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The Politics of Emotions in International Relations: Who Gets to Feel What, Whose Emotions Matter, and the "History Problem" in Sino-Japanese Relations

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A large literature within the field of international relations has now explored both how emotions can shape political perceptions and behavior and how international actors may seek to manipulate, harness, or deploy emotions and emotional displays for political ends. Less attention, however, has been paid to how political struggles can also center upon issues of who can or should feel what emotion and whose feelings matter. Precisely, we theorize a distributive politics of emotion that can manifest in three general forms, all of which have their own properties and logics of contestation. The first centers on emotional obligations, understood as an actor's duties to feel and express specific emotions. The second concerns emotional entitlements, or the rights an actor enjoys to either feel or not feel certain emotions. And the third involves hierarchies of emotional deference, that is, the varying degrees of priority accorded to different actors' feelings. We illustrate how the politics of emotions can unfold on the international stage by looking at developments in the so-called history problem within Sino-Japanese relations.

Introduction

Harold Laswell's (1936) aphorism characterizing politics as "who gets what, when, how" is applicable not just to material rewards, positions of power, or status goods. There also exists a distributive politics of emotion concerned with who gets to *feel* what, when, and how, and whose feelings matter. In this paper, we theorize a distributive politics of emotion for the field of international relations (IR) and outline the three forms it can assume: a politics of emotional obligations concerned with duties to feel certain emotions, a politics of emotional entitlements involving rights to feel or not feel particular emotions, and a politics of hierarchies of emotional deference that stipulate whose feelings deserve consideration. Each form entails its own properties and logics of contestation. Albeit ubiquitous in the micro-politics of everyday life, we argue that political contests over emotional rights, duties, and hierarchies can also play an important role in shaping interactions and relationships on the international stage.

For illustration, we examine the so-called history problem in Sino-Japanese relations. Contrary to the notion that time heals all wounds, the history problem has been an enduring source of tensions. We show how an initially negotiated structure of emotional obligations and deference in which Tokyo was responsive to Beijing's concerns became ever more contested. Japanese conservative and right-wing groups mounted a counter-offensive, asserting the need for deference to the feelings of Japanese war bereaved and war dead as well as Japanese children's entitlement to feel national pride. This was coupled with broader growing resistance within Japanese society to Beijing's repeated calls for demonstrations of continued remorse. Consequently, key parties came into conflict over competing political claims to and about emotions. Ours is not a story of emotions driving behavior—we take no position on protagonists' motives. Rather, we showcase how the terms of debate, the logics of argumentation, and the very fault lines of the history problem are permeated with a politics of emotion.

In what follows, we introduce our conceptualization of the politics of emotion, situating it vis-à-vis existing literature on emotions in IR, elaborating the forms it assumes, and sketching out its implications for international politics. We then look to the history problem within Sino-Japanese relations to illustrate how political disputes over emotions can unfold between states. We conclude by summarizing the implications of our arguments, pointing to other scenarios where the politics of emotion arguably play a key role and suggesting ways in which our framework could be used to further inform IR research.

Emotions and International Politics

The lament that IR neglects emotions (Crawford 2000) can no longer be sustained. A large literature now speaks to the

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significance of emotions for international politics. Two major strands of theorizing stand out.

The first focuses on *political emotion*, namely the ways in which emotional reactions, feelings, and affective dynamics shape international political processes and outcomes. To this belongs studies that examine how the physiological, felt, and cognitive effects of emotions shape actors' interests and behavior, frequently by drawing upon emerging research in psychology and neuroscience (McDermott 2004; Mercer 2005; Kertzer and Tingley 2018). Here too belongs work that focuses on particular emotional responses—epitomized in Markwica's (2018) delineation of the different roles fear, pride, anger, hope, and humiliation play in shaping leaders' responses to coercion.

A second strand focuses on *emotional politics*, that is, political discourse and behavior that work by appealing to, cultivating, manipulating, or emulating emotions and emotional expression for political ends. Here, for example, we can order work that looks at how discourse may seek to elicit or represent emotions for political purposes (Koschut 2020), the ways in which emotional performances may be used to strategically project images (Hall 2015), or how populist politics plays to feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, or fear (Kinnvall 2018).

Granted, these are ideal-typical characterizations, and there also exists important work at the intersection of the two. Kaufmann's (2019) symbolic politics approach looks at both how elites incite and play to public emotions and how these in turn drive aggressive behavior. Hutchinson (2016), alternately, explores how political representations of trauma appropriate, intertwine with, and shape political emotions. Holland and Solomon (2014) have examined the ways in which foreign policy discourses both speak to and are sustained by affective investments. Numerous other examples exist, these are but illustrations; our purpose here is not to offer a comprehensive survey of the field but a rough sketch of its current topography.

The Politics of Emotion

It is within this landscape we hope to raise to prominence a further, less-attended strand: the politics of emotion. Succinctly, we define the politics of emotion as denoting political contests involving claims over who can or should feel what and/or whose feelings matter. We realize our definition is more restrictive than those elsewhere. Åhäll (2018, 38), for instance, designates the politics of emotions as "capturing the political effects of emotional practice," thereby denoting myriad reciprocal intersections between politics, discourse, emotions, and emotional expression—in line with approaches in anthropological, cultural, and postcolonial studies (Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990; Ahmed 2014; Holland and Solomon 2014; Muppidi 2014). We, in contrast, offer a narrower definition to clearly differentiate our endeavor from existing studies of political emotion and emotional politics within IR. Our approach aligns more closely with Beattie, Eroukhmanoff, and Head (2019, 138), who define the politics of emotion as concerning "who gets to express emotions, what emotions are perceived as legitimate or desirable (and conversely which should be repressed or are illegitimate), how emotions are circulated and under what circumstances …" Our interest, precisely, is in a distributive politics centering on claims to and about emotions.

Emotions, for our purposes, denote socially recognized patterns of felt response and disposition. These are forms of feeling with socially given names—such as anger, pride, or shame—and socially acknowledged logics as to when, why, and with what implications they appear. Whether or not emotions are universal biological kinds (Tracy and Randles 2011) or, alternately, social constructions cobbled together from a jumble of cognitive and affective components (Barrett 2017) is a debate beyond this piece. What matters here is the social life of emotions, their existence as socially meaningful elements of human lived experience.

That said, emotions are not tangible, they cannot be divided or allocated like a pie. Emotions can only become the object of the negotiations, debates, and struggles entailed in a distributive politics through representation. Representation makes emotions present in social and political life, for we have no direct access to the internal emotional experiences of others, only the expressions, discourse, and practices representing those states (Hutchison and Bleiker 2014, 505–6). Representations can also involve how emotions are invoked in the abstract, hypothesized in conjectured scenarios, attributed to amorphous collectives, or elevated as politically meaningful. As Hutchinson and Bleiker (2014, 506) note, "representation is the process through which individual emotions become collective and political."

