Destructive Discourse

‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States, Australia and Japan in the 1980s and 1990s

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University 2006

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.
ABSTRACT

By the 1960s-70s, most Western commentators agreed that Japan had rehabilitated itself from World War II, in the process becoming on the whole a reliable member of the international community. From the late 1970s onwards, however, as Japan’s economy continued to rise, this premise began to be questioned. By the late 1980s, a new ‘Japan Problem’ had been identified in Western countries, although the presentation of Japan as a dangerous ‘other’ was nevertheless familiar from past historical eras. The term ‘Japan-bashing’ was used by opponents of this negative view to suggest that much of the critical rhetoric about a ‘Japan Problem’ could be reduced to an unwarranted, probably racist, assault on Japan.

This thesis argues that the invention and popularisation of the highly-contested label ‘Japan-bashing’, rather than averting criticism of Japan, perversely helped to exacerbate and transform the moderate anti-Japanese sentiment that had existed in Western countries in the late 1970s and early 1980s into a widely disseminated, heavily politicised and even encultured phenomenon in the late 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, when the term ‘Japan-bashing’ spread to Japan itself, Japanese commentators were quick to respond. In fact, the level and the nature of the response from the Japanese side is one crucial factor that distinguishes ‘Japan-bashing’ in the 1980s and 1990s from anti-Japanese sentiment expressed in the West in earlier periods.

Ultimately, the label and the practice of ‘Japan-bashing’ helped to transform intellectual and popular discourses about Japan in both Western countries and Japan itself in the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, in doing so, it revealed crucial features of wider Western and Japanese perceptions of the global order in the late twentieth century. Debates about Japan showed, for example, that economic strength had become at least as important as military power to national discourses about identity. However, the view that Western countries and Japan are generally incompatible, and share few, if any, common values, interests or goals, has been largely discarded in the early twenty-first century, in a process that demonstrated just how constructed, and transitory, such views can be.
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AUTHOR’S NOTE

Disclaimer
This thesis is a work of academic scholarship on the concept and practice of ‘Japan-bashing’. As such, it includes written and visual references to historical and contemporary views of Japan that reflect racial or prejudicial attitudes towards Japan common to the period of their composition. The author does not endorse these views, nor the practice of ‘Japan-bashing’ generally.

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Japanese names are given following Japanese custom, with surname first, except in the case of authors who are more widely known for their English-language writings under their Western-style names.

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INTRODUCTION

With defeat in World War II, Japan appeared to have reversed most of the great military, political and economic advances it had made since its re-engagement with the West in the mid-nineteenth century. Many Japanese undeniably had hopes of a new beginning after the defeat. On the other hand, dreams of a Japanese empire were gone, Japan’s military forces were disbanded, both leadership and populace were in disarray, the economy was devastated and Japan had temporarily lost its national sovereignty. For the future, as far as its standing in the world was concerned, it might have seemed likely that Japan would slip into relative obscurity.

Certainly, Japan did maintain a comparatively low military, political and diplomatic profile in the first decades after the war. By 1955, however, economic recovery had begun; and the 1960s were characterised by rapid economic growth. By the 1970s, many Western commentators agreed that Japan had rehabilitated itself at all levels, in the process becoming a reliable ally and a responsible member of the international community, one that functioned in recognisable, if somewhat ‘Asian’ or ‘exotic’, ways that non-Japanese occasionally struggled to comprehend. Undoubtedly the intense ideological confrontations of the Cold War monopolised a great deal of public attention throughout the world in this period; but given Japan’s remarkable post-war transformation, its economic ‘miracle’ could hardly have failed to attract comment, either in Japan itself or in other nations.

Western interest in Japan, if not in the entire Asian region, had increased greatly by the late 1970s and, as one result, serious and well-regarded scholarship on Japan prospered like never before. From that time onwards, however, as Japan’s economy continued to rise and Western economies by contrast began to falter, the ‘Japan boom’ in Western scholarship came to include a rethinking of the implications of Japan’s post-war economic ‘miracle’. This reinterpretation of post-war Japan was eventually dubbed
The best-known of the original ‘revisionists’ were the so-called ‘Gang of Four’: American political scientist Chalmers Johnson; veteran of the United States Commerce Department Clyde Prestowitz; American journalist James Fallows; and Dutch journalist and academic Karel van Wolferen. At the core of revisionism was the perception that Japan, as a nation, was fundamentally and irreducibly ‘different’ from ‘the West’, and that this basic difference had helped to produce Japanese economic success. This essentialist perception was accompanied and conditioned, for some, by an acute sense that a radical historical transformation was underway, namely that Japan was positioning itself to become a dominant world power once more, but this time by reason of its economic success. For many observers in Western nations, this was a troubling prospect, as it implied that a reversal of international roles was underway, one which threatened the fundamental identity of what was usually termed ‘the West’, that is, a relatively vague geo-political area broadly encompassing North America and Western Europe, as well as Australia and New Zealand. In reality, ‘the West’ typically meant the United States, which had been represented both inside and outside the United States itself as the centre of not only ‘the West’, but also the ‘free world’ in the post-war period.

To many Americans, Japan had transformed itself throughout the post-war period from an economic student to an economic competitor of the United States, one that

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appeared to be ‘winning’ the international economic game given the large trade and investment surpluses in Japan’s favour by the late 1980s. There was a strong perception that Japan’s economic success had thus been gained at the expense of American economic decline, just as claims that Japan would lead a dawning ‘Pacific century’ highlighted the end of what American publisher Henry Luce had once called the ‘American century’. Yet, whether Japan was suited to such a powerful role seemed ominously unclear to many commentators in the United States. ‘Revisionists’ tended to believe that Japan’s real priority was the achievement of power through economic success at all costs, a philosophy which was perceived as alarmingly reminiscent of its previous aggressive and militarist nationalism and was treated as direct evidence that Japan could not be trusted as a global power. They therefore argued that Japan must be ‘contained’ for the wider benefit of the international community, including Japan itself. The emergence of similar perspectives on Japan in other Western nations, including Britain, France, Germany and Australia, helped to foster the perception of a growing division between ‘the West’ and Japan, which also reinforced the artificial construction of ‘the West’ at the same time.

In this context, the ‘rethinking’ of Japan’s position led academic, political, economic and social commentators in many Western countries to identify a new ‘Japan Problem’ by the mid-1980s. By the end of that decade, negative views of Japan in the West in fact appeared to be overshadowing more positive views that displayed interest in and respect for Japanese people, culture and traditions; admiration for Japan’s post-war economic recovery and development; and appreciation of Japan’s high level of

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technological progress. It was, of course, not the first time that critical views of Japan had surfaced in Western nations. Indeed, the anti-Japanese rhetoric of the 1980s and 1990s recalls the Western emphasis on the ‘yellow peril’ from the late nineteenth century onwards, as well as Allied anti-Japanese propaganda during World War II.\(^7\)

Once again, from the late 1970s onwards, Japan was presented as a dangerous ‘other’ to ‘the West’ on the basis of its alleged differences from a normative but vaguely defined Western model, thus demonstrating the endurance of negative Western stereotypes of the ‘Orient’. However, the rhetoric of the later period also had its own distinctive characteristics, as will be shown throughout this thesis.

In the 1980s and 1990s the view that Japan posed a ‘problem’ to the Western world was certainly not universal. Beginning in the late 1970s, Western and Japanese commentators began to attack the critical rhetoric directed at Japan by characterising it as ‘Japan-bashing’ – a new term which suggested that much of the rhetoric that eventually culminated in the labelling of Japan as a ‘problem’ could be reduced to an unwarranted assault on Japan. In essence, the label implied that the new criticism of Japan was as Eurocentric and racist as that of the ‘yellow peril’ and World War II periods. The new term gradually entrenched itself and took on a life of its own.

‘Japan-bashing’ is thus both a label and a practice, though there was rarely agreement as to which precise practices it covered, apart from the expression of openly anti-Japanese views, or actual assaults on apparently ‘Japanese’ people and things. It is ‘Japan-bashing’, with all its ambiguity, which is the central concern of this thesis. The thesis investigates the emergence of the label ‘Japan-bashing’ and how it operated within specific discourses in the West and Japan in its heyday in the 1980s and 1990s, concluding with an analysis of the ultimate significance of both the label and the

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practice, and an examination of their continued development into the early twenty-first century.

‘Japan-bashing’ in Context

The term ‘Japan-bashing’ was relatively slow to spread during the late 1970s and early 1980s. By the late 1980s, however, it was in widespread use in the United States, as a means of characterising and criticising negative views of Japan in academic, political, business and media forums. The apparently straightforward nature of the label as a description of supposedly unreasonable criticism of Japan also prompted its adoption in many other Western countries and also in Asia, including Japan. The analysis of why Japan was a ‘problem’ varied in each case, largely in accordance with the particular historical experience and political, economic and geographical circumstances of each nation in relation to Japan at any given point. In many Western countries, the identification of Japan as a ‘problem’ tended to mimic the perspective of the United States towards Japan: that is, it reflected recent concerns about Japan’s economic success and its suitability for the role of a global economic power. In Asia, however, Japan’s economic success was often viewed as the triumph of a distinctively Asian economic model and, at least until the Asian economic ‘crisis’ in 1997, this meant it was something to be pursued and emulated rather than problematised. For Asian countries, especially China and South Korea, historical perceptions of and encounters with Japan were far more pertinent than economic issues in explaining why Japan was a ‘problem’. Asian versions of the ‘Japan Problem’ thus do not really constitute an extension of the pattern that began in the United States, even though the term ‘Japan-bashing’ was similarly applied to characterise and criticise them.

Despite national variations, however, the meaning of ‘Japan-bashing’ seemed transparent to many Western and Japanese observers: it was a term that suggested that
criticism of Japan was an attack on Japan as an entity, rather than on specific institutions or actions, and it was an attack most likely based in racism. The prime targets for the label of ‘Japan-bashing’ were the ‘Gang of Four’ revisionists and their ideological supporters. Understandably, the charge was keenly felt, leading the ‘Gang of Four’ to publicly refute the accusations.8 The four ‘revisionists’ noted that many accusations of ‘Japan-bashing’ were being issued, not just as a spontaneous expression of disagreement by Japanese commentators, as might be expected, but also in a deliberately calculated manner by both Western and Japanese observers. Westerners who used the term, they argued, had become a de-facto ‘Chrysanthemum Club’ or ‘Japan lobby’ whose aim was to promote and protect Japan’s interests in the West, as well as to popularise their own interpretations of Japan in Western discourse.9

It was true, as some Western observers had implied during the 1980s, and as would be acknowledged more widely in the early 1990s, that the term ‘Japan-bashing’ was not in fact straightforward and had not been coined simply as a way to target apparent racism. The actual invention of the term has been commonly credited to American economist and political scientist Robert C. Angel, who was president from 1977 to 1984 of the Japan Economic Institute of America, a non-profit, Washington-based think-tank funded by Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Angel evidently concocted the term ‘Japan-bashing’ as a rhetorical device to avert criticism of Japan in the United States, and encouraged its use to suggest that critics of Japan were at best uninformed and at worst motivated by racism.10 Thus, those who used the term ‘Japan-bashing’ implied in part that previous Western interpretations of Japan, which portrayed

the nation as a friendly ally in all respects and as a responsible member of the international community, had been and remained accurate.

The role of Robert Angel in deliberately creating and attempting to popularise the label ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States is widely known and acknowledged among Japan experts and has been confirmed several times since 1992, when Angel first publicly admitted his role.\footnote{Ibid. Angel confirmed his role again in Robert C. Angel, 'Origin of the Epithet "Japan Bashing"', \textit{Journal of Professional Issues, Professionalism, Administration and Leadership in Education}, no. 4, August 1998, \texttt{http://www.debito.org/PALE898.html}, accessed 20 November 2004.} Despite this, the term was typically used throughout the 1980s and 1990s as if it were a spontaneous, transparent, self-explanatory and virtually timeless label for anti-Japanese views, almost as though it had always existed and need not be investigated. Such an approach to ‘Japan-bashing’ entirely overlooks the invented nature of the label and the process by which it became an influential rhetorical tool both in Western and Japanese discourse on Japan in the late twentieth century. In reality, the term ‘Japan-bashing’ had its own origins and trajectory, intertwined with but also separate from the alleged actual practice of ‘Japan-bashing’: that is, the apparently anti-Japanese views and actions to which the label was often applied.

This thesis argues in part that the dissemination of the label ‘Japan-bashing’, while intended to avert criticism of Japan, perversely helped to popularise it, thus actually reinforcing the alleged practice of ‘Japan-bashing’ in Western countries in the 1980s and 1990s. As noted above, the term was often used with minimal or no reference to its provenance in the late 1970s or its deliberate deployment as a rhetorical tool thereafter. Use of the term in this uncritical manner helped to raise the prominence of the intellectual dispute over how to characterise Japan in this period. The resulting polarisation of commentators from academic, political, business and media forums, among others, helped to engender a socio-political atmosphere in the United States that was conducive and receptive to further expression of anti-Japanese views. Thus,
ultimately, the label ‘Japan-bashing’ helped to transform the moderate anti-Japanese sentiment that existed alongside other views of Japan in the United States in the 1970s into a widely disseminated and heavily politicised phenomenon in the 1980s and 1990s. ‘Japan-bashing’ also became an encultured phenomenon, with works of popular culture both influenced by and directly contributing to the ongoing criticism of Japan.

The label as well as the alleged practice of ‘Japan-bashing’ operated in similar and yet dissimilar ways outside the United States in this period. While the beginning point for an analysis of ‘Japan-bashing’ must be the United States, as that nation provided both the origins and main site of ‘Japan-bashing’, it is thus also important to examine other national variants. One place in which the American discourse of ‘Japan-bashing’ was adopted and extended is Australia. Australia provides a particularly useful comparison with the United States, principally because, while analysis of the supposed ‘Japan Problem’ in both countries was based in an economic context, Australia in fact sat in a very different geo-political and economic position in relation to Japan. Nevertheless, while deploring the rise of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States, many Australian commentators did engage in similar practices. Comparing ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States and Australia makes it possible to identify which parts of the discourses were specific to one nation, and which were more widely expressed.

Moreover, it is vital to an examination of ‘Japan-bashing’ to recognise that it was not just a one-way discourse emanating from the West. On the contrary, Japanese commentators were very much involved. ‘Japan-bashing’ views were widely reported in Japan, if not reproduced verbatim, and attracted a great deal of comment from Japanese observers. Many of them agreed with the presumption that Japan was, indeed, ‘different’ from ‘the West’, particularly those who were supporters of the genre of literature known as ‘Nihonjinron’, or theories of the Japanese, which sought to explain Japan’s ‘national character’ for the benefit of both Japanese and international
audiences. However, Japanese observers were by no means passive or complicit in the face of discourses identifying their nation as a ‘problem’. In fact, the level and the nature of the response from the Japanese side is one crucial factor that distinguishes ‘Japan-bashing’ in the 1980s and 1990s from anti-Japanese sentiment expressed in the West in earlier periods. Furthermore, the prominence of the label ‘Japan-bashing’ in Japan itself helped to transform internal discourses on the nation and its relations with ‘the West’. The allegedly widespread Western practice of ‘Japan-bashing’ hardened the response to criticism of some Japanese observers to the extent that reasoned engagement by other Japanese commentators with Western debates on Japan tended to be viewed as siding with the ‘bashers’. Some Japanese observers eventually responded to ‘Japan-bashing’ by using the label and engaging in the practice of ‘America-bashing’.

Critics of ‘Japan-bashing’ and ‘America-bashing’ warned that a cycle of reciprocity was forming between the United States and Japan, one which threatened the ‘most important bilateral relationship in the world, bar none’. As some commentators warned, a war with Japan might even be forthcoming. While such rhetoric was a particularly disturbing development for American and Japanese proponents of a strong bilateral relationship, even observers who did not go so far as to predict a war articulated their concerns that confrontation between the two nations on any scale would be disastrous in that it would embroil and have a detrimental impact on the wider global community.

No serious confrontation eventuated, however, and by the mid-1990s, both the use of the label and the alleged practice of ‘Japan-bashing’ had begun to decline. With the exception of some persistent ‘revisionists’, and a brief resurgence around the time of the Asian economic ‘crisis’ in 1997, there was much less Western criticism of Japan as a whole by the late 1990s. Nevertheless, in a sign of how entrenched the expression had become by then, both Western and Japanese commentators who sought to reject criticism of particular Japanese policies or actions continued to accuse critics of ‘Japan-bashing’. Such use of the term suggested that, particularly for certain Japanese commentators, the label had become part of a generalised defensive reaction which sought to reject any foreign criticism of Japanese actions or policies.

The continued use of the label on an occasional basis did not disguise the fact, however, that Western discourses on Japan had fundamentally changed by the late 1990s. In Western countries, more positive views of Japan once more began to gain ascendancy, particularly in response to a global boom in Japanese popular culture. It might be thought that this change in emphasis from negative to positive images of Japan demonstrated the effectiveness of the label ‘Japan-bashing’ in averting criticism. In fact, however, while the label was firmly cemented into Western and Japanese discourse as a way of countering apparently anti-Japanese views, it did not accomplish Robert Angel’s original goal of suppressing criticism of Japan, nor was it responsible for the re-emergence of positive views.

Rather, it was the change in Japan’s own economic circumstances in the 1990s that had undermined perceptions of Japan as a ‘problem’. Both Western and Japanese commentators begin to speak, not of ‘Japan-bashing’, but rather of ‘Japan-passing’ and ‘Japan-nothing’. These new terms implied, if it was not stated outright, that Japan was no longer an inevitable economic superpower; instead, it was believed to be suffering its own economic decline. For Western nations at the turn of the twenty-first century,
moreover, the focus of concern had moved to other emerging issues, such as the impact of globalisation, the rise of China and the growth of militant Islam. To some commentators, a new expression seemed apposite: ‘Japan-surpassing’. Clearly intended to consolidate the rhetorical progression from ‘Japan-bashing’ to ‘Japan-passing’ to ‘Japan-nothing’, this new term was used to express the sense that Japan had surpassed the United States’ expectations in emerging once again as a strong international power and a reliable ally for ‘the West’ in dealing with some of the more recent global concerns. That the term could easily be confused with the earlier ‘Japan-passing’ – that is, it could be taken to mean that Japan itself was being surpassed by another nation – seemed to be overlooked by Western and Japanese commentators alike.

The rise and relative decline of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the 1980s and 1990s thus demonstrates how a rhetorically clever, albeit hardly original, attempt to manipulate Western discourse in order to avert criticism of Japan can go badly awry. While a few commentators applauded ‘Japan-bashing’ because it raised Japan’s profile or spurred new research on Japan, in reality its impact was almost entirely destructive, in both the West and Japan, even for those who were only peripherally rather than directly involved. Furthermore, while for most commentators ‘Japan-bashing’ has now become a quaint historical, rather than a pressing contemporary, phenomenon, it is actually by no means extinct, as noted above. Even in the early twenty-first century, ‘Japan-bashing’ remains a powerful influence upon Western and Japanese discourses about Japan, although it is certainly less prominent than in earlier periods.

Despite its obvious importance in the study of discourses about Japan, as well as in understanding broader global changes in the late twentieth century and beyond, the phenomenon of ‘Japan-bashing’ remains relatively neglected in scholarly writings. The failure to examine it may be partly the result of an unvoiced reluctance to focus on

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something that may seem completely negative, rather than on other, positive responses to Japan. Analysis of ‘Japan-bashing’ may seem to focus on an uncomfortable, even embarrassingly intolerant part of modern history in which Japan was effectively treated by Western countries as a dangerous ‘other’, as it had been in the ‘yellow peril’ and World War II periods. Yet, just as the anti-Japanese propaganda that accompanied Western military action in World War II has now taken its proper place in studies of that conflict, the phenomenon of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the 1980s and 1990s cannot easily be dismissed. Moreover, as the revival of older images of Japan in the discourses of ‘bashing’ demonstrated, to assume that there will be no ongoing legacy from ‘Japan-bashing’ is both unwise and potentially dangerous.

The narrative of ‘Japan-bashing’ is extremely complex, and difficult to establish. Different aspects of it are evident at formal international, national and local levels in numerous countries; in academic books and journals relating to history, international relations, politics, economics, trade, business; and in more mainstream newspapers, magazines, television and radio programmes. ‘Japan-bashing’ was also a strongly oral discourse, evident everywhere from the floors of parliaments to the floors of drinking establishments. Informal, cultural expressions of ‘Japan-bashing’ also appeared in a variety of formats. Moreover, in all these forums, the very nature of ‘Japan-bashing’ has ensured that it promoted divisiveness, rather than consensus, about its own characteristics. There is no one accepted interpretation of what the label ‘Japan-bashing’ meant, what specific practices it was intended to characterise, the degree of its impact on discourses about Japan, or its potential legacy. As such, ‘Japan-bashing’ has been an omnipresent and yet strangely elusive phenomenon, one which has resisted coherence. These factors make the systematic examination of ‘Japan-bashing’ very challenging. Perhaps as a consequence, few observers have attempted the task of linking together its disparate strands in order to analyse it comprehensively. However,
given the hindsight that can now be employed, it is time to place ‘Japan-bashing’ in its proper historical context and to assess its legacy in the twenty-first century.

**Writings about ‘Japan-bashing’**

Despite a boom from the mid-1970s in studies of Western images of Japan, only a few scholars have cast their eye directly on ‘Japan-bashing’. Among the studies that do exist, the most notable feature is the failure of most scholars to examine the origins and use of the actual term. This observation applies both to commentary that was itself a part of the debates about Japan and to more analytical works on the topic published well into the early twenty-first century. Only journalist John Judis’s two-page article for the *Columbia Journalism Review* in 1992 on the media’s misuse of ‘loaded terms with long histories or damaging connotations’ has thus far explored Robert Angel’s role in the

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invention and popularisation of ‘Japan-bashing’, although several other commentators have since drawn on that article to briefly acknowledge Angel’s involvement.

The failure to inquire into the provenance of the term, as well as mistaken conclusions regarding its origin and trajectory in some cases, are symptomatic of the rather ahistorical and non-contextual way in which ‘Japan-bashing’ has often been treated. Angel had a specific purpose in using the word ‘bashing’ to suggest that criticism of Japan was racist and, therefore, unacceptable, but as noted above, those who used the term later often did so uncritically. While it is a challenge to find writings about Japan in the 1980s and 1990s that do not mention the rise of negative views in the West (whether or not the actual label ‘Japan-bashing’ is used), attempts to problematise the label and practice itself are rare. Most commentators in the 1980s and 1990s simply conflated criticism of Japan with anti-Japanese racism, exactly as Angel had intended. For instance, among dozens, if not hundreds, of articles on ‘Japan-bashing’ in the Western media, many of which were intended to be analytical, very few appeared even to recognise that the anti-Japanese views to which the description ‘bashing’ was applied were part of a far larger and more complex phenomenon. Thus, as Judis pointed out, much ostensible analysis of ‘Japan-bashing’ has been limited, simplistic or simply inaccurate, reflecting a ‘lack of historical knowledge’ and a ‘naïveté’ about how debates can be deliberately, or even accidentally, shaped. This observation remains true even

of recent references to ‘Japan-bashing’, which all too often fail to reflect on the term. The entry on ‘Japan-bashing’ in the 2005 edition of the *Encyclopedia of Racism in the United States*, for instance, merely describes deliberate incidents of anti-Japanese racism.\(^{20}\)

Even when the origins of the label ‘Japan-bashing’ are discussed, observers have often erroneously credited the term to candidates other than Robert Angel and to time periods before and after the late 1970s. Author Michael Crichton, for example, initially asserted that the term ‘Japan-bashing’ was used by American ‘apologists for Japan’ before World War II and merely reappeared in the 1980s,\(^{21}\) though he did acknowledge in 1993 that the term had been deliberately created by an American ‘public relations flack’, namely Robert Angel.\(^{22}\) By contrast, most observers have operated on the presumption that the term ‘Japan-bashing’ did originate in the late twentieth century. Though other candidates and periods have also been put forward,\(^{23}\) the most frequently credited source has been journalist Theodore White, who attracted attention on the basis of his controversial article ‘The Danger from Japan’, which was published in 1985 just as the label ‘Japan-bashing’ was coming into popularity.\(^{24}\) Masao Miyoshi has been one

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of the very few scholars to acknowledge that it was more correct to say not that White invented the term, but rather that ‘[b]ashing became full blown with Theodore White’s article’. 25  Even among the few linguists and literature specialists who have focused on the expression ‘Japan-bashing’, there has been little attempt to inquire into its origins or recognise that it had been coined for a specific purpose. Linguist Ludwig Deringer, who acknowledged the vernacular appearance of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the journal American Speech in 1991, for example, simply credited the term to an article in Newsweek magazine in 1988. 26

Many observers of ‘Japan-bashing’ have acknowledged that the term is difficult to define. One commentator remarked, for example, ‘I cannot define “Japan bashing”, but I know it when I see it’ – a paraphrase of earlier judicial remarks in the United States on the difficulty of defining pornography. 27 Many saw an obvious connection between ‘Japan-bashing’ and the rising popularity of a relatively new definition of ‘bashing’ as a ‘malicious, unprovoked attack’ or ‘verbal attack and abuse’. 28 The most specific definition of ‘Japan-bashing’ was proposed by David Abney in 1995, when he applied the term to ‘actions, attitudes and laws that attack, denigrate, stigmatize or discriminate

26 Ludwig Deringer, 'The Continued Popularity of –Bashing', American Speech, vol. 66, no. 3, Autumn 1991, p. 331. The article to which Deringer referred was cited as appearing in Newsweek on 24 October 1988. However, the term ‘Japan-bashing’ had been used earlier in the same magazine: see Bill Powell and Thomas Rich, 'The Fallacy of Japan Bashing', Newsweek, 11 January 1988, p. 36.
against Japan and persons of Japanese ancestry'. In short, Abney equated ‘Japan-bashing’ with lingering racism towards Japan. Linguist Frank Nuessel also described ‘Japan-bashing’ in 1993 as a ‘sophisticated type of race-baiting’. He noted that the re-emergence in the United States of pejoratives such as ‘Jap’ and ‘Nip’ had been ‘amazingly swift’, despite the fact that their use had virtually skipped a generation since World War II. For civil rights activist William Hohri, the links to racism were so clear that he preferred to use the term ‘Jap-bashing’ in the belief that the wartime pejorative reinforced awareness of the term’s overall ‘racist colouring’. However, perhaps the ultimate validation of Robert Angel’s efforts to create a link between criticism of Japan and racism can be seen in the fact that even opponents of the term agreed that true ‘Japan-bashing’ practices could be considered comparable to anti-Semitism. Historian of Japan Ben-Ami Shillony, for example, saw direct parallels between ‘anti-Semitism’ and ‘anti-Japanism’, as well as between ‘Jew Baiting’ and ‘Japan Bashing’. David Norman Smith, however, disagreed, arguing that while anti-Semitism was ‘hallucinatory’, ‘Japan-bashing’ was not, as ‘Japan-bashers’, with rare exceptions, did not ‘make mountains out of mere rumors of molehills’.

29 Abney, 'Japan Bashing', pp. 4-5.
Many studies of the term ‘Japan-bashing’, even apparently well-reasoned and coherent academic analyses, have fallen into the trap of considering it ahistorically. One of the earliest treatments was a statistical analysis conducted by Verna Keith, Jon Alston and Arnold Vedlitz of possible ‘Japan-bashers’ in the American population during the period 1974-85. While their survey made no effort to describe what a ‘Japan-bashing’ attitude might be (besides a ‘dislike’ of Japan), it did suggest which segments of the population were most prone to negative views of Japan, such as the old, the less educated and the poor. However, it was anachronistic to suggest that those with negative attitudes towards Japan as early as 1974 could be described as ‘Japan-bashers’, given that the term was not coined until the late 1970s. The usefulness of this survey is also limited by its end-point, which in 1985 fell well short of the peak of ‘Japan-bashing’ practices in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Similarly ahistorical studies of ‘Japan-bashing’ produced in the early 1990s used the term to characterise certain phases in the United States’ historical relations with Japan, dating from 1853. Susan D. Moeller exemplified this anachronistic view in her summary of the 1980s and the 1990s as ‘“Japan-Bashing” Revisited’. As noted above, the prime targets to be labelled as ‘Japan-bashers’ were the ‘revisionists’. For their part, the revisionists rejected the label ‘bashing’ as an unfair description of their intentions towards Japan. Some other observers, too, even though they did not necessarily support ‘revisionism’ itself, agreed with the revisionists’s
complaints about the unfairness of equating all criticism with ‘bashing’. As Norma Field pointed out in 1992, while anti-Japanese racism clearly existed in the United States, not all criticism of Japan was racist. Some observers therefore attempted to refine the range of criticism of Japan that could be described as true ‘bashing’, on the basis that judgment should depend on the target, topic and degree of the criticism being levelled, specifically whether such criticism would be considered by moderate commentators as unwarranted, unjustified or untenable. David Abney argued, for example, that it was not ‘bashing’ to condemn Japanese wartime atrocities or to accuse Japanese of being ‘tough competitors’, but that ‘asserting that there is an evil Japanese conspiracy to rule the earth or blaming the rise in Japan’s economic vigor for the end of Western civilization as we know it’ clearly qualified.

On the other hand, the re-examination of criticism of Japan did not often lead to detailed study of the revisionists and their relationship with ‘Japan-bashing’. Many studies simply confined themselves to summaries of the revisionists’ individual positions, or offered noticeably partisan rebuttals of their interpretations of Japan. There are, however, a few useful analyses. One of the best-known articles on ‘Japan-bashing’ was written by journalist David Brock in 1989. While Brock did not inquire into the origins of the term ‘Japan-bashing’, he did note the ‘indiscriminate’ nature of the label, which he saw as a euphemism for accusations of racism that were being deliberately deployed to cut off debate. Despite this insight, Brock inexplicably went on to conflate revisionist criticism of Japan with ‘bashing’, describing the revisionists

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39 See, for example, Morrone, 'Japan Bashing as a Literary Form', p. 78; Abney, 'Japan Bashing', pp. 4-5.
40 Abney, 'Japan Bashing', p. 5.
41 See, for example, the overview of the revisionists in George R. Packard, 'The Japan-Bashers are Poisoning Foreign Policy', Washington Post, 8 October 1989, p. C4; Peter Ennis, 'Separating the Revisionists', Tokyo Business Today, January 1990, pp. 30-1.
not only as ‘Japan-bashers’ but also ‘“America-bashers” of the first rank’ because of their censorious pronouncements on the United States’ economic decline.43 While his article contains some good analysis of the rising influence of ‘Japan-bashing’ (meaning ‘revisionism’, for Brock) on American politics, Brock’s call for the ‘bashers’ to be defeated seems simplistic and similar in intent to the pronouncements of those who were deploying the label ‘Japan-bashing’ to silence debate.

