Japan, China, and the construction of history
Douw, L.M.

Published in:
IIAS Newsletter

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
AFTER THE APEC MEETING in Beijing in November 2014 a series of pictures were released in the world press, which showed Japan’s Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and China’s President Xi Jinping reluctantly shaking hands. Small wonder, Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations have been in stalemate for several years and apparently won’t improve much for some time to come. On 25-26 June 2015 a workshop was convened at the University of Amsterdam with the intention to discuss this impasse: can a historiography be constructed that counteracts the East Asian regional identity? And with regard to the latter, promotion of trade and investment, or the construction of a military build-up under US leadership? If so, are both alternatives to this counterhistoriography preferable? One recurring motif during the workshop was the need to balance the desire to overcome the repressed identities of those left behind during the repressed identities of those left behind during the World War II, and the Chinese state’s territorial claims in the East and South China Sea. Counter-claims by the US, which backed Japan, warn China against using force in supporting its claims and threaten the US free navigation.

Ingrid d’Hooghe (Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael) argued that the consistent anti-Japanese propaganda, which China uses in its public diplomacy, harms Japan’s international image and triggers a Japanese counter-offensive, even if it also keeps the dialogue between both countries going and ameliorates mutual bad feelings about one another among their populations. She also acknowledged, however, that China starts from an underdog position and may feel threatened by its conscious encirclement by both countries part of a long lasting pattern. This pattern in its turn may be a start becoming a significant breakthrough for the Pacific balance of power approach, which has recently emerged in public debate, and threats to sharpen the apparent Sino-Japanese antagonism rather than soften it.

Several of the papers in the workshop will be published in the recently relaunched academic journal China’s President Xi Jinping (right) shakes hands with Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during their meeting at the APEC meetings in Beijing, 10 Nov 2014. The formal talks signified a breakthrough in ending a two-year row between Asia’s biggest economies over history and territory. ©REUTERS/ Kim Kyung-Hoon.

Every issue of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AIS) Newsletter is devoted to the major motives in the revisions of Sino-Japanese histories. The Newsletter is published four times a year, generally in March, June, September and December. Its primary audience is the 1600 members of the Institute, the 7000 members of the University of Amsterdam and all those who are interested in Asian research. The Newsletter is also distributed to government and non-government organizations, research and academic institutions, and libraries. The Newsletter is also distributed to government and non-government organizations, research and academic institutions, and libraries.

For further information on the journal’s institutional embedding and editorial policy, please see: www.brill.com/ctica (see also the announcement on page 35).

Leo Douw, Department of Anthropology, University of Amsterdam (L.M.Douw@uva.nl).

References
1 The workshop was held at the occasion of the author’s retirement and was kindly sponsored by the Program Group Moving Matters for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam, the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden, and the Faculty of Arts at the University of Amsterdam.

2 For a publication of Dirlik’s paper, see http://tinyurl.com/ boundaryDirlik

3 The workshop was of much richer in content than could ever be done justice in a summary article, and all misrepresentations are the author’s responsibility. Valuable contributions, aside from those by the paper presenters, were provided by the discussants and session chairpersons. For shortness sake only their names follow here, in alphabetical order: Jula Barker (University of Amsterdam), Otto Holman (University of Amsterdam), Gerd Jannes (University of Amsterdam), Susan Leong (VU University Amsterdam), Chris Lorenzo (VU University Amsterdam), Pieter Poot (Netherlands Institute for War Documentation), Willem van Schendel (University of Amsterdam), Sikko Visscher (University of Amsterdam), and Harriet Zurndorfer (Leiden University).