Crucially, expressions and representations of emotions are never separate from the *feeling rules* circulating in their social environment. Feeling rules denote "rules about the verbal and non-verbal expression of appropriate emotions in a given situation" (Koschut 2020, 14). Feeling rules are a basic part of social life and are often taken for granted. But they are highly political: they reflect how the socially shared understanding of a situation—with all its power relations, hierarchies, and value judgments—is expected to interact with an actor's innermost beliefs, attitudes, and desires to generate a felt state, or at least the appropriate expression of one.

At the heart of feeling rules are equations offering ideologically correct predictions for a given actor's feelings and expressions in a given context. Accordingly, where expression and feeling deviate from the dictates of feeling rules, this can cast doubt on the alignment of an actor's interiority—the beliefs, attitudes, values, and desires understood to give rise to emotion—with prevailing norms and values. Feeling rules, therefore, shape how actors express and narrate emotions to others, discipline emotions within themselves, and find their lived and displayed emotionality externally—and even internally—appraised (Hochschild 1979, 56–63). Correspondingly, feeling rules importantly supply the logics underpinning political claims as to what emotions are, should, or may potentially be felt for any given combination of an actor's interior composition and external situation. Where actors intersubjectively share and conform to feeling rules, their influence goes unnoticed or appears natural. Feeling rules reveal themselves through social hints and sanctions toward apparent deviances, in debates over their ambiguities, in circumstances when expectations over feeling rules diverge and clash, or when actors openly rebel against them (Hochschild 1979, 56–75).

The politics of emotion emerges where actors disagree over and contest the application, interpretation, and content of feeling rules and dispute whose feelings deserve priority. What is at stake, therefore, is not what individuals actually feel per se, but the dominant social expectations for and value accorded to certain actors' emotional life (Shields 2005). As Ling (2014, 582) notes, "'feeling rules' shape 'emotional regimes' of who gets to feel and express what." These regimes can have real individual consequences, however, as they structure the rewards and sanctions actors will face for different types of emotional expression

(or non-expression) and the degree of social consideration given their perceived feelings. Where internalized, such expectations also guide the efforts individuals make to elicit or suppress emotions within themselves (Hochschild 1979, 61–63).

Admittedly, we are not the first to engage this strand of theorizing. Feminist scholars in particular have identified the politics of emotion operating at the micro-political level within gendered relationships (Shields 2005). Existing IR work has also tended to focus on micro-political, everyday practices (Beattie, Eroukhmanoff, and Head 2019) and how individuals defy and challenge the feeling regimes advanced by the state, for example, in terms of who can mourn (Koschut 2019), whose feelings of insecurity matter (Bilgic and Gkouti 2021), who deserves compassion and empathy (Head 2020), or how much anger is permitted victims of violence (Jeffery 2020). Indeed, although feeling rules and hierarchies exist as diffuse and varying social expectations, the state and its institutions often play an important role in promoting and imposing such regimes.

We seek to go beyond existing theorizing in two key ways. First, we offer a more explicit theorization of the different forms the politics of emotion can take, delineating three analytically distinct varieties. Each implicates different claims, dynamics, and types of counter-politics. Second, while acknowledging the importance of the micro-political dimension, we argue the politics of emotion can also play out macro-politically, between states and collective groups on the international stage.

Three Forms

The Politics of Emotional Obligation

The politics of emotional obligation is a politics of duty. Its protagonists seek to impose a requirement on a target group or category of actors to feel a particular emotion. Where successful, it establishes the shared normative expectation that a given situation, context, or issue should induce a specific emotion in the actor in question, be it negative (e.g., anger or guilt) or positive (e.g., satisfaction and pride).

The politics of emotional obligation are most contentious where expectations starkly diverge between protagonists and targets. Such divergences can emerge when readings of a given situation or issue differ, resulting in different emotions being expected in response (Shields 2005, 8). Divergences may also result when the internal values, beliefs, or concerns that give rise to emotions differ between protagonist and target. Protagonists may also blame divergences on the very emotional competence of the target, their ability (or inability) to feel emotion, or at least, feel the appropriate ones (Thoits 2018, 206–7). To illustrate, an actor not showing guilt in response to a perceived transgression may be accused of having not interpreted the situation (including its own culpability) properly, not sufficiently caring, or simply being incapable of feeling guilt. Protagonists thus simultaneously promote a dominant situational narrative, a relevant value system, and a set of feeling rules for the actors and issues of interest.

The ostensible goal of the politics of emotional obligation is not just to levy a norm; it is to ensure its targets sincerely feel certain emotions. However, continuously knowing and policing what others think and feel is virtually impossible; only outward expression and behavior are observable. Consequently, in practice, the politics of emotional obligation frequently focuses upon the discourse and conduct of its targets. Sincere actors should display the expected emotional behavior when appropriate, refrain from any discordant expressions, and certainly not show "outlaw emotions" that contradict prevailing feeling rules (Jaggar 1989, 166). Where battles over emotional obligation are fractious, one can expect heightened vigilance toward those suspected of "surface acting" (Hochschild 2012, 37–38), paying lip service, or being two-faced out of political expediency. Indeed, the politics of emotional obligation can—at its extreme—lead to ever greater demands for proof of emotional authenticity and ever closer monitoring for deviation.

Where a counter-politics emerges, it may manifest in attacks on the protagonists' narratives, value systems, or feeling rules (Shields 2005, 9). In extreme cases, defiant targets may blatantly flaunt the rules to provoke overreactions, inciting protagonists into self-delegitimation. Where targets are in some way beholden to the protagonists or concerned about third-party perceptions, resistance may be more subtle, in "coded communication" only legible to a specific few (Albertson 2015). Even where initially accepted by targets, emotional obligations can over time still generate resentment, as the targets become frustrated by repeated demands to prove their sincerity.

In short, albeit fundamentally a politics of duty, the politics of emotional obligation can implicate broader struggles over narratives, beliefs, values, and feeling rules. Even where protagonists are successful in establishing a prevailing emotional obligation, they cannot assume its internalization. The subsequent result—particularly where the political process was fraught—is the focus of contention then shifts to what constitutes sincerity on the part of the targets and whether or not this has been demonstrated. The politics of emotional obligation achieves its fullest victory when obligations cease to appear political and instead become commonsensical.

The Politics of Emotional Entitlement

The politics of emotional entitlement is a politics of rights. Its protagonists aspire to a prerogative of feeling, often their own, seeking to create or defend liberties to feel or not feel as desired. It is most intense where actors perceive unreasonable interference in their legitimate experience and expression of feeling. Assertions of emotional rights may stem from beliefs about what is fair, morally justified, or simply natural. The objective is protected relief from that which prevents the free enjoyment of a rightful emotional life.

The politics of emotional entitlement assumes both weak and strong forms. The weak form involves the right not to feel certain emotions. Akin to what Isaiah Berlin termed "negative liberty" (Berlin 2017) such demands are articulated as "freedom from"—freedom from shame, or guilt, or fear. The weak form generally seeks freedom from negative emotions, from feelings perceived as underserved, undesired, and unpleasant. The strong form, by contrast, aspires to a recognized claim to certain emotions. Like Berlin's notion of "positive liberty" (Berlin 2017), it demands a "freedom to" feel—to mourn, to feel pride, or outrage.

In either form, the politics of emotional entitlement takes aim at external expectations, norms, or conditions seen as unduly impinging upon emotional freedoms. In some cases, its protagonists may seek to dismantle or gain exemption from certain feeling rules. They may attack existing interpretations, value systems, or narratives that they see as stifling their emotional life, asserting a right to alternative feelings and expressive displays. In other cases, protagonists may target external conditions or practices, on the belief that something or someone is preventing them from feeling desired emotions or, conversely, making them feel unwanted ones. Here, altering the outside environment serves the

purpose of permitting a desired internal state. Such reasoning means that claims to emotional entitlements can generate demands for change in the world. A counter-politics to such efforts may respond that the target for change is being misconstrued, that the protagonists are too thin-skinned or too sensitive, or the target for change is not so emotionally significant. Or it may reply with apposite claims to entitlement, invoking competing claims to deference.

The Politics of Emotional Deference

The politics of emotional deference center upon whose emotions deserve consideration, respect, and priority. Protagonists often seek to elevate the potential emotional impact of a given decision, practice, or outcome on a certain set of actors as a socially, morally, and politically salient concern. Protagonists may speak for themselves or on behalf of others. Although membership in the referent group may provide greater authenticity, debates over emotional deference can occur without the referent group ever participating, or even being alive. Indeed, the feelings in question may themselves be completely hypothetical; the political significance thereof, nevertheless, can be quite real.

The politics of emotional deference generally depends upon moral claims to a priority of consideration. It can be rooted in a logic of a moral economy that compensates service and loss with deference, seeks to account for undeserved suffering and victimhood, or is responding to debts for self-sacrifice. It may also appeal to shared hierarchies of concern ascribing greater moral status to the emotional life of certain groups, such as children.

Regardless, the politics of emotional deference manifests in a very clear idiom. "We must respect the feelings of X." "How would that make X feel?" "We have to think about the emotional impact on X." Intersubjective feeling rules play a crucial role here, supplying the template with which hypothetical emotions are predicted and testimonies of feeling are judged. Where successful, the politics of emotional deference attains a set of policy outcomes or, more expansively, creates general norms for discourse and conduct to respect the referent group's feelings.

Disputes over emotional deference may be at the center of political struggles or may play auxiliary roles. It may be part of larger struggles for recognition (Murray 2018), in which emotional deference accompanies other demands for respect, status, and social esteem. Or it may be marshalled to justify a particular political position or policy, as a resource political actors can deploy to their advantage.

Interactions

Albeit analytically distinct, in practice, these forms can and likely do co-appear and intertwine. Protagonists of one form may find their adversaries to be protagonists of another. The politics of emotion can also intersect with political emotions and emotional politics. Sincerely felt political emotions may supply protagonists their motivation, be it resentment toward certain emotional obligations or outrage over a perceived disregard for their feelings. Conversely, where successful, the politics of emotion may shape how targets discipline or cultivate political emotions within themselves. Emotional politics in the form of political appeals to emotions or political performances thereof may also simultaneously challenge or reinforce feeling rules and hierarchies of emotional deference. We separate these for theoretical purposes, not to suggest their mutual exclusivity within political life.

To be absolutely clear, we make no normative argument as to which forms of the politics of emotion are good or bad. To the extent that we have a position, it is that the politics of emotion is neither inherently one nor the other; it can serve both worthy and unworthy political aims. However, our goal here is not to offer normative judgment, rather to theorize how a politics of emotion is constituted.

The International Politics of Emotion

Identity, the Nation-State, and Collective Memory

The politics of emotion, as existing work shows (Shields 2005; Beattie, Eroukhmanoff, and Head 2019), is ubiquitous within everyday micro-political interactions. We argue it can also play out internationally between collectives and states. Crucial to this is identity. Identity categories offer a basis for making claims to and about collective emotional obligations, entitlements, and hierarchies of deference.

Within international politics, the nation arguably forms a central locus of collective identity. National identity and the nation-form to which it is linked are social constructions, imagined, spoken, and performed into existence (Brubaker 1998; Anderson 2006). All the same, nations—understood as politically significant "imagined communities" (Anderson 2006) of people linked together based on certain putative commonalities—frequently inhabit subject positions within political discourse. Nations are storied not just with wants and desires, but also emotions felt, imposed, and denied. Leaving aside IR debates over collective emotions (Sasley 2011; Mercer 2014; Hall and Ross 2019), nations are frequently narrated as communities of emotional experience—both positive, such as pride and joy, and negative, such as humiliation and mourning. Belonging to the nation is intricately linked to feeling the nation.

The modern nation-state form ties the legitimacy of the state to its ability to express, preserve, and promote its nation; in turn, the state draws upon connections to the nation to claim political loyalty. States can thus emerge as the cultivators, protectors, and advocates of national feeling and nation-centric feeling rules. States may further seek to instill emotional obligations in citizens or subjects toward the nation to forge bonds of allegiance (Berezin 2001). States may also advance regimes of emotional deference—both domestically and internationally—in recognition of national narratives of heroism, sacrifice, and victimhood. And states may defend the entitlements of their national community to be free of burdens upon its emotional life. States must thus contend with political actors—both domestic and foreign—that assert their own competing visions of national emotion. In brief, this state–nation nexus means that defending and advancing the national community's feelings can constitute a core state responsibility.

Consequently, the politics of emotion can unfold internationally, with state actors both as protagonists and targets. The context may be bilateral, with one state seeking to impose emotional obligations on another. Or the target may be the entire putative international community, as when a state strives for a new international norm of emotional entitlement or deference. Nation-states may also find themselves on the receiving end of an international politics of emotion advanced by multiple state or non-state actors. Subotic and Zarakol (2020), for instance, discuss how Western European feeling rules concerning the Holocaust were urged upon Eastern European states as the latter sought European Union membership.

Certainly, states are not the only collective actors within the international politics of emotion and the nation not the only relevant collective identity. Sub-national, transnational, and supra-national actors and identities can all also be protagonists and targets. Ling (2014), for instance, points to a politics of emotion between colonizers and colonized. However, nation-states—due to the centrality of national identity and the organizational capacity and resources of the state—play a particularly prominent role.

And while we reject "communitarian understandings of culture" (Reus-Smit 2018, 232) that would view feeling rules as nationally "coherent, integrated, and bounded," contradictions between dominant state-sponsored national emotional regimes (Ling 2014, 582) can generate clashes over how emotions and their expression are interpreted across and between states. Arguably, transnational interactions, global activism, and the pressures of international socialization have engendered certain supra-national convergences on feeling rules and shared understandings of emotional expression, such as contrition for historical atrocities (Berger 2012). But differences do persist and can give rise to friction. That said, actors may also deploy essentialist claims to cultural distinctiveness to defend certain emotional regimes from external demands and criticism.

The international politics of emotion can also be crucially linked to questions of collective memory and its divergences. Various scholars have identified how conflicting collective memories—or circuits of memory (Mitter 2020, 14–20)—can frustrate state cooperation (Midford 2002; He 2009), exacerbate territorial disputes, and prevent reconciliation (Gustafsson 2020). Others have suggested that memories of past aggression can limit the potential power of states and render them more susceptible to manipulation (Yang 2002).

We would add that how the past is narrated has emotional implications: whether one can or should feel pride, shame, or indignation; whether one's pain and trauma are respected or denied; or whether one's claim upon particular emotions is justified. The past, in particular, supplies the basis for ascribing or claiming collective role identities (Wendt 1999, 227)—such as perpetrator or victim, victor or vanquished, benefactor or recipient—engendering collective emotional obligations, entitlements, and hierarchies between them. At stake in the historical narratives of collectives—particularly ones with nations as their subjects—is the nature of the inheritance of emotional rights and burdens for their members.

Nothing here denies actors may genuinely care about the factual substance of historical narratives, be driven by a desire to have their identity recognized (Murray 2018), or that struggles over historical memory can additionally implicate efforts by state actors to write history in the service of sovereign power (Edkins 2003). Rather, the point is that said histories also have distributive emotional consequences. Accordingly, in some cases, actors—especially those promoting nationalist projects—may craft historical narratives with an eye to the emotional entitlements and obligations they generate. Even where particular facts stubbornly resist denial, interested or ideologically motivated actors may endeavor to elevate, downplay, or spin them to massage their emotional implications.

The Politics of Emotion, Internationally

The above presents a basis for an international politics of emotion, one with collective actors—nation-states in particular—as both protagonists and targets. State actors may accept or resist emotional obligations foisted from without or, conversely, advocate their imposition upon foreign others. They may defend the emotional entitlements of their nationals against external demands or engage claims by others to entitlement. They may seek international emotional deference, either to their nation as a whole or to subnational groups, as well as acknowledge or dismiss calls for deference from others. And clearly, the international politics of emotion can run parallel to and become intertwined with domestic political concerns, disputes, and activism. Collective memory, especially, can underpin claims for emotional rights and duties on the international stage and, where memories diverge, become a battleground with distributional emotional consequences.

But so what? What does this theoretical framework contribute to IR as a field? First, it offers a conceptual vocabulary for systematically identifying and understanding the forms the politics of emotion can take. Indeed, many IR scholars have engaged the politics of emotion without theorizing its forms explicitly. Hagström (2020), for instance, examines how Swedish participants in debates over NATO were chastised for not adhering to emotional obligations, such as to show pride. Adler-Nissen (2014) looks respectively at stigma management and rejection in the cases of Germany and Austria, arguably constituted by the acceptance or avoidance of obligations to remorse. And more broadly, authors working on ontological security argue certain states have sought security in their identities by denying past war crimes (Zarakol 2010; Gustafsson 2014; Mälksoo 2015); conceivably compounding the stakes of such denialism are entitlements to pride or obligations to shame. The large IR corpus on trauma (Resende and Budryte 2014) also very clearly implicates entitlements to pain and efforts to establish deference to the feelings of those who have suffered. Other examples abound, and we limit ourselves only for reasons of space.

Second, it points to how international conflicts may revolve around or be exacerbated by the politics of emotion. One might surmise that because the putative objects of dispute—feeling rules and hierarchies of emotion—are intangible not material, the politics of emotion might be less contentious. The material world faces scarcity; in contrast, the world of felt experience is internal and subjective, and feelings can be had by all. Such reasoning is problematic. As Vasquez (2009, 81) observes, "What little research there has been on issues shows that the more tangible an issue, the greater the likelihood of eventual resolution, while the more intangible, the more contentious and conflict-prone an issue …" With emotional consequences at stake, issues may be more indivisible and compromise less possible, especially when implicating principled and moral questions. Conflict resolution may thus hinge upon settling disagreements over claims to and about emotions. What is more, resolving such disputes can entail quite tangible, material consequences, be they in terms of demands for substantive evidence of emotional sincerity or changes to the material world to accommodate emotional entitlements or show deference.

Third, it allows us to begin theorizing and recognizing the tactics and counter-tactics such a politics engenders. Protagonists may advance claims through argumentation (Risse 2000), appealing to history, morality, or even empathetic understanding. Seeking greater entitlements and deference, they may engage in one-upmanship, emphasizing how one group's situation exceeds—positively or negatively—another's. Conversely, to lessen emotional obligations and protect entitlements, they may employ "whataboutism," downplaying certain factors by relativizing. Actors may

additionally endeavor to reframe certain events or circumstances so as to invoke or, alternately, render irrelevant certain feeling rules. And when defending against emotional-political demands, actors may counter-attack, either by dismissing protagonists as exaggerating, insincere, or too sensitive or by seeking to discredit or deny the basis for the claims they oppose. Participants may also resort to more forceful measures, offering pay-offs, mobilizing social shaming, or even deploying coercive threats. These latter tools may not alter targets' inner beliefs but can nonetheless oblige outward compliance.

An Illustration

How, then, does one evaluate a case for a politics of emotion? Our arguments are not about causality, concerning relationships between variables, but rather the constitution (Wendt 1998) of a particular form of politics, a distributive politics of emotion. It emerges most visibly when actors explicitly debate, dispute, and fight over who can or should feel what and whose feelings matter. We should thus observe this in what key actors say and do—how they describe the nature of their dispute, what triggers tensions, what justifications and tactics they employ. Granted, people say many things, but the fact that in moments of tension prominent actors are referencing emotional obligations, entitlements, or needs to show deference in their statements offers evidence a politics of emotion is in play. We make no claims about motives or personal emotions—while important, our arguments concern the constitution of a particular type of politics, not what drives actors. Rather, we must show that when central players collide, they are arguing about emotional obligations, entitlements, and hierarchies of deference; when tensions erupt, they emerge from clashes over, challenges to, or perceived violations of the protagonists' desired distribution of emotional duties, rights, and prioritizations; when participants justify themselves, they do so on the basis of claims about emotion and feeling rules; and when actors do battle, their tactics include one-upmanship, what-about-ism, reframing, dismissal, denial, or questioning the sincerity and motives of their adversaries.