Apart from Brock’s article, perhaps the most widely noted analytical comment on ‘Japan-bashing’ and the revisionists is Masao Miyoshi’s 1991 critique of the writings of Chalmers Johnson, Clyde Prestowitz, Daniel Burstein and Ian Buruma, amongst others. The greater part of his article consists of a simple rebuttal of the various pronouncements of the revisionists, particularly their tendency to fall into criticism of Japanese culture itself, rather than of specific government, corporate or individual actions. Unlike Brock, however, Miyoshi noted that there was an ‘element of irony’ in using the term ‘Japan-bashing’ (including his own use of it) because of its ‘inexactitude’ and the ‘curious’ motives of those who used it. The irony stemmed, in his opinion, from the fact that the majority of accusations of ‘Japan-bashing’ came from Americans ‘who anticipate and preempt Japanese paranoia’, rather than from Japanese commentators, who were, nevertheless, ‘sensitive’ and ‘defensive’ and often did ‘group all negative critics together as bashers, regardless of the substance of their arguments’.44

Apart from studies of the revisionists, there has also been some analysis of their critics, who were often labelled as the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’ or the ‘Japan lobby’, amongst other epithets. However, such commentary also tends to be partisan, particularly when it originates from the ‘revisionists’ themselves.45 Perhaps the most notable contribution has come from none other than Robert Angel, who resigned from

43 Ibid., p. 35.
45 See, for example, Choate, *Agents of Influence.*
the Japan Economic Institute of America amidst some acrimony in 1984, allegedly prompted by a dispute about whether the Institute should publish material which, in his view, presented Japanese government-created ‘propaganda’ as ‘news’ about Japan.\footnote{Reported in ibid., p. 189.}


In addition to studies of the ‘revisionists’ and their critics, some scholars have focused on the Western news media and their reporting on Japan. For instance, there are some useful, if contending, studies of the media’s role in popularising the term ‘Japan-bashing’, as well as the media’s own apparent participation in ‘bashing’. On the one hand, some have minimised the impact of the media. Andrea Lex’s thesis, for example, considered the degree to which ‘Japan-bashing’ permeated the American press by comparing two periods, 1978-82 and 1988-92, of coverage of Japan in the \textit{New York Times} and the \textit{Los Angeles Times}.\footnote{Andrea Louise Lex, 'Japan Bashing and the Image of Japan in the American Press', unpublished MSc dissertation, Iowa State University, 1993. See also Fuse Koji, 'Are American News Magazines Setting the Agenda for Japan Bashing? A Content Analysis of Coverage of Japanese Economic Activities: 1981-1990', unpublished MA dissertation, Drake University, 1994.} Lex hypothesised that the period 1988-92 would reveal more ‘Japan-bashing’ than 1978-82. She concluded, however, that this was not the case. In her opinion, both newspapers were ‘neutral’ during these timeframes and therefore, she argued, ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States ‘does not occur in news articles’, though it might in other areas of the print media, such as editorials, opinion-editorial pieces, letters to the editor and the like.\footnote{Lex, 'Japan Bashing', p. 4.} Similarly, in their survey of the
American press between late 1988 and mid-1990, Stanley Budner and Ellis S. Krauss concluded that American newspapers ‘eschew[ed]... Japan-bashing’, as ‘references to, or indications of “Japan bashing” are scarce in U.S. news stories’. They admitted, however, that evidence of ‘Japan-bashing’ was ‘likely to be found in editorials and op. ed. pieces’. On the other hand, different surveys emphasised that the overall portrayal of Japan within the media in general, regardless of the specific publication or programme, and the repeated references to ‘Japan-bashing’, combined to increase the use of the label, as well as the practice of ‘Japan-bashing’.

By contrast, the appearance of ‘Japan-bashing’ in Western and Japanese popular culture has received far less attention, perhaps because many of those scholars who examined the impact of Japan on Western popular culture published their work in the 1980s, before ‘Japan-bashing’ came to its peak. Only a few studies have since analysed the impact of ‘Japan-bashing’ on works of popular culture from the 1980s and early 1990s, typically concentrating on novels or films produced in the United States.

The most sustained attention, much of it critical, has been paid to one work alone:

Michael Crichton’s controversial 1992 novel *Rising Sun* (and its 1993 film version), which will be discussed in Chapter Six.\(^{55}\)

With the widespread definition of ‘Japan-bashing’ as racism, there has been little impetus to consider its broader historical causes. Yet, as a few commentators have acknowledged, ‘Japan-bashing’ was ‘more than racism’.\(^{56}\) For some neo-realist observers, it was largely a product of unfortunate international timing, as Japan’s economic strength simply made it the ‘yellow’ enemy for the West in an era when the strength of its main ‘red’ enemy, the Soviet Union, was obviously faltering.\(^{57}\) Yet, while there certainly were similarities in the rhetoric directed against Japan and the Soviet Union, there was not necessarily a sequential relationship between the two discourses in the somewhat simplistic manner suggested. Indeed, the creation of the label ‘Japan-bashing’ in the late 1970s predated the demise of the Soviet Union by at least a decade. Moreover, the wealth of anti-Japanese views that seemingly bore such a close relation to the discourse of the ‘red peril’ considerably predated even the Cold War and its fears of Communism, having already been in evidence by the early twentieth century in depictions of the ‘yellow peril’.\(^{58}\)

Other observers have linked the rise of anti-Japanese views in Western countries in the late twentieth century with the whole trend of historical relations with Japan. According to the ‘clash’ view of United States-Japan relations promoted especially by Walter LaFeber, anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s

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\(^{56}\) Hohri, “Jap Bashing”, p. 4.
\(^{57}\) See, for example, Anne Portier, 'American Mass Media and Japan: Exotic Travelling from Pluralism to Imaginary Alternatives', *Current World Leaders*, vol. 36, no. 2, April 1993, p. 364; Raz and Raz, "America" Meets "Japan", p. 161.
merely reflected the latest of many confrontations between those two nations. Some scholars have used the actual term ‘Japan-bashing’ to describe a conflict that has allegedly endured since the mid-nineteenth century, with only minor deviations from hostility into harmony. ‘Japan-bashing’ is ‘the norm’, declared Abney, ‘not a cyclical aberration’. The clash perhaps resurfaced with the approach of the fiftieth anniversaries of significant World War II events, such as the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. This interpretation of ‘Japan-bashing’ is not only anachronistic, as mentioned earlier, but it also reduces a relationship of complexity and depth to an extremely simplistic level.

Leaving aside claims that Japan was merely an incidental replacement for the Soviet Union or, conversely, that it was a virtually timeless enemy of Western countries, other commentators have taken more contextualised approaches to ‘Japan-bashing’ that attempt more fully to incorporate the national and international contexts of the late twentieth century. In essence, ‘Japan-bashing’ has been seen as a form of ‘Japan panic’: an instinctive orientalist-like Western response to a crisis of identity which had been triggered by perceptions that modernity, treated as inherently a Western concept, was being commandeered by Japan. ‘Japan-bashing’ has thus been described as a form of


‘geo-economic nationalism’ on the part of the West. Alternatively, rather than a reaction to Japan itself, some observers have suggested that ‘Japan-bashing’ was far more politically or economically expedient in origin; in short, that those who engaged in such ‘bashing’ appeared to want to ‘suppress alternative explanations for America’s declining economic role in the world or for Japan’s ascendency’.

While ‘Japan-bashing’ even in the United States has been relatively neglected in scholarly analyses, there has been much less study of the way it developed in other countries. For example, there has been no systematic review and analysis in English of the spread of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ or of the many responses to it in Japan itself. This lack appears to stem from a Western view that Japanese commentators were inexplicably – or perhaps complicitly – silent in the face of revisionist criticism. Indeed, one Western commentator even argued in 1989 that recent discourse on Japan was notable for the fact that Japanese commentators had not found the ‘words to strike back’ against the revisionists, thereby allowing foreigners to shape Japan’s international image. This was a curious belief to hold in a year which had also produced Ishihara Shintarō and Morita Akio’s controversial book ‘No’ to ieru Nihon (The Japan that Can Say No), which drew widespread criticism in Western countries, and particularly in the United States. However, apart from the extended analysis since 1989 of Ishihara and Morita’s work, Japanese responses to ‘Japan-bashing’ have been almost entirely overlooked or dismissed by Western commentators. For instance, Masao Miyoshi

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64 Chronister, 'Japan-bashing', p. 13.
claimed in 1991 that Japanese discourse on ‘Japan-bashing’ was ‘brief, fragmentary, episodic, undocumented, and unsystematic’, and had ‘little to offer in the way of information or insight’. Yet, even if such complaints could be upheld, this makes Japanese commentary no different from any other discourse on ‘Japan-bashing’, including that found in Western countries.

Western emphasis on Ishihara and Morita to the exclusion of other Japanese responses thus represents a crucial failure, one that renders studies of ‘Japan-bashing’ one-sided in a manner that recalls the ‘orientalist’ denial of the voice of the ‘Orient’ in earlier studies of the region. Moreover, this failure to take Japanese responses seriously has also effectively distorted the small amount of analysis that does exist. Some Western observers, for example, effectively blame Japanese commentators for both inciting and exacerbating ‘Japan-bashing’. Budner and Krauss noted, in once instance, that there were far more references to ‘Japan-bashing’ in the Japanese press than the American press. They argued that ‘resorting’ to the label ‘bashing’ as an ‘all-purpose explanation of criticism’ was simply an example of Japanese interests viewing Japanese behaviour as ‘more justified’ than that of others and criticisms of it as ‘less justified’, a stance which ‘may also reflect the oft-noted national penchant of the Japanese to see themselves as victims’. For some observers, the popularity of ‘Japan-bashing’ in Western countries was thus directly attributable to Japan’s successful exploitation of the ‘currency of victimization’. However, the belief that ‘Japan-bashers’ were victimising Japan was merely the most strongly reported Japanese interpretation of the phenomenon in the West; a variety of other responses was also evident, as will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Neither has there been substantial analysis of ‘Japan-bashing’ from a transnational perspective, perhaps largely because the United States has generally been acknowledged as the origin and main source of the phenomenon. The experience of ‘Japan-bashing’ in Australia, for example, remains largely unexplored in any systematic way; possibly, as historian Gavan McCormack has asserted, because Australian popular attention has remained largely fixed on the ‘familiar’ worlds of Europe and North America rather than on issues related to Asia. Another reason might be, as historian Hélène Bowen Raddeker claimed in 1998, that Australian scholarship on Japan has tended to be disproportionately preoccupied with World War II. While Raddeker did not characterise this perceived imbalance as ‘Japan-bashing’ in itself, she did question whether historians should ‘continue contributing to images of Japan that centre its past, and thus its character, on one particularly blighted period’, especially as in doing so they ‘might be catering too much to [contemporary] media-influenced perceptions’ of Japan.

Most of the small number of studies that have examined negative views of Japan which might be termed as Australia’s own practice of ‘Japan-bashing’ focus on Australian responses to Japanese investment, particularly regarding the ‘multifunction

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polis’, a joint Japanese-Australian high-technology city planned to be built in Australia in the early 1990s. Such studies tend to make little or no reference to the wider international context of ‘Japan-bashing’. Cultural geographer Joe Hajdu concluded, for instance, that Australian opposition to Japanese investment in the 1980s and 1990s was a ‘typical’ reaction to the prospect of cultural change apparently to be wrought by non-Australians, a reaction that was strongly and negatively coloured by specific Australian experiences of war with Japan. However, he made no reference to other countries, apart from noting that Japanese investment was also becoming a ‘hot topic’ in the United States.

In the last decade or so, ‘Japan-bashing’ seems to have been largely dismissed in the international scholarly community as a forgettable part of relations principally between the United States and Japan in the 1980s and early 1990s. It has been described, for instance, as the ‘1983-93 interlude in U.S.-Japan relations’ or as the


‘war of words’ which lasted from 1985 to 1995.78 Despite the opportunities offered by hindsight, however, the few studies published since the mid-1990s have provided little new understanding of ‘Japan-bashing’. For instance, a 2001 article by sociologist W. Lawrence Neuman essentially updated the 1988 work of Keith, Alston and Vedlitz.79 Neuman conducted a survey of American attitudes towards Japan in the 1980s and 1990s, characterising them as dominated by fear of the ‘alien other’. However, he expressly declined to examine the ‘cultural or macro-historical causes’ of ‘Japan-bashing’ or ‘why Japan was selected as a target for wrath’.80 Other studies have similarly offered little new analysis. Elizabeth Dahl’s 1999 article on the negative implications of ‘Japan-bashing’ for the United States-Japan relationship seemed particularly dated, given that warnings of the impact of the phenomenon were being issued over a decade earlier.81 Similarly lacking in new insights was Roy Donahue’s 1998 deconstruction of a single Washington Post article from 1989, in which he came to the seemingly obvious conclusion that “‘Japan bashing’ in the mass media may ignore certain facts to the detriment of cross-cultural understanding”.82

Furthermore, recent analysts have often ignored or discounted the resurgence of ‘Japan-bashing’ that occurred during the Asian economic ‘crisis’ and as a result of other contentious issues in the late 1990s. Even those who have written specifically about this later period have provided minimal analysis of ‘Japan-bashing’. For example, Tanno Dai and Hamazaki Toshihide’s analysis of the connection between foreign

80 Neuman, 'Fear of the "Alien Other"', pp. 335, 338.
opposition to Japanese whaling in the late 1990s and ‘Japan-bashing’ failed to make any observations on ‘Japan-bashing’ in the longer term.\textsuperscript{83} Indeed, as one critical review of their analysis complained, Tanno and Hamazaki did not even define ‘Japan-bashing’; they just presumed it to be a ‘dislike of what the Japanese do specifically because it is the Japanese doing it’.\textsuperscript{84}

Perhaps as a result of a desire to forget ‘Japan-bashing’, consideration of its impact and legacy has been scarce. In fact, analysts have mostly limited themselves to examining the influence of ‘revisionism’ in the United States. A German-language monograph by Hartwig Hummel published in 1997, for example, explored the extent to which revisionism had been legitimised within elite discourse in the United States through a study of the journal \textit{Foreign Affairs}, concluding that a ‘special prominence’ had been given to revisionism in the late 1980s and early 1990s.\textsuperscript{85} John Kunkel took a similar, albeit broader-based, approach in his 2003 book, by looking at the increasing influence of revisionism on American trade policy in the late 1980s and early 1990s.\textsuperscript{86} While some observers have continued to examine the revisionists after revisionism,\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{87} See, for example, Brink Lindsey and Aaron Lukas, 'Revisiting the "Revisionists": The Rise and Fall of the Japanese Economic Model', \textit{Trade Policy Analysis}, Cato Institute,
only Andrew Horvat has focused specifically on the wider legacy of revisionist discourse. Horvat concluded that the ‘most important lesson’ from revisionist thinking about Japan was the need to build relationships between nations that can withstand strains of the magnitude evident in the 1980s and 1990s. Apart from ‘revisionism’ and its impact in the United States, few other aspects of ‘Japan-bashing’ have continued to be studied. The exceptions have been the murder of Chinese-American Vincent Chin in Detroit in 1982, which was allegedly inspired by ‘Japan-bashing’, and the controversial sale of the Seattle Mariners baseball franchise to a part-Japanese consortium in 1992.

Aims and Argument of the Thesis

This thesis undertakes a broad historical examination of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States and Australia in the 1980s and 1990s, and the reaction in Japan. The United States has been chosen because it was the prime site of ‘Japan-bashing’ and the target of Japanese ‘America-bashing’, and Australia because it provided important variants in a nation which stood in a very different relationship with Japan, but within which a number of commentators still regarded Japan as a ‘problem’. While ‘Japan-bashing’ also occurred in Asian nations, as noted above, the perception of Japan as a ‘problem’ in


those countries was generally the result of very different geographical, historical, cultural, economic and political circumstances compared to those of ‘the West’ in the 1980s and 1990s. Thus, direct comparison of Western and Asian ‘Japan-bashing’ is difficult, and should be undertaken in a separate study. Reactions in Japan, by contrast, are included in the thesis because it is crucial to recognise that ‘Japan-bashing’ was not a one-way discourse.

The thesis ultimately seeks to address the significance of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the 1980s and 1990s in terms of the discrete and crucial episode it represented in national and international discourses about Japan. On the one hand, this period demonstrated the ongoing tendency in Western (and some Japanese) discourses to reduce prevailing views of Japan to either positive or negative images – ‘Japan-loving’ or ‘Japan-bashing’ – with little acknowledgement of the true complexity and depth of any such views. More specifically, it highlighted the endurance and malleability of negative views of Japan, in the sense that ‘Japan-bashing’ perpetuated the intermittent historical – and ‘orientalist’ – trend in Western nations of viewing Japan as a dangerous ‘other’. The ‘Japan-bashing’ period, as John Dower has implied, is thus expressly akin to the two earlier historical periods in which negative views of Japan were prominent and influential in the West, namely the ‘yellow peril’ and World War II periods.90 The re-emergence in the 1980s and 1990s of images of Japan as a dangerous ‘other’ suggest that ‘Japan-bashing’, too, has now added to the West’s historical lexicon of negative imagery of Japan. In the future, if Japan should again come to be perceived as an ‘enemy’ of the West, the negative images of the ‘Japan-bashing’ period, as much as those associated with the ‘yellow peril’ and World War II, are likely to be resurrected.

On the other hand, however, the characteristics of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the 1980s and 1990s also set this period apart from previous bouts of anti-Japanese sentiment.

90 Dower, War Without Mercy, pp. 313-17.
These years were exceptional not only because of the nature and extent of criticism of Japan but also because such criticism was comprehensively and vehemently challenged both in Western countries and in Japan. Such challenges polarised commentators into apparently pro-Japan and anti-Japan camps, with one of the weapons of the former against the latter being the very label ‘Japan-bashing’ itself, which, like other examples of negative language, attempted to encapsulate difference and erase nuance and complexity in a simple one-shot term. The deceptive simplicity of the label saw it resonate in Western countries, raising the profile of alleged ‘Japan-bashers’ – from respected Japanese Studies academics to self-declared Japan ‘experts’ – to unprecedented heights. This trend helped to give criticism of Japan an ‘intellectual patina’ of acceptability that earlier negative views of Japan had lacked.\(^91\) Nevertheless, attempts to counter anti-Japanese views in Western discourse on Japan with the label ‘Japan-bashing’ ultimately failed. Rather, these attempts paradoxically contributed to a socio-political atmosphere that aggravated such views, in the process transforming fairly moderate anti-Japanese sentiment from the early post-war decades into a fully-fledged anti-Japanese phenomenon in the 1980s and 1990s.

The term ‘Japan-bashing’ thus had a primarily destructive impact on Western discourse about Japan. Accusations of ‘Japan-bashing’ resulted in both the ‘revisionists’ and the ‘Japan lobby’ being attacked on the basis of their intellectual abilities and personal integrity, as much as for their ideas. While the ‘revisionists’ were often labelled as racist, their critics were called uninformed ‘intellectual dupes’, to use Robert Angel’s own retrospective characterisation,\(^92\) or corrupt tools of Japan’s influence. It is entirely possible that some potential commentators, fearing the impact of either characterisation, absented themselves completely from debates about Japan.

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\(^91\) Lee Smith, Donald Holt and Carla Rapoport, 'Fear and Loathing of Japan', *Fortune*, 26 February 1990, p. 50.

\(^92\) Quoted in Judis, 'Trade: Economic Labels that Lie', p. 39.
As such, ‘Japan-bashing’ effectively reduced the range and depth of certain discourses about Japan in the West in the 1980s and 1990s by inhibiting the frank and reasoned exchange of views. For other individuals, however, the choice whether to participate or not in these discourses was less voluntary. Many Japanese people, or those mistaken for Japanese, were dragged into ‘Japan-bashing’ as scapegoats for the actions of the Japanese government or businesses, and consequently had to face incidents of discrimination and outbursts of violence. Many observers therefore feared that ‘Japan-bashing’ was providing a legacy to intellectual discourse that was rhetorically similar to that of McCarthyism in the United States in the 1950s, with the added spice of anti-Japanese discrimination reminiscent of that of earlier periods.

The impact of ‘Japan-bashing’ on Western discourses about Japan was compounded by the direct and forthright responses of many Japanese commentators, who further distinguished ‘Japan-bashing’ in the 1980s and 1990s from earlier periods by their engagement with both alleged ‘bashers’ and their critics. Unlike World War II, in which two discourses of racial propaganda ran more or less in parallel, one emanating from the West regarding Japan and the other emanating from Japan regarding the West,93 the discourses of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the West and in Japan overlapped and radically influenced each other. In essence, ‘Japan-bashing’ in the West helped to produce ‘America-bashing’ in Japan which, in turn, reinforced and exacerbated further ‘Japan-bashing’ in Western countries.

Ultimately, the 1980s and 1990s represented a distinct period not just in terms of Western discourse on Japan, and Japanese responses to it, but also for what ‘Japan-bashing’ revealed about perceptions of the global order and related concerns in the late twentieth century. In Western countries, Japan’s economic resurgence meant that it was necessary to find a new framework for dealing with Japan, which, clearly, could no

93 See Dower, *War Without Mercy*. 
longer simply be dismissed as a vanquished enemy or an insignificant ally of the West whose activities were restricted to its own region. The rhetorical search for this new framework aptly demonstrated how the geo-political and security concerns that had dominated the Cold War period had come to be overshadowed by economic concerns by the late twentieth century. In many eyes, economic power was now the crucial marker of national identity and strength in the international arena. However, some Western attempts to understand and reconcile with Japan’s rise to economic prominence did not particularly broaden understanding of Japan or of its connection to the global economic order. Rather, Japan was simply labelled in some cases as an international ‘problem’, a labelling that supported the older, and well-entrenched, framework that emphasised Japan’s alleged ‘differences’ from and supposed incompatibility with ‘the West’.

The malleability of dominant Western images of Japan became even more evident with the relative decline of ‘Japan-bashing’ from the late 1990s onwards. While this decline was partly because Japan’s own economic misfortunes had lessened Western fears of Japan, it was also a response to the emergence of competing issues of concern for the West, such as the rising military and economic power of China and the growth of militant Islam. On such matters, mainstream Japanese views have differed little from those of the West. As a result, Japan in the early twenty-first century is no longer considered ‘unique’ – far from it. Even if Japan seems to some extent still ‘different’ from Western countries today, it is a difference that does not overwhelm the widespread perception, at least at elite levels, that Japan also shares common values, interests and goals with the West: interests, values and goals that are not as evident in China or in Muslim nations, for example. In the early twenty-first century, good relations between Western countries and Japan are perceived on both sides as natural, inevitable and necessary in the face of new, pressing global issues. However, even this dramatic re-
positioning of Japan has not resulted in the end of ‘Japan-bashing’, which remains an ongoing influence on Western and Japanese discourses about Japan.

**Thesis Sources, Approach and Outline**

Source material for this thesis comes from as comprehensive a range as possible of academic, institutional, government and media writings about Japan produced primarily in the United States, Australia and Japan in the 1980s and 1990s. Some writings are formal, book-length monographs; others consist of short journalistic pieces. Authors range from respected experts on Japan to those who could only notionally claim expertise on any topic whatsoever but could somehow obtain a forum for their views. The broad range of material on Japan available in this period recalls the observation of the eminent nineteenth-century British scholar of Japan, Basil Hall Chamberlain, who claimed in 1890 that ‘not to have written a book about Japan’ was ‘fast becoming a title to distinction’.94

Of particular significance are the polemical writings of the ‘revisionists’ and their critics, some of which were aimed at broad, national audiences and others at specific interest groups. Journals of history, foreign policy, economics and business, such as the American periodicals *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, the *National Interest*, the *New Republic*, *Orbis* and the *Atlantic*, are particularly useful, as it is within their pages that much of the intense debate over the ‘Japan Problem’ and accusations of engagement in ‘Japan-bashing’ took place. Reporting and opinion-editorial commentary on the debate, as well as reader responses in the form of letters to the editor, then appeared in forums such as the American publications *Business Week*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and the Australian *Bulletin*, as well as major newspapers such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Australian*.

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The spread of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ to Japan and the spectrum of Japanese responses are examined through a range of English- and Japanese-language writings in books; in government publications; in intellectual journals such as the centrist Chūō kōron (Central Review), the right-leaning Shokun! (Gentlemen!) and the review journal Japan Echo; in magazines such as Tokyo Business Today and the Japanese edition of Newsweek; in the English-language newspaper Japan Times; in the conservative daily Yomiuri shimbun (Yomiuri newspaper) and in the liberal dailies Asahi shimbun (Asahi newspaper) and Mainichi shimbun (Mainichi newspaper). English-language sources produced in Japan are useful, as they reflect what the relevant institution or individual wanted to be known outside Japan. Japanese-language sources, on the other hand, often reveal a frankness and clarity of thought that is not present in similar English-language materials. The original Japanese edition of Ishihara and Morita’s pivotal ‘No’ to ieru Nihon (The Japan that Can Say No), for example, contained different material, was perceived differently by its audience, and had a different impact compared to its eventual English translation.

Finally, the extension of the debate about Japan to both Western and Japanese popular culture in the 1980s and 1990s – the enculturation of ‘Japan-bashing’ – is examined through a range of English-language and Japanese-language fiction, television programmes, films, plays, songs, poetry, cartoons and jokes, amongst other works. While Michael Crichton’s Rising Sun is probably the best-known cultural example of ‘Japan-bashing’, it was but the tip of the ‘Japan-bashing’ iceberg of products that were eventually produced for commercial sale during this period.

Chapter One of the thesis gives an overview of the historical pattern of Western images of Japan, describing how Japan’s rhetorical role as an ‘other’ to the West eventually produced an emphasis on the ‘danger’ it supposedly posed to Western nations. While fears of Japan were apparently validated with the outbreak of World
War II, positive views re-emerged in the early post-war period. Nevertheless, negative views of Japan lingered in some quarters and reappeared with great vigour as part of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the 1980s and 1990s. Chapter Two examines the perception of Japan as a new ‘problem’ for the United States in the mid-1980s and the consequent polarisation of commentators on Japan into the so-called ‘revisionists’ and the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’ or ‘Japan lobby’. This polarisation was exacerbated by the addition of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ to the debate and its increasing popularity from the mid-1980s onwards. Chapter Three examines the ensuing contest over the term ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States, which not only helped to entrench the label but also exacerbated the anti-Japanese atmosphere in the United States. Chapter Four goes on to analyse the phenomenon of ‘Japan-bashing’ in Australia, showing similarities and differences in Australian perceptions of Japan as a ‘problem’ compared with those in the United States, as well as Australia’s own version of ‘Japan-bashing’ practices. Chapter Five turns to the entry of Japanese commentators into the debate over the ‘Japan Problem’ and ‘Japan-bashing’. The chapter shows that some commentators suggested the source of ‘Japan-bashing’ was misunderstandings between the West and Japan while others reinforced ‘Japan-bashing’ with their tendency to fall into ‘America-bashing’. Chapter Six shifts the focus away from the formal national level to demonstrate the embedding of ‘Japan-bashing’ and ‘America-bashing’ in Western and Japanese popular culture in the 1980s and 1990s. Chapter Seven will assess the decline but not the end of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the late 1990s. It shows that the label ‘Japan-bashing’ has remained an enduring, although certainly less prominent, feature of Western and Japanese discourses on Japan in the early twenty-first century. Finally, the Conclusion examines the overall significance of the ‘Japan-bashing’ phenomenon, and shows how ‘Japan-bashing’ has influenced other forms of ‘nation-bashing’.
CHAPTER ONE

FROM ‘YELLOW PERIL’ TO ‘JAPAN-BASHING’:
HISTORICAL IMAGES OF JAPAN IN THE WEST

While the label ‘Japan-bashing’ was relatively new in the late 1970s and early 1980s, many of the practices it was applied to were not. Indeed, Western and Japanese observers quickly discerned that the range of views labelled as ‘Japan-bashing’ drew heavily upon previous historical periods in which Japan had been viewed negatively in the West. The influence of the specific circumstances of the 1980s and 1990s meant that Western views of Japan in that period had their own distinctiveness. Undeniably, however, both the tropes and the vehemence of anti-Japanese rhetoric from the ‘yellow peril’ and World War II periods re-emerged with a vengeance in those later decades. As historian John Dower observed in 1986, the rhetoric of the 1980s is ‘historically specific: it is the rhetoric of World War II’.¹ Some observers even characterised ‘Japan-bashing’ as an attempt to bring about the third forced ‘opening’ of Japan by the West – drawing a parallel with the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry’s fleet in 1853 and the United States-led Allied Occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952 – to make the point that, as in the past, foreign criticism appeared designed to pressure Japan to conform to Western expectations.² In order to understand the rise, function and significance of ‘Japan-bashing’, it is thus necessary to explore how images of Japan have been constructed, disseminated and altered over time and, in particular, how Japan came to be viewed as not only an ‘other’ but a dangerous ‘other’ to Western nations including the United States and Australia. This chapter therefore traces the historical path of Western

perceptions of Japan, from the ‘yellow peril’ of the late nineteenth century to the ‘Japan-bashing’ of the late twentieth century.

Since Japan’s re-engagement with the West in the mid-nineteenth century, the construction and dissemination of particular images of Japan have been an integral part of the Western experience of the ‘Orient’, in a discursive process which has been described in recent years as the practice of ‘orientalism’. Western observers of and travellers to Japan often characterised Japan as racially and culturally ‘different’ from the West, usually relying on the assumption that there was a monolithic ‘Japan’ that could be compared to a monolithic ‘West’. The influence of Social Darwinism in the late nineteenth century encouraged many Western observers to portray Japan as part of a supposedly inferior ‘Orient’, a characterisation which was sometimes upheld by Japanese observers in their own writings on ‘Japan’. However, while this theme of Japanese ‘difference’ from a supposed Western model has often been promoted since the nineteenth century, observers have not always reached the same conclusions regarding the implications of that ‘difference’, particularly the implications for ‘the West’ itself.

Rather, it has been said that Western images of Japan have swung back and forth between positive and negative, as if on a pendulum. This metaphor suggests that at any given time dominant images of Japan are either solely positive or solely negative, which has rarely, if ever, been the case: both positive and negative images of the nation have tended to remain in circulation at most times. Nevertheless, the metaphor does serve to highlight the Western sense that Japan is, at heart, a paradoxical entity. Some

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5 For the classic account of Japan’s supposedly paradoxical nature, see Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946, p. 2. See also Nathan Glazer, ‘From Ruth Benedict to Herman Kahn: The
observers argue that Westerners hold both ‘unconditional affection and unconditional antipathy’ for Japan, with little neutral ground in between. Indeed, perceptions of the ‘differences’ between Japan and the West have periodically overwhelmed any sense that Western nations and Japan might share values, interests or goals or could be partners in global affairs. Rather, Japan has been held up as a dangerous ‘other’, a military, economic and, perhaps, social danger to the West. At other times, however, the apparent convergence of Japan with the West, and its similarities to the West, have been championed as the prime reason for Western nations and Japan to enjoy a mutually beneficial political, economic and cultural partnership.

Such periodic transformations in dominant Western images of Japan, from positive to negative and back again, indicate the tremendous malleability of perceptions of the ‘other’ in response to specific historical circumstances, and especially in response to circumstances in Western nations themselves. This chapter argues that Japan has often been placed in the role of the ‘other’ when Western nations, especially the United States, have suffered crises in confidence relating to perceptions of national identity and place in the global order. Such anxiety about positioning has typically coincided with Japan attaining a notable level of military or economic prominence in world affairs, such that it appears to be challenging ‘the West’. Ultimately, the re-emergence and subsequent pervasiveness of ‘yellow peril’ and World War II tropes in ‘Japan-bashing’ in the late twentieth century has demonstrated the remarkable endurance of the ‘orientalist’ perspective as a discourse for viewing Japan, if not the entire ‘Orient’.

The Aesthetic Nation: Meiji Japan in the West

Images of Japan as an ‘other’ to the West are part of a much larger repertoire of Western images of the ‘Orient’. In the last few decades, ‘orientalism’ has become an increasingly popular meta-narrative for interpreting these images. The term was introduced by Edward Said in 1978 to theorise Western scholarship on Asia and the Middle East.7 Said drew on Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci to define and contextualise ‘orientalism’ as the Western process of inventing the idea of the ‘Orient’ by positing an irreducible ontological and epistemological distinction between the familiar ‘self’ and the strange ‘other’.8 Orientalism is a discourse articulated in terms of asymmetrical power: the imperial hegemony of the West is seen as a natural counterpart to the colonised Orient. Said thus envisioned orientalism as a ‘political doctrine willed over the Orient’ because the Orient was ‘weaker’ than the West.9 The application of pronounced hierarchical value judgements was perhaps inevitable: in ‘orientalist’ discourses the West is ‘rational, developed, humane, superior’, and the Westerner ‘rational, virtuous, mature, “normal”’, while the ‘Orient’ is ‘aberrant, underdeveloped, inferior’ and the ‘Oriental’ is ‘irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, “different”’.10

Few would deny that the Western approach to Japan from the ‘yellow peril’ era of the late nineteenth century to the ‘Japan-bashing’ of a century later has followed a generally orientalist pattern.11 Western perceptions of Japan as an ‘other’ have been founded upon the assumption that Japan’s national-cultural ‘identity’ is fundamentally

8 Ibid., pp. 2, 43-4.
9 Ibid., p. 204.
10 Ibid., pp. 40, 300.
different from that of ‘the West’. Western visitors to Japan from the sixteenth century onwards consistently affirmed this difference, often lingering on the idea that Japanese society, as a whole, systematically reversed or inverted Western habits and customs. The sixteenth-century Italian Jesuit missionary Alessandro Valignano, for example, described Japan as ‘the reverse of Europe’, as everything was ‘so different and opposite’ that ‘they are like us in practically nothing’. Indeed, the difference was so great that it could be ‘neither described nor understood’.  

Two hundred years later, Western observers of Japan were still largely agreeing with the notion that Japan was different from an often unspecified Western ‘norm’ and, moreover, that it was ‘uniquely’ different. Such observers relied upon two questionable assumptions. Firstly, they assumed that a quintessential and monolithic Japanese identity could, in fact, be isolated, an idea that discounted the possibility of significant diversity within Japan. Secondly, they assumed that this identity had remained substantially unchanged by exposure to outside influence and internal development. As early as 1890, British scholar Basil Hall Chamberlain declared, for example, that Westernisation had had little deep-seated impact on Japan, as the ‘national character’ of Japan ‘persists intact, manifesting no change in essentials’.  

Almost a century later, journalist Richard Halloran asserted that Japan was thoroughly Westernised, remaining ‘Japanese and Asian only by the accident of geography’; however, he also offered the contradictory proviso that, for Japan, Westernisation was actually a ‘myth’, as ‘Western influence has changed the face of Japan and the accoutrements of Japanese life, but it

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has not penetrated the minds and hearts of the Japanese people’.\textsuperscript{14} In essence, this confirmed, as James Fallows argued in 1986, that the Japanese are ‘different from you and me’.\textsuperscript{15}

Many observers of Japan from the mid-nineteenth century onwards have wondered whether the differences between Japan and the West meant that the ‘Western mind’ could ever hope to understand Japan. The myriad of apparent differences seemed to create some kind of impassable barrier or ‘perception gap’, one that was impossible to breach or bridge. Yet, the oft-noted Western inability to comprehend Japan did not always mean that Japan was considered dangerous. In the second half of the nineteenth century, there was little sense that Japan posed an inherent threat to the West, in contrast to Christian Europe’s fears of the Islamic Orient, or the ‘Anti-Europe’.\textsuperscript{16} Most Western observers of Japan were content to wax rhapsodic on Japan’s apparent idiosyncrasies, which supposedly made it a quaint, mystical, enchanted land, replete with exotic scenery and engaging ‘little’ Japanese. American consular official Percival Lowell perhaps summarised the views of most Western observers in this period when he commented in 1888 that ‘we seem, as we gaze at them, to be viewing our own humanity in some mirth-provoking mirror of the mind, - a mirror that shows us our own familiar thoughts, but all turned wrong side out’. Indeed, he concluded, ‘to the mind’s eye their world is one huge, comical antithesis of our own’.\textsuperscript{17}

For Lowell and his contemporaries, the only challenge Japan posed to the West was one of literary expression: the eternal search for adequate terms to describe the endearing nature of the land and the people. The frequently overdone tone of adoration

\textsuperscript{16} Kiernan, \textit{The Lords of Human Kind}, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{17} Percival Lowell, \textit{The Soul of the Far East}, New York: Macmillan, 1911 (first published 1888), p. 3.
led some in the West to wonder whether such a nation as Japan could, in fact, exist at all. Well before Said’s thesis on the ‘orientalist’ mindset, Oscar Wilde in 1889 questioned the Western tendency to deliberately ‘create’ Japan, declaring that the ‘whole of Japan is a pure invention’ and the Japanese were a ‘deliberate self-conscious creation’. Wilde credited Japan’s ‘invention’ to the reception of Japanese art, particularly the work of the renowned artist Hokusai, which had spawned a boom for ‘Japonaiserie’ in Europe and elsewhere. Thus, many early travellers came not to explore the unknown but to affirm their pre-established notions regarding the aesthetic qualities of ‘Japan’ and, frequently, they were not disappointed. The American travel writer, Henry M. Field, visiting Japan in 1877, noted: ‘We recognize him [the Japanese] at once, for never was a human creature so exactly like his portrait. We see every day the very same figures that we have seen all our lives on tea-cups and saucers, and fans and boxes’.

For some Western observers, there was an additional challenge: how to categorise Japanese civilisation in comparison to that of ‘the West’. This challenge effectively provided the foundations of perceptions of Japan as a dangerous ‘other’. When first visiting Japan in 1889, for example, Rudyard Kipling was unsure how to articulate Japan’s position in the world in the terms with which he was most familiar from his experience of India under the British. He finally concluded that ‘the Japanese isn’t a native, and he isn’t a sahib [master] either’. Most Western observers in the late

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19 This term was coined by French poet and critic Charles Baudelaire in 1861 to describe the use of Japanese artefacts as ‘props for conjuring up fanciful visions of Japan’: Elisa Evett, *The Critical Reception of Japanese Art in Late Nineteenth Century Europe*, Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982, p. viii.


nineteenth and early twentieth centuries agreed, however, that Japan was well behind the West on the temporal path of development, even though it was acknowledged to be assiduously pursuing a national programme of Western-style modernisation. The incipient modernity implied by the success of Japan’s programme so far, on the other hand, drew both positive and negative responses. As Homi Bhabha has argued, mimicry of the West could be both reassuring and disturbing to Westerners: reassuring, because mimicry served to reinforce the perception that the West was the centre of power in the global order, with a status that was desired in the less-advanced Orient; but also disturbing, because it posed an ‘immanent threat’ to the fundamental differences on which the boundaries between the Orient and the Occident were supposedly based.22

Many Western observers approved of and praised the Meiji leadership for the apparent success of efforts to inculcate in the Japanese people a sense of cohesive nationhood and, simultaneously, to drive towards Western-style modernisation. The commendation was also extended to the Japanese people at large, who were said to display an ‘aptitude for acquiring the civilization of the West’.23 Henry M. Field wrote in 1877, for example, of his high regard for Japan’s ‘remarkable’ progress: the nation had been ‘unmoored … from the coast of Asia’ and ‘towed’ across the Pacific, so that it was now placed ‘alongside of the New World, to have the same course of life and progress’.24 At the same time, however, some Westerners were less kindly disposed to the changes that modernisation had initiated in Japan, regretting the apparent impact on Japan’s ‘authenticity’. Such sentiments were frequently expressed by those who desired that certain allegedly ‘unique’ features of Japanese culture, such as the samurai

24 Field, From Egypt to Japan, p. 417.
tradition, would remain static. For instance, Ella M. Hart Bennett, a British traveller, opened her memoir of Japan in 1904 with the wistful observation:

The fear of the globe-trotter of to-day is whether he will be in time to see the Japan of his dreams and of romance, before this great Western wave of progress and reform has divested the Land of the Rising Sun of its quaint originality and fascinating charm.25

In essence, such mournful, sometimes even angry, complaints centred on a desire, if not an actual need, for Japan to remain oppositional to the West, an exotic Oriental nation rather than one that might bring into question the firmly established boundaries between the ‘Orient’ and the ‘Occident’ in the global order. Yet, while Western observers disagreed about whether modernisation constituted desirable progress within Japan, there was little, at first, which was viewed as actually threatening. Indeed, Japan’s supposed idiosyncrasies could seem almost farcical and the allegedly childlike characteristics of the Japanese, charming. As such, they were not to be taken seriously. Disturbing though modernisation was to those Westerners who desired to preserve ‘authenticity’, early reports about Japan’s future prospects suggested considerable complacent detachment:

Wealthy we do not think it [Japan] will ever become: the advantages confirmed by Nature, with the exception of the climate, and the love of

indolence and pleasure of the people themselves forbid it. The Japanese are a happy race, and being content with little are not likely to achieve much.26

**The ‘Yellow Peril’: Japan as a Dangerous ‘Other’**

By the late nineteenth century, general Western complacency regarding Japan’s modernisation had begun to give way to openly-voiced concern, as progress in modernisation forced observers to reassess the boundaries between Western countries and Japan. One such boundary was connected with the supposedly ‘natural’ order of global power, based on the racial theories of Social Darwinism which were prominent in this period. With its definitive hierarchy based on white racial superiority, Social Darwinism offered considerable reinforcement to the discourse of orientalism: it naturalised the disconnection between the West and the Orient and helped to convey the notion that there was an ‘irreducible distance’ between the two regions.27 Yet, by the late nineteenth century, many observers recognised that Japan increasingly straddled the boundaries between the two regions, a development which threatened the previously impervious narrative of orientalism.28 This was, for many, a disconcerting complication, as Japan had begun to prove that the ‘Orient’ could be, and was, more than merely passively ‘feminine’, exotic and distant; rather, it could be dangerously and aggressively ‘masculine’ and, therefore, was something to be feared.29

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28 This is an enduring view, as is demonstrated by Samuel Huntington’s classification of Japan in 1996 not as a part of an Asian or East Asian civilisation but as a unique civilisation of its own: Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996, p. 45.
Fear of Japan’s challenge to ‘the West’ was being expressed in the concept of the ‘yellow peril’ by the late nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{30} Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany is usually credited with the invention of the term ‘yellow peril’.\textsuperscript{31} Certainly he was responsible for popularising the phrase, by commissioning a now well-known allegorical drawing by H. Knackfuss, shown below, some time after 1895.


At its core, the concept of the ‘yellow peril’ articulated fears that the relationship between the Western world and the Orient would be inverted, thereby nullifying the West’s superiority. There was even a suggestion that the West might lose its own identity in the struggle with the Orient, with all the implications of miscegenation, vice and barbarism that this seemed to entail. For many, the ‘yellow peril’ was the fear that


\textsuperscript{31} The English writer M. P. (Matthew Phipps) Shiel is also occasionally credited, thanks to his trilogy of novels \textit{The Yellow Danger} (1899), \textit{The Lord of the Sea} (1901) and \textit{The Yellow Wave} (1905): see, for example, Edward James, 'Yellow, Black, Metal and Tentacled: The Race Question in American Science Fiction', in Philip John Davies (ed.), \textit{Science Fiction, Social Conflict and War}, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990, p. 28.
‘hordes’ or ‘waves’ of ‘Oriental’ immigrants would pour into the West; for others, it was the prospect of actual invasion by the armies of Japan or another ‘Oriental’ nation, no doubt based on memories of the Mongol Empire invasions. As French observer René Pinon noted in 1904, there was a vision of ‘Japanese and Chinese hordes spread out ... crushing under their feet the ruins of our capital cities and destroying our civilisations’.  

Japan’s transformation into a ‘yellow peril’ was widely believed by Western observers to be the result of its successful emulation of Western modernity in economic, imperialist and military terms. Such a view strongly contradicted earlier, comforting predictions of a modest destiny for Japan. For instance, Japan’s economic development by the late nineteenth century raised the prospect of Japan becoming a direct and formidable competitor of the West, and reactions to this vision were fierce. As one commentator observed in 1897, it appeared that the Japanese were ‘engaged in a criminal conspiracy against the commercial supremacy of the Western world’ and that ‘if it was a mistake to underrate and deride them’, then it was ‘folly’ not to recognise them as a ‘grave public danger’. The sense that Japan was competing with the West was heightened when it won its war with China in 1894-95, thus demonstrating the modern capabilities of its military forces. As another commentator observed in 1897, Japan had suddenly appeared as a ‘cyclone in a smooth sea of common-place progress’; other nations might ‘progress’ but what Japan was doing ‘must be termed a phenomenon’. Perceptions that Japanese leaders held considerable imperial ambitions

were reinforced by victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, as well as the annexation of Korea in 1910. For many observers, such events challenged the ‘entire mystique of white supremacism’ represented in orientalism.\textsuperscript{36} In response, Japan came to be represented as a ‘yellow peril’ by numerous Western politicians, military officers, journalists and novelists, many of whom assiduously predicted that a war between ‘the West’ and Japan, if not all Asia, was inevitable.\textsuperscript{37}

At the same time, the characterisation of Japan as a ‘yellow peril’ was countered by a complex array of positive images throughout the early twentieth century. These images generally related to Western admiration of Japan’s successful modernisation, including its economic development and military victories, so that Japan was portrayed not as a ‘peril’ but as the ‘yellow hope’ both in, and for, Asia.\textsuperscript{38} Japan became an ally of Great Britain under the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902, with the result that it sided with the Allies during World War I and sat as one of the five major victors at the Versailles Conference in 1918-19. In light of such achievements, many Westerners retained considerable sympathy for Japan, rejecting both the characterisation of Japan as a ‘yellow peril’ and the likelihood of war with Western countries until well into the 1930s. Respect for Japan continued to be expressed, even after Japan’s invasion of Manchuria in 1931-32 and the adverse international reaction it produced from some quarters. While such positive views were perhaps partially informed by official and

\textsuperscript{36} Dower, \textit{War Without Mercy}, p. 6.
semi-official Japanese efforts to favourably influence Western audiences, a degree of economic self-interest on the part of Western nations was also evident. In Australia, for example, Japan’s military actions in the early 1930s were often diplomatically overlooked in order to preserve Australia’s developing export market in Japan. Thus, for those Western commentators who promoted closer diplomatic, economic and cultural ties with Japan, the rhetoric of the ‘yellow peril’ was simply destructive. As one American critic opined in 1933, ‘yellow perilism’ had produced a ‘literary diet of corrosive, poisonous, mind upsetting war food’, which, in quantity, was ‘as dangerous to the public welfare as a diet made up entirely of pickles’.

While amicable relations with Japan were still diligently pursued by some in the West, however, the outbreak of war between Japan and China in 1937 pushed Western perceptions of Japan more towards the ‘yellow peril’ view. For many in the West, this attitude to Japan was justified by the events of World War II. The ‘treachery’ of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 helped to construct the ensuing war with Japan on a Manichean basis, as a war between good and evil, between civilisation and barbarism – one that, it seemed, would ultimately determine the future of ‘the West’ and the global order itself. For many Western observers, the enemy in the Pacific consisted of all the Japanese people: unlike the ‘good’ Germans amongst the Nazis, there were no ‘good’ Japanese. It was thus commonplace during the war to argue that the Japanese were animalistic and not human, and therefore clearly inferior to ‘Westerners’. In sources ranging from official government statements to the speeches of military officers, the works of cartoonists, novelists, film-makers and song-writers,

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41 Roy Matthew Frisen, 'Japanophobia', *Forum & Century Magazine*, October 1933, Section I.
and in media reports on the war, the Japanese were regularly depicted using animal
metaphors, as monkeys, apes, gorillas, octopodes, dogs, rats, vipers and insects.\textsuperscript{43}

However, Japan’s early successes during the war, and particularly its lightning
advances into South East Asia, complicated the ‘orientalist’ perception of Japan in the
West as inferior, irrational and backward. Images of Japan as a superior nation came to
the forefront, based on the perception that the Japanese soldier possessed uncanny
discipline and fighting skills. While these alternative images helped to undermine
‘orientalism’, the conclusion reached by many Westerners was still that the distinction
between the West and the ‘Orient’ was permanent: the Japanese were a ‘uniquely
contemptible and formidable foe’ that had to be overcome, if not utterly destroyed.\textsuperscript{44}
Thus, the view that Japan was an implacable opposite to the West was used at this stage
to justify what has been characterised as a ‘war without mercy’.\textsuperscript{45}

\textbf{Beyond the ‘Yellow Peril’: Japan in the Early Post-World War II Period}

The eventual Allied victory over Japan and the apparent achievements of the United
States-led Allied Occupation of 1945-52 resulted in the re-emergence of more positive
views. For the West, Japan was no longer so great a danger but it remained an ‘other’,
one that was still susceptible to the ‘orientalist’ perspective. For many Western
observers, Japan’s defeat was nothing less than a confirmation of Western ‘masculine’
superiority over the ‘feminine’ Orient, and thus an affirmation of the dominant place of
the West in the global order. Those who had been warning of the ‘yellow peril’ for
some time were particularly exultant about victory over Japan. The Randolph Hearst
newspaper empire, for example, boasted in 1945 of ‘More Than 50 Years’ of warning

\textsuperscript{43} For discussion of the animal metaphors see, for example, ibid., pp. 82-93; Robert
MacDougall, 'Red, Brown and Yellow Perils: Images of the American Enemy in the
\textsuperscript{44} Dower, \textit{War Without Mercy}, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
the United States about the threat from Japan. Western images of Japan proved to be an adaptable part of the process of recasting the defeated nation in a manner that preserved this sense of triumphant superiority. Instead of a ‘blood-soaked gorilla’, Japan was now portrayed as an ‘irritated but already domesticated little monkey’, one that was childlike, harmless and in need of assistance from the West.

The rise of the Cold War with the Soviet Union and the spread of Communism in Asia in the late 1940s and early 1950s provided the impetus necessary to complete the rehabilitation of Western images of Japan. In popular opinion, the newly Communist nations of China and North Korea essentially replaced Japan as the ‘yellow peril’. Moreover, within a few years of defeat in 1945, the reformist policies of the Occupation had helped to legitimise Japan as a nation that had apparently been successfully liberated from its ‘feudal’ and ‘militarist’ past and newly imbued with progressive ‘Western’ ideals. Japan’s rejoining of the international community in the early post-war period, symbolised by, for example, its entry into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1955, demonstrated the extent to which Western distrust of Japan had been overturned, even though considerable anger continued to be directed at Japan from other Asian nations. By the 1960s, American observers were widely promoting the concept of Japan as an ‘equal partner’ to the United States, as the two nations were now perceived to share many basic ideals and national goals. This shared outlook, together with careful diplomacy, seemed likely to overcome any short-term difficulties that

might arise between the two nations. Rhetoric of this kind demonstrated an optimism that United States-Japan relations were now bound by ‘inevitable harmony’, even if in reality such rhetoric was aimed at fulfilling the United States’ ‘grand scheme’ to contain the spread of Communism, which included presenting Japan as a vital Cold War ally in Asia.49

In the following years, dominant Western views of Japan appeared to remain relatively positive, unless perceptions of some ‘crisis’ prompted a temporary negative shift, as with the contentious revision of the United States-Japan Security Treaty in 1960, and associated protests in Japan, or as a result of protests in Japan over the Vietnam War of 1965-73.50 At the same time, however, certain misgivings about Japan continued to be expressed, particularly by those individuals and groups whose attitudes remained highly conditioned by World War II, but also by certain scholars who regarded Japan’s post-war transformation with some wariness.51 Resurrecting the assumption that Japan’s supposed national-cultural ‘identity’ was incapable of changing, some Western commentators questioned whether Japan really had been transformed from ‘yellow peril’ to ally. Perceptions of Japan as ‘alien’, ‘paradoxical’, ‘unstable’ and ‘unpredictable’52 manifested themselves as suspicions about the extent and permanence of Japan’s post-war transformation, often with the implication that some residual force of feudalism or militarism lay concealed underneath Japan’s overtly democratic appearance. Commentators who took this line were apparently guided less

52 Glazer, 'From Ruth Benedict', p. 163.
by the rhetoric of ‘inevitable harmony’ than by the belief that there was an ‘inevitable conflict of interests’ between the West and Japan.\(^{53}\)

Nevertheless, such views only rarely detracted from the generally positive political, military, economic, social and cultural relations between Western countries and Japan from the 1950s onwards. Several decades on from World War II it might have been supposed that Western images of Japan as an ‘other’ – and, indeed, a dangerous ‘other’ – had finally been overcome, as public opinion about Japan in the West was predominantly positive or, at worst, ambivalent. It was not uncommon to hear politicians, economists and business leaders echoing the much earlier perception of Japan as a ‘partner’ to or a mirror of the West. Unlike Percival Lowell’s mirror in the late nineteenth century, however, this time the mirror did not show ‘our own familiar thoughts, but all turned wrong side out’.\(^{54}\) Rather, it displayed a nation that appeared to be comfortingly familiar to the West. However, the fragility of this new image was soon exposed when the perception that Japan posed a dangerous challenge to ‘the West’ re-emerged once more.

**The Economic ‘Miracle’ and ‘Peril’: Japan in the 1970s**

While positive relations between Western countries and Japan continued throughout the early post-World War II period, Japan’s role as a natural ‘partner’ or a ‘mirror’ to the West began to be questioned in the early 1970s, particularly in the United States. As one assessment noted in 1972, the term ‘partnership’ had perhaps been ‘too idealistic’, and while the ‘essential elements’ of friendship between the United States and Japan had not changed, a ‘very different atmosphere’ was now emerging.\(^{55}\) This sense of transition was spurred in part by the realisation in the United States, particularly at elite

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\(^{54}\) Lowell, *The Soul of the Far East*, p. 3.

levels, that ‘partnership’ with Japan was certainly more rhetoric than reality. After all, the United States was a dominant military and economic superpower, one which participated actively in the international arena; while Japan was a diplomatically passive nation, almost wholly reliant on the United States for its security, although it was starting to emerge, as Herman Kahn declared, as an economic ‘superstate’.  

For many Western commentators, Japan’s economic recovery from World War II, and particularly its economic growth throughout the 1960s, amounted to a ‘miracle’. However, as Willard Price and others began to point out in the early 1970s, Japan’s ‘miracle’ appeared to be a peril for other countries. This view was especially evident in the United States, which had seen its bilateral trade deficit blow out from US$380 million in 1970 to $2.5 billion in 1971 and then $3 billion in 1972, each year in Japan’s favour. Such figures revived the perception that Japan might be an economic ‘threat’ to the United States, if not the entire world. President Richard Nixon described this Japanese ‘threat’ in 1971, for example, as ‘far more serious than the challenge that we confronted even in the dark days of Pearl Harbor’. Tension in relations between the United States and Japan worsened when the United States unexpectedly re-established relations with China in 1971, without so much as warning Japan in advance of this major shift in policy – a development which was viewed by some in Japan as a shock akin to ‘Pearl Harbor in reverse’ for the way it apparently devalued Japan’s importance to the United States. Such tensions led some observers to suggest that bilateral

relations had entered a period of transition, one that might even result in a ‘crisis’.\(^{61}\) However, despite such concerns, no ‘crisis’ eventuated, largely due to constructive attempts by officials and scholars in both the United States and Japan to improve relations. Positive gestures included the return of sovereignty over Okinawa from the United States to Japan on schedule in 1972.\(^{62}\)

In the 1970s, Japan’s economy continued to develop – certainly at less spectacular rates than it had in the 1960s but far more impressively than the economies of some Western countries, which had fared less well through the oil ‘shocks’ of 1973 and 1979, when industries were devasted by shortages of oil and rapid increases in prices.\(^{63}\) Meanwhile, Western scholarship on Japan flourished as political scientists, economists, sociologists, anthropologists and historians alike searched for the ‘secret’ of Japan’s economic ‘miracle’, a search which produced a multitude of complementary and competing explanations, most of which also sought to discover how to transfer Japan’s success elsewhere. On the one hand, some commentators believed Japan’s success stemmed from the reforms enacted during the Allied Occupation. The diplomatic historian John Curtis Perry, for example, emphasised this interpretation in his (mostly) humorous \textit{New York Times} editorial in 1981, in which he pleaded ‘Please, Japan, Return the Favor: Occupy Us’.\(^{64}\) On the other hand, many observers disputed the centrality of the Occupation to Japan’s economic success. Instead, they argued that the ‘secret’ was the Japanese political-economic ‘model’ itself, intimating that Japan had, on its own


merits, achieved a significant degree of economic development, partly by consolidating trends already apparent in the pre-war period, such as the cultivation of tight, cooperative links among Japanese political, bureaucratic and corporate figures and institutions.65

Widespread support for this meta-historical explanation for Japan’s economic ‘miracle’ prompted the emergence in Western nations of a genre of literature which sought to ‘Learn from Japan’. Sociologist Ezra Vogel’s perfectly titled and propitiously timed *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America* in 1979 quickly became well-known.66 Advocates of ‘learning’ from Japan extolled the Japanese ‘model’, which was said to be based in turn on the nation’s ‘unique national character’. As mentioned earlier, such interpretations were supported and encouraged from within Japan by proponents of the genre known as ‘Nihonjinron’ (theories of the Japanese), who readily accepted that Japan was ‘unique’. The apparent obsession with the Japanese ‘model’ was sometimes taken to absurd lengths in Western countries, as demonstrated by the popularity in the United States during the late 1970s and early 1980s of Miyamoto Musashi’s *The Book of Five Rings* (originally published in Japanese in 1645), a short manual on the spiritually-based code of swordsmanship of the samurai, which was believed by some to reveal Japan’s modern economic secrets, as shown in the cartoon below.

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George Lois, a columnist for the advertising magazine *Adweek*, was reported to have begun this ‘Musashi craze’ as a result of a ‘tongue-in-cheek’ piece he wrote in 1981 claiming that the ‘Japanese entrepreneur … studies, lives and works’ according to Musashi’s ‘mythic tome’.67 The American publisher of the book was politely bemused by the subsequent attention it received, for while this version had been first published in 1974, it was in its ninth printing and had sold 75 000 copies by the early 1980s. Amusingly, the publishers even reported having been asked if Musashi was available for a talk show.68 In reality, the samurai link with Japan’s modern economic system was tenuous: doubtless unbeknownst to the book’s twentieth-century proponents, seventeenth-century samurai were not permitted to engage in business at all and, as one observer of the Musashi boom pointed out, even those samurai who did ‘give up their swords for the abacus’ usually ‘went broke’.69

Eventually, the idea that the Japanese political-economic ‘model’ could be learned and its ‘miracle’ transferred to the West or anywhere else began to be dismissed. By the

68 Ibid.
mid-1980s, it had become apparent to many Western observers that the so-called ‘secrets’ of Japanese success were unlikely to bring equal results elsewhere. As critics pointed out, the assumption that an economy is primarily a function of culture was clearly erroneous. Moreover, those who continued to believe that culture was indeed the ‘secret’ usually insisted that the ability to understand the ‘unique’ Japanese national-cultural characteristics that supposedly underpinned the economic ‘miracle’ was confined to those who were Japanese by blood. Therefore, logically, the Japanese ‘model’ could neither be understood by outsiders, nor exported. Furthermore, as was becoming increasingly apparent both in the West and in Japan, the Japanese ‘model’ had had mixed success even in its native habitat. Some commentators pointed to the negative social and environmental impacts of economic growth in Japan, essentially establishing a rival ‘Japan-as-anti-model’ genre. In Australia, one leading critic warned that ‘bad things would come with good’. He continued:

the promoters of the Japan model in Australia are advised to examine carefully not only the economic benefits but also the social costs which are associated with it … [as] it does not necessarily raise the standard of living measured in terms of the quality of life, and may significantly worsen it.

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Such problems with the Japanese ‘model’ led some analysts to conclude that the Japanese economic ‘miracle’ had been a ‘false promise’. Thus, while Japan’s economic success had already been viewed by some Western commentators as a renewed Japanese challenge to the West in the early 1970s, the extent of this challenge, and the number of commentators who believed in it, had been considerably magnified by the close of that decade. This set the stage for the re-emergence of Western images of Japan as a ‘yellow peril’.

The Re-emergence of the ‘Yellow Peril’: Japan in the 1980s and 1990s

By the early to mid-1980s, many observers had begun to remark that negative views of Japan were re-emerging in Western countries, views that appeared different from the moderate criticism that had been expressed in the earlier post-war period. While this trend was observable in many Western countries, it was again most evident in the United States. American pollster William Watts argued in 1984, for example, that while the United States had had previous ‘differences’ with Japan, most notably in the early 1970s, negative views of Japan in those periods had not entered public discourse to an extent comparable with the early 1980s, a period which he thought was marked by ‘harsh rhetoric’. He concluded that while the overall balance of American perceptions of Japan remained positive and it was ‘overly dramatic to talk of a crisis in the relationship’, the trend towards negative images was there, and it was both ‘significant’ and ‘worrisome’.

While the supposed Japanese political-economic ‘model’ had earlier been praised by Western commentators as the ‘key’ to Japan’s economic success, now it was viewed far more critically. In short, the Japanese ‘model’ was understood to be instrumental in

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creating and sustaining ‘Japan Inc.’, an expression that is generally credited to business expert James Abegglen in the early 1970s, although it had also been used in the 1930s. Regardless of its specific origins, this expression was used by Western commentators to highlight the cooperative links that were perceived to exist among Japanese companies, as well as the degree to which those companies were ‘unfairly’ guided and assisted by the Japanese government, particularly the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, with the aim of creating an ‘irresistible economic force’ on a national scale. As such, ‘Japan Inc.’ was viewed as synonymous with a broader Japanese undertaking to pursue economic success regardless of the social and environmental cost at home or the detriment to relations with other nations, particularly the United States.

By the 1980s, the impact of trade competition with Japan appeared to be extending not only to ‘iconic’ industries in the United States, such as the automotive industry, but also ‘sunrise’ or new industries, which were expected to have crucial importance in the future. As one observer warned, the United States was now facing a future as a ‘first-class military power with a second-class industrial base’, one highly

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76 For instance, a 1936 article in Fortune magazine claimed that ‘For a generation … it has been Japan Incorporated against the world’: 'The Proof of the Pudding', Fortune, vol. 14, no. 3, September 1936, p. 77.


dependent on Japan. Moreover, if the future was ‘technological’ and if technology had become ‘Japanised’, then the ‘syllogism’ suggested that the future of the United States, too, would be ‘Japanese’. The year 1985 was a particular watershed: at that point the United States became a net debtor nation in addition to its already substantial trade deficit with Japan. As The Economist pointed out in 1986, the United States’ trade balance during the previous twenty-five years had gone from a surplus of US$5 billion to a deficit of $150 billion. Conversely, Japan’s share of that trade deficit had increased from US$1.7 billion in 1974, to $10.4 billion in 1980 and to close to $50 billion by 1985.

The sense that Japan was economically subsuming the United States was not only evident in trade figures, but was exacerbated by the nature and volume of Japanese investment, which dramatically increased in the mid- to late 1980s. The flow of some US$650 billion dollars in Japanese investment to the United States between 1985 and 1990 permitted many commentators to overindulge in the double-entendre possibilities of the word ‘yen’. While Japanese investment occurred in many sectors and regions, American attention to it often narrowly focused on investment in ‘iconic’ industries and structures, as in Sony’s purchase of CBS Records in 1988 and Columbia Pictures in

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1989; Matsushita’s purchase of MCA-Universal film studios in 1990; Nintendo’s involvement in the purchase of the Seattle Mariners’ baseball team in 1992; and the purchases by Japanese interests of such landmarks as New York’s Radio City Music Hall and the Rockefeller Center, and Pebble Beach golf course in California.

Many American observers in fact welcomed Japanese investment for the economic benefits it provided and, indeed, state governments vied with each other to offer attractive packages to potential Japanese investors. The southern state of Tennessee, for example, promoted itself as a destination for Japanese investment, a stance which the state parodied in a 1989 advertisement published in Japan, as shown below.

![Figure 1.3: ‘Tennessee: Where the World Comes to Work’, advertisement published in the Japan Economic Journal, 28 January 1989, p. 9.](image)

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At the same time, others suggested that Japanese investment was merely further evidence of an economic invasion; that is, Japanese investors were engaged in a deliberate and concerted process of ‘Japanising’ the identity and the future of the United States.85 Some critics suggested the extent of Japanese investment was so great that New York should be renamed as ‘New Tokyo’, while Los Angeles had become Tokyo’s ‘twenty-fourth ward’ and Hawaii Japan’s ‘forty-eighth prefecture’.86

Newsweek magazine made this point, less than subtly, with the cover page of its October 1989 issue, shown below, featuring a geisha replacing the Statue of Liberty in the logo of Columbia Pictures, which had recently been purchased by Sony.87 Commentators

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87 For analysis of Newsweek’s coverage, see 'Case Study: The Sony-Columbia Deal', in Peter W. Oehlers, 'Mediating News: The "International Media Echo" and Symbolic International Relations', in Abbas Malek and Anandam P. Kavoori (eds), The Global
apparently feared that, like the company’s symbol, the output of the new Sony Pictures would be ‘Japanised’.  

By the mid-1980s it had become popular in Western countries to argue that Japan’s economic success was showcasing the decline of the United States and, consequently, the end of the primacy of ‘the West’ in the global order. The most prominent ‘declinist’ was Paul Kennedy, who suggested that the United States had fallen victim to ‘imperial overstretch’, like late-nineteenth-century Britain, with the nation’s outside interests and obligations taking an increasing toll of its waning share of world economic production and growth amid increasing public debt.  

Figure 1.5: ‘Columbia Geisha’, Newsweek, 10 October 1989.

Kennedy and many other declinists strongly implied that Japan was the most obvious replacement for


88 Economist Michael Borrus cynically suggested that it was just as likely to be a question of whether Columbia Pictures would end up corrupting Sony: cited in Brenton Schlender, 'Are the Japanese Buying Too Much?', Fortune, Fall 1990, p. 99.

the United States as a global power, if they did not argue outright that the two nations were trading places.\textsuperscript{90} Japan, it was reported, was evolving into the global ‘number one’, was the ‘best positioned’ for the ‘Pacific century’ and was the ‘betting favourite to win the economic honors of owning the twenty-first century’.\textsuperscript{91} Even the cover artwork of the Japanese edition of Kennedy’s book highlighted this apparent transition, depicting ‘Uncle Sam’ stepping off the pedestal of ‘world leadership’ and being replaced by a Japanese character.\textsuperscript{92}

The image of the United States as a superpower arguably formed part of the basis of American national identity, particularly in the post-war period, and so there was a natural unwillingness by some commentators to concede that the United States was in decline. As John Dower explained, if such a concession were made the inference was ‘America As Number Two’; that is, the ‘end of the postwar economic supremacy of the United States’ and the ‘ascendance of the Pacific over the Atlantic as the hub of world commerce’.\textsuperscript{93} Certain commentators thus rejected the concept of decline of the United States outright, arguing that it was merely a ‘persistent myth’ based on inaccurate or exaggerated evidence.\textsuperscript{94} Others grudgingly acknowledged apparent decline but did not see it as the end of American hegemony. They came to be known as ‘revivalists’ for

\textsuperscript{90} See, for example, Prestowitz, \textit{Trading Places}.


their belief that the United States would recover to maintain its position of global dominance in the twenty-first century.95

For many more commentators, however, the core concern appeared to be neither the decline of the United States, nor the more general implication of a decline in Western power in the global order, although both prospects were clearly troubling. Rather, it was the specific implications of Japan becoming a global power. Some observers argued that Japan was reneging on its moral obligations to the United States, which it allegedly owed as a result of the United States’ post-war contributions to and support of Japan. In this argument, one of the main forms of American support was the provision of a ‘free ride’ to Japan, which enjoyed the military protection of the United States and thus spent comparatively little on its own armed forces. Other commentators, however, simply emphasised their view that Japan was manifestly unsuited to the role of a global economic power. Newsweek editor Robert J. Samuelson argued in 1985, for example, that Japan had already acquired global responsibilities ‘before being capable, psychologically and politically, of discharging them’.96 While some commentators suggested that on the international stage Japan appeared to be directionless, as it had ‘power without purpose’,97 others argued that Japan’s purpose was all too evident: that is, Japan intended to form some kind of ‘Pax Japonica’ or ‘Pax Nipponica’. These expressions hinted at the re-emergence of some form of Japan’s wartime Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.98 Journalist and author Daniel Burstein was particularly

fond of dramatising such disturbing scenarios, opening his critical commentaries on Japan with dire narratives of Japan’s supposed future domination over the world.\textsuperscript{99} Such dramatic scenarios undoubtedly served to attract public attention, particularly from the media. However, they also detracted attention from more reasoned (and less fictional) analyses of Japan’s future. Only a few proponents of the view that Japan was intending a new Japanese order admitted, for example, that any such order would be ‘limited and uneven’ because of Japan’s relative lack of military power and limited ability to attract international political support, especially in the Asian region.\textsuperscript{100}

For many Western observers, such negative views of Japan, particularly with their ‘dramatic future scenarios and conspiratorial reasoning’, were already ‘closer to fictional spy novels or geo-financial thrillers’ than to ‘serious’ studies.\textsuperscript{101} Nevertheless, these views helped to shape the sense that, for the West, the ‘yellow peril’ of Japan was replacing the ‘red peril’ of the Soviet Union. Many commentators speculated that Japan might even prove to be a greater threat than the Soviet Union had ever been. For instance, journalist Marvin Wolf argued in 1983 that the Japanese threat was very serious, as the Japanese had ‘brilliantly disguised their conspiracy’.\textsuperscript{102} Wolf implied that while the Soviet Union had been an obvious military opponent, Japan had neatly concealed its intention of taking over Western countries. Such conspiratorial

\textsuperscript{100} Ezra Vogel, ‘Pax Nipponica?’, \textit{Foreign Affairs}, vol. 64, no. 4, Spring 1986, pp. 762, 767.
interpretations prompted a number of pundits to opine that ‘the Cold War is over, and Japan won’,\textsuperscript{103} a view which was echoed in the cartoon below.

![Cartoon showing three figures discussing the Cold War]


The comparison between Japan and the Soviet Union was strengthened by a range of public opinion polls in the late 1980s which showed that while attitudes to the Soviet Union were improving,\textsuperscript{104} perceptions of Japan were worsening to the extent that Japan was now considered by some to be the major threat to the West. For example, in August 1989, while twenty-two per cent of respondents to an opinion poll asking which was the ‘more serious threat’ to the United States named the Soviet Union, sixty-eight per cent named Japan.\textsuperscript{105} A similar poll in October 1989 revealed that fifty-two per cent of American respondents gave greater weight to the economic threat from Japan, while thirty-three per cent thought the military threat of the Soviet Union was more


important. Such views of Japan were also held by individuals in senior positions in government, business, academia and the media. Drawing upon a survey that expressly compared the opinions of such American ‘leaders’ with those of the general public, John E. Rielly concluded in 1991, for example, that almost two-thirds of both types of respondents considered Japan to be the ‘critical threat’ to the United States, as shown in the graph below.

![Graph showing the percentage of public and leaders considering various threats to U.S. vital interests.](image)


The apparent shift in perceptions of who the enemy was, from the Soviet Union to Japan, led *Time* columnist Charles Krauthammer to drolly posit the existence of a ‘law of conservation of national hostility’, which held that the United States was subject to a deep-seated psychological need for an ‘enemy’ at all times. The transition from the ‘red peril’ to the ‘yellow peril’ certainly appeared straightforward to some observers, particularly as the new rhetoric drew heavily on that surrounding ‘the former “evil empire”’, as was suggested in the cartoon below.

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107 Charles Krauthammer, 'Do We Really Need a New Enemy?', *Time*, 23 March 1992, p. 76.
However, some observers recognised that the transformation in Western images of Japan in the 1980s and 1990s was far more complex, in that it resurrected rhetoric that had previously been heard during the ‘yellow peril’ and World War II periods, albeit with obvious alterations. As early as 1983, for example, popular culture theorist Gary Hoppenstand observed that the stereotype of the ‘yellow peril’ was re-appearing, although this time the ‘devil doctors and yellow fiends’ resided in the ‘auto plant rather than the opium den’. Just as in the earlier periods, the rise of anti-Japanese views was underpinned by an emphasis on Japan’s supposed ‘differences’ from the West. Once again, Japan’s national-cultural ‘identity’ was seen as transparent and homogeneous. Now, however, there was a stronger emphasis on culture than on racial characteristics, causing media studies scholar Phil Hammond to suggest that it was ‘not a question of an inherited script’ about Japan so much as a ‘different script – one appropriate to the

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109 MacDougall, 'Red, Brown and Yellow Perils', p. 60. Other commentators have argued that the image of the ‘other’ that was applied to Japan has also drawn upon historical perceptions of the Chinese and the American Indians, to name but two. See David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 2nd edn, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

times’. Hammond also noted, however, that the repeated emphasis on the singularity of Japanese culture appeared to be merely a coded, and therefore acceptable, way of discussing racial difference.

Most Western proponents and defenders of the view that Japan was a ‘threat’ to Western countries claimed that such a stance was not underpinned by racism – or, if it was, any racism was ‘unconscious’ or ‘implicit’ or was a response to genuine concerns, and so could perhaps be excused. More detached observers surveyed the Western news media and concluded that while some representations of Japan were ‘pluralistic’, ‘complex’ and ‘balanced’, others appeared to be racist. For instance, Margaret Quigley of the New York-based Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting organisation argued in 1992 that ‘most media ran news stories, op-eds and cartoons riddled with racist sentiment’ regarding Japan, concluding that the media’s xenophobic and racist attitude in the 1980s and early 1990s ensured that ‘[r]eporting on Japan will live in infamy’. As other observers pointed out, it was often easy to overlook the media’s

113 See, for example, the defence of the United States advertising industry in Donny Deutsch, 'It's Not Bashing Japan to Sell USA's Strengths', USA Today, 2 August 1990, p. 8A.
more subtle and latent forms of racism, such as the use of tropes reminiscent of the 'yellow peril' or the propaganda of World War II, or even simple examples of 'unwarranted negative bias' about Japan.

Many Western views of Japan in the 1980s and 1990s drew upon historical tropes quite directly. For example, a Japanese man in a cartoon would usually be presented as some kind of warrior, though he would now be ‘dressed in a business suit rather than jungle greens’, and references to feudalism or militarism were never very far behind in images of ‘economic samurai’ or ‘business warriors’. Samurai and sumo wrestlers were often portrayed, as shown in the magazine covers below.

Figure 1.8: “How Japan Does It”, cover of *Time*, 30 March 1981.  
Figure 1.9: ‘Space-Age Samurai’, cover of *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 4 December 1981.


116 See, for example, Ellis Cose, 'Yellow-Peril Journalism: Is Latent Racism Coloring Business Coverage of Japan?', *Time*, 27 November 1989, p. 79.


While such representations were meant to produce wariness of Japan’s supposed ‘threat’ to the West, other images were meant to ridicule or incite revulsion. As in World War II, Western cartoonists routinely represented the Japanese people as short, with slanted eyes, glasses and buck teeth, grinning idiotically and speaking poor or heavily accented English, as shown below.

Figure 1.10: ‘Trade Wars’, cover of *Time*, 13 April 1987.

Figure 1.11: ‘Japan on Wall Street’, cover of *Business Week*, 7 September 1987.

Figure 1.12: Doug Marlette, ‘Kudzu’, *Newsday*, 7 February-1 March 1990, reproduced from ‘Project Zinger: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly’, Seattle: Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism and the Asian American Journalists Association, 23 August 1991, p. 9.
Some commentators also emphasised the supposedly non-human nature of the Japanese people, as in the expression ‘economic animals’,\textsuperscript{119} or portrayed them as dehumanised robots living in a ‘robot kingdom’ and a futuristic ‘robotopia’.\textsuperscript{120}

The revived emphasis on supposed differences between Japan and Western countries in the late twentieth century served to highlight the old perception that the West and Japan were natural and inevitable opposites. For instance, journalist Lance Morrow gave it as his view in 1992 that the United States and Japan were each other’s ‘antiworld’, with:

Japan an exclusive, homogeneous Asian ocean-and-island realm, tribal, intricately compact, suppressive, fiercely focused; and the U.S. a giant of huge distances, expansive, messy, inclusive, wasteful, rich, individualist, multicultural, chaotically diverse.\textsuperscript{121}

Setting Western countries and Japan apart in this manner strengthened perceptions that ‘the West’ and Japan shared few, if any, common values, interests and goals. Moreover, as a number of commentators warned, it heightened the sense that Western countries and Japan were locked into an inevitable competition or conflict for control of the future.

For many Western observers, the main field of this competition was obviously the economic one. The contest was often articulated through the metaphor of sport, as in Andrew Kopkind’s 1985 analogy:

Like two sumo wrestlers, the United States and Japan are locked in another trade dispute. We can expect a lot of programmed grunting and grappling by these two world-class behemoths and much outrageous noise from the US Congressional section of the bleachers.\textsuperscript{122}

However, the economic competition was also articulated through martial metaphors. While the term ‘trade war’ was not new, Marvin J. Wolf was perhaps the first, in 1983, to devote an entire book to the potential for a ‘trade war’ between the United States and Japan.\textsuperscript{123} Wolf’s concerns were echoed by many others, including the prominent Chrysler auto executive Lee Iacocca, who noted in 1984 that ‘[r]ight now we’re in the midst of another major war with Japan’, a ‘trade war’.\textsuperscript{124} The martial metaphor was particularly attractive to the news media, as demonstrated by the ubiquitous use of terminology such as ‘invasion’, ‘battle’, ‘clash’, ‘collision’, ‘confrontation’, ‘dispute’, ‘face-off’ and ‘fight’ to describe economic tension between Western countries and Japan.\textsuperscript{125} Time magazine, for instance, illustrated the United States’ ‘trade war’ with Japan in 1987 with pictures of American and Japanese cannon firing import and export goods, such as cars, computers and aircraft, across the spread of its pages.\textsuperscript{126} By 1992,

\textsuperscript{123} Wolf, \textit{The Japanese Conspiracy}.
economist Lester Thurow had expanded upon the ‘trade war’ rhetoric to predict an imminent economic war among the United States, Europe and Japan.\(^{127}\)

The seriousness with which the economic ‘threat’ of Japan to the United States was regarded was particularly visible in references to the geo-historical motif of Pearl Harbor, a toponym that had apparently entered the vernacular language in the post-war period to mean ‘any significant or crippling defeat, betrayal, loss, etc., that comes unexpectedly’.\(^{128}\) Renewed use of the term ‘Pearl Harbor’ as a metaphor in relation to Japan reached a peak in 1991, the fiftieth anniversary of the Japanese attack. In that year, for example, journalist Karel van Wolferen titled an essay on the United States-Japan relationship with the question ‘An Economic Pearl Harbor?’\(^{129}\) A similar editorial in *Newsday* instructed readers on ‘How to Prevent an Economic Pearl Harbor’, and was illustrated by a photograph of the USS *Arizona* burning at Pearl Harbor in 1941.\(^{130}\)

While the economic ‘threat’ from Japan was thought to be obvious, some commentators also argued that Japan might pose a military threat to ‘the West’. Former *New York Times* correspondent Henry Scott Stokes, for example, warned in 1986 that Americans should even consider the ‘terrifying prospect of a suicidal nuclear-armed Japan’. Stokes suggested that with Japan’s ‘culture and traditions’ ‘savaged by economic competition with the West’, the nation might choose, somewhat like the

\(^{127}\) Thurow, *Head to Head*, p. 163.


\(^{129}\) Curiously, despite the headline, the article admitted that current tensions were ‘obviously not comparable’ with Pearl Harbor: Karel van Wolferen, ‘An Economic Pearl Harbor?’, *New York Times*, 2 December 1991, p. A17.

prominent novelist Mishima Yukio in 1970, the ‘evil beauty’ of ‘destruction’. In their 1991 book entitled *The Coming War with Japan*, George Friedman and Meredith LeBard outlined their belief that the current economic disputes between the United States and Japan would inevitably develop to become the ‘second war with Japan’, for the reason that ‘Japan chose war’ in ‘identical circumstances’ in 1941. However, in their view, no matter which nation won, it would not be the last such war, as the ‘struggle between Japan and the United States, punctuated by truces, friendships, and brutality’ would ‘shape the Pacific for generations’.

The re-emergence of historical Western images of ‘Japan’ in the 1980s and 1990s demonstrated that such images can have an endurance and malleability that extends over a very long period, and that ‘orientalism’ still plays a prominent role in the concept of the Asian ‘other’. Indeed, it has been argued that it was the use of such historical images that kept ‘Japan-bashing’ alive, as without them, ‘Japan-bashing’ might have been ‘relegated to the pages of history books’ and subject only to ‘periodic curiosity’.

However, the 1980s and 1990s are significant for reasons far beyond the obvious parallels with earlier periods. These two decades are exceptional not only because of their specific historical circumstances but also because the Western characterisation of

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Japan as a dangerous ‘other’ was so thoroughly challenged and contested, both in the West and in Japan. The introduction of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ as a means of characterising and rejecting criticism of Japan helped to transform Western discourse on Japan in the 1980s and 1990s to an extent that could scarcely have been imagined in the late 1970s. The next three chapters will examine the rise of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States and Australia in the 1980s and 1990s, beginning with the early period in the United States.
CHAPTER TWO

THE BIRTH OF ‘JAPAN-BASHING’ IN THE UNITED STATES

‘Japan-bashing’ often appeared to be a generic global discourse or, more specifically, a ‘Western’ discourse of the 1980s and 1990s. In actuality, however, it was a distinctively American discourse, at least in the beginning. Not only was the term ‘Japan-bashing’ created in the United States in the late 1970s, it was also used extensively there in government, academic, media and cultural forums in subsequent years, making the United States the primary site in which the label was used and ‘Japan-bashing’ itself was allegedly practised. Moreover, when Japanese commentators began to acknowledge and to respond to supposed ‘Japan-bashing’, most of their attention focused directly on the United States, almost to the exclusion of other nations. Thus, it is vital to examine the context in which ‘Japan-bashing’, both as a label and a practice, came into vogue in the United States and its specific trajectory thereafter. While there are other ‘Western’ and even ‘Asian’ variants of ‘Japan-bashing’, it is the American version which remains at the centre of the phenomenon.

As the first of two chapters dealing with the United States, this chapter examines the birth of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the late 1970s. It first describes how the negative views of Japan discussed in the previous chapter coalesced as the ‘Japan Problem’ in intellectual discourse in the United States in the mid- to late 1980s. It then examines the emergence of an intense polarisation among observers regarding interpretations of Japan, one in which commentators were crudely characterised as either ‘traditionalist’ or ‘revisionist’. Lastly, the chapter examines the origins, initial trajectory and popularisation of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States.

The chapter argues that the negative views of Japan that came to be labelled as ‘Japan-bashing’ were primarily driven by elite opinion in the United States and did not, at least until the late 1980s, reflect widespread public opinion about Japan, which
remained largely positive. By the late 1980s, however, the manipulation of the term ‘bashing’ had further exacerbated the intense debate about Japan, particularly as many commentators used the label as though its meaning were straightforward. The take-off of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States, and subsequent disputes over use of the term and the impact of those disputes, will be examined in Chapter Three.

**The Emergence of the ‘Japan Problem’**

As we have seen, the phenomenon of ‘Japan-bashing’ had its principal origins in American perceptions of Japan’s post-war economic success. While many American commentators praised Japan’s success and endeavoured to ‘learn’ from it, others found much to be apprehensive about in Japan’s seemingly unending rise to prominence, not only for what it implied about the present but also for what it suggested about the future. While such negative views of Japan were first expressed in the early 1970s, they did not solidify until the mid- to late 1980s, when they coalesced as the ‘Japan Question’, ‘Japan issue’ or, more commonly, as the ‘Japan Problem’.1 While it is widely believed that this latter expression was coined by Karel van Wolferen in 1986,2 it had, in fact, been used the previous year by economists C. Fred Bergsten and William R. Cline, who explained that the ‘Japan problem’ consisted of the ‘widespread view’ that ‘Japan is

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“different”: not only in the diligence of its people and underlying competitiveness of its economy … but in the basic manner in which it relates to the rest of the world’.³

For most American commentators, the ‘problem’ was not Japan’s overall relationship with the rest of the world; rather, it was Japan’s relations with the United States specifically, how Japan’s economic success had reconfigured the framework of those relations in the post-war period and what this implied for the United States. As the World Press Review remarked in 1987, perhaps the ‘Japan Problem’ was simply ‘too much success’.

Perceptions of Japan’s dramatic transformation seemingly compelled American commentators to reassess the United States-Japan relationship, as Japan had become, for some, a pernicious economic competitor, as well as a general and potent national rival

for the United States. Moreover, despite widespread criticism, Japan appeared to be unwilling or unable to modify the ‘national’ course that seemed to be bringing it increasingly into conflict with the United States. As some observers acknowledged, Japan was not the only nation that could compete with the United States, as many other countries also challenged it in military, economic or ideological terms. Nevertheless, the sense that, of all of them, Japan was the country that was somehow fundamentally ‘different’ from the United States helped to refine and amplify the focus on Japan, simultaneously drawing American attention away from other countries which it might otherwise also have labelled as a ‘problem’. Perceived inexorable difference, then, was the deciding factor in the ‘Japan Problem’, whether implicitly or explicitly.

By the late 1980s, some commentators had declared the ‘Japan Problem’ to be the most significant contemporary and future issue facing the United States. As Clyde Prestowitz remarked in 1987, ‘It used to be that we could say America should be moving into the future. … Now we are finding out that we don’t have a future’. While the ‘red peril’ supposedly represented by the Soviet Union had been ideological and military, the new ‘yellow peril’ appeared to be principally economic, and it emanated from a nation that was ostensibly friendly to the United States. As Prestowitz opined in 1988, the ‘real challenge to American power’ was ‘not the sinister one from the [Communist] Eastern bloc, but the friendly one from the Far East’. In this interpretation, the United States’ entire framework for dealing with Japan in the post-war period was recast: where once Japan had been a strategically pivotal ally in the ideological and military containment of Communism, now it was a problem in its own right, one that must also be ‘contained’, ‘managed’ or ‘harnessed’ in order to protect not

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4 See, for example, Dennis J. Encarnation, Rivals Beyond Trade: America Versus Japan in Global Competition, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992.
only the United States but also Japan itself from its supposedly imprudent ‘national’ course which set it against American, and probably global, opinion.\(^7\) For many commentators, the nature and extent of anti-Japanese views in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the assumptions they often incorporated about the United States’ alleged superiority and purported authority over Japan, were thus ‘frighteningly reminiscent of the run-up to the 1930s’.\(^8\) However, assertions that the United States and Japan were inevitably set on a path to renewed conflict were regarded by others as ‘preposterous’.\(^9\) Author Jeremiah J. Sullivan observed, for example, that the answer to the question ‘shall it be war?’ between the United States and Japan was neither ‘yes’ nor ‘no’, but rather ‘how could such a silly question be asked in the first place?’ In Sullivan’s opinion, the ‘people who say such things’ should be ignored.\(^10\)

**The ‘Traditionalists’ versus the ‘Revisionists’**

The concept of the ‘Japan Problem’ was associated with a polarisation in discourse on Japan in the United States by the late twentieth century, among politicians, administration officials, the intelligence community, business leaders, industry groups, economic experts, Japanese Studies specialists and the media alike. The ideological disagreement among Japan ‘experts’ was described by one academic as reminiscent of Akira Kurosawa’s classic film *Rashomon* (1950), where characters give widely

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differing interpretations of the same event. The issues of contention were numerous, but most related to the difficult questions of whether Japan was a ‘problem’ and, if so, what this implied for the United States and its approach to Japan.

Some observers argued that the significance of the concept of the ‘Japan Problem’ had been magnified out of all proportion, as in fact it was being promoted only by a small number of elite American commentators. Pollster William Watts, for example, characterised the negative focus on Japan as a symptom of the ‘beltway syndrome’, by which he meant that criticism of Japan was concentrated in the geo-political area surrounding Washington D.C. and did not reflect wider public concern. Watts supported this view with the results of opinion surveys in which respondents were annually asked about the ‘most important problem facing the country today’. Watts reported that drugs, international security and the economy topped the list for several years in the late 1980s, with respondents referring also to the Soviet Union, the Persian Gulf, Central America, Iran and the Contra issue, and China. However, Japan was not on the list, an omission which suggested to Watts that if there was a ‘Japan Problem’, it was not one acknowledged by the general public in the 1980s. Watts’ view was borne out by other polls: the radical transformation in American views of Japan discerned by some observers often did not appear to be mirrored by mainstream public opinion, as surveys conducted from the late 1970s until the early 1990s consistently revealed positive and friendly reactions to Japan. An analysis of survey data taken in the United States from 1974 to 1985, for example, which specifically attempted to identify hostility to Japan, found that respondents accorded Japan a ‘relatively stable, positive

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Moreover, a series of polls conducted from the late 1980s onwards continued to show that many Americans perceived Japan in a friendly manner, as shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of poll</th>
<th>Generally friendly (%)</th>
<th>Generally unfriendly (%)</th>
<th>No opinion (%)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 1985</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1986</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1987</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1988</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 1989</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 1989</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 1990</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 1990</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>Nov 1991</td>
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<td>Dec 1992</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 1993</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 1994</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1995</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


While negative views amongst the American public regarding Japan are thus difficult to detect, the existence of a tense dispute among prominent governmental, business, academic and media commentators in the United States was much more apparent. Two informal camps of elite opinion-makers which supported roughly opposing paradigms regarding Japan emerged in the mid- to late 1980s. While both camps had significant internal variations in their interpretations of Japan, these variations were often overlooked by analysts who focused attention on one simplistic difference: support of or opposition to the concept of the ‘Japan Problem’. Occasionally, individuals placed themselves clearly in one or the other camp, but it was

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14 As the results from the July 1995 survey do not add up to 100 per cent, they were clearly rounded inaccurately by the CBS News/New York Times pollsters.
far more common to establish one’s own stance by identifying ideological opponents and distancing oneself from them, or to be placed on one or the other list by media commentators. From 1990 onwards, for example, historian Ronald A. Morse periodically issued extensive reports on Washington’s ‘movers and shakers’, characterising government figures, lobbyists, scholars and journalists, among others, according to their ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ attitudes towards Japan. Jeremiah Sullivan perceived such activities as the ‘lining up of opponents on either side’, as commentators ‘scurry to take a stand either for or against Japan’. Though the differences in opinion between the two camps were doubtless genuine in many cases, it often appeared that discourse on Japan had simply been appropriated by commentators in the pursuit of other objectives, such as the raising of individual profiles in the public arena, the quest for electoral support, the game of political point-scoring or the boosting of media circulations.

In one camp was the group of commentators variously labelled as the ‘traditionalists’, the ‘apologists’, the ‘Japanapologists’, the ‘Japanophiles’, the ‘white hats’ (a popular culture reference meaning the ‘good guys’), the ‘intellectual geishas’, the ‘Japan handlers’, the ‘Japan crowd’, the ‘Japan Club’, the ‘Japan lobby’, the ‘Japan boosters’, the ‘High Church of Japan Watchers’, the ‘Cherry Blossom Crowd’, the ‘Cherry Blossom Protection Association’ or the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’. The ‘traditionalist’ paradigm was said to maintain that Japan’s political-economic system essentially conformed to the neo-classical Anglo-American model, or was slowly converging with it. The ‘bible’ of the ‘traditionalists’ was said to be *Asia’s New Giant*,

a 1976 volume edited by economists Hugh Patrick and Henry Rosovsky. This volume itself revised the then-traditional economic orthodoxy about Japan – namely that Japan’s economic system was based on government-led industrial policy to a degree that would be impermissible elsewhere – which had been earlier established by such scholars as economists William Lockwood and Martin Bronfenbrenner, and historian Edwin Reischauer. One observer thus characterised Patrick, Rosovsky and their like-minded colleagues as the ‘original revisionists’. While ‘traditionalist’ was, therefore, not necessarily an accurate description of this group of commentators, it was relatively free of negative implications compared to some of the other epithets, which concentrated less on the substance of the views presented and more on the alleged motivations of those who promoted them.

As noted above, the term ‘Japan lobby’ had been used throughout the post-war period to refer to non-Japanese, principally Americans, who spoke in Japan’s favour. The origins of the range of newer terms were less clear, though observers often treated these terms as relatively transparent. While no one has ever stepped forward to admit to inventing the term ‘Chrysanthemum Club’, for instance, it was obviously derived from

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19 Katz, Japan: The System that Soured, p. 298.
the flower used as the seal of the Japanese imperial house.\(^{21}\) The central figure of the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’ in the 1980s was usually identified as Edwin Reischauer, who was called the ‘doyen of Chrysanthemums’ and whose *Japan: The Story of a Nation*, first published in 1970, was described as the ‘bible’ for the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’.\(^{22}\) Besides Reischauer, the ‘Club’ was said to include a number of prominent Japan experts, such as sociologist Ezra Vogel, business expert James Abegglen, Japan scholar and writer Donald Richie, former *Time* correspondent and political scientist Frank Gibney, author and translator Edward Seidensticker, economist Gary Saxonhouse, international relations scholar George R. Packard, and former United States ambassadors to Japan Mike Mansfield (1977-88) and Thomas S. Foley (1998-2001). Other notable alleged members included Democrat Senator Bill Bradley; Republican politician, and later vice president, Richard Cheney; a number of George H. W. Bush administration officials and former officials such as Secretary of State James Baker, Richard Darman, Michael Boskin, Elliot Richardson and Stanton Anderson; and, from the George W. Bush administration, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and James Kelly.\(^{23}\) It was even claimed that the entire Department of State belonged to the


\(^{23}\) Richard Darman is a former chief of the Office of Management and Budget; Michael Boskin was a former chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors; Elliot Richardson was a former Secretary of Defense and of Commerce and the head of the Association for Foreign Investment in America; and Stanton Anderson was a former White House aide and State Department official: John Schwartz, Joshua Hammer, Michael Reese and Bill Powell, 'Japan Goes Hollywood', *Bulletin with Newsweek*, 10 October 1989, p. 67.
'Chrysanthemum Club'. Former deputy United States Trade Representative Michael Smith, for example, noted that the Department of State was often referred to in the early 1980s as ‘the Japanese Embassy on 23rd Street’, showing that administration and trade officials were also considered to be participants in the disputes over how to interpret Japan. Some United States-based organisations connected with Japan, too, were considered to be strongly influenced by ‘Chrysanthemum Club’ views, including Robert Angel’s Japan Economic Institute of America, the Japan-United States Friendship Commission, the United States-Japan Foundation and various other Japan-America societies. In addition, several industrial or corporate coalitions based in the United States, such as the Pro Trade Group, the Consumers for World Trade, the American International Automobile Dealers Association and the International Electronics Manufacturers and Consumers of America, were viewed as part of the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’, on the grounds that they were comprised primarily of Japanese companies and their American subsidiaries.

Like ‘Japan lobby’, the term ‘Chrysanthemum Club’ implied certain motivations for expressing pro-Japanese views. On the one hand, the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’ stance was seen as a natural extension of the United States government’s approach to Japan in the post-war period, which was, allegedly, to leave the management of relations with Japan to ‘experts’. Such an approach had helped to create a distinct cadre of individuals who, having invested a large amount of expertise and time in Japan, tended to ‘see things Japan’s way’. Mike Mansfield, for example, was a twelve-year ambassadorial

veteran of Japan who was widely noted for his enthusiasm in promoting the importance of Japan to the United States. Mansfield’s tendency to praise Japan fulsomely while in office produced at least one call for him to be fired, and his unfailing support of Japan on his return to the United States led to his description as an ‘extra Japanese ambassador to the United States’. Critics complained that members of the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’ like Mansfield were skewing American discourse on Japan, as they seemed to see their function not as representing American interests but as moderating American policy to take into account the competing demands of the United States and Japan, with the demands of the latter seemingly privileged over those of the former. For the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’, one critic observed, a ‘smooth relationship’ with Japan was ‘an end in itself’.

On the other hand, the term ‘Chrysanthemum Club’ was also used to imply more mercenary motives on the part of some commentators, especially those who could be characterised as ‘professional Pollyannas’ who were engaged in a mission to ‘sing the praises of Japan’. Various prominent individuals, lobbying groups, law firms and public relations consultancies, particularly in Washington D.C, were well known in this period to have been hired by Japanese interests. Some critics suggested that many of those who expressed pro-Japanese views were thus either well paid to support Japan

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27 See, for example, Mike Mansfield, 'The U.S. and Japan: Sharing our Destinies', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 68, no. 2, Spring 1989, pp. 3-15.
30 Kearns, 'After FSX: A New Approach to U.S.-Japan Relations', p. 46.
33 For a shortlist of some of the companies and firms involved, see Eduardo Lachia, 'Capital Campaign: Japanese are Lobbying Hard in U.S. to Offset Big Protectionist Push', *Wall Street Journal*, 23 August 1985.
publicly, or had a great deal to lose by criticising or condemning Japan – whether through loss of Japanese funding or loss of contacts in Japan. 34 Ronald A. Morse asserted in 1988, for example, that ‘Everyone who gets money from Japan has to worry about not offending Japan’. 35 Michael Crichton, the controversial author of the 1992 anti-Japanese novel *Rising Sun*, thus had a new label for those commentators whom he saw as being unduly, or unpatriotically, apologetic for or defensive of Japan’s economic behaviour in the post-war period. He called them ‘Chrysanthemum-kissers’. 36 The overriding implication was that such individuals favoured appeasing and apologising for Japan in order to protect Japan’s interests and the overall United States-Japan relationship, even if appeasement damaged the United States.

In the other camp were commentators who became known as the ‘realists’, the ‘trade hawks’, the ‘Black Ship’ group 37 or, as mentioned earlier, as ‘revisionists’, a term which was first used in this context by journalist Robert C. Neff, then the Tokyo bureau chief of *Business Week* magazine. 38 The revisionist camp was unofficially led by the

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‘Gang of Four’: Chalmers Johnson, who was known as the intellectual ‘godfather’ of revisionism, Karel van Wolferen, Clyde Prestowitz and James Fallows, who are depicted in the cartoon below.


Many other commentators also articulated ‘revisionist’ views about Japan, including a number of politicians and officials from both sides of the United States’ political divide in the 1980s and 1990s, such as Democrat Representatives Richard Gephardt, John Dingell and Richard J. Durbin; Republican Representative Helen Delich Bentley; Republican presidential candidate Pat Buchanan; Republican Senator John C. Danforth; former Democrat senator Paul Tsongas; Reagan White House chief of staff (and later ambassador to Japan, 2001-04) Howard H. Baker; Reagan and George H. W. Bush trade policy official Glen Fukushima; Tokyo embassy official Kevin L. Kearns; and Clinton


administration Council of Economic Advisors chair Laura D’Andrea Tyson. Prominent intellectuals and commentators who were described as ‘revisionist’ included management expert Peter Drucker, political economist (and later vice-presidential candidate) Pat Choate, economic commentator Eamonn Fingleton, intellectual historian Ivan Hall, international economists Leon Hollerman and Stephen D. Cohen, investment banker R. Taggart Murphy, Brookings Institution economist Robert Lawrence and MIT researcher Charles Ferguson. Other notable figures included author Michael Crichton, Chrysler chairman Lee Iacocca and journalists Theodore White, Daniel Burstein, Jon Woronoff, John Judis, Michael Lind and Thomas Friedman.

The ‘revisionist’ paradigm focused on Japan’s political-economic system, its institutions and practices, with the aim of determining how the United States should deal with Japan. While many commentators claimed in this period that Japan was ‘unfair’, the revisionists by contrast usually argued that Japan was ‘not unfair’, as ‘we knew they were playing a different game’. The basic tenet of ‘revisionism’ was that Japan had a ‘different’ political-economic system compared to that of the United States, in contrast with the convergence view of the ‘traditionalists’ which was widely rejected by the revisionists as a ‘myth’, if not outright ‘intellectual chicanery’. Chalmers Johnson argued, for example, that revisionism constituted the ‘intellectual recognition’ that ‘Japan’s alleged fundamental similarity to the Western capitalist democracies was always based on ignorance of Japan itself’. Revisionism itself, however, was not

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entirely new. At least one observer argued that it bore a noticeable intellectual debt to the writings of certain Japan scholars of earlier periods.44

While the revisionists agreed that Japan’s political-economic system was ‘different’ from the ‘Western’ model, their interpretations of why this was so varied widely. As John Dower pointed out with some exasperation in 1990, post-war Japan has been described in a multitude of ways:

[Japan had been labelled as a] plan-rational as opposed to a market-rational nation, a mixed capitalist state, a capitalist development state, a technocratic state, a neomercantilist state, a “smart” state, a network state, a corporatist (or corporatist-without-labor) state. … [It has also been claimed that Japan] practices industrial policy, administrative guidance, “window” guidance, patterned pluralism, administered competition, compartmentalized competition, guided free enterprise, managed capitalism, quasi-capitalism, [and] state-directed capitalism.45

Chalmers Johnson is, perhaps, the most widely identified and well respected of the original ‘revisionists’, largely due to his path-breaking book on Japan’s influential Ministry of International Trade and Industry published in 1982, entitled MITI and the Japanese Miracle.46 A decade after publication, this book was labelled as ‘probably the most widely read and influential scholarly book by a Japanese specialist ever’,

principally because it was thought to have shaped both Japanese and non-Japanese perceptions of the Ministry’s allegedly significant role in the success of ‘Japan Inc.’. 47 Although MITI and the Japanese Miracle is viewed as the ‘intellectual anchor’ for the revisionist camp, 48 and even though Johnson wrote widely on ‘revisionism’, he appeared to personally dislike this label. 49 He preferred to be described as a ‘restorationist’ on the basis that he was reviving the regard for Japan’s government-led industrial policy that had supposedly been earlier overturned by the ‘traditionalists’. 50

Chalmers Johnson’s main contribution to revisionism came in the form of his concept of Japan as a ‘capitalist developmental state’, in which economic success had been consensually orchestrated by the state. In Johnson’s opinion, Western nations did not sufficiently recognise Japan’s ‘different’ political-economic system. 51 When the differences between the Japanese and other systems were openly acknowledged by outsiders, he argued, Japanese counter-action swung into place, with Japanese commentators defending Japan from criticism by claiming that Westerners could not communicate well with Japanese, were subject to cultural misunderstandings and even practised racism towards Japan. At the same time, the ‘illusion’ that Japan was converging with the West was deliberately fostered by Japanese officials, academic spokespersons and the media through ‘meaningless’ rhetoric and the ‘misuse’ of statistics. 52 Despite Johnson’s criticism of Japan, his solution to the ‘Japan Problem’ can most aptly be summarised as the American emulation of Japanese strategies. He

48 Kunkel, America’s Trade Policy, p. 136.
argued, for example, that the United States should create a bureaucratic entity to co-
ordinate sustained industrial policy along the lines of the Ministry of International Trade
and Industry.\textsuperscript{53} He did warn, however, that it would be unwise to wholeheartedly adopt
Japanese institutions and policies before carefully pondering the ‘numerous social and
political consequences’ of doing so.\textsuperscript{54} In 1994, Johnson co-founded the Japan Policy
Research Institute, a non-profit organisation dedicated to the ‘promotion of
understanding of Japan’s political and economic behavior and growing significance in
world affairs’.\textsuperscript{55}

A second prominent revisionist, trade policy specialist Clyde Prestowitz, came to
revisionism in the mid- to late 1980s with personal experience of dealing with Japan as
an administration official, having been Counsellor for Japan Affairs to the Secretary of

![Figure 2.3: 'Clyde Prestowitz', reproduced from Peter Ennis, 'Separating the Revisionists',
Tokyo Business Today, January 1990, p. 30.]

After resigning from this position, Prestowitz was highly critical in his 1988 book,
entitled Trading Places: How We Allowed Japan to Take the Lead, of the

\textsuperscript{53} Chalmers Johnson, 'Their Behaviour, Our Policy', National Interest, vol. 17, Fall
\textsuperscript{54} Johnson, MITI and the Japanese Miracle, p. 320.
June 2006.
administration’s ‘intellectual and bureaucratic blunders’ concerning Japan.  

Like Johnson, Prestowitz maintained that the Japanese economy was ‘based on principles and … [had] objectives, structures, and operating practise that deviate very substantially from the neoclassical Western model’.  

Prestowitz aimed most of his criticism at the United States, which, he argued, had failed to understand the economic requirements for real strategic power: that is, the necessity of maintaining leadership in high-technology industries. Japan, on the other hand, had viewed industrial performance as ‘akin to national security’ and poured ‘enormous energy’ into ensuring that its own industry would be the ‘world leader’.  

Continuing his role as an advocate of strong American economic policy, in 1989 Prestowitz founded a public policy research organisation called the Economic Strategy Institute, which attracted a number of other ‘revisionists’, including Chalmers Johnson, Richard Gephartd, Kevin Kearns and Laura D’Andrea Tyson. The Institute’s stated goal is to ensure that ‘globalization works with market forces’ on the basis of ‘principles, policies, and institutions consistent with democratic values’ although, according to one assessment, it was really founded simply to support Japanese-style economic policies in the United States.

Karel van Wolferen was the only non-American in the ‘Gang of Four’ revisionists. He was nevertheless regarded as a significant player in ‘revisionism’


because of his high-profile status as an economic and financial policy journalist for the Netherlands-based liberal newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* (New Rotterdam Current Financial News).

Figure 2.4: ‘Karel van Wolferen’, reproduced from Gregory Clark, ‘The West’s Warped View of Japan’, *Independent Monthly*, March 1990, p. 29.

Van Wolferen’s ‘Japan Problem’ articles for *Foreign Affairs* in 1986 and 1990, together with his 1989 book, entitled *The Enigma of Japanese Power: Power and Politics in a Stateless Nation*, gained him considerable notoriety as a ‘revisionist’.⁶¹ On the basis of the book’s publication in eleven languages, including English and Japanese, and sales of over half a million, van Wolferen has been described as the ‘intellectual inspiration’ for revisionists, and has achieved a status virtually equal to that of Johnson as a revisionist ‘godfather’.⁶² One commentator, for instance, described van Wolferen as a ‘fangs-

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bared’ interpreter for ‘modern critics of Japan who don’t have the time to read on their own’. Like the other revisionists, van Wolferen argued that Japan’s political-economic system was ‘unique’, in his opinion because there appeared to be no central figure of authority and accountability. He argued that it was nigh on impossible for the United States to deal with such a ‘headless’ nation; yet, at the same time he maintained that if the trend of failing to confront the ‘Japan Problem’ continued, then the bilateral trade deficit would also continue and industrial capacity in the United States would eventually be lost.

The last of the ‘Gang of Four’ was James Fallows, a speechwriter for the Carter administration from 1977 to 1979. Fallows is best known for a series of journalistic articles and a book written during three and a half years of residence in Japan in the late 1980s. These include the controversial ‘Containing Japan’, published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1989, which claimed that Japan was pursuing a ‘one-sided and destructive expansion’ of economic power to the detriment of the United States. The article’s title bore obvious parallels to George Kennan’s famous 1947 call for the United States to ‘contain’ the Soviet Union. Fallows’ first book, *More Like Us*, was also published in 1989 and was ostensibly an analysis of ‘America’s ills’ compared to Japan. His second book, entitled *Looking at the Sun*, was published in 1994 and urged readers to learn from Japan’s economic successes which, in his opinion, had stemmed directly

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64 Van Wolferen, 'The Japan Problem Revisited', p. 49.  
66 Fallows, 'Containing Japan', p. 41.  
from the effectiveness of its economic system.\textsuperscript{69} Like his fellow revisionists, Fallows saw in Japan a divergence from, not a convergence with, the Western model. He identified an unwillingness to acknowledge this divergence and the ‘constant expectation that Japan is about to change’ as the ‘central intellectual flaw in [the United States’] trading policy’ in relation to Japan.\textsuperscript{70} Rather than ‘talk the Japanese into behaving more like us’, however, he suggested that a blanket policy of reciprocity was in order. He advised, for example, ‘let’s not yell at the Japanese; let’s imitate them’.\textsuperscript{71} Critics charged that Fallows was a ‘neo-Orientalist’,\textsuperscript{72} perhaps because of his argument that the United States should consider ‘containing’ and, therefore, dominating Japan – a purported solution to the ‘Japan Problem’ that seemed to epitomise the ‘revisionist’ paradigm.

‘Revisionism’ and the Rise of ‘Japan-bashing’

While there was a large diversity in revisionist interpretations of Japan in the United States, the unifying theme, as we have seen, was that Japan’s political-economic system and, therefore, its economic practices, were ‘different’ from those of the United States, and constituted a threat. The revisionists thus argued that their goal in ‘rethinking’ Japan was to fill the great need in the United States for new and innovative political, economic and foreign policy suggestions that would enable the nation to cope with the ‘Japan Problem’. Accordingly, through their speeches, writings and the activities of policy organisations, such as Prestowitz’s Economic Strategy Institute and Johnson’s Japan Policy Research Institute, the revisionists urged the United States to ‘rethink’ its

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\textsuperscript{72} Buruma, \textit{The Missionary and the Libertine}, p. 274.
Japan strategies in order to counter ‘Japan Inc.’. They were, therefore, often strongly critical of the United States itself, although this feature of their arguments was frequently overlooked by their critics.

One of the major reforms supported by the revisionists, following Johnson’s suggestion noted above, was the establishment of a Department of Trade and Industry in the United States to mimic the workings of the equivalent Japanese ministry. As Democrat representative Richard Gephardt complained in 1989, the United States had ‘some 25 different agencies [which] deal with trade in 25 different ways’.73 While such a new department had been suggested since the late 1970s, some twenty Congressional resolutions to establish one were passed in the period 1983-96, reaching a peak of seven in 1987-88 alone,74 although in the end no such department was ever created. In urging partial emulation of Japan, the revisionists seemed to be saying that the United States had to manage its economic relations with Japan in a ‘more realistic and sophisticated way … one unclouded by outdated ideologies or wishful thinking’.75 And, unlike the members of the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’, the revisionists were apparently less concerned with maintaining the health of the overall relationship between the United States and Japan and more with the necessity of rebuilding and maintaining an economically strong United States in the face of the Japanese challenge.

Revisionism always contained the possibility of confrontation. While the ‘Gang of Four’ argued that the ‘purpose of revisionism’ was ‘not to isolate, ostracize, punish or

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74 For the Congressional Record, see http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.html, accessed 20 February 2004.
75 Charles H. Ferguson, 'America's High-Tech Decline', Foreign Policy, vol. 74, Spring 1989, p. 139.
condemn Japan’,76 opponents pointed out that the revisionists often disproportionately concentrated on criticisms of and prescriptions for Japan, despite the criticisms they also made of the United States. As *Time* magazine succinctly put it in 1987, the new trend was about ‘getting tough with Japan’.77 An example of the tendency to focus more on Japan than on the United States can be seen in a *Newsweek* article in October 1989 entitled ‘Five Ways to Fight Back’. Of the ‘five ways’, four were directed at Japan while only the fifth, and final, exhorted Americans to ‘get our own act together’.78 Many revisionists promoted this ‘tough’ approach to Japan, urging American politicians, administration officials, business leaders and other policy-makers to apply pressure to the Japanese government in order to persuade it to change its economic practices. This pressure, it was asserted, should be bolstered by clear threats of retaliatory sanctions if Japan did not change. Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins argued, for example, that ‘reciprocity’, with the ‘attendant threat of tariffs, quotas, and other sanctions’, must be ‘on the bargaining table’ between the United States and Japan.79 However, critics of the revisionists claimed that calls for the United States to appropriately manage its economic relations with Japan were nothing more than a ‘respectable’ cover for protectionism, which made the revisionists essentially a ‘protectionist lobby’ at heart.80 Cruder epithets than ‘protectionist’ soon followed.

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77 See cover illustration, *Time*, 13 April 1987; and Russell, 'Trade Face-off'.
including ‘racists’ and ‘crypto-racists’. The most effective and influential of the new labels, however, was undoubtedly ‘Japan-basher’.

As we have seen, while the term ‘Japan-bashing’ might appear to have been a spontaneous and natural response to strong criticism of Japan, it was actually the brainchild of economist and political scientist Robert C. Angel, although it was nearly a decade before he admitted that he was its architect. In the late 1970s, Angel was president of the Japan Economic Institute of America, an organisation that has often been perceived as a covert, or at least poorly disguised, form of the ‘Japan lobby’ in the United States. This perception stemmed from the source of the Institute’s funding – Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs – and the fact that it conducted Japanese trade-related lobbying activities in the United States from 1957 (when it was established as the United States-Japan Trade Council) until the late 1970s, without registering under the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938. This Act, with its criminal penalties for non-compliance, was designed to ensure that the American public remains aware of the foreign source of any information that attempts to sway public opinion, policy or laws in the United States. While the Institute stopped its lobbying under Angel’s

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81 On the term ‘crypto-racists’ as applied to the revisionists, see Katz, *Japan: The System that Soured*, p. 289.
presidency in the late 1970s, and widely acknowledged its Japanese funding, which was reported in 1990 to be an annual sum of US$842,000, critics such as Chalmers Johnson still maintained that it merely ‘posed’ as an independent organisation. This assertion strongly annoyed the Institute’s American leadership. When business consultant Mindy L. Kotler referred to the Institute as a ‘representative of Japan’ in a report on the ‘Japan lobby’ in 1990, for example, she received a fiery rebuff from the Institute’s president, including a temporary ban on using the Institute’s library facilities.

During his presidency of the Institute, Angel apparently decided to take a personally proactive role in countering criticism of Japan’s economic system. His decision to do so was seemingly not influenced by specific guidance from Japan, which accords with the ‘arms length’ relationship that the Institute supposedly maintained with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Japanese embassy officials in the United States in the late 1970s. Angel has explained that in the course of his career, he had noted the usefulness of charges of ‘anti-Semitism’ in mitigating or rebutting foreign criticism of Israeli government policy. The accusation of ethnic and religious

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85 See, for example, Angel’s comments in Clyde H. Farnsworth, 'U.S.-Japan Trade Showdown', *New York Times*, 27 March 1982, p. L32. On ceasing most operations in September 2000, the Institute admitted that the closure was due to a Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Finance decision that ‘it was time for a shift in their budget priorities’: Japan Economic Institute of America, 'About JEI', 2000, http://www.jei.org/AboutJEI/About_JEI.html, accessed 4 April 2003.


88 Kotler, 'Making Friends', p. 59. For a report of this incident, see Auerbach, 'Japan Group Punishes Writer for Article'.

89 Robert C. Angel, email to Narrelle Morris, 29 June 2005.


prejudice inherent in use of the term often had the effect of silencing those critics labelled as anti-Semitic. In the late 1970s, Angel decided that a similar term, ‘anti-Japanism’, would probably have the same power to suppress mounting criticism of Japan in the United States, and he attempted to popularise it. However, the term failed to take hold. At this point, Angel happened to watch a television programme in which the subject of ‘Paki-bashing’ in the United Kingdom was introduced. This term had arisen around 1970 to describe incidents of hostility directed at Pakistanis (or those mistaken for Pakistanis) resident in the United Kingdom.92 Angel may also have been influenced by the rise in use in the United States from the 1960s onwards of other ‘bashing’ terms, including ‘union-bashing’, ‘bureaucrat-bashing’, ‘dissident-bashing’ and ‘gay-bashing’.93 Angel appropriated the term ‘bashing’, modified ‘anti-Japanism’ into ‘Japan-bashing’ and began using the expression against those he saw as critical of Japan. Describing his intentions, Angel said:

> I looked around for a phrase to use to discredit Japan’s critics, and I hoped to be able to discredit those most effective critics by lumping them together with the people who weren’t informed and who as critics were an embarrassment to everybody else.94

In other words, the label ‘Japan-bashing’ effectively equated criticism with ignorance and, by implication, with racism.

Angel’s use of ‘bashing’ to suggest ignorance on the part of ‘bashers’ can be seen in a speech he delivered in Los Angeles in 1983, in which he criticised the United

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94 Quoted in Judis, *‘Trade: Economic Labels that Lie’*, p. 39.
States’ approach to Japan as ‘increasingly tough public demands’ by the administration and politicians, followed by ‘threats of severe economic retaliation’. This approach, he argued, had ‘reached the level of a fine art, known in Washington and Tokyo as “Japan-bashing”’. Angel suggested that the reason that the United States’ policy was so reliant on ‘Japan-bashing’ was that the nation had not allocated sufficient resources to ‘learn enough’ about Japan.\(^95\) The implication that all critics of Japan were racist was also obvious. The label ‘Japan-basher’ thus functioned as an ‘effective piece of propaganda’, as it shifted attention ‘away from the substance of the … assertions made by the critic and towards the critic’s personal motives’.\(^96\)

The subsequent trajectory of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ throughout the 1980s is difficult to determine. Angel himself contended that the expression was first picked up by the Japanese media in the early 1980s and, after that, quickly spread to the American media,\(^97\) which were demonstrating increasing interest in Japan during the 1980s, as shown in the graph below.


The label ‘Japan-bashing’ made possibly its first American media appearance in the *New York Times* in mid-1982. However, perhaps indicating the relative unfamiliarity of the term at that stage, journalist Steve Lohr was forced to append a definition, suggesting, frankly, that it meant ‘punishing Japan for the success of its export drive’.

While the term was thus in use in the early 1980s, it was not until about 1985 that it became a ‘universally recognised phrase’ in the ‘political vocabulary’ of the United States. From 1985 onwards, however, ‘Japan-bashing’ moved into mainstream public use.

The trigger for this slow popularisation of the term was the ongoing ‘Japan boom’ in the United States, during which there was a noticeable broadening and further
intensification of the debate over the ‘Japan Problem’. One report estimated that nearly 850 English-language books, articles and government reports dealing solely with aspects of the United States’ economic relations with Japan had been published between 1980 and 1985 alone.\textsuperscript{101} A side-effect of this ‘boom’ was the participation in debates of many individuals who were not from the traditional ranks of Japan ‘experts’ and whose views were published in a variety of intellectual and popular forums. Indeed, as one observer argued, the compelling vision of the United States in decline and dominated by Japan was ‘too important to leave … to Japan specialists’.\textsuperscript{102} The debate over the ‘Japan Problem’ was therefore taken up as a ‘veritable cottage industry’ in the United States,\textsuperscript{103} one in which many non-specialists, including national and local politicians, media figures, lawyers, consultants, trade union officials and representatives of other domestic interest groups had a part to play. As Andrew Horvat pointed out, revisionist arguments were thus just as likely, if not more likely, to be found ‘in newspapers, on television, or even in movies’, as ‘on the pages of academic journals’.\textsuperscript{104}

As mentioned earlier, one such participant was the distinguished journalist Theodore White, who was, in fact, not at all new to matters relating to Japan, having witnessed the Japanese surrender ceremony on board the USS \textit{Missouri} in September 1945.\textsuperscript{105} As early as 1982, White argued that the Japanese government was engaged in a trade ‘war’ aimed at undermining and destroying ‘complacent and vulnerable’

\textsuperscript{102} Samuels, 'Japanese Political Studies', p. 19.
industries in the United States. He dramatically expanded on this argument in July 1985 in his article, ‘The Danger from Japan’, which focused public attention squarely on the degree to which the ‘Japan Problem’ could supposedly be held accountable for economic decline in the United States. White wrote:

40 years after World War II, the Japanese are on the move again in one of history's most brilliant commercial offensives, as they go about dismantling American industry. Whether they are still only smart, or have finally learned to be wiser than we, will be tested in the next 10 years. Only then will we know who finally won the war 50 years before.

White’s article concluded with a none-too-veiled threat: that the ‘superlative execution’ of Japanese ‘trade tactics’ might provoke an ‘incalculable reaction’ from the United States. The Japanese, he recommended, ought to remember the ‘course that ran from Pearl Harbor to the deck of the U.S.S. Missouri in Tokyo Bay just 40 years ago’.

The publication of White’s article in 1985 proved to be a turning-point in the dissemination of the term ‘Japan-bashing’. One observer asserts that White’s piece made the New York Times the first newspaper to publish a ‘Japan-bashing’ article in the United States. Even if White’s article was not actually the first – as we have seen – it was certainly ‘one of the earliest and most influential articles’ or a ‘low point’ in the ‘Japan-bashing’ genre. White himself seemed to reject the suggestion that he was

107 White, 'The Danger from Japan', p. 22.  
108 Ibid., p. 58.  
engaging in ‘Japan-bashing’. To be so accused, he declared, was to be considered protectionist or, even worse in his view, racist.\footnote{White, ‘The Danger from Japan’, pp. 57-8.} However, critics argued that White’s article constituted ‘mindless jingoism’ of an ‘unremittingly rancorous’ tone, and further, that when ‘men of Teddy White’s stature’ exploited this ‘sleazy’ line of argument, it was a regrettable indication that ‘Japan-bashing’ had become respectable.\footnote{Robert J. Samuelson, ‘Our Japan Obsession’, \textit{Newsweek}, 12 August 1985, p. 56.} Certainly, the placement and timing of the article were almost ideal if the aim was to heighten public sentiment in this new ‘war’ with Japan. The article was prominently billed in the \textit{New York Times Magazine} shortly after the Senate confirmation hearings for Clayton Yeutter, who had been nominated by President Ronald Reagan to the office of the United States Trade Representative in March 1985. Yeutter was the leader in the Reagan administration’s new, offensive negotiation strategy towards Japan and had faced a ‘barrage of demands’ in the Senate hearings for him to take a ‘tough’ stance with Japan.\footnote{Kunkel, \textit{America's Trade Policy}, p. 52.} One journalist characterised Congress at this stage as being in a ‘fever pitch’ to ‘do something’ about Japan.\footnote{Rowen, ‘Low Point in Japan-Bashing’, p. A19.} The combination of White’s status and the placement and timing of his article has virtually ensured that White, rather than Robert Angel, is typically credited as the pioneer of ‘Japan-bashing’, albeit as a practitioner rather than as the creator of the term.\footnote{See, for example, Paul J. Bailey, \textit{Postwar Japan: 1945 to the Present}, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, p. 1; W. Lawrence Neuman, 'Fear of the "Alien Other": Cultural Anxiety and Opinions about Japan', \textit{Sociological Inquiry}, vol. 71, no. 3, Summer 2001, p. 336.}

While neither White nor the \textit{New York Times} may have deserved the credit for publishing the first ‘Japan-bashing’ article, use of the term unquestionably increased following the publication of this piece. The expression became common both in commentary that was itself a part of the polemical discourse about Japan and in more analytical works, both journalistic and academic, on topics relating to Japan. In 1987,
the terms ‘Japan-bashing’ and ‘Japan-basher’ were apparently first recognised in a survey of keywords in American television news coverage of United States-Japan relations, rising to a peak in popularity in 1992. Similarly, surveys of articles published in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* from 1980 to 2005, as shown below, reveal that use of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ increased every year from 1985 to a peak in 1992, with only a few exceptions.

![Number of Uses](chart)

**Table 2.3: Use of the Term ‘Japan-bashing’ in the New York Times, 1980-2005.**

This data was assembled from a search of all full-text articles published in the *New York Times* from 1980 to 2005 held in the Dow Jones & Reuter’s Factiva database.

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\footnote{The Factiva database does not hold articles from the Washington Post prior to 1985. Consequently, some uses of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ in the period 1980 to 1984 may have been omitted.}
In a poll conducted in November 1990, for example, only twenty-eight per cent of respondents indicated that they were familiar with the term ‘Japan-bashing’, while seventy-two per cent replied that they had never heard of it.\(^{120}\) This figure seems low, even taking into account the ignorance of Japan that observers frequently highlighted as a feature of American public opinion around this time. It also seems to contradict perceptions that the practice of ‘Japan-bashing’ was popular, as reflected in President George H. W. Bush’s comment in 1991 that it had become a ‘minor sport in some places’,\(^{121}\) and a journalistic remark in 1992 that it had even replaced baseball as the traditional pastime in the United States.\(^{122}\) However, the low number of survey respondents who recognised the term ‘Japan-bashing’ perhaps accurately indicated that the vision of Japan as a dangerous ‘other’ had been principally promoted by elite opinion, at least until the contests over ‘Japan-bashing’ took off at the beginning of the 1990s.

The birth of the ‘Japan-bashing’ phenomenon was the result of a specific evolution in American discourse about Japan in the late twentieth century. While the tendency to portray Japan as ‘different’ from the United States bore distinct parallels to trends in earlier historical periods, it was also indisputably linked to the specific economic context of the 1970s onwards. Japan’s economic success was widely perceived as threatening to the United States, not only in the present but also the future. Yet, this characterisation of Japan as a new ‘problem’ for the United States proved to be strongly


contested, and by the late 1980s, criticism of Japan was frequently equated with ‘bashing’. The next chapter examines the take-off of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States and the contest that ensued regarding the uncritical and, often, deliberate use of the label.
CHAPTER THREE

‘JAPAN-BASHING’ TAKES OFF IN THE UNITED STATES

By the late 1980s, the term ‘Japan-bashing’ had become a fixed part of American discourse on Japan. However, its seemingly ambiguous origins and agenda meant that it was not at all clear what the term actually meant or what range of practices it was meant to encapsulate and critique. Those who used the term rarely seemed to consider the implications of using such an incendiary epithet. They often simply implied that any and all criticism of Japan amounted to ‘bashing’. Those who were labelled as ‘Japan-bashers’ thus had considerable reason to defend themselves. In turn, they attacked their critics for inexactitude or, in many cases, on the grounds that they were acting as ‘lobbyists’ or ‘apologists’ for Japan.

This chapter examines the contest over the label ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s among the ‘revisionists’, their critics and those commentators who attempted to position themselves as middle-ground observers. It shows that increasing use of the expression in the course of these disputes helped to create a socio-political atmosphere which encouraged, rather than discouraged, the articulation of criticism of Japan in the United States. Such an atmosphere contributed to the shaping of the United States’ official stance towards Japan in this period, which critics claimed was itself based on ‘Japan-bashing’.

The Contest over the Label ‘Japan-bashing’

Though Robert Angel and others focused on criticism of Japan in the United States in the late 1970s and labelled it as ‘bashing’, such criticism was actually quite limited at this stage. It has been said that in the late 1970s and early 1980s, ‘Japan-bashing’ was
practised within a narrow, ‘blue-collar’ group.1 The perception of it as a ‘blue-collar’ phenomenon stemmed from the fact that criticism of Japan in this period principally emanated from disgruntled American workers and their unions, in industries strongly affected by Japanese competition, such as steel and automobile manufacturing, as shown in the cartoons below.

![Cartoon 1](image1.png)  
**Figure 3.1:** Lou Grant, ‘Godzilla vs the Incredible Blah’, *Los Angeles Times*, circa 1978-79.  

![Cartoon 2](image2.png)  
**Figure 3.2:** ‘Of Course I Understand the Key to Japanese Productivity - They’ve Got Jobs!’, *Houston Chronicle*, 11 April 1983.

Both cartoons reproduced from the Biles Collection, Baylor Collection of Political Materials Library, Baylor University.

By 1982, in response to a survey asking which foreign nation’s imports were posing a ‘serious threat’ to American jobs, seventy-four per cent of respondents nominated Japan, well above the second-ranked ‘threat’ of Taiwan, at thirty-five per cent.2 The media published pictures of steel and auto workers smashing Japanese cars – often Toyotas – in retaliation for job losses and warned drivers of Japanese-made cars that their automobiles were in danger of being vandalised by angry workers. Of course, for

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1 Lee Smith, Donald Holt and Carla Rapoport, 'Fear and Loathing of Japan', *Fortune*, 26 February 1990, p. 50.  
every American who participated in the ‘symbolism of smashing a Toyota’, there were many others who ‘admire – and purchase – Japanese products’. However, manufacturers and drivers of Japanese cars were not the only target of anger. In 1982, two unemployed auto-workers bashed and killed Vincent Chin, a Chinese-American man, in Detroit, a centre of the American auto industry. Despite their defence attorney’s claim that it was a ‘quantum leap, a giant jump’ to connect the attack to existing anti-Japanese sentiment, the ‘Japan-bashing’ link was widely perceived to be obvious, particularly in the Asian-American community.

While critical views of Japan in the late 1970s and early 1980s were thus sometimes perceived as ‘blue-collar’ in origin, similar criticism was in fact also voiced by prominent ‘white-collar’ business leaders, such as ‘Chrysler’s Japan bashing chairman’ Lee Iacocca, whose popularity assumed ‘extraordinary proportions’ in the early to mid-1980s. In addition, politicians whose constituencies were affected by Japanese competition – such as Democrat Representative Richard Gephardt and Republican Senator John C. Danforth, both of Missouri, and Democrat Representative John Dingell of Michigan – also strongly criticised Japan in this period. They formed a loose coalition of alleged ‘Japan-bashers’ in Congress who argued that the United States had to take a firmer line towards Japan. In the ninety-seventh Congress of 1981-82 alone, for example, over thirty bills were introduced advocating trade barriers against

6 Kurt Anderen, 'A Spunky Tycoon Turned Superstar; Straight-Talking Lee Iacocca Becomes America's Hottest Folk Hero', Time, 1 April 1985, p. 30.
7 Robert W. Merry, 'Congressional Anger on Free Trade could Lead to some Major Changes', Wall Street Journal, 17 March 1983, p. 29.
Japan. However, as mentioned earlier, neither ‘blue-collar’ nor ‘white-collar’ criticism in the early 1980s appeared to engage the attention of the American public enough to modify the mostly positive views of Japan then current. Even the murder of Vincent Chin, which was extensively publicised as an example of literal, if misplaced, ‘Japan-bashing’, was allegedly seen elsewhere in the United States as a ‘local, blue-collar, minority affair’. Perceptions of Japan as a danger in the 1970s and early 1980s were undoubtedly partially suppressed by the continued positioning of the Soviet Union as an ‘other’ at this time. However, the new prominence of anti-Japanese views in the late 1980s cannot be solely ascribed to the end of the Cold War. Rather, the intensely critical focus on Japan was shaped by a public contest in the United States in the mid- to late 1980s over the meaning of and apparent agenda behind the label and alleged practice of ‘Japan-bashing’.

This contest began with the widespread application of the label ‘Japan-basher’ to certain commentators, especially the ‘Gang of Four’, who were functioning as the public face of criticism of Japan in the United States by the late 1980s. In 1989, *Newsweek* magazine explained that the label ‘Japan-bashing’ was commonly applied to the pronouncements of ‘Japan’s critics’, and then helpfully referred to the so-called ‘revisionists’ as ‘Japan-bashers’. While the tone of the *Newsweek* article was fairly polite, other writers were not shy in attacking both the substance of revisionist writings

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and the revisionists themselves, often in an *ad hominem* manner. According to one revisionist, the emotional attack on revisionism as ‘Japan-bashing’ in this period amounted to a ‘spasm of hysteria’.

Another complained that the debate over Japan had degenerated to the extent that it ‘more properly belonged on a television talk show than in or near the corridors of power of official Washington’.

Perhaps the most vehement opponent of ‘revisionism’ was international relations scholar George R. Packard, who responded fiercely to the revisionists’ implicit and often explicit criticism of the theories of his mentor, Edwin Reischauer. In short, Packard denounced the revisionists for ‘carrying on germ warfare’, presumably meaning to imply that their tactics were covert, illegitimate and reprehensible. Packard labelled James Fallows, in particular, as a ‘parasite’. Packard contended that the revisionists, much like biological agents, were needlessly ‘poisoning’ the atmosphere of American discourse on Japan and were helping to ‘distort’ and ‘confuse’ the United States’ policy-making on Japan. Other critics similarly suggested that the revisionists were naïvely or purposefully stirring up anti-Japanese views in the United States, as well as anti-American views in Japan. They were, therefore, endangering the entire United States-Japan relationship and, as a result, undermining the stability of the entire international community. This was because, as Mike Mansfield asserted, strong

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relations between the United States and Japan formed a ‘common structure vital to the future of both, as well as the rest of the world’.17

The revisionists, however, felt that use of the label ‘Japan-bashing’ clearly implied they were racist, which they believed they were not. They argued that while a link undoubtedly did exist between true ‘Japan-bashing’ and racism,18 the label had been overzealously expanded and used indiscriminately to encompass any and all criticism of Japan, even well-founded criticism which was clearly not based in racism. As Masao Miyoshi astutely observed in 1991, it seemed that a ‘Japan-basher’ could be ‘informed or uninformed, analytic or irrational, honest or deceptive’, as ‘in short, anyone who is less than encouraging, enthusiastic, or euphoric about Japan seems to qualify as one’.19 Indeed, for some commentators, the ubiquitous deployment of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ meant that it had become effectively meaningless. Michael Crichton argued in 1992, for example, that the ‘specialness’ of the label ‘Japan-bashing’ had been erased.20 Some commentators thus suggested that the term ought to be obliterated entirely from American discourse about Japan or, at the very least, that a firm distinction had to be recognised between criticism and racism.21 Those commentators who deliberately or naïvely conflated the two, it was argued, were simply trivialising true racism.22 The revisionists’ desire to eradicate the term ‘Japan-bashing’

19 Miyoshi, 'Bashers and Bashing in the World', p. 65.
21 See, for example, Steven C. Clemons, "Japan-Bashing": A Manipulated Concept: American Critics are not Always Bashers, Japan Times, International Weekly edn, 17-23 August 1992, p. 11.
22 Fallows, 'Nationalism, not Racism', p. 28.
was strengthened by the revelation in 1992 of its origins and managed trajectory.\footnote{See John B. Judis, 'Trade: Economic Labels that Lie', \textit{Columbia Journalism Review}, vol. 31, no. 4, November 1992, pp. 38-9.}

Their exasperation and anger was not particularly directed at Robert Angel but at those commentators who continued to use the term as if it hid no specific agenda whatsoever.\footnote{See, for example, Ivan P. Hall, \textit{Bamboozled: How America Loses the Intellectual Game with Japan and its Implications for Our Future in Asia}, Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2002, pp. 139-40.}

The revisionists thus usually took every opportunity to emphasise the distinction they saw between their justifiable criticism of Japan on the one hand, and true ‘Japan-bashing’ on the other. The ‘Gang of Four’, for example, not only addressed their critics individually but also published a joint statement in the weekly magazine \textit{U.S. News & World Report} in May 1990. In it, they rejected all charges of ‘Japan-bashing’, describing the term as a ‘witless label for any critical analysis of the Japanese system’. The purpose of revisionism, they contended, was analysis, not ‘moralizing’.\footnote{James Fallows, Chalmers Johnson, Clyde V. Prestowitz and Karel van Wolferen, 'Beyond Japan-bashing: The "Gang of Four" Defends the Revisionist Line', \textit{U.S. News & World Report}, 7 May 1990, p. 54.}


Similarly, James Fallows declared that the label raised his hackles, as it implied that he wanted to ‘destroy’ Japan by the rhetorical equivalent of sowing ‘salt in the rice paddies’.\footnote{Quoted in 'Containing James Fallows', \textit{American Chamber of Commerce Japan Journal}, March 1990, p. 49.}

The revisionists complained that their interpretations of Japan were not only widely misunderstood but had been deliberately ‘distorted and redefined’ by those commentators who were antagonistic to revisionism.\footnote{Fallows, Johnson, Prestowitz and van Wolferen, 'Beyond Japan-bashing', p. 54.} In short, as
Lee Iacocca bluntly declared in 1990, he had heard enough about ‘this Japan-bashing crap’ to last him a hundred years.\(^{29}\)

As part of their objection to the term ‘Japan-bashing’, the revisionists struck back at their critics in a manner which raised basic questions about the identity and agenda of those critics, as mentioned earlier. On the one hand, some commentators argued that the label ‘Japan-bashing’ was being used in a reflex fashion by Japanese commentators, who were said to have adopted the term with ‘fervor and industry’.\(^{30}\) Pat Choate claimed, for example, that while ‘Japan-basher’ was used in the United States in a ‘jocular manner’ to mean ‘critic’, as indeed *Newsweek* magazine had done in 1989, in Japan the label implied that those in question were ‘racist’, the ‘enemy’ or ‘extremist[s]’\(^{31}\). Some Japanese commentators were thus regarded as overly sensitive to foreign criticism. R. Taggart Murphy complained, for example:

> [The Japanese media are prone to] amplify … every stray comment by a grandstanding member of Congress to make it appear that the bombs are about to start dropping again. Critical remarks about Japan made in an empty committee room on the [Capitol] Hill (empty, that is, except for Japanese reporters) and not bothered about by a single U.S. newspaper will be on the front page in Tokyo.\(^{32}\)

Many of the revisionists interpreted Japanese sensitivity to criticism as a deeply calculated reaction, especially as they knew that a number of Japanese commentators in

\(^{29}\) Quoted in Marjorie A. Sorge and David C. Smith, "91: It's Hard to Project (Lee A. Iacocca)', *Ward's Auto World*, 1 December 1990, p. 45.


\(^{32}\) Murphy, *The Weight of the Yen*, p. 230.
fact agreed that Japan was, indeed, ‘different’ from ‘the West’. The American ambassador to Japan, Michael Armacost (1989-93), chided the Japanese media for negative coverage of revisionism in 1989, for example, noting that as Japan maintained its own ‘vast literary genre’ – namely, *Nihonjinron* – which explained how ‘Japanese anatomy, tastes or attitude[s]’ are ‘different’, attacks on ‘revisionism’ were ‘contradictory’.33 In short, the revisionists believed that they were being attacked in Japan for who they were, namely outsiders, rather than what they wrote.

The ‘grand accusation’ of ‘Japan-bashing’ was thus dismissed by some revisionists as ‘Tokyo’s most audacious polemical ploy’.34 Some thought this ‘ploy’ was designed to allow the Japanese to ‘play the role of the victim, the role they most love’.35 The revisionists argued that the label ‘Japan-bashing’ was part of a deliberate smear campaign by the Japanese government, in collaboration with some elements of the Japanese business world, the intelligentsia, the academic establishment and the media. This remained a popular interpretation even after Robert Angel’s role was understood, or perhaps expressly because of his involvement with the Japan Economic Institute of America. Both Chalmers Johnson and Clyde Prestowitz argued, for example, that the ‘virulent attack’ in Japan on the revisionists was instigated and supported by the Japanese government, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.36

Johnson further claimed that the term ‘revisionist’, though coined in this context by journalist Robert C. Neff, was being used by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to

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34 Hall, *Bamboozled*, p. 139.


stigmatise foreigners who described Japan as different from the West. The Japanese media, it was suggested, supported the government’s ploy by sensationalising attacks on the revisionists in an almost formulaic manner. ‘Ask any 10 Japanese to list the top tier of Japan-bashers’, declared author Michael Lewis, ‘and you’d receive 10 identical lists’.

As a consequence, it supposedly mattered little to the revisionists whether they were politely tagged as ‘revisionist’, accused of ‘Japan-bashing’ or labelled ‘racist’, as such epithets were all simply examples of the high priests in charge of defending orthodoxy about Japan ‘doing what high priests everywhere are expected to do: ferreting out heresy and organizing witch hunts’. In this view, Japanese claims of ‘bashing’ were, therefore, nothing more than propaganda that was aimed at discrediting the revisionists, suppressing their interpretation of Japan and, at the same time, gaining international sympathy for being unfairly victimised by foreign commentators.

On the other hand, the revisionists also acknowledged that many claims of ‘bashing’ originated within the United States, not Japan. Masao Miyoshi suggested that the judges of ‘Japan-bashing’ were predominantly Americans, which he thought was peculiar. Some observers believed that certain Americans levelled the charge of ‘bashing’ because of an inexplicable deference to Japan, or a well-intentioned but misguided desire to defend Japan from criticism, in line with the United States’ traditional role of protecting Japan internationally, although in this case it was

40 Miyoshi, 'Bashers and Bashing in the World', p. 65.
defending Japan from critics within the United States itself.  

However, other revisionists saw American claims of ‘bashing’ as an attempt to deliberately shape American discourse on Japan in a desired direction by ruthlessly discrediting the revisionists, just as Angel had intended. Foreign policy scholar Steven C. Clemons argued, for example, that the concept of ‘Japan-bashing’ had obviously been ‘manipulated to invalidate those Americans who have run against the politically correct concept of Japan’ as a ‘constant’ friend and ally. As a result, in his view the revisionists had simply been ranked alongside those who committed hate crimes and violence.  

Such a strategy to discredit seemed particularly evident when accusations of ‘bashing’ emanated from commentators who were regarded as part of the ‘Japan lobby’, as members of the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’ or as ‘Chrysanthemum-kissers’. Many revisionists suggested that when such commentators accused others of ‘Japan-bashing’, they were concealing their own real interest and ultimate agenda. For example, when George R. Packard publicly castigated ‘Japan-bashers’ in 1989, it was noted that while he acknowledged his links to the Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies at Johns Hopkins University, there was no mention of his status as a salaried consultant to a Washington-based advisory firm for Japanese companies wanting to invest in the United States, nor any acknowledgement that he solicited funds from Japanese companies for his university. This led Chalmers Johnson to claim that Packard had a ‘truth-in-advertising’ problem. However, the revisionists were often just as unforthcoming about their own agenda – sometimes unwisely, considering they were

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41 See, for example, Stephen S. Rosenfeld, 'All this Deference to Japan: Why is Criticism Called "Bashing"?', *Washington Post*, 10 April 1987, p. A27.
42 Clemons, "Japan-Bashing", p. 11.
45 Reported in Schlossstein, 'The New McCarthyism', p. 32.
calling into question the integrity of their critics. For instance, Steven Schlossstein called in 1989 for the public to be properly informed about ‘which piper pays for which tune’ when it came to members of the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’. This was rather ironic given that there was no mention of his own open adherence to revisionist views of Japan.

Many revisionists did counterattack against claims of ‘bashing’ by successfully drawing attention to those individuals who could be considered as part of the ‘Japan lobby’ or who appeared to be ‘academics-for-hire’ by Japan. One of the most attentive in this regard was Pat Choate, who listed dozens of individuals as Japan’s ‘agents of influence’ in a book published in 1990 and, as a consequence, was forced to deny that he himself was a ‘Japan-basher’. In his opinion, the ‘agents’ were those individuals who were supported by Japanese funding or had lucrative ‘consultancies’ with Japanese companies – apparently in return for acting as professional ‘apologists’

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49 Choate, *Agents of Influence*.
for Japan. Particularly annoying to Choate and other observers was the number of former administration officials and former members of Congress in such roles, such as former White House aide and State Department official Stanton Anderson, who was charged by critics with being the ‘best-connected lawyer-lobbyist for Japanese interests in Washington’.\(^{51}\) Similar complaints were also made against numerous American institutions and organisations which accepted Japanese funding, such as universities and think-tanks.\(^{52}\) Even when links to Japan were made completely explicit, the revisionists sometimes implied that recipients of Japanese favour simply could not be trusted, as they were ‘collaborating with an enemy power’.\(^{53}\) In 1989, for example, over a dozen members of Congress, including the prominent Congressman Richard Gephardt, sent a letter of complaint to President George H. W. Bush regarding his appointment of economist Gary Saxonhouse to the administration’s Council of Economic Advisors. The substance of their complaint was that Saxonhouse had also advised Japan’s Ministry of International Trade and Industry.\(^{54}\) For their part, those commentators who had been labelled as members of the ‘Japan lobby’ or the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’ rejected all suggestions that their views of Japan were motivated by anything other than valid scholarship and honest opinion. For instance, George Packard declared categorically that ‘[t]here is not and never has been anything remotely like a “Chrysanthemum Club”’.\(^{55}\)


\(^{53}\) As suggested in Smith, Holt and Rapoport, ‘Fear and Loathing of Japan’, p. 51.

\(^{54}\) Ibid.

\(^{55}\) Packard, ‘Edwin O. Reischauer’, p. 76.
The rounds of accusations against supposed ‘bashers’ and ‘lobbyists’, many of which appeared calculated, generated claims from both sides that a ‘whiff of McCarthyism’ was ‘in the air’ around American discourse about Japan. On the one hand, Clyde Prestowitz described the label ‘Japan-bashing’ as a ‘demagogic tool’ and as a ‘McCarthyist trick’; one which had been designed to censor discussion relating to Japan. A number of unsubstantiated claims were made that debate about Japan had been silenced because commentators were ‘scorned as alarmists and accused of Japan bashing’. On the other hand, attacks on supposed ‘Japan lobbyists’ led other observers to ponder whether the new McCarthyism consisted less of accusations of ‘Japan-bashing’ and more of the opposite: that is, the ‘tendency to attack Americans who seem “soft on Japan”’. As in the McCarthy period in the United States in the early 1950s, reported John C. Campbell, it was the diplomats and scholars who were singled out as ‘biased, or even corrupted and dishonest’. For their part, the ‘Gang of Four’ and Pat Choate all denied that discussion of Japanese-funded lobbying in the United States had any McCarthy-type agenda.

The Spread of ‘Japan-bashing’ Practices

While accusations of ‘Japan-bashing’ may have suppressed some American discourse about Japan, they did not silence criticism in the way that Angel had intended. Rather,
the contest over ‘bashing’ and ‘lobbying’ helped to create an atmosphere that actually favoured criticism of Japan, and anti-Japanese views thus became more common in intellectual and popular discourses in the United States. By the late 1980s, anti-Japanese views had noticeably spread far beyond the supposedly blue-collar ‘bashing’ that had characterised the earlier part of the decade. As *Fortune* magazine observed in 1990, ‘Anti-Japan feeling used to be a largely blue-collar phenomenon, ignited by job losses in autos and steel’ but now ‘white-collars are taking over the battle’ in the United States.\(^\text{62}\)

Many commentators and organisations condemned the apparent popularity of ‘bashing’ as a new low-point in American discourse about Japan. Educators, for instance, raised concerns about how they were to appropriately ‘teach Japan’ given that ‘bashing’ was ‘no longer confined to television commercials and best-selling novels’ but had become ‘commonplace among students’.\(^\text{63}\) Similarly, some Christian commentators called for fellow American religious activists and churches to act as a ‘community of moral discourse’ in the debate about Japan; that is, they should oppose ‘bashing’ on Christian grounds.\(^\text{64}\)

Objections to ‘Japan-bashing’ were often based on evidence that there were real-world consequences to the spread of anti-Japanese views, just as there had been in earlier periods. As many commentators pointed out, the Japanese-American community, as well as those mistaken for Japanese, had become a frequent target of

\(^{62}\) Smith, Holt and Rapoport, ‘Fear and Loathing of Japan’, p. 50.


‘bashing’, even those who had only peripheral connections with Japan.\textsuperscript{65} In 1993, linguist Frank Nuessel warned that there was a danger that the violence suggested by ‘Japan-bashing’, symbolised in the destruction of objects of Japanese origin, could be transferred from objects to people.\textsuperscript{66} This warning was already considerably dated, however, as the most serious incident of apparently literal ‘Japan-bashing’ had already occurred: the murder of Vincent Chin in Detroit in 1982.

Understandably, many Japanese-American and Asian-American commentators and organisations explicitly condemned ‘Japan-bashing’. The Japanese American Citizens’ League, for instance, took a prominent role in recording and reporting incidents of ‘bashing’ to both the government and the media.\textsuperscript{67} In the early 1990s, the league gathered what it described as ‘Comments from Across the United States that Engage in or Contribute to Japan Bashing’.\textsuperscript{68} In 1992, the league’s national director, Dennis Hayashi, reported a notable increase not only in the number of reported incidents of harassment of Japanese-Americans but also in the ‘viciousness’ of the harassment. He concluded that ‘Japan-bashing’ was increasingly manifesting itself ‘not just in simple name calling but in threats of physical violence’.\textsuperscript{69} The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights supported the league’s observations in a 1992 report, which found that the American public’s resentment of Japan’s economic success had added to ‘historic

\textsuperscript{65} See, for example, Iino Masako, 'Asian Americans Under the Influence of "Japan Bashing"', \textit{American Studies International}, vol. 32, no. 1, April 1994, pp. 17-30.
\textsuperscript{68} Japanese American Citizens' League, 'Comments from Across the United States that Engage in or Contribute to Japan Bashing', San Francisco, n. d. [1992-93].
anti-Asian sentiments’ in the United States. Moreover, the report noted that political leaders were unthinkingly contributing to the problem by lashing out at Japan as the cause of economic difficulties in the United States. Apart from cases of obvious discrimination or racism, however, few commentators specified the practices to which they objected in relation to ‘Japan-bashing’. Nevertheless, any vagueness in definition was typically outweighed by the vehemence with which such commentators sought to apportion blame for the spread of anti-Japanese views.

The most obvious candidates for blame were the revisionists who, it was suggested, had deliberately engendered a broad anti-Japanese atmosphere in the United States in order to promote their views or, in an even more mercenary perspective, simply to sell their writings, an activity which critics trenchantly described as ‘Japan-bashing for profit’. Even if the revisionists had not deliberately created the anti-Japanese atmosphere, it was suggested that they had certainly promoted and exacerbated it by supplying critical, if not overtly anti-Japanese, views with a respectable intellectual ‘patina’ that such views had supposedly lacked in the early 1980s. Business Week magazine declared on its cover in August 1989, for example: ‘Once, such views would have been dismissed as “Japan-bashing”, but now they have an intellectual base’. Similarly, James Fallows was described as a ‘god of journalism’ who had ‘unassailable liberal credentials’. His support of revisionism, therefore, ‘guaranteed that revisionism could no longer be accused of being motivated by racism or “Japan bashing”’. While these statements disturbingly implied that perhaps only ‘blue-collar’ anti-Japanese

71 Lawrence Malkin, 'In the U.S., Book Writers Go after a Hot Subject', International Herald Tribune, 13 February 1990, p. 6.
72 Smith, Holt and Rapoport, 'Fear and Loathing of Japan', p. 50.
73 Cover page, Business Week, 7 August 1989.
views qualified as ‘bashing’, the revisionists’ intellectualisation of anti-Japanese views certainly did help to encourage their further, and more effective, dissemination in the United States, particularly in light of the traditional role of ‘experts’ in American discourse on Japan.

Unfortunately, as the revisionists themselves often complained, revisionism was thereafter ‘plundered, popularized and propagandized’ by a variety of critics, who were often uninformed and extreme in their views.75 It was these ‘less reputable writers’, one observer argued, who used ‘rhetorical forms that bordered on racism and demagoguery’ in their criticism of Japan.76 It was often assumed that the revisionists naturally supported all such criticism and their names were frequently associated with extremely critical views to which they in fact objected. In 1991, for example, Pat Choate and Lee Iacocca successfully sued National Press Books, a Maryland-based publishing house, in order to stop the publication and distribution of a book entitled The Second Pearl Harbor. Choate and Iacocca had been touted, falsely and allegedly without their permission, as contributors to the book, which they described as a ‘fake’, a ‘hoax’ and ‘truly a Japan bashing book’.77 Thus, while the revisionists did do much to assist in the creation and validation of an anti-Japanese atmosphere in the United States, other commentators certainly jumped on their intellectual bandwagon.

The revisionists and their ideological supporters were not the only targets of blame for the spread of anti-Japanese views. The media garnered particular criticism

for their willingness to report on and, indeed, participate directly in the contest over ‘Japan-bashing’, and for their failure, in some cases, to firmly reject ‘bashing’ as a practice. While both the revisionists and their critics found an enthusiastic forum for their views, the greater media prominence of the revisionists gave them increased credibility. Clyde Prestowitz, for instance, was declared by one observer in 1993 to be well nigh ‘unavoidable’ in media coverage of trade with Japan.  

78 There appeared on occasion to be a definite slant in the media towards revisionist perspectives, especially in writings by foreign journalists posted in Japan.  

79 However, such partisanship did not stop the media directly participating in the contest between the revisionists and their critics by blithely adopting the language of ‘bashers’ and ‘lobby’ and placing individual commentators in one or the other group. As Akira Iriye pointed out, the media ‘sensationalized the division among American specialists on Japan by calling the two sides the Chrysanthemum Clubbers and Japan Bashers’.  

80 While some commentators suggested that it was merely ‘op-ed cartoonists and sensation seeking reporters’ who characterised the revisionists as ‘bashers’,  

81 even well-respected media outlets joined in. As John Judis remarked in 1992, the media’s use of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ demonstrated a certain naïveté about how easily debates could be directed and shaped in the age of the mass media.  

82 It is just as likely, however, that there was a simple lack of concern about the consequences of using the expression. Certainly, the media’s coverage of ‘Japan-bashing’ helped to transform what had been intellectual discussions

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80 Peter Frost, 'Japan through History: An Interview with Akira Iriye', *Education About Asia*, vol. 3, no. 2, Fall 1998, p. 21.
82 Judis, 'Trade: Economic Labels that Lie', p. 38.
between the revisionists and their critics into a more popular, and ominous, phenomenon by the late 1980s.\textsuperscript{83}

While many observers of American discourse on Japan did argue that ‘bashing’ had become widespread in the United States by the late 1980s, the extent of public acceptance of such criticism of Japan is difficult to assess. There remained in some quarters, for instance, a lingering sense that ‘bashing’ was something that was only done by others. For those residing in western states in the United States, ‘Japan-bashing’ was often regarded as an ‘unfashionable east-coast habit – as passé as caffeinated coffee’.\textsuperscript{84} This was a largely inaccurate belief, however, as anti-Japanese views were certainly not distributed solely by geography, although it is true that there was a notable concentration in the Washington ‘beltway’ of elite discourse. Rather, surveys pointed out that the members of the public most prone to critical views of Japan were generally the old, the less educated and the poor, although critics were by no means restricted to these categories.\textsuperscript{85} By the 1990s, however, one survey found that the public base of anti-Japanese opinion had extended to two newer groups: more educated people and those who otherwise held liberal views on race.\textsuperscript{86}

Still, survey respondents did not see Japan as a likely military opponent. In response to a poll conducted in May 1990 asking which country would be the most likely to wage a future war against the United States, thirty-three per cent of respondents selected Iran; twenty-seven per cent, Libya; twelve per cent, the Soviet Union; and eleven per cent, China. Apparently no respondents predicted Iraq, which became an opponent by the end of that year. Only four per cent predicted that it would

\textsuperscript{83} Portier, 'American Mass Media and Japan', pp. 366-7.
Rather than a military danger, a significant number of Americans focused on Japan as an economic danger, ostensibly because of the extent of the United States’ trade deficit with Japan and the volume of Japanese investment in the United States. Yet, as was often pointed out during this period, while the United States was in deficit to many countries, including Canada, and there was significant investment from other countries, including Britain and the Netherlands, the target of criticism generally remained Japan alone. Observers noted, for example, that while there was much public hue and cry about the sales of Columbia Pictures and MCA-Universal to Japanese companies, as mentioned earlier, there was very little concern over the sale of film studios to other foreign companies. Anxieties regarding Japanese investment were allegedly prompted by the sense that such investment posed a greater threat to the United States’ economic independence than did European or Canadian investment, a belief that was held by some sixty-four per cent of respondents to one survey in 1990. For many observers, the American public’s criticism of Japan thus appeared to be founded not in a more general xenophobia against any foreign target but rather in specific racism relating to Japan, meaning that it amounted to ‘Japan-bashing’.

Public concern about Japan manifested itself most strongly in an array of ‘Buy American’ campaigns throughout the 1980s and 1990s, many of which were strongly reminiscent of similar ‘Buy American’ or ‘Boycott Japan’ campaigns that had occurred from the 1930s onwards. Workers and unions in ‘blue-collar’ industries, particularly in automotive industry regions, were again in the vanguard, producing bumper stickers

reading, for example, ‘Say No to Tokyo! Buy America’ and ‘Don’t Give Jobs to Japan. My Future Depends on It’, with a picture of a white baby. Such emotive pleas also frequently made reference to World War II, as in one ‘Buy American’ pamphlet in 1991 which read in part:

A call to arms for all Americans to declare war on Japanese products and all non American made products! When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor – we went to war! … And when Japan threatens the security of American jobs we must go to war again – with a complete boycott of all products not made in America.93

Many American companies jumped on board the ‘Buy American’ campaigns, producing anti-Japanese advertisements and incentive schemes designed to promote American products. Such advertisements came from large corporations as well as small business proprietors, including a St Louis, Missouri barbershop which drew national attention in 1992 with its simple offer of a one-dollar discount to customers who arrived in American-made cars.95 Such campaigns seemed to be partially successful, as the number of Americans who claimed in surveys that they would make a ‘conscious effort’ to avoid Japanese products jumped from forty-nine per cent to sixty-three per cent between 1990 and 1992.96

92 Cited in ibid., p. 184.
93 Quoted in ibid., p. 163.
Formal political discourse was, to some degree, informed by anti-Japanese views throughout the 1980s and 1990s, particularly in those places markedly affected by Japanese competition, such as Detroit, as mentioned earlier, or areas in which there was significant opposition to Japanese investment, such as New York and Los Angeles, amongst other places. Criticism of Japan was also a central feature of the Washington political and lobbying scene, to the extent that ‘beltway’ ‘Japan-bashing’ was certainly the most familiar to Japanese commentators. Numerous serving administration figures and politicians from both the Democratic and Republican parties, as well as independents, made a name for themselves as irrepressible ‘Japan-bashers’, including Republican Representative Helen Delich Bentley of Maryland who spent some time reading ‘her friend’ Marvin J. Wolf’s 1983 book *The Japanese Conspiracy* into the Congressional record in 1989 and 1990.97

Political discourse influenced by ‘Japan-bashing’ was believed to have exacerbated anti-Japanese views among the American public, particularly when such views were endorsed by figures on both sides of politics, thereby creating a sense of bipartisan agreement.98 However, there still appeared to be limits. Few political candidates who espoused highly critical views of Japan or advocated the adoption of allegedly ‘Japan-bashing’ policies were elected to serve or advanced to higher office. In the congressional elections in 1986 and the presidential elections in 1988 and 1992, trade with Japan was a campaign issue for many candidates. Democrat Richard


While the American public might not have been sufficiently focused on the supposed threat from Japan to support politicians who were openly critical of Japan, ‘revisionist’ views appeared to have considerably more impact at elite governmental and business levels. Indeed, as one poll suggested in 1991, the percentage of American ‘leaders’ who regarded the economic danger from Japan as the ‘critical threat’ to the United States was actually marginally higher than the percentage of the public holding the same view.\footnote{See chart in Chapter 2, in John E. Rielly, ‘Public Opinion: The Pulse of the ’90s’, *Foreign Policy*, no. 82, Spring 1991, p. 87.} Such polls led one observer to conclude that revisionism had found a ‘richer, more fertile soil’ amongst the elites than with the public.\footnote{John Kunkel, *America’s Trade Policy towards Japan: Demanding Results*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 142.} The tendency among elites to view revisionism as ‘on the whole more realistic’ than the picture of Japan ‘painted by the old-line Japan-handlers’\footnote{David Brock, ‘The Theory and Practice of Japan-Bashing’, *National Interest*, vol. 17, Fall 1989, p. 32.} was significant, for unlike members of
the public whose capacity to exert pressure was limited, ‘leaders’ naturally had a direct influence on the United States’ official stance towards Japan. From 1985 onwards, the direction of government policies emanating from the Reagan, Bush and Clinton administrations, and successive congresses dominated by either side, became subject to increasing accusations of ‘Japan-bashing’.

‘Japan-bashing’ and Official Policy

While there had been aggressive comments on Japan from Reagan administration officials and in Congress since the early 1980s, the emergence of the revisionists, and the sense that they had given voice to the essence of the ‘Japan Problem’, strengthened the position of those who advocated the adoption of allegedly ‘Japan-bashing’ policies, particularly in relation to trade. The bilateral Market-Oriented Sector-Selective (MOSS) trade talks, for example, were initiated in 1985 by the Reagan administration’s newly appointed United States Trade Representative, Clayton Yeutter, partly in response to Congressional concerns about the ineffectiveness of American policy on trade with Japan. However, American trade negotiators reportedly became disillusioned with the progress of negotiations, with some dubbing the MOSS talks as ‘more of the same stuff’ or, less politely, as ‘more of the same shit’.106 Perceptions in the United States of the relative failure of the talks, as well as yearly increases in the trade deficit with Japan after 1985, contributed to rising criticism of Japan in official Washington throughout the late 1980s. In 1986, Richard Gephardt proposed a bill containing a controversial provision known as ‘Super 301’, which, when passed in 1988, authorised economic retaliation against nations that impeded imports from the United States. While the bill did not target Japan specifically, the ‘Japan Problem’ was certainly the

main issue for those who supported ‘Super 301’. By the late 1980s, Congress appeared to have fractured into two contending ideological camps in relation to Japan, much as the ‘revisionists’ and their critics had done. As one observer declared, ‘you have to be a Japan-basher or you’re considered either a naïve idiot or a tool of the Japan lobby. There’s no rational middle anymore’.

The administration of President George H. W. Bush appeared to adopt elements of a ‘Japan-bashing’ approach almost from Bush’s inauguration, beginning with its citation of Japan under ‘Super 301’ as an ‘unfair’ trading nation in 1989. Even though Brazil and India were also cited, most attention was certainly focused on Japan. In a highly symbolic event in 1989, President Bush handed a crowbar to his new United States Trade Representative, Carla Hills, during her swearing-in ceremony, implying that Hills would need it to pry open Japan’s supposed trade barriers. For many observers, it was the tone of the 1989-90 Structural Impediments Initiative (SII) talks, however, that represented the true ‘ascendancy’ of revisionism and, therefore, ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States, as they were supposedly based on the revisionists’ desire to take a tough line with Japan. The SII talks were aimed at reducing structural trade barriers between the United States and Japan. The agreements reached in mid-1990 promised, among other things, a lowering of alleged Japanese barriers that hindered market access by foreign companies. The revisionists themselves, however, were not eager to take the credit for the increase in American pressure on Japan, nor did they see such talks as

likely to be particularly effective. For instance, Chalmers Johnson declared that the talks reflected the ‘official’ position that the economies of the United States and Japan could be ‘reformed to look like each other’, while the revisionists had ‘consistently held the opposite’.\footnote{Chalmers Johnson, 'The "Revisionist" Stance on Trade with Japan', \textit{Washington Post}, 11 August 1992, p. A16. See the same point in Clyde V. Prestowitz, 'Revising Revisionism?', \textit{Far Eastern Economic Review}, 18 September 1997, p. 3.}

While the United States’ trade policies towards Japan raised questions about ‘bashing’, its handling of security issues initially remained relatively insulated from such controversy. Apart from long-standing complaints by some American commentators about the expense of the United States’ ongoing military protection of Japan, and the economic advantages to Japan that American protection allegedly entailed, few security issues prompted criticism of Japan until the late 1980s. However, by the end of that decade, the trade tension between the United States and Japan had begun to spill over into the security relationship.\footnote{Susan F. Rasky, 'U.S.-Japan Tensions over Trade Said to Imperil Security Relations', \textit{New York Times}, 7 August 1987, p. A11.} In particular, issues relating to the sharing of the defence burden and the transfer of defence-related technology from the United States to Japan drew claims from critics that the United States was being left open to financial and technological exploitation by Japan.\footnote{See, for example, Christopher A. Preble, 'Japan Should Start Paying for its own Defense', \textit{USA Today}, November 1991, pp. 16-18.} Under the FSX fighter plane agreement in November 1988, for example, the United States agreed to transfer F-16 aircraft technology to Japan as the basis for a new Japanese aircraft. However, critics openly questioned whether or not Japan could be trusted with that technology.\footnote{For an overview of the ‘FSX debate’ from a critic’s point of view, see Kearns, 'After FSX', pp. 45-6. See also Clyde V. Prestowitz, 'Giving Japan a Handout: Why Fork over $7 Billion in Aircraft Technology?', \textit{Washington Post}, 29 January 1989, p. D1.} They pointed to such instances as the revelation in 1987 that Japan’s Toshiba Machine Company had violated the regulations of the international Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Control, of which Japan was a member, by selling eight computer-
guided propeller milling machines to the Soviet Union between 1982 and 1984. This technology allegedly improved the ability of Soviet submarines to evade detection, leading a Pentagon official to estimate that it would cost some US$30 billion for the United States to regain its previous level of technological superiority.\textsuperscript{116} While Norwegian and French firms had similarly violated the export regulations, most criticism in the United States focused specifically on Toshiba. The intensity of political response can be seen in a comment made by Richard Darman, a Bush administration official who was normally judged as a member of the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’:

\begin{quote}
It seems absurd that a supposed ally would transfer technology that could tip the strategic military balance, indeed, in this context, one might easily be inclined to ask: What’s wrong with a little Japan bashing?\textsuperscript{117}
\end{quote}

In protest against Toshiba, nine Republican members of Congress, including Don Ritter, David Dreier, Duncan Hunter, Elton Gallegly and Helen Delich Bentley, gathered on Capitol Hill in Washington on 2 July 1987 and used a sledgehammer to publicly destroy a small Toshiba radio-cassette player during a press conference,\textsuperscript{118} as shown in the picture below.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{toshiba_destroyed}
\caption{Sledgehammer砸碎的Toshiba收音机磁带机}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{118} Brock, 'The Theory and Practice of Japan-Bashing', p. 29.
While such ritual forms of ‘Japan-bashing’ had been practised since the early 1980s, with an object – usually a Japanese-made automobile – substituting for Japan itself,\(^\text{119}\) the vision of elected politicians, rather than disgruntled auto workers, publicly destroying Japanese-made goods undoubtedly raised the profile of such conduct, or at least gave it a ‘new kind of respectability’.\(^\text{120}\) Certainly, similar ‘bashing’ events took place across the United States thereafter, often as part of a ‘Buy American’ campaign. In 1992, columnist Laurie Petersen of *Adweek* claimed he had been informed of an automobile dealership, presumably trading in American-made cars, where customers could visit, then ‘grab a hammer and smash a Japanese car parked in the front lot’, in what he described as ‘terrorist marketing’.\(^\text{121}\) Similarly, the protest group ‘Wake Up America’ unfurled an American flag on top of a demolished Subaru car in Massachusetts in 1992.\(^\text{122}\) Such incidents of ‘bashing’ prompted one observer to


suggest that a ‘ban the sledgehammer’ campaign might greatly improve the United States’ overseas image.123

The extent of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States, particularly at official levels, led many observers to issue warnings about the effect in Japan and the possible consequences for the United States-Japan relationship. While Japanese criticism of the United States had been evident throughout the post-war period, it began to pick up in the early 1980s. As early as 1982, for example, Robert Angel observed a ‘much higher level of resentment in Japan than in the past’ of American criticism of Japan.124 While there were many Japanese reactions to ‘Japan-bashing’, as will be shown in Chapter Five, the most obvious response was ‘America-bashing’, which was described as early as April 1987 as Japan’s ‘new sport’.125 ‘America-bashing’ in Japan, in turn, attracted comment in the United States, with the most vehement commentators again quickly labelled as ‘Japan-bashers’.

As with ‘Japan-bashing’, however, it was not clear to American observers what ‘America-bashing’ meant and what practices it might include. Foreign policy specialist Ted Galen Carpenter suggested that ‘America-bashing’ consisted of portraying the United States as a ‘decadent, crime-ridden, declining world power’, of allegations that ‘Washington bullies or cynically manipulates Japan’, of assertions that the United States had a ‘nefarious strategy to prevent Japan from achieving greatness’ and of the argument that ‘Japan is now strong enough, given its economic productivity and technological sophistication, to cast off its humiliating dependence on the United States’.126 Whatever practices it did include, however, it seemed clear to many

126 Ted Galen Carpenter, A Search For Enemies: America’s Alliances after the Cold War, Washington D.C.: Cato Institute, 1992, p. 64. For a broader consideration of the
observers that ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States had effectively bred ‘America-bashing over there’.127

The epitome of this new ‘America-bashing’ was considered to be Ishihara Shintarō and Morita Akio’s controversial 1989 book ‘No’ to ieru Nihon (The Japan that Can Say No), mentioned earlier.128 Essentially, the book argued that Caucasians were inherently racially prejudiced against ‘Orientals’ and specifically that the United States was ‘increasingly emotional, even hysterical, about Japan’. The United States would not have reacted in such a manner against an economic rival, Ishihara contended in the English-language version of the book, if West Germany, Britain or Australia, rather than Japan, had achieved the same level of economic power. Washington, he reported, was divided into the ‘Cherry Blossom Club’ and ‘Japan-bashers’, the latter of whom were looking for a ‘scapegoat’ for the United States’ own economic troubles and used ‘high-handed tactics’ against Japan. He argued that Japan should, if pressed too hard by the United States, choose to sell its strategically-valuable semiconductor technology to the Soviet Union rather than the United States. He also argued that the United States was ‘dangerously confused’ about Japan and was therefore simply directing a ‘witch hunt’ against Japan.129

The American response to ‘No’ to ieru Nihon was swift: the book was quickly translated into English without permission from the Japanese authors or publisher, reportedly by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Department of

129 Ishihara, The Japan that Can Say No, pp. 21, 29, 85, 105, 114.
Defense. There were also rumours, however, that the translation had been initiated by the Central Intelligence Agency, or that it had been ‘funded by Japan-bashers in the U.S. government’ looking for evidence to support their criticism of Japan. The translation was then rapidly circulated through high-level circles. As Ronald A. Morse noted in late 1989, ‘[p]eople all over the [Capitol] Hill are reading it, and everybody who gets a copy produces 25 more’. The translation was also read into the Congressional record. The seriousness with which the book was treated was largely due to the status of Ishihara and Morita as ‘perhaps the Lee Iacocca and Richard Gephardt of Japan’. Thus, the book was regarded in the United States as a ‘serious reflection of Japanese attitudes’ – even more so because it had not been intended for distribution outside of Japan. Ishihara and Morita’s book had sold over a million copies in Japan by 1990, although Ivan Hall suggested that this probably reflected its ‘diffuse emotional resonance’ with the Japanese public, rather than any ‘practical concurrence’ with the authors’ views.

130 For Ishihara’s attribution of the unauthorised translation to the Department of Defense, see ibid., p. 12.
136 Ibid.
For many American observers, the suggestion that Japan might discard the United States for the Soviet Union, however unlikely it was to occur in practice, seemed like a validation of the revisionists’ worst predictions about the ‘Japan Problem’. Chalmers Johnson suggested, for example, that in raising the possibility that Japan might sell semi-conductor technology to the Soviet Union, Ishihara and Morita had been more effective than any ‘revisionist’ in alarming the United States.\(^{139}\) Democrat Representative James A. Traficant of Ohio labelled their book as an example of ‘stone-cold America bashing’. He recommended that General H. ‘Stormin’ Norman Schwarzkopf, the popular and much lauded commander of the Coalition Forces during the Gulf War of 1990-91, be sent to Japan to ‘take care of our No. 1 problem’ and to turn Japanese people like Ishihara from ‘bashers’ into ‘bashees’.\(^{140}\) Several new allegedly ‘Japan-bashing’ books were published to oppose Ishihara and Morita, including *The Second Pearl Harbor*, mentioned earlier. American businessman and writer Leon Anderson, for instance, was so ‘incensed’ by the ‘arrogance’ of Ishihara and Morita’s statements that he produced an equally vitriol-laden book in reply.\(^{141}\)

The peak of both popular and official ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States appears to have been 1992, a year which began inauspiciously when twenty-one prominent American business leaders, including Lee Iacocca, accompanied President George H. W. Bush to Japan for a trade summit. Bush’s embarrassing collapse at a Tokyo dinner into the arms of Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi, caused by sudden illness, was widely seen as a metaphor for the United States’ decline. While Bush was himself reported to...

\(^{139}\) Malkin, 'In the U.S., Book Writers Go after a Hot Subject', p. 1.


\(^{141}\) Anderson was angered even further by the official English translation of ‘No’ to ieru Nihon when it was published in the United States in 1991, arguing that the tone of the language used by Ishihara had been watered down by a Harvard ‘Japan-apologist professor’, namely Frank Baldwin. He interpreted this as direct proof of Pat Choate’s ‘agents of influence’ theory: Leon Anderson, *Japanese Rage: Japanese Business and its Assault on the West*, New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1992, p. x.
be ‘stunningly unconvincing as a born-again Japan-basher’, it was suggested that the tone of his ‘begging and bullying expedition’ to demand wider foreign access to Japan’s markets had given a licence to the American public to engage in its own ‘Japan-bashing’.

The public backlash against Japan certainly climaxed thereafter, with ‘Buy American’ campaigns enjoying some successes. Los Angeles County drew international attention in early 1992, for example, when it controversially cancelled a US$122 million contract with Japan’s Sumitomo Corporation for the provision of railway cars, a decision that was widely regarded as an expression of ‘Japan-bashing’. The town of Greece, New York, however, had somewhat less luck with its ‘Buy American’ campaign. The city boasted that it had spent an extra US$15,000 in order to secure a John Deere excavator, which then turned out to be principally made in Japan, while it had rejected a Komatsu model that had actually been made under joint venture in the United States. Opposition to Japanese investment also picked up in early 1992, with the managing association for baseball in the United States casting doubt on the likelihood of the Seattle Mariners’ baseball team being sold to a bidding consortium that included significant financial backing from Yamauchi Hiroshi, the president of Nintendo in the United States. This anti-Japanese attitude was also described by some commentators as ‘Japan-bashing’, given that one franchise in the baseball league was already Canadian-owned. Despite such existing foreign ownership, baseball was promoted as an ‘apple pie’ sport; a sport in which no foreigners, let alone the Japanese,

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143 Charles Krauthammer, 'Do We Really Need a New Enemy?', *Time*, 23 March 1992, p. 76.
145 See, for example, Kevin Anderson, "'Made in USA" Isn't Anymore", *USA Today*, 27 January 1992, p. 2B.
146 See, for example, Steve Wulf, 'An Outside Pitch', *Sports Illustrated*, 10 February 1992, pp. 30-4.
had a part to play. These incidents, and more, led many observers to conclude that the United States was engaged in a ‘wave’ of ‘Japan-bashing’ in 1992 that was far more serious than that of earlier periods.

Perhaps the most stunning incident in this newly intensified ‘Japan-bashing’ was the unofficial release in 1992 of a Central Intelligence Agency-commissioned report entitled ‘Japan: 2000’. The report was written by former Air Force colonel and Defense Department official Andrew Dougherty, together with various professors at the Rochester Institute of Technology, as well as ‘corporate gunslingers, Japan hands and ersatz pundits’, including Chalmers Johnson. It warned that the great majority of ‘mainstream’ Japanese

absolutely embrace the national visions (for world economic domination) …

[and] are creatures of an ageless, amoral, manipulative and controlling culture – not to be emulated – suited only to this race, in this place.

Even more controversially, the report recalled wartime propaganda with its comparison of the Japanese with a ‘lamprey eel, living off the strength of others’. The report concluded that “the rising sun” is coming – the attach [sic] has begun’. It warned of the devastating consequences that might follow Japan’s advance, arguing that economic influence might ‘precede the imposition of substituted [that is, Japanese] value

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systems’, an eventuality that was especially alarming because of the ‘absence of any absolutes or moral imperatives in the Japanese paradigm’. In essence, the ‘Japan: 2000’ report was yet another example of the argument that Japan’s ‘differences’ from a supposed ‘Western’ norm meant that it posed a specific danger to the United States. As such, the report was quickly and widely labelled as an ‘extreme expression’ of ‘Japan-bashing’. Critics derided it for its racist tone and numerous errors, and suggested that it had been guided solely by the Central Intelligence Agency’s desire to justify its own existence and thus preserve the level of funding it had been used to receiving in the Cold War era. The Central Intelligence Agency and some of the report’s ostensible authors, including investment banker Jeffrey E. Garten and political scientist Kent Calder, promptly distanced themselves from the report for fear of being branded as ‘Japan-bashers’. Chalmers Johnson, however, did not; instead, he defended his role in helping to write the report as a part of his civic duty as an American.

The concept of the ‘Japan Problem’ had thoroughly permeated public discourse by 1992, and ‘Japan-bashing’ thus became a key issue during the presidential election of that year. Several candidates for their party’s nomination, including Republican Pat Buchanan, Democrat senator J. Robert Kerrey, Democrat senator Tom Harkin, and businessman H. Ross Perot, were strongly critical of Japan and issued campaign advertisements voicing their intention to be ‘tough’ on Japan. In an attempt to separate

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152 Quoted in ibid., p. 368.
154 Bruce Cumings noted, for example, that the report declared that the Sino-Japanese War occurred in 1905 (actually 1894-95), that Hitler rose to power in 1939 (actually 1933), that the katakana syllabary is a ‘form of writing using the english [sic] alphabet’ (whereas it uses Japanese characters), and that Japan expected annual growth to continue at a rate of 20 per cent (a rate it had never reached). He concluded that the report would more aptly be titled ‘Ethnocentrism 1900’: Cumings, 'C.I.A.’s "Japan 2000" Caper', p. 366.
155 Awanohara, 'Paradigm Paranoia', p. 15.
himself from the crowd, Democrat Paul Tsongas, formerly a senator, issued a television advertisement and a Japanese-language pamphlet declaring that he was firmly opposed to ‘Japan-bashing’.\textsuperscript{158} In the event, as had happened before, candidates who were strongly critical of Japan failed to gain sufficient support to be elected. To some observers, this again demonstrated that the American public tended not to support politicians who voiced strong criticism of Japan,\textsuperscript{159} although it is just as likely that issues relating to Japan were not sufficiently important to voters to make a difference to their choice, as Tsongas was also overlooked by the public. Democrat presidential nominee Bill Clinton, on the other hand, while making economic performance a focus of his campaign, managed to keep his pronouncements regarding Japan relatively low key, so much so that he was viewed in Japan as the ‘candidate of choice’\textsuperscript{160}.

There were widespread hopes in both the United States and Japan that the new Clinton administration would be more favourably disposed towards Japan than the previous two administrations had been. Early signs of the decreasing influence of ‘bashing’ on the United States’ official policies towards Japan were promising. By 1993, Japan’s own economic decline and signs of an American economic revival had prompted many commentators to acclaim the ‘end’ of ‘Japan-bashing’, with observers expressing their relief that ‘bashing’ had seemingly revealed itself as an episode of limited duration, not a long-lasting trend. President Bill Clinton essentially gave official notice of the end of ‘Japan-bashing’ in 1993 when, speaking at Waseda University in Tokyo, he noted that ‘in years past … some Americans viewed Asia’s vibrancy and particularly Japan’s success as a threat. I see it very differently’. Clinton called for a ‘new and stronger partnership’ between the United States and Japan, one that would

\textsuperscript{159} Burstein, \textit{Turning the Tables}, pp. 82-3.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p. 83.
‘deal honestly with the differences we have over our nations’ economic policies’.\textsuperscript{161} However, these declarations of an end to ‘Japan-bashing’ and the characterisation of it as a short-term phenomenon soon proved both premature and problematic.

\textbf{‘Japan-bashing’ in Decline?}

While its slow slide into economic recession in the early 1990s made some earlier fears of Japan appear foolish, criticism did not immediately dissipate. Despite hopes of an end to ‘bashing’, the Clinton administration gave high priority to issues relating to Japan, and adopted an approach strongly reminiscent of ‘revisionist’ ideology.\textsuperscript{162} Clinton was reported to have spent some time during his presidential campaign reading the writings of revisionists and similar ‘trade hawks’, including Clyde Prestowitz, Lester Thurow, Glen Fukushima, Robert Kuttner and Laura D’Andrea Tyson.\textsuperscript{163} Tyson, for one, publicly supported the revisionists’ call for more aggressive United States’ policies towards Japan,\textsuperscript{164} and her appointment by Clinton as chair of the Council of Economic Advisors, as well as the ‘revisionist’ influence of several other key personnel in the administration, made it appear as though the revisionist message regarding Japan had been fully accepted.\textsuperscript{165} The Japan policies actually articulated by the administration


\textsuperscript{165} These personnel included United States Trade Representative Mickey Kantor, Treasury Undersecretary Lawrence Summers and Deputy Director Bowman Cutter of the National Economic Council: Judis, ‘Rougher Trade’, p. 26; Davis, ‘Clinton's Get-
were viewed as further evidence of the official acceptance of revisionism, particularly the United States-Japan Framework for a New Economic Partnership, which was announced in 1993.\textsuperscript{166} The subsequent Framework negotiations aimed at setting specific trade targets, a process which was viewed by critics as an attempt at instituting a system of ‘managed’, rather than free, trade.\textsuperscript{167} As Robert Neff observed in 1995, the ‘joke in Washington’ was that ‘revisionism now is orthodoxy’.\textsuperscript{168}

Revisionists were very approving of the apparent implementation of their views at the highest levels, with Clyde Prestowitz quoted as saying, for example, that the Clinton administration was ‘doing great’, as it had ‘put U.S. trade policy on a much sounder philosophical basis’.\textsuperscript{169} Critics of revisionism, on the other hand, were rather horrified, as their worst nightmare appeared to be coming true: ‘Japan-bashing’ was continuing to play a part in the United States’ official policy towards Japan.\textsuperscript{170} Some observers suggested, however, that Clinton was not necessarily a ‘revisionist’ at all but was merely acting upon the belief that the American public was critical of Japan and, therefore, wanted an administration that was tough on Japan.\textsuperscript{171} This interpretation was seemingly supported by opinion polls. While polls continued to reveal positive feelings

\textsuperscript{167} See, for example, the criticism of the administration’s trade policy voiced by economist Jagdish Bhagwati in Jagdish Bhagwati, 'The U.S.-Japan Rift: Samurais No More', \textit{Foreign Affairs}, vol. 73, no. 3, May-June 1994, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{169} Judis, 'Rougher Trade', p. 24.
\textsuperscript{171} Judis, 'Rougher Trade', p. 24.
towards Japan, they also showed that the greater the United States’ trade deficit with Japan, the lower was Clinton’s approval rating as president.172

While the perception that ‘Japan-bashing’ had ended in 1993 might have been premature, there were more definite signs of a decline by the middle of the decade. The United States’ trade deficit with Japan had begun to even out and, more crucially, Japan’s share of that deficit was falling: while Japan accounted for sixty-five per cent of the United States’ overall trade deficit in 1991, its share had dropped to twenty-eight per cent by the end of 1996.173 The Framework negotiations between the United States and Japan were also concluded in 1995, with an agreement on automotive trade marking the end of a decade of controversial and high-profile trade negotiations that had begun with the Market-Oriented Sector-Selective talks in 1985.174 The prime cause of the decline in ‘Japan-bashing’, however, was a more widespread acknowledgement of Japan’s own economic problems. With little evidence to suggest that Japan was recovering from the economic malaise that had begun with the ‘bursting’ of its economic ‘bubble’ in 1991, commentators began to ponder the idea that Japan was experiencing a ‘lost decade’ in the 1990s.175 Thus, it was clear to many observers that Japan now posed no great threat to the United States, if it ever had.

In this context, a new paradigm on Japan began to emerge in the mid-1990s. It came to be known as ‘new revisionism’, ‘revisionism in review’ or ‘post-revisionism’.

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Once again, it was critical of Japan, but now there was a focus on Japan’s supposed failure, rather than its success. The specific tenets of post-revisionism varied as much as those of its predecessor, although they generally included emphasis on the supposedly negative features of Japan’s political-economic system, in an attempt to explain Japan’s economic decline. One of the few participants in the ‘Japan-as-anti-model’ genre to avoid the label of ‘basher’ was journalist Bill Emmott, whose reasoned analysis in *The Sun Also Sets: The Limits to Japan’s Economic Power* in 1989 was described as an ‘antidote’ to the ‘Japan-bashers’. While Emmott seemingly faced an uphill battle in the late 1980s to convince sceptical audiences that even Japan had economic weaknesses, the tide soon turned in his favour and he became known in publishing circles as the man who had accurately predicted Japan’s economic decline.

Proponents of ‘post-revisionism’ did generally discard or overturn many of the original revisionists’ most cherished notions, especially the concept of ‘Japan Inc.’. In 1998, economic journalist Richard Katz summarised most of the new thinking when he labelled Japan as the ‘system that soured’, in a book which the *Wall Street Journal* described as a ‘post-revisionist bible’. The Ministry of International Trade and Industry, once championed as a cornerstone of ‘Japan Inc.’, was now presented as a ‘mouse’, hidebound by conservatism and a hindrance to positive reform. Even the basic existence of the Japanese economic ‘miracle’ itself was questioned, given that for many Japanese, economic success had apparently provided merely an ‘empty’

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177 See, for example, Penguin UK’s description of Emmott: [http://www.penguin.co.uk/nf/Book/BookDisplay/0,0_0140298037,00.html](http://www.penguin.co.uk/nf/Book/BookDisplay/0,0_0140298037,00.html), accessed 14 March 2005.


affluence. The supremacy of post-revisionism over revisionism in American discourse on Japan appeared complete in 2000, when Ezra Vogel questioned his own original thesis in a new book entitled *Is Japan Still Number One?*.\(^{181}\)

In this changed atmosphere, it is not surprising that many observers came to believe that ‘Japan-bashing’ had finally been overcome by the late 1990s. However, as Chapter Seven will show, this was actually not the end of the phenomenon. Rather, ‘Japan-bashing’ continued well into the early twenty-first century. Historian Carol Gluck sadly observed in 1993 that ‘only two countries as closely intertwined’ as the United States and Japan could have reached such ‘exquisite extremes of mutual bashing’.\(^{182}\) While the United States was certainly at the centre of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the 1980s and 1990s, however, the American version was not the only such discourse. Thanks to the contest described in this chapter between alleged ‘Japan-bashers’ and their accusers, the term ‘Japan-bashing’ sank ‘tenacious roots into the English language’,\(^{183}\) and was soon adopted elsewhere. Chapter Four goes on to examine the similarities and differences in ‘Japan-bashing’ in Australia compared to the United States.


\(^{183}\) Hall, *Bamboozled*, p. 139.
CHAPTER FOUR

‘JAPAN-BASHING’ IN AUSTRALIA

In Australia, the term ‘Japan-bashing’ was adopted from American discourse. It went on to operate in both similar and dissimilar ways in the 1980s and 1990s compared to the United States. The differences can be attributed primarily to the fact that while the so-called ‘Japan Problem’ in Australia was rhetorically based in an economic context as it was in the United States, Australia had different economic concerns and a different relationship with Japan. Indeed, it was Australia and Japan that were in relatively similar positions of political, economic and to some extent military dependence on the United States, leading some observers to dryly suggest that, for Australia, the prevailing ‘problem’ could be considered to be the United States, not Japan.

This chapter first analyses perceptions of the ‘Japan Problem’ in Australia. It then examines the label ‘Japan-bashing’ as it operated in Australia. In fact, Australian observers only rarely described Australian-based criticism of Japan as ‘bashing’. Instead, the term tended to be reserved for observations about what was happening in the United States. Finally, the chapter assesses the nature and extent of the practices which can be labelled as Australia’s own version of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the 1980s and 1990s.

The chapter demonstrates that Australian perceptions of the ‘Japan Problem’ were overwhelmingly conditioned by the realities of Australia’s generally positive relationship with Japan. For the most part, Japan’s role as a valuable political, economic and security partner in the Asia-Pacific region overrode the sense that it constituted a ‘problem’ for Australia in the manner that it did for the United States. There was, however, deep concern in Australia about ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States, on the basis that Australian relations with Japan are often effectively governed
by ‘triangular diplomacy’ with the United States. Hence, anything that disturbed the political and economic equilibrium of the United States, especially when it related to Japan, attracted attention in Australia. Australian commentators have been acutely conscious of Australia’s position as a middle-rank power in a competitive world, of the apparent danger that Australia might become the ‘white trash of Asia’, and of the need to turn any change of global circumstance to advantage if possible. Therefore, ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States represented both opportunity and threat in the eyes of Australian observers, at least until it began noticeably to emerge in Australia itself.

In contrast to ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States, negative views of Japan in Australia appeared to be largely driven by popular, rather than elite, opinion. While a minority of Australians was clearly influenced by memories of wartime encounters between Japan and Australia, others appeared to ‘bash’ Japan only in connection with specific and high-profile issues, such as the proposal to build a joint Japanese-Australian high-technology ‘multifunction polis’ in the late 1980s. However, as this chapter demonstrates, popular anti-Japanese sentiment in Australia did not generally influence Australia’s official policies towards Japan, which remained very positive in tone compared to those of the United States.

An Australian ‘Japan Problem’?

While the concept of a ‘Japan Problem’ is particularly associated with the United States in the mid- to late 1980s, several of the first commentators to use the expression were

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2 See, for example, Maximilian Walsh, 'Will We Become the Poor White Trash of Asia?', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 August 1988, p. 15.
not American. Almost at the same time as Dutch journalist Karel van Wolferen was popularising the expression in 1986-87, Australian journalist Peter Hartcher was defining it for his Australian readership as the widespread international view that Japan was ‘greedy and unfair’ and was not exercising ‘responsibility or political maturity commensurate with its vast wealth and power’ in its interactions with other nations. While Hartcher focused on the rhetoric that was being expressed in the United States, he also implied that many Australians shared this view.3

It is not at all clear to what extent Australians actually did believe that Japan was a ‘problem’ in the 1980s and 1990s and, if it was, whether it constituted the same ‘problem’ that was supposedly facing other Western nations. The difficulty in identifying a specifically Australian version of the ‘Japan Problem’ lies in the fact that it is hard to determine which parts of discourse about Japan were domestic in origin and which parts, if any, were imported. Some observers assumed that the ‘Japan Problem’ was a generic one for ‘the West’ as a whole. Thus, the Australian former diplomat and scholar Gregory Clark described Japan in 1989 as a ‘new bogeyman’ for Western countries in general.4 Even analyses which ostensibly surveyed contemporary Australian views of Japan often in practice simply described American versions of the ‘problem’, sometimes omitting mention of Australia entirely.5


The sense that Australia shared a ‘Japan Problem’ with other Western countries was undoubtedly based on the assumption that Australian encounters with Japan have closely replicated those of the dominant ‘Western’ power, the United States, particularly during the ‘yellow peril’ and World War II periods. On the other hand, however, the sense that Australia’s experience of Japan has been slightly different from that of the United States has also been acknowledged by some commentators, in line with the idea that Australia ‘suffered and lost’ during World War II, whereas the United States ‘suffered and won’. Such an interpretation appears to stem from the sense that Australia sustained significantly more damage from its war with Japan than did the United States, owing to the proximity of battlefields to Australia, the experiences of prisoners-of-war, and the extent to which such experiences reinforced long-standing fears of invasion from Asia. Journalist Peter Bowers observed in 1990, for example, that the Japanese came so close to Australia during the war that ‘childhood imagery of Australians pulling rickshaws across the [Sydney] Harbour Bridge remains with an aging generation to this day’. Memories of wartime encounters with Japan have been enduring, as demonstrated by the boom in publications and media productions detailing the experiences of Australian prisoners-of-war, the ongoing exploration and

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9 Peter Bowers, 'Insert', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 March 1990, p. 34.

10 A few among many examples of prominent memoirs that have been frequently republished are Rohan Rivett, *Behind Bamboo: An Inside Story of the Japanese Prison Camps*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1945; Roy Whitecross, *Slaves of the Son of Heaven: A Personal History of an Australian Prisoner of the Japanese During the Years 1942-1945*, Sydney: Dymock’s, 1951; Russell Braddon, *The Naked Island*,
commemoration of significant wartime events, \(^{11}\) and the outpouring of emotion regarding the death of Emperor Hirohito in 1989.\(^{12}\) Such memories have contributed to a different perception of the ‘Japan Problem’ for Australia. As political scientist Allan Patience explained in 1991, the ‘disturbing reality’ is that ‘Australia has a serious Japan problem’, one that is founded on a ‘complex anti-Japanese mentality’ which has grown and been reproduced ‘relentlessly’ in contemporary Australia.\(^{13}\)

Contemporary Australian attitudes have been considered to resemble broader Western discourse on Japan, particularly that of the United States, in the post-war period. Diplomat and scholar Richard Broinowsk withdraw concluded that the views of Herman Kahn and other American scholars on the rise of Japan in the 1970s were ‘widely read’ in Australia, and that this had helped commentators arrive at the perception that Australia, too, was ‘entirely different to Japan’.\(^{14}\) Certainly, by the late 1970s, many

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\(^{12}\) See, for example, Paul Summers, 'Yellow Peril Revisited: Stories on Japan after Hirohito's Death', *Australian Journalism Review*, no. 12, 1990, pp. 107-12.

\(^{13}\) Allan Patience, 'Confronting a Terrible Legacy: Australia's Japan Problem and the MFP', *Policy, Organisation and Society*, vol. 4, Summer 1991, p. 27. See also Paula Brinkworth, 'Australia's Relationship with Japan Today - A Neurotic Alliance because of the Consequences of the War', *Cabbages and Kings*, vol. 18, 1990, pp. 99-106.

Australian commentators perceived that Japan was markedly ‘different’ from some undefined Western norm and, as elsewhere, this difference was generally thought to be based on broad, cultural differences.\textsuperscript{15} The Japanese economic system, however, was often viewed in a positive light. It was promoted as a superior ‘model’ for Australia, which led to a ‘Learn from Japan’ campaign in which advocates again proposed the creation of a Japanese-style Ministry of International Trade and Industry.\textsuperscript{16} Moreover, federal and state governments openly pursued benefits from Japan’s economic success, particularly in the form of Japanese investment in Australia. Such investment was viewed as highly desirable, especially when it came attached to technological projects such as the proposed Very Fast Train service to link Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra, which was first suggested in 1984, or the high-technology ‘multifunction polis’, which was proposed in 1987. Thus, even in the late 1980s, many Australians remained relatively positive towards Japan. In one poll of public opinion taken in May 1989, for example, some sixty-four per cent of respondents reported that they felt ‘warm’ or ‘neutral’ towards Japan, compared to thirty-four per cent who rated their feelings as ‘cool’.\textsuperscript{17} However, as elsewhere, the urge to learn from Japan and benefit from Japan’s economic success also gave way to pondering whether in reality Japan might pose a ‘problem’ for Australia.

The discourse of a contemporary Japan ‘problem’ in Australia was both similar to and different from that in the United States. Some observers thought that the specifics of the American debate had not affected Australia very much. As historian Gavan

\textsuperscript{15} See, for example, Reg Little and Warren Reed, \textit{The Confucian Renaissance}, Sydney: Federation Press, 1989.
\textsuperscript{16} This was promoted by former Australian Democrat politician John Siddons and his Unite Australia Party, which had been established in 1986: Dean Jaensch and David Scott Mathieson, \textit{A Plague on Both Your Houses:Minor Parties in Australia}, St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1998, p. 112.
McCormack pointed out, much of the apparent influence of American discourse was confined to the ‘highest levels’ in Australian policy debates about Japan.\(^\text{18}\) McCormack suggested that little of the American debate about the ‘Japan Problem’ was reflected at the public level in Australia, basing his view on the assertion that locating works by the ‘Gang of Four’ revisionists in Australia was both difficult and expensive.\(^\text{19}\) Certainly, a 1988 survey of major Sydney and Melbourne bookstores revealed that of seven recently-published books on Japan, including works by Chalmers Johnson, Clyde Prestowitz and Jon Woronoff, only three were readily available.\(^\text{20}\) However, even if such major scholarly works by the revisionists were not widely read by the public, the media extensively covered the United States’ relations with and perceptions of Japan throughout the 1980s and 1990s, often from the revisionist perspective. Moreover, many of the revisionists visited Australia in this period. Chalmers Johnson, for instance, spoke several times at Australian events, including one notable conference in 1989 where the scheduled topic of his speech on ‘the problem of Japan’ reportedly so offended Ishihara Takeshi, the chairman of Nissan Motor Company, that he withdrew from the conference rather than face what he seems to have expected to be Johnson’s ‘Japan-bashing’.\(^\text{21}\) Moreover, as some observers pointed out, even if elite American debates about Japan were relatively unknown in Australia, other writings had the potential to be influential. Historian Richard Gehrmann, for example, was very concerned about the ‘specifically American anti-Japanese narrative’ represented in Michael Crichton’s 1992 novel \textit{Rising Sun}, as well as its 1993 film version, which will

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\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Greg Dodds, 'Japan's Management Style Brought to Book', \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 7 September 1988, p. 49.
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be discussed in Chapter Six. He argued that the ‘Japan-bashing’ in Rising Sun had the potential to develop and reinforce negative Australian attitudes about Japan, if not all Asia.\(^\text{22}\) In short, while American perceptions of the ‘Japan Problem’ were less well known in Australia than they were in the United States, they nevertheless played an important part in shaping discourses on Japan in Australia.

Australian conceptions of the ‘Japan Problem’, however, were also conditioned by Australia’s specific relationship with Japan, as well as by perceptions of Australia’s role in the Asia-Pacific region and the world. As Australian Broadcasting Corporation television correspondent Walter Hamilton pointed out in 1991, the ‘anxieties of Australians’ about Japan might be similar to those of Americans, but Australia’s perceptions of Japan were very different from those in the United States. This was because Australia was neither a major power, nor a competitor in trade terms with Japan.\(^\text{23}\) Moreover, as many commentators pointed out, Japan and the entire Asia-Pacific region were perhaps more important to Australia than they were to the United States, as arguably Australia was itself geographically part of Asia. From the time of the Labor government of Prime Minister Bob Hawke in the late 1980s onwards, the suggestion that Australia was ‘Asian’ began to be heard more and more often. The argument was often viewed as more rhetoric than reality, particularly in Asia itself.\(^\text{24}\) Nevertheless, it helped to shape various ‘look north’ policies in the 1980s and 1990s which encouraged Australian enmeshment or engagement with the region.\(^\text{25}\)

Engagement with Asia, and particularly with Japan, according to some commentators, was the best way to position Australia for the political and economic challenges it supposedly faced as a middle-rank power in an increasingly competitive economic environment.²⁶

In geo-political terms, Japan therefore tended to be perceived as a natural and valuable partner for Australia due to apparent national similarities, including limited international political and military power; shared self-images as outsider or as peripheral nations in Asia; common interests in promoting beneficial political, economic and security linkages in the region, through such bodies as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum and the Association of South East Asian Nations Regional Forum; common views on pressing global issues such as disarmament; and a similar, sometimes uneasy, role as ‘alliance anchors’ in the region for the United States.²⁷ Moreover, Japan had been Australia’s most important trading partner since the late 1960s, and successive Australian federal and state governments took steps to ensure that this connection would continue to flourish. While American observers from that time onwards increasingly viewed Japan as an economic competitor, the keyword for Australian observers was ‘complementarity’: on the one hand, Japanese industry was heavily capital-intensive and technology-intensive, and on the other, Australia’s strength was in the primary industries, especially mining and farming. Thus, Australia supplied food and raw materials to Japan, importing processed and manufactured goods in return, and unlike the United States, which was consistently in deficit to Japan, Australia maintained a large economic surplus with Japan.²⁸ Given this surplus, there

²⁸ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'The United States-Japan Relationship and its Implications for Australia', reply by the Department of
was ‘little point’, as journalist Gerard Henderson pointed out in 1992, in Australians ‘turning Japan-bashing into a contemporary art form’. ²⁹

Indeed, if there was a ‘problem’ nation for Australia in terms of a trade deficit, it was the United States, as shown on the graph below.

![Graph showing Australia's balance of trade with Japan and the United States, 1989-98](image)


A senior official of Austrade, the Australian government’s trade promotion body, pointed to Australia’s substantial trade deficit with the United States in 1992 and noted that if any nation ‘should be upset and bashing their trade partner’, it was Australia that should be ‘bashing’ the United States. ³⁰  Indeed, Australian concerns about trade with the United States, as well as the extent of the United States’ influence on Australia generally, produced anti-American views in this period which were arguably based on perceptions of an ‘America Problem’, although that specific terminology was not commonly used. ³¹  In short, many observers realised that Australia was simply not in

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³¹ See, for example, Ross Dunn, 'PM Accused of Risking Alliance with US', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 September 1987, p. 4.
the same geo-political or economic position as the United States in relation to Japan and, in marked contrast to the dominant portrayal of Japan as a ‘problem’ in the United States, Japan was therefore promoted as a respectable and influential economic power.

Nevertheless, the idea that Japan was a ‘problem’ clearly resonated for those Australians who already had strong negative images of Japan, and particularly for those who remained influenced by wartime experiences. Moreover, perceptions of a ‘Japan Problem’ also resonated for those who were sceptical about official Australian policies of increased engagement or enmeshment with Asia in the 1980s and 1990s, or what some critics called the ‘Asianisation’ of Australia. Thus, whether influenced by American discourse about Japan or not, more than twice as many respondents to a survey by the Melbourne Age newspaper in May 1989 said they felt threatened by Japan compared to those who felt threatened by the Soviet Union.

The Debate over the ‘Japan Problem’

The concept of the ‘Japan Problem’ was much less debated in Australia than in the United States, and hence there was less scope for the high-level disputes about interpreting Japan which so divided the participants in American discourses. Moreover, while Japan was perceived as a ‘problem’ by elite opinion-makers in the United States, Australian political, bureaucratic, business, media and academic leaders typically held favourable views of Japan, slightly more so than the public. For example, surveys of Australian elite and popular opinion regarding Japan conducted in 1982-83 showed that while roughly eighty-five per cent of ‘leaders’ had a ‘friendly’ attitude towards Japan,

32 Gehrmann, 'The Rising Sun of Australian Japan Bashing?', p. 60.
34 'The Fear from Without Recedes', Age (Melbourne), 8 May 1989, p. 4.
only sixty-four per cent of the public voiced the same opinion. As a result, the ‘Japan Problem’ was usually debated in popular, rather than intellectual, forums.

However, polarisation did occur among certain Australian commentators on Japan, especially on specific high-profile issues. The controversy over the Japanese proposal to build a high-technology ‘multifunction polis’ in Australia, for example, was arguably the ‘biggest source of debate on the Australia-Japan relationship’ in the post-World War II period to date when it erupted in 1990. As in the United States, such polarisation did not follow the conventional ideological division between the political right and the left. Indeed, as Allan Patience pointed out, criticism from both sides contributed to a ‘hostility to Japan in the popular mind’. By the same token, Australian debates over the ‘Japan Problem’ took place in a much shorter timeframe than in the United States; according to one analysis, the period of heightened concern about Japan lasted only from 1986 to 1989. While this is a conservative estimate given that it falls short of the major controversy over the ‘multifunction polis’, Australian debate about the ‘Japan Problem’ was certainly comparatively short-lived.

On the one hand, a particular group of Australian commentators was identified by critics as Australia’s own ‘Japan-admirers’, ‘Japan-lovers’ or ‘Japan lobby’, though some of them in fact lived in Japan. Political historian Peter King argued, for example, that journalist Murray Sayle and scholar Gregory Clark (both residents of Japan) were

37 Patience, ‘Confronting a Terrible Legacy’, p. 25.
‘more than half-inclined to see things Japanese in a favourable light’, although he
admitted that they did not entirely refrain from criticising Japan.\textsuperscript{40} Other figures
supposedly in this group included prominent politicians, economists, business leaders
and journalists, as well as members of some special interest groups that promoted
Australia-Japan relations, such as the Australia-Japan Foundation and the independent
think-tank, the Committee for Economic Development of Australia.

On the other hand, not all Australian observers praised Japan or viewed
Australia’s increasingly close relations with Japan as entirely beneficial. The dissenters
were far fewer in number, however, than the ‘revisionists’ in the United States, and
wielded far less influence upon their government’s official policy towards Japan.
Indeed, Peter King argued in 1997 that Australia’s economic leaders largely lacked the
‘revisionist muscle’ that so coloured discourse about Japan in the United States,\textsuperscript{41} as
most seemed to favour engagement with Japan. As a result, there was little scholarly or
media discussion of revisionism in a specifically Australian context, and even less
discussion of who, if anyone, might qualify as an Australian ‘revisionist’.

In the view of those few observers who did offer an opinion, however, the obvious
‘revisionist’ candidates were those who, like their American counterparts, criticised
Japan’s political-economic system, declared Japan unsuited to the role of global
economic leadership or advocated inward-looking protectionist policies to counter
Japanese industrial competition. Gavan McCormack alleged that the writings of
political economist Ted Wheelwright and unionist Abe David provided a starting-point
for ‘revisionism’ in Australia, largely because of their warnings about the possible
negative impacts on Australia of Japan’s economic strength.\textsuperscript{42} Similarly, Peter King

\textsuperscript{40} King, ‘Japan and Australia’, p. 128.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 129.
\textsuperscript{42} McCormack, ‘An Asian Threat?’, pp. 40-1. See Abe David and Ted Wheelwright,\textit{The Third Wave: Australia and Asian Capitalism}, Sutherland, NSW: Left Book Club
suggested that Wheelwright’s writings demonstrated a ‘kind of systematic dissent’ from the economic pragmatism shown by many Australians towards Japan, and argued that this qualified Wheelwright for inclusion. King also added McCormack himself, as well as the academic sociologist Yoshio Sugimoto who, King suggested, took ‘an impeccably jaundiced view of his alma mater’ of Japan.\(^{43}\) Other Australian observers were far more generous in adding names to the list, not necessarily as ‘revisionists’ but certainly as strong, often unrelenting, critics of Japan. Allan Patience, for example, listed Wheelwright, McCormack and Sugimoto, while adding sociologist Ross Moyer, war veteran and novelist Russell Braddon and academic Paul James to the roster. These academics and writers had, according to Patience, made themselves conspicuous by producing a ‘diet of unrelieved negativism’ about Japan.\(^{44}\) Radio commentator Ron Casey, war veterans’ spokesperson Bruce Ruxton and anti-investment campaigner Bruce Whiteside also expressed strongly negative views of Japan which, in their case, appeared to have been heavily influenced by Japan’s role in World War II.

Australian ‘revisionists’ and other critics had widely divergent views about Japan, although most believed in some form of the ‘Japan Problem’. One point of agreement was that the concept of the ‘special relationship’ between Australia and Japan was misguided. For instance, Yoshio Sugimoto concluded in 1991 that the ‘optimistic portrayal’ of relations between Australia and Japan camouflaged the real ‘power relationship’ between the two nations. In reality, he argued, the ‘supposed reciprocity between Australia and Japan’ was ‘not well-proportioned’, which meant that Japan exercised a dominance over Australia that was akin to ‘economic colonisation’.\(^{45}\) Australia’s engagement with Japan therefore had to be carefully monitored, particularly


\(^{44}\) Patience, ‘Confronting a Terrible Legacy’, p. 25.

any programme to ‘learn’ from Japan which might result in negative impacts upon Australia. Gavan McCormack argued that Australians had to be aware of ‘certain basic and serious problems’ about Japan, such as endemic official corruption and environmental degradation. 46 Other observers were not critical of Japan per se but cautioned that engagement with Japan, or indeed Asia generally, should not be pursued at the expense of relations with other powerful nations, such as the United States, or at the expense of Australia’s traditional links with Britain.47

The Meaning of ‘Japan-bashing’ in Australia

While some people clearly believed that Australia had a ‘Japan Problem’, it was not the same ‘problem’ as it was in the United States. As a consequence, discourse in Australia about ‘Japan-bashing’ also differed from that in the United States. The invention and use of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States went relatively unnoticed in Australia until the mid-1980s. Even when the expression was acknowledged, Australian observers, like their international counterparts, rarely ventured to define it. An Australian lexicographer noted in 1990 that the suffix ‘bashing’ had become very ‘productive’; 48 yet, the term ‘Japan-bashing’ had not been included in mainstream dictionaries of Australian English by the late 1990s. 49 While Australian observers of ‘Japan-bashing’ never really investigated the origins of the term itself, when the label was used, it was generally meant to imply, as in the United States, that criticism of Japan was an unjustified assault, more often than not based in racism.

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There was general agreement among Australian observers that ‘Japan-bashing’ practices were occurring in the United States, and elsewhere to a lesser extent. ‘Japan-bashing’ was variously described as an ‘American tradition’, as ‘America’s favourite pastime’ and as a ‘compulsory sport for many US politicians’.\textsuperscript{50} Like baseball, opined one Australian journalist in 1987, ‘Japan-bashing’ was being practised for both ‘fun and profit’ in the United States.\textsuperscript{51} It was also acknowledged to be occurring in Europe. Indeed, to one observer, it appeared that ‘Japan-bashing’ ‘redoubled in ferocity’ as it crossed the Atlantic from Washington to Paris.\textsuperscript{52}

When the term ‘Japan-bashing’ was used in Australia, it was employed as a tool to criticise those individuals and groups who appeared to be expressing not only extreme anti-Japanese views but also reasoned criticism. The ‘Gang of Four’ revisionists were again the primary targets; many Australian observers seemed to regard their criticisms of and dramatic prescriptions for Japan as excessive or extreme.\textsuperscript{53} Other revisionists, including Michael Crichton, were similarly labelled. The United States’ official stance towards Japan was also stigmatised in the Australian media as ‘bashing’ by the late 1980s, undoubtedly under the influence of similar comment in the United States itself.\textsuperscript{54} Events which provoked especial criticism in Australia included the highly-publicised ‘Toshiba-bashing’ on Capitol Hill in 1987,\textsuperscript{55} the leaked publication of the controversial Central Intelligence Agency report ‘Japan: 2000’ in 1991, which was described by one

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{51} Epstein, 'Don't Blame the Japanese', p. 10.
\textsuperscript{52} Andrew Clark, 'The Yen Moves in on Europe', \textit{Sun Herald}, 14 January 1990, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{53} McCormack, 'An Asian Threat?', p. 40.
\textsuperscript{55} Epstein, 'Don't Blame the Japanese', p. 8.
\end{footnotes}
Australian journalist as a ‘crude’ ‘Japan-bashing’ polemic,\textsuperscript{56} and the reaction to President George W. Bush’s ill-fated 1992 trip to Tokyo, which was viewed as having ‘unleashed a new round of Japan bashing’ in the United States.\textsuperscript{57}

Some Australian commentators were realistic about the apparent agenda of American commentators in criticising Japan. Ross Garnaut pointed out in 1989, for instance, that despite a perception in the United States that Japan was to blame for American difficulties, economic decline in the United States was actually an ‘American rather than a Japanese problem’, and criticism of Japan therefore reflected populism rather than reasoned, analytical understanding of the international economic system.\textsuperscript{58} Official American efforts to arrest economic decline by promoting what appeared to be a system of managed trade in the course of negotiations with Japan were accordingly strongly criticised, including by Don Russell and Ashton Calvert, the Australian ambassadors to Washington and Tokyo respectively, in 1994.\textsuperscript{59} However, this is not to say that observers entirely sided with Japan. Ishihara Shintarō and Morita Akio’s ‘No’ to ieru Nihon, for example, disappointed some Australian commentators. Historian Morris F. Low, for one, argued that the book showed signs of having been hastily produced for a populist Japanese audience, with wanton disregard, or at least little thought, for the potential international backlash against the book’s argument that Japan should use its technological strength to gain advantages over other nations.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58} Quoted in Mike Steketee, 'Japan Not to Blame for US Problems', \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 27 May 1989, p. 36.
The reactions of Australian observers to ‘Japan-bashing’ typically revealed one overriding concern: the extent to which ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States and ‘America-bashing’ in Japan might impact on Australia, either positively or negatively. The perception that ‘Japan-bashing’ and ‘America-bashing’ would have consequences in Australia stemmed from the acute sense that Australia was not a large player on the international scene, and thus was heavily affected by the political and economic manoeuvrings of other countries, specifically those of the United States and Japan.61 Indeed, it often seemed that the more important consideration was not Australia’s own relationship with either nation but, rather, the intricate minutiae of the relations between the United States and Japan, and the potentially global ramifications of changes to that relationship.

For Australia, ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States offered an unparalleled opportunity. On the one hand, Australia could distinguish itself in Japanese eyes from the United States by emphasising its desire and ability to engage with Japan, knowing that Japanese commentators were extremely sensitive to American ‘Japan-bashing’. Some observers were delighted, for instance, when Amaya Naohiro, a former Vice-Minister of International Trade and Industry, pronounced Australia as Japan’s ‘closest’ friend in 1987.62 This declaration was interpreted to mean that ‘old friends’ like the United States had become ‘betrayers’ in the Japanese mind, thereby placing Australia ‘right at the top of Japan’s list of real friends’.63 On the other hand, Australia could exploit any general economic benefit secured by the United States as a result of ‘Japan-bashing’, such as more open Japanese markets. Economist Julia Lowell estimated, for example, that more than half of the United States’ negotiations with Japan for improved

63 Ibid.
market access covered goods and services that Australia exported, or could export, to Japan.\footnote{Julia Lowell, 'Free Trade Champion? Australian Views of the US Trade Crusade Against Japan', \textit{Pacific Economic Papers}, no. 295, September 1999, pp. 6, 12.}

At the same time, however, Australian observers were acutely aware that ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States also posed a very significant threat to Australia, if not to the stability of the international trading system as a whole. Given the American trend towards managing its trade with Japan on a strictly bilateral basis rather than through multilateral forums, and Japan’s apparent acquiescence to this, many observers feared that Australia’s own trade interests might be relegated to an ‘occasional glimmer’ on the policy horizons of both the United States and Japan.\footnote{O'Neill, 'Spar Wars', p. 23.} In 1987, for example, Japan caved in to American pressure and deliberately diverted its coal and beef imports from Australia to the United States. This contributed to a drop in Australia’s share of Japan’s beef imports from fifty-four per cent in 1980 to forty per cent in 1988.\footnote{Garnaut, \textit{Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendancy}, p. 199.} By far the worst case scenario, however, was the suggestion that discord between the United States and Japan would develop into a war. In the coming war, George Friedman predicted in the \textit{Bulletin} in 1991, Australia would find it very difficult indeed to maintain relations with both the United States and Japan.\footnote{Bruce Stannard, 'Meat in the Sandwich', \textit{Bulletin}, 20 July 1991, pp. 32-3.} Some Australian observers agreed, suggesting that one day Australia might well have to choose between its ‘old and treasured alliance partner’ of the United States and the ‘economic powerhouse’ of Japan.\footnote{‘Should Old Acquaintance’, \textit{Australian Financial Review}, 2 January 1992, p. 10.}

Widespread hopes in Australia that the early 1990s would bring the end of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States, particularly with the changeover to the Clinton administration in early 1993, were quickly dashed. Observers mourned the fact that while ‘Japan-bashing’ had long had adherents among the American leadership, particularly in Washington, its role as a ‘popular congressional sport’ and impact on
official American policy towards Japan appeared to have intensified.\(^69\) Concerns about the detrimental impact of such ‘bashing’ on Australia were again prominent. For instance, a report issued in 1994 by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, entitled ‘The United States-Japan Relationship and its Implications for Australia’, noted official concern that ‘trade friction between the US and Japan not be allowed to adversely affect third parties’, adding that the ‘threat of damage’ to Australia had become more ‘pertinent’ than ever.\(^70\)

As a consequence of official and media attention in Australia to ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States, the critical spotlight rarely fell squarely on the question of whether something that could be labelled as ‘bashing’ was occurring in Australia. The federal government repeatedly denied that Australia itself would ever ‘bash’ Japan, presumably as part of an attempt to distinguish Australia from the United States in this respect. For instance, Senator Peter Cook, the Federal Minister for Industrial Relations, remarked in January 1992 that he had observed that it was the ‘fashion’ in North America and Europe to ‘bash Japan’. However, he pointed out that Australia ‘lives in the region’ and was ‘not into that scene’.\(^71\) Similarly, in September 1992, Senator Gareth Evans, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, publicly denied that Australia’s policy towards Japan could be characterised as ‘bashing’, stating that:

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\(^69\) Hamish McRae, 'Watch Out, Japan is Waking to a New Era', *Age* (Melbourne), 5 August 1993, p. 18; Maximilian Walsh, 'APEC Begins to Come of Age in the Minds and Interests of Asia', *Age* (Melbourne), 8 June 1993, p. 18.

\(^70\) Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'The United States-Japan Relationship', p. 5.

\(^71\) Quoted in 'Minister Says Australia Not Intent on "Japan Bashing"', *Japan Economic Newswire*, 31 January 1992, reference no. 01310058.
The Australian Government has never regarded it as particularly constructive or productive, given the intensity and significance of our relations with Japan, to get into an overt Japan-bashing stance.\(^\text{72}\)

By contrast, though they did not usually interpret it as ‘bashing’, many Australian observers acknowledged that anti-Japanese views and practices appeared to be increasing in Australia – some even detecting what they called ‘Australia’s racist debate’ about Japan.\(^\text{73}\) However, such anti-Japanese views were often expressly or implicitly distinguished from ‘bashing’. Bulletin columnist Ben Sandilands, for example, noted in 1990 that the ‘only encouraging thing’ about the ‘familiar litany of anti-Japanese sentiment’ in Australia was that it had ‘yet to become as widespread or witless as the current outbreak of verbal Japan bashing at all levels of US public life right up to Congress’.\(^\text{74}\) Similarly, journalist Peter Robinson acknowledged in 1990 that there was a ‘quite vicious anti-Japanese strain’ in Australia which seemed to parallel ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States. However, he suggested that, unlike in the United States, Australia’s bout of ‘Japan-bashing’ had been ‘fortunately brief’, meaning it was already over.\(^\text{75}\) In the end, however, such attempts to distinguish anti-Japanese sentiment in Australia from ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States were unconvincing.

**The Course of Australian ‘Japan-bashing’**

While the dominant Australian perception was that ‘Japan-bashing’ was something that occurred in the United States and Europe, aspects of the phenomenon were certainly evident in Australia, although usually to a lesser extent. As one analysis admitted in


\(^{73}\) See, for example, Rix, *The Australia-Japan Political Alignment*, p. 105.

\(^{74}\) Ben Sandilands, 'Why We Get Japan Wrong', *Bulletin*, 1 May 1990, p. 44.

\(^{75}\) Peter Robinson, 'Our Partner in Freedom', *Sun Herald*, 1 April 1990, p. 31.
1993, discussions of Japan often ranged from ‘bashing’ to ‘admiration’ with ‘various mixtures of both in between’. When the term ‘Japan-bashing’ did appear, it was typically used in the same manner as in the United States: to conflate criticism of Japan with racism. Thus, the label ‘basher’ was applied to those commentators who expressed criticism of Japan’s political-economic system, including Gavan McCormack, whom Peter King called ‘Australia’s most distinguished Japan basher’, as well as Yoshio Sugimoto and Ted Wheelwright. The term ‘Asia-basher’ was also occasionally used to describe those commentators who did not focus specifically on Japan but were strongly critical of Australia’s increasing engagement with Asian countries. When philosopher John Passmore, for example, argued in 1992 that Australia should not pass over its tradition of close ties with Europe for stronger links with Asia, he was accused of engaging in a ‘genteel form of Asia-Bashing’, a charge which he rejected.

To some Australian observers, it appeared as though the term ‘Japan-bashing’ was being misapplied in certain cases. As political economist John Ravenhill argued, debates in Australia over whether Japan was ‘different’ from an unspecified Western norm did not necessarily amount to a ‘Japan bashing exercise’. Those Australians who were accused of ‘bashing’ often mustered similar arguments in their defence as the ‘revisionists’ did elsewhere. Thus, they maintained that their criticism was not aimed at Japan or the Japanese as a whole but only at aspects of the system typically summarised as ‘Japan Inc.’. Indeed, as Yoshio Sugimoto pointed out, so-called ‘Japan-bashers’

77 King, 'Japan and Australia', p. 129.
79 Ravenhill, The "Japan Problem" in Pacific Trade', p. 129.
80 Peter King, email to Narrelle Morris, 7 October 2005.
such as himself often merely articulated criticisms of Japan that were ‘amazingly similar to those of anti-government, anti-establishment individuals and groups in Japan’.\textsuperscript{81} Gavan McCormack, too, suggested that accusations that he was a ‘basher’ were ironic, as his criticism of Japan was largely based on ‘dissenting Japanese scholarship’ by scholars, critics and citizens. The label ‘basher’, he argued, had therefore been misapplied in his case, unless all those Japanese critics were similarly described.\textsuperscript{82} Sugimoto maintained that, despite the fact that criticism and racism were actually ‘two analytically separate orientations’, those labelled as ‘“Japan-bashers” in Australia’ like himself were simply being dismissed as ‘anti-Japanese racists’.\textsuperscript{83} As globalisation scholar Paul James pointed out, any criticism of Australia’s desire to pursue engagement with Japan in this period was ‘likely to be misinterpreted as anti-Japanese’. He added that the likelihood of such misinterpretation had silenced many Australian commentators on Japan.\textsuperscript{84} However, as in the United States, a commentator who was classed as ‘anti-Japanese’ or even openly labelled as a ‘basher’ did not necessarily receive strong censure from the public. As one observer of Bruce Ruxton, a spokesman for military veterans, pointed out, ‘Japan-bashing’ had not done Ruxton’s career any harm at all.\textsuperscript{85}

Arguably the most prominent episode surrounding accusations of ‘Japan-bashing’ in Australia occurred as a result of an academic conference held in Canberra in 1993, entitled ‘Stirrup, Sail and Plough: Continental and Maritime Influences on Japanese Identity’. Various delegates from Japan’s International Research Center for Japanese

\textsuperscript{81} Sugimoto, 'Australia-Japan', p. 175.
\textsuperscript{82} McCormack, \textit{The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence}, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{83} Sugimoto, 'Australia-Japan', p. 176.
Culture (Nichibunken) attended the conference. After the conference concluded, Nichibunken scholar Haga Tōru attacked the proceedings of the fourth day in the Japanese-language journal *Bunka kaigi* (Cultural Council), stating that they were ‘exclusively devoted to Japan-bashing’:

After a barrage of criticism of ‘Japanese nationalism’ that could not be considered anything but an expression of hatred and resentment ... the ANU’s New Leftist Gavan McCormack, the behind-the-scenes manipulator of this conference, proceeded to elaborate his denunciation of ‘Japaneseness’ by means of violently distorted and completely hackneyed ideology ... . We were shocked, angered and disgusted with this ‘Academic Conference’ held by a ‘National University’ ... . I felt a renewed sense of the importance of Nichibunken’s overseas mission: from time to time to cross over into enemy territory and see just what exactly these ‘bashers’ are made of, and to form even closer academic relations with the real Japan scholars, helping them to prosper and gain strength.

In response, McCormack described the allegation of Australian ‘Japan-bashing’ as a prime example of ‘spontaneous’, ‘irrational’ and ‘bullying’ criticism, which was ‘intended only for a Japanese audience of like-minded peers’ and would not likely be published in Nichibunken’s official English journals. McCormack argued that such

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86 They attended despite sociologist Hugh Mackay’s confident assertion in the same year that the Japanese are ‘not to be found at conferences discussing their national identity’: Hugh Mackay, *Reinventