry writes in the US about the G2 Sino-American relationship; historian Neil Ferguson even coined a neologism therefore: Chimerica; but few scholars or journalists pay attention to the trilateral relationship between China, Japan and the US.

It's not only dangerous to build an empire, it's even more dangerous to give one away. This statement could well be McGregor's main message. The Pax Americana has enabled the region to grow peacefully during the last 70 years into an economic success, but a political disaster; a familiar perception which has also been discussed in Europe. The US supremacy has guaranteed not only in Far East Asia, but also in Western Europe for the peaceful frame conditions which enabled both regions to grow economically. But both regions failed to grow into mature political entities under the auspices of the US as parent surrogate. Europe had this unpleasant awakening in the Ukraine conflict with Russia; Japan's awakening has been triggered by the Diaoyu/Senkaku Island confrontation and is reinforced by the new US president who would have liked to retreat military forces entirely from the region and is quoted saying: If we step back, Japan will defend itself very well. Hasn't it won every battle against the Chinese so far?

Japan's relationship to the US has changed during the last few years. It was deeply resentful about the US, about having lost the war and having been imposed a constitution. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's 1971 visit to China was a slap into its face and the 80ies trade war between the two countries is part of the negative collective memory. It nevertheless wants the US now to flash the sword and fend off China's encroachment on hitherto regional stability. A weakened America, in particular one which suffers from a chaotic presidency provides though to China an opportunity to build its own political empire in the region. Large tender battles between the two nations about high speed railway projects are the tip of an iceberg of economic interests which hover beneath the political sabre rattling.

Then there is the issue of the Japanese apology for war crimes and atrocities committed during WWII. There have been no joint declarations, no joint historical research process and therefore the bilateral history has neither been collectively nor individually digested despite 14-20 million victims. A joint historical review as done in Germany and France is needed. Asking for an official apology from Japan and using the lack of such an apology against the neighbor country wasn't China's policy for decades until the 80ies. Mao thanked Japan for invading China, because otherwise the communists wouldn't have defeated the nationalists; and it's a historical fact that most fighting against Japanese forces was done by nationalists, not communists. That myth was introduced in the 90s by Jiang Zemin in the course of ramping up a patriotic education which mainly aimed at uniting the dissolving country against Japan.

China did never ask for official reparation payments from Japan and thinks it did Japan a favor thereby: we repaid cruelty with kindness. Japan on the contrary thinks that it never was thanked for the vast investments and infrastructure aid which has been poured into the country in particular in the 80s and 90s. Mutual resentment is deeply rooted, but above all, both countries have never managed to treat each other as equals; probably because they were never able to. China, stuck in its self-perception of cultural superiority, viewing Japan as just another vassal state in the all-under-heaven empire, and Japan in its weird Galapagos mentality believing very much like orthodox Jews to be the God chosen people.

McGregor thinks that China's big failure in foreign policy is to not have befriended Japan since the GFC and drawn it away from the US. Similar to 17-20th century French foreign policy on continental Europe fearing a unification of German speaking people, the US were motivated in Far East Asia ever since WWII by keeping China and Japan apart. In a Pacific century the front line of Pax Americana runs therefore through Japan over South Korea down to Taiwan and the Philippines, and it is this fault line where we will see with some

probability political and military eruption in the years to come.

Although the analogy wasn't mentioned, I am pretty sure that McGregor would agree to compare the current political situation in Far East Asia to Europe before WWI. France and England saw the rise of Germany and thus a major shift in the balance of power which they were not able to contain. In the collective consciousness, in particular of the ruling elite, new found economic might translated into political arrogance, which led then to war. Henry Kissinger wrote in his 2014 book *World Order* that the rise of China creates a similar shift in the power balance regionally and globally.

Xi Jinping and Shinzo Abe are described by the author as having lots of similarities; both haven't been stellar scholars to put it euphemistically, but both are men of action; both are members of the political elite and have their family roots in the Sino-Japanese war; their family history is intimately tied to national history; a fact which can not be overemphasized, because it is exponentially reinforced by the Confucian culture which is predominant in both countries: man is part of a family, and the families are the smallest units of the country. The concept of society or nation is alien to Confucius and have been first introduced to Japan by the West with China now following en suite re-building an entire civilization into a nation.

McGregor concludes that it will be difficult for president Xi to genuinely befriend Japan and put the past behind, because a good kick into Japan's ass is the party's best weapon to mobilize its masses. I believe, that Abe gets equally as much unifying fear out of the common enemy China. But considering the global dimension of pressing challenges ahead such as environmental degradation and increasing automation of labor markets, we really have to ask ourselves which solutions are available to get these two countries out of their past traumas and future fears to act jointly in the here and now. The author leaves this question sadly open; at least in his talk. Both nations and in particular it's leaders are advised to look inside and spend some time on C.G. Jung who said: Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.

Nick says

Fabulous history of US/Japanese/Chinese relations. The reader will come away with a stronger understanding of Chinese decision making, the importance of history (specifically WWII) in the region, and what present US behavior means for the future.

Nathik says

This is an interesting account on the trilateral relationship between the US, China & Japan (in other words three biggest economies of the world) since post-worldwar-II. I always thought of the Sino-japanese turbulent relationship from the point of view of their historical baggage, Senkaku island dispute and Yasukuni Shrine visits but if you throw US(not to mention Taiwan, South Korea) in the middle it completely changes the equation and gives a new perspective to the East Asia security. This book completely changed my binary mode of thinking (that US-Japan are allies , US-China are rivals and China-Japan are rivals) on the trilateral relationship and provides much more nuanced and intricate history of the region and relationships.

The Sino-Japanese relationship is so fragile that diplomatic ties were nearly broken over dumping poisoning. The mutual mistrust and animosity between two countries which had rich cultural exchange for centuries reminds me of Freud's theory of the narcissism of small differences. In many ways Sino-Japanese relationship reminds me of Indo-Pak relationship as well.

Although book talks about the relationship from the point of view of all the three nations, CCP appears often in bad light. Its often cold, calculating, aggressive, arrogant, manipulative and entitled. Given the change in the US administration, it would be interesting what the future of the trilateral relationship will be like. Overall of a good read on the subject. Highly Recommended.

Some interesting anecdotes from the book.

Dick Cheney boasted in 2016 that the Gulf war funding as model for the exercise of the US power. "We ended up with a \$60 billion war and paid only \$5 billion". Japan contributed \$13 billion for it.

Early in his presidency George W. Bush said in that the U.S would defend Taiwan with "whatever it took" if Chinese attacked the island. He noticed Staff Stephen Hadley looking surprised. When the president asked him if he said something wrong, Hadley replied "Well, you just blown away 20 years of strategic ambiguity".

In one of the anti-japanese demonstration, one the protestors asked "Can I shout 'punish corruption'?" and the police replied "Only slogans concerned with the Diaoyu islands are allowed".

Before the 70th anniversary of the end of WW-II parade, one of Abe's advisers asked the Chinese "Whether the parade is going to be anti-Japanese" and the Chinese replied negative. "What is the name of the parade?" they asked. The official parade name was the "Commemoration of 70th anniversary of Victory of Chinese people assistance against Japanese Aggression and World Anti-fascist War".