To illustrate the plausibility of our framework (George and Bennett 2005, 75) and how it offers new insights into a well-studied case, we look to the Sino-Japanese history problem (Japanese: *rekishi mondai;* Chinese: *lìshǐ wèntí*). The history problem denotes a series of disagreements and controversies between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Japan concerning legacies of the latter's conduct toward China prior to 1945, particularly its invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and subsequent aggression against China as a whole in 1937. Given its empirical import and the puzzling fact that far from dissipating as time has passed, it has repeatedly returned to plague Sino-Japanese relations, the history problem has attracted intense scholarly attention as a case implicating nationalism, identity, collective memory, and issues of reconciliation.

Some explain it as the product of different, competing identities or identity projects (Suzuki 2007, 2015b; Zarakol 2010; Gustafsson 2014, 2015). For such identity-centered approaches, history serves identity construction; as differing identity projects over time generate divergent histories, tensions accordingly intensify. Others, taking an instrumentalist approach, focus on political incentives, examining how conflicting versions of history may be produced and used for political gain or to bolster state legitimacy (Hughes 2008; Cheung 2010). Examples range from the PRC's use of history to gain concessions from Japan and its use of patriotic education to cultivate loyalty to nationalistic appeals by Japanese politicians against a background of economic decline. And still others who theorize apologies and reconciliation highlight the problems afflicting Sino-Japanese reconciliation efforts, be they difficulties with apologies eliciting domestic backlashes (Lind 2008), failures to create shared historical narratives (He 2009), or misaligned domestic attitudes, political will, and international conditions (Berger 2012). Emotions also feature in explanations invoking legacies of trauma (Hutchison 2016) as well as more recent negative sentiments emerging from social interactions (Wan 2006, 142–67), echoing general approaches that view emotions and affect as constituting interests and identity (Hall and Ross 2015).

All are important contributions. We seek not to contest nor disprove any of them. However, they are incomplete. Whether glossing emotions or arguing for their significance, on the whole they have yet to fully engage how political struggles over emotional claims also have shaped the trajectory of the relationship. Inquiring after the politics of emotion means looking at what the core players are saying at crucial junctures, what they claim to be disputing and why, how they justify themselves, and what tactics they employ.

To these ends, we concentrate primarily on the major statements and interactions of the leadership and official mouthpieces of both sides within key episodes of the history problem, as well as the discourse of groups leading the conservative and right-wing backlash within Japan. For the latter, we focus in particular on two prominent groups: (1) the Japanese Bereaved Families Association (henceforth Izokukai), a group with major—albeit of late declining—influence in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) whose goals are to promote the welfare of the bereaved and ensure "the honor and memory of those who died serving their country" (Smith 2015, 69–72) and (2) the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (henceforth Tsukurukai), a set of right-wing scholars and activists dedicated to promoting a nationalist, revisionist view of Japanese history (Rose 2004, 53). We recognize the history problem implicates a much broader variety of actors and issues. Conservative and right-wing voices—themselves a diverse group, ranging from pragmatists to more revisionist groups like Nippon kaigi—are far from the only ones within Japanese society; numerous Japanese groups have advocated tirelessly for the victims of Japanese militarism (Seraphim 2006) or challenged historical revisionism and denialism. There are also multiple voices within China (Rose 2004), and issues addressed below (e.g., controversies surrounding Yasukuni Shrine) further involve Koreans, Taiwanese, and other victims of Japanese imperialism and wartime aggression. We cannot hope to exhaustively capture all nuances; our treatment can only be partial at best. But arguably, the triangle of official PRC actors, official Japanese actors, and conservative, right-wing Japanese groups forms a key locus of significant, recurrent tensions within Sino-Japanese relations and hence is our focus.

We concede ours is by nature an interpretive endeavor and open to contestation. We, therefore, anchor our interpretations in explicit references to what central actors (leaders, official mouthpieces, and activists) were saying and to the extent possible engage potential objections or alternative readings. We also return to existing alternative arguments at the end to showcase our contribution. Our aim is to demonstrate how the politics of emotion has been an ever-present element of the history problem, repeatedly evident at key junctures in what its participants argued over, how they justified themselves, and the ways in which they chose to react and interact.

We argue one can observe a politics of emotion present when Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations were established; it produced emotional obligations and hierarchies of deference that would structure the relationship for decades afterward. These progressively became challenged, however, by two developments: a right-wing counter-politics asserting a need to show deference to the feelings of Japanese war-bereaved, the war dead, and—increasingly—Japanese children and also a broader growing resistance within Japan to obligations to continually demonstrate remorse through apologizing.

The 72 System

The politics of emotion were present from the start of official relations between the PRC and Japan, and what emerged from the normalization agreement in 1972—the so-called 72 system—were obligations on the Japanese side to "reproach itself" for past wartime behavior and show deference to Chinese feelings. Precisely, the 1972 Joint Statement declared: "The Japanese side is keenly conscious of the responsibility for the serious damage that Japan caused in the past to the Chinese people through war, and deeply reproaches itself" (Ishi et al. 2010, 425).

One might surmise that the PRC side was seeking to capitalize on Japanese war responsibility for political or material gain. However, the PRC had already chosen to abandon claims to reparations, and, in fact, the question of an apology was not originally a significant issue on the agenda. The inclusion of this statement, remarkably, was the unintentional result of a comment by Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei during an opening banquet in which he expressed "profound regret for the 'great trouble' (Japanese: *tadai na gomeiwaku*)" Japan had caused the Chinese people. The PRC side, based on the Chinese translation (using the term *máfan*, generally denoting small inconveniences), saw his words as entirely insufficient given the emotional gravity of the past—there was a disjuncture here between perceived emotional obligations and expected expressions—and thus held an emergency meeting where they agreed the Japanese side needed to be made aware of the significance of its war responsibility (Zhu 1992, 37). As PRC Premier Zhou Enlai told Tanaka the following day, "Prime Minister Tanaka's comment, [that Japan] ' … caused inconvenience to the Chinese people', will only elicit the animosity of the Chinese people. This is because in China, the term 'cause inconvenience' [*máfan*] is used only when referring to inconsequential matters" (Ishi et al. 2010, 56).

A series of negotiations thus ensued over the appropriate sentiment Japan should express in the normalization communique, and notes record Tanaka and PRC Foreign Minister Ji Pengfei debating the meaning of the word "reproach" (Japanese: *hansei*, Chinese: *fǎnxǐng*) and whether it was adequate considering the issue's emotional magnitude (Ishi et al. 2010, 93). At stake were not material rewards but emotional obligations and deference to Chinese feelings. In the end, by settling on the term "reproach," as He (2017) notes, "responsibility [was] established not as a definite fact but as a *feeling*" (emphasis added).

One might argue this is simply rhetoric, but it is to exactly these emotional obligations and hierarchies of deference that both sides returned in one of the first major post-normalization episodes of the history problem, the 1982 textbook controversy. It began when Beijing reacted vehemently to reports the Japanese government was attempting to water down wording in history textbooks describing Japan's wartime aggression. Beijing's official mouthpiece (Renmin Ribao 1982) warned any such revisions would incite "enormous indignation" (*jīdà fènkǎi*) among the Chinese people, thus calling on Japan to show deference to Chinese feelings. Consequently, the Japanese government indeed declared that the textbook authorization process would "pay greater attention to the feelings of neighboring countries" (Rose 2004, 56). Invoking the 1972 Joint Communique, it "confirm[ed] Japan's remorse" and that such a "spirit … naturally should also be respected in Japan's school education and textbook authorization" (Miyazawa 1982)—this became known as the "neighbouring countries clause" for textbook reviews. When a similar incident erupted in 1986, Beijing quickly prompted the Japanese government to "fulfil the promise it made in 1982," pointing to how the 1982 experience had hurt the feelings of people in Asian countries (Renmin Ribao 1986); the prime minister, Nakasone Yasuhiro, intervened to ensure the offending passages were changed (Asahi 1986).

We can see similar resort to assertions of emotional obligations and hierarchies in 1985, when Nakasone officially visited the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, which since 1978 enshrines the spirits of fourteen convicted Class A war criminals together with almost 2.5 million Japanese war dead. Beijing responded quickly, criticizing the visit for "hurting the feelings of people of various countries in the world" (Renmin Ribao 1985), and Chinese students held mass demonstrations. Debate erupted in Japan involving issues of deference and obligation. On the one hand, Japanese government representatives pointed to the need to respect the feelings of the Izokukai, who had long called for official prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni (Japanese Diet 1985). On the other hand, critics, and eventually even Nakasone himself, held that such a visit was seen as "hurting the feelings of not only the Chinese but also other Asian peoples" (Nakasone 1985).

Nakasone chose not to revisit the shrine in 1986, and we can clearly observe a politics of emotion at work in his reasoning. Explaining this decision to PRC President Hu Yaobang, Nakasone wrote, "As a part of the 40th anniversary activities, considering the sorrowful feelings of the Izokukai and various others, I officially visited Yasukuni for the first time as prime minister … it was out of respect for the feelings of my fellow countrymen, to express mourning for those ordinary soldiers who sacrificed for their country … But, even though the war ended forty years ago, unfortunately the scars of history still remain deep in the hearts of the peoples of neighbouring Asian countries. Thinking we need to avoid hurting the feelings of the people of neighbouring Asian countries, your country foremost, by officially visiting Yasukuni Shrine, where leaders responsible for the war of aggression are enshrined, we reached the high-level political decision not to visit Yasukuni this year" (Nakasone 1997, 248–49).

In sum, be it the initial normalization statement or subsequent controversies over textbooks and prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni, key actors did not simply invoke a language of emotion, they spoke of, debated, and justified their choices in terms of emotional obligations and hierarchies of deference, particularly for "the feelings of not only the Chinese but also other Asian peoples."

Counter-Politics

Over time, however, the structure of emotional obligations and deference embodied in the 72 system confronted a growing counter-politics led by Japanese conservatives and

right-wing groups. Their tactics involved denialist attacks on the historical facts and interpretations behind PRC demands for Japanese contrition, what-aboutist complaints about the PRC's history textbooks, and efforts to dismiss the sincerity of Chinese feelings. Most significantly, however, they began to forcefully assert alternative claims of emotional deference and entitlement for Japanese children, the Japanese war bereaved—and public more broadly—to mourn the war dead and feel gratitude for their sacrifice. They argued on behalf of the feelings of those who had lost loved ones to the war, as well as the feelings of the war dead themselves.

For example, a 1995 Diet resolution expressing "a sense of deep remorse" for "acts" that inflicted "pain and suffering upon the other peoples of other countries, especially in Asia" (Rose 2005, 135) faced significant conservative backlash. A statement by a prefectural Izokukai chairman neatly summarizes the core criticism: "As [a representative of] the Izokukai, I am absolutely against one-sided condemnation of Japan. The war dead are not aggressors. This resolution desecrates the spirits of the dead soldiers who died for the country and tramples on the feelings of the bereaved families" (Asahi 1995). Others complained it would cause Japanese children to lose pride in their country (Koo 2018, 39). The resolution was significantly diluted and suffered a lack of support, reflecting consideration for the feelings of the Izokukai (Mukae 1996). Beijing, for its part, criticized those opposing the resolution for not fulfilling Japan's obligation to express regret and apologize (Lu 1995).

Also around this time, in 1996, the controversial Tsukurukai was established to more actively push a right-wing, revisionist version of Japanese history. One could argue their focus on rewriting history textbooks stemmed from ideological and identity-based commitments. But their justifications were awash with references to emotion, and more precisely, the entitlement of Japanese children to national pride. Their explicit goal was "to produce a textbook that would revise the masochistic descriptions [of Japanese history in existing textbooks] and would make children feel pride in Japan" (Sankei Shimbun 2001). This, in turn, is for the mission of "protecting" children and ensuring that they are "raised healthy" (Tsukurukai 2020). As one Tsukurukai advocate stated, "'To foster pride in their country of birth' is the purpose of history. So it is not that historical facts are irrelevant, but that one should first teach historical facts that generate pride … But in Japan, they made it so as not to have pride in our nation's history … " (Fujioka 2003, 29). In 2001, the Tsukurukai's efforts bore fruit as its first textbook passed the Japanese government's authorization process; the PRC countered with its own claims for emotional deference, attacking this for "severely injuring the feelings of the people of the victimized countries" (Lu 2001).

Conservatives also promoted prime ministerial Yasukuni visits to cultivate proper emotions in the young. As argued in a Yasukuni newsletter, "the image [of the Prime Minister paying tribute] will inspire today's youth, the bearers of the next generation, to feelings of gratitude to the war dead and of patriotism" (cited in Breen 2004, 85). Underpinning all this was the basic nationalist position that Japanese children were entitled—if not obligated—to feel proud of Japan and love their nation (Tsukurukai 2020).

Such claims concerning emotional entitlements and deference were key to the context in 2001 where LDP politician Koizumi Junichirō pledged to visit Yasukuni on August 15—the anniversary of the Japanese surrender—if elected party leader, thereby appealing to members of the Izokukai (Cheung 2010, 534). In 1996, Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō—a former Izokukai president—had paid an official visit to Yasukuni but refrained from visiting again in the face of PRC criticism (Asahi 1996). Koizumi was distinguishing himself from Hashimoto; he won the election. Beijing denounced Koizumi's pledge, requesting he "refrain from doing things that hurt the feelings of the people of Asian countries, including China" (Yomiuri 2001).

Numerous actors within Japan, including within the LDP, also raised objections—while some challenged the constitutionality of official visits on the basis of separation of religion and state, others called for deference to neighboring countries' feelings. As Lind reports, "Social Democrat leader Doi Takako likened the visit to laying a wreath at Hitler's grave and questioned, 'What would the countries that suffered under his hand feel?" (Lind 2008, 73). Koizumi, however, persisted, explaining that: "I visit to offer my heartfelt respect and gratitude to the war dead" (Asahi 2001). Facing significant criticism, he settled upon visiting Yasukuni on August 13, 2001, avoiding the more sensitive anniversary. But he issued regrets for breaking his promise, and simultaneously endorsed both emotional obligations to victims of the war and Japanese entitlements to mourn, expressing "feelings of profound remorse and sincere mourning to all the victims of the war" while appealing for possibilities for "respecting the feelings of the Japanese people toward Yasukuni Shrine …" (Koizumi 2001b).

Despite domestic and international criticism, Koizumi persisted in visiting annually while prime minister. He engaged in the tactic of reframing, repeatedly casting visiting Yasukuni—and the gratitude and mourning he described his actions as expressing—as separate from and compatible with other emotional obligations and entitlements within Sino-Japanese relations: "I am offering an expression of mourning to the war dead of my country. I still just cannot understand why foreigners should say this is impermissible." (Mainichi 2004). He coupled this with displays of contrition, seeking to defray accusations of glorifying militarism. For instance, following his 2001 visit, he travelled to Beijing and expressed "heartfelt apologies to the Chinese who fell victim to aggression" (Koizumi 2001a).

Beijing rejected this reframing, and apart from denouncing his visits as glorifying militarism, countered by asserting needs for deference to the feelings of Chinese and Japanese obligations to remorse. In the words of PRC President Hu Jintao, "Remorse expressed for the war of aggression should be translated into action … [Japan] should never do anything again that would hurt the feelings of the Chinese people or the people of other Asian countries" (China Daily 2005). This, combined with the recurring textbook issue among other problems drove bilateral relations to their lowest point since 1972. By the end of Koizumi's tenure, Beijing was refusing to meet with him (Smith 2015, 59–60). While differences over ideology and history were certainly in play, clearly apparent in the discourse and reasoning of central actors on both sides were competing claims concerning emotional entitlements, obligations, and due deference.

Koizumi's tenure marked the height of bilateral history problem tensions; since he stepped down in 2006, they have not reappeared to the same degree, but do nonetheless periodically re-emerge. For example, in 2013, Prime Minister Abe Shinzō conducted an unannounced visit to Yasukuni. Abe told reporters, "I prayed to pay respect for the war dead who sacrificed their precious lives and hoped that they rest in peace … I have no intention to neglect the feelings of the people in China and South Korea" (McCurry 2013). While the Izokukai expressed gratitude, Beijing expressed "intense righteous indignation towards the Japanese

leaders' behavior which brutally trampled on the feelings of Chinese and other victimized Asian peoples and openly challenged historical justice and the common sense of humanity" (Renmin Ribao 2013). Abe's replacement, Suga Yoshihide, has not visited Yasukuni as prime minister at the time of this writing, but made a "masakaki" tree offering; Xinhua was quick to note that such "ritual offerings … hurt the feelings of the people of China" (Xinhua 2020).

The Apology Issue

The first half of the 1990s saw Japanese expressions of contrition going far beyond the 1972 statement, as when the Japanese emperor conveyed remorse for the suffering inflicted on the Chinese people (Rose 2004, 101), or, most prominently, when Prime Minister Murayama Tomi'ichi famously marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Japanese surrender by expressing "feelings of deep remorse" and "heartfelt apology" for Japan's "colonial rule and aggression" (Rose 2005, 135–36). This, the Murayama statement, was much appreciated in the official Chinese media (Yang 2013) and subsequently became a key reference point in the relationship.

But as time progressed, PRC demands on Japan for continued evidence of remorse and self-reproach met greater resistance. This trend became visible during PRC President Jiang Zemin's 1998 visit to Japan (Wan 2006, 130; Berger 2012). Beijing demanded a written apology similar to one given to South Korea earlier that year. Tokyo was unwilling to acquiesce unless China, like South Korea, reciprocated with a statement of forgiveness and a pledge not to raise the issue again (Sato 2001); bluntly, Tokyo was seeking an end to its obligations to remorse. Beijing was unwilling to grant this, so while Prime Minister Obuchi Keizō did verbally express a "feeling of remorse and apologies to China," the resultant written declaration only expressed "deep remorse." Although not appearing submissive vis-à-vis a rising PRC was likely a factor, as *Yomiuri* (1998) commented, Tokyo also sought to avoid a "domestic revival of criticism against repeated apologies."

The desire to lift the obligation to apologize was similarly evident in the 2015 Abe statement marking the seventieth anniversary of Japan's surrender. While earlier statements contained explicit apologies, Abe's did not, mentioning instead that "Japan has repeatedly expressed the feelings of deep remorse and heartfelt apology" (Abe 2015). Importantly, Abe sought to release future generations from obligations to display remorse: "We must not let our children, grandchildren, and even further generations to come, who have nothing to do with that war, be predestined to apologize."

The PRC Foreign Ministry responded that Abe should have presented a "sincere apology … rather than being evasive … The question of history … affects the sentiments of the Chinese people." The official news agency, Xinhua (2015), was more direct, announcing "Abe's watered-down apology fails sincerity test." This language of sincerity suggests the importance of Abe conveying genuine feeling as opposed to just lip service to obligations.

We can see here an ongoing contest between continued assertions that Japan has obligations to remorse and counter-arguments Japan—and particularly its younger generations—should now be entitled to release. Indeed, at the time of Abe's statement, a majority of Japanese believed Japan either was approaching or had already reached the point of apologizing enough (Mainichi 2015). This phenomenon has been labeled "apology fatigue" (Suzuki 2015a), describing not only a chafing at ongoing obligations but, arguably, also a counter assertion of entitlements to be free of this emotional burden. Moreover, Tokyo has been at pains to emphasize the statements of remorse and apology it has already issued over the years (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2018).

But as one Chinese scholar writes, "In truth, the Chinese side consistently points out that the real problem is not "whether or not Japan has apologized" but rather that the Japanese government cannot with a frank and sustained manner admit historical facts, adhere to a reproachful [Chinese: *fanxing*, identical to the 1972 wording] attitude, maintain consistency between its actions and words" (Lu 2015, 124). Apologies are in this view not an act of closure, but rather one among multiple indicators of continued Japanese acknowledgment of historical wrongdoings and obligations for remorse. And, accordingly, the Japanese side does not get to decide when its obligations end. As another Chinese scholar writes, "the Japanese government leaders should apologise until the victim countries recognize it as enough …" (Ling 2015, 117).

Summary

One could argue the Sino-Japanese history problem is about nationalism, identity, or ideology—there is no denying all play important roles—but reducing it to these would ignore how central actors are themselves framing the issues at stake, their repeated references to emotional duties, rights, and hierarchies.

The Chinese side continually emphasized the need for Japanese counterparts to not only recognize the identities of Chinese as victims of wartime aggression, but also show deference to their feelings and assume an ongoing obligation to feel remorse. As Liu Deyou (2002, 9), former head of the Chinese Association for Japanese Studies and a significant figure in the history of Sino-Japanese relations writes, "In the past Japanese militarism invaded China. Although the Japanese people also suffered greatly, the disasters and suffering borne by the Chinese people is beyond words. The Chinese people are victims, and therefore have an immense hatred of Japanese militarism … The feelings of the victims of course deserve respect."

Granted, frequently repeated official PRC accusations of this or that action "hurting the feelings of the Chinese people" may appear to some formalistic and hollow. Enterprising bloggers have even created sardonic maps showing all countries alleged to have hurt China's feelings (Arcostia 2008). Still, official usage of the phrase grounds itself in an assertion that the offending behavior should change out of respect to Chinese emotions, while simultaneously elevating the PRC officialdom as the nation's true advocate.

Importantly, in the early years following normalization, the Japanese side did take such accusations seriously, as the textbook and Yasukuni episodes in the 1980s demonstrate. In later years, however, a counter-politics emerged within Japan—one that promoted deference to the feelings of the war-bereaved and war dead, and elevated Japanese children's entitlements to be free from guilt and pride in their nation. This counter-politics has been bolstered by the rise of revisionist politicians—such as Abe—within the LDP; Beijing's strident denunciations of this counter-politics as reviving militarism also ironically helped elevate its profile.

Accompanying these developments were also more general Japanese perceptions that the PRC's ongoing demands for deference and demonstrations of remorse and

self-reproach were politically driven rather than based on sincere emotion. Indeed, asked in 2016 how to solve the history problem, 69.9 percent of Japanese respondents identified the PRC's "anti-Japanese education" as the problem, and PRC media reporting about Japan came in second (43.5 percent); only 39.7 percent pointed to Japan's own historical awareness (Genron NPO 2016). The underlying notion that Chinese feelings are more a product of official manipulation than real has arguably served the tactic of dismissal.

Nothing above denies the possibility of ulterior motives on the part of participants, as instrumentalist approaches might suggest. As Mitter observes, "a desire to limit Japan's international influence" likely feeds Beijing's accusations that Japan is shirking its obligations to remorse and backsliding into militarism (Mitter 2020, 214). And while it is undeniable that Japanese imperialism scarred many lives and left legacies of trauma, Beijing has also used history for shoring up domestic legitimacy. Indeed, Beijing's politics of emotions fits comfortably with larger discourses of national humiliation (Wang 2012). Conversely, in Japan there exist domestic incentives—as evidenced during Koizumi's leadership bid—to cater to right-wing constituencies. And these episodes have unfolded against a background of shifting economic power that has altered the balance of the relationship (Koga 2013). But even if one adopts an instrumentalist lens, questions remain as to what can be and is being instrumentalized. Here one must return to the inescapable ways in which political claims, attacks, and counter-attacks were repeatedly justified with reference to emotions, and more specifically, emotional obligations, entitlements, and prerogatives. Our framework broadens our understanding of the expanse of political issues with which instrumental actors may pursue leverage.

Nor do we dispute the importance of substantive identity concerns or historical memory. But even our cursory overview of the history problem above suggests these domains are shot through with implications for and struggles over who can or should feel what and whose feelings matter. Existing approaches have focused on attachments to identity, recognition by others, and whether states are positively or negatively portrayed; but at key points central players within the Sino-Japanese history problem spoke of respect for feelings, entitlements to pride, and the extent of emotional obligations stemming from the past. We need to move beyond discussions of identity and memory that either gloss emotions or become bogged down debating whether to validate them as sincere or dismiss them as cynical. Our approach spotlights how disputes over identity and historical memory also involve distributional emotional consequences, shaping what participants perceive at stake.

Perhaps most importantly, the above analysis has practical implications for questions of reconciliation. Existing work on apologies and reconciliation, inter alia, blame the history problem on insufficient Japanese contrition, domestic backlashes within Japan, or conflicting historical narratives. Our approach suggests neither the perfect apology nor shared agreement on historical facts alone will generate Sino-Japanese reconciliation. Apologies may signal acceptance of emotional obligations, but do not necessarily eliminate them. And clashes over history not only implicate narratives of identity, but also carry consequences for who can or should feel what and whose feelings matter. Our approach spotlights how stable reconciliation may also require enduring agreement as to who has rights or duties to feel what and whose feelings should receive consideration.

Conclusion

Political actors fight over resources. They fight over ideas. They also fight over feelings. We argue there exists a politics of emotion revolving around who should or can feel what and whose feelings matter. Such struggles have their own logics and tactics, including efforts to define and impose feeling rules, contest the understandings and interpretations that underpin emotional claims, and challenge the bases upon which certain groups' feelings are prioritized over others.

Looking to the Sino-Japanese history dispute, we use our framework to highlight a dimension that instrumentalist, identity-based, and reconciliation-oriented approaches have overlooked, thereby suggesting ways to expand their analyses. We proffer an alternative means of engaging the significance of the ubiquitous ways participants invoke emotion within this dispute without becoming entangled in arguments over the sincerity of their professed feelings.

However, the politics of emotion is not limited to the Sino-Japanese history problem. We can arguably see it in relations between Japan and South Korea concerning the issue of wartime sexual slavery. It appears in political arguments that invoke deference to the feelings of victims, such as those who died in the 9/11 attacks and their kin. We can see it in the international row over the Danish Muhammad cartoons and arguments that these trampled the feelings of Muslim communities. We see it globally threaded into struggles over how to deal with the legacies of colonialism, slavery, atrocities, and civil wars—be it whose feelings matter in shaping acts, objects, and sites of commemoration, who is entitled to pride or anger, or who is obligated to feel remorse or shame. We offer here a conceptual framework that identifies and renders comprehensible the logics of ongoing political struggles all around us.

And ours is also a larger contribution to the field. It contributes to the literature on emotions and international relations, arguing that apart from the ways felt emotions shape politics or politics works to harness emotions and their effects, there also exists an analytically distinct distributional politics of emotion. Its operations are not just micropolitical; it can play out internationally between state actors. It also contributes to work on struggles over identity, nationalism, recognition, and historical memory, bringing into relief the ways these can also be accentuated, exacerbated, or in some cases even driven by concerns over distributional emotional consequences. And going forward, it arguably has much to contribute to discussions of hierarchy and resistance within IR, for political battles over emotional duties, rights, and hierarchies of deference can serve as both an extension of power relations and a site for their contestation. Most broadly, it contributes to what we understand as the stuff of politics: questions of who can or should feel what and whose emotions matter can be deeply political.

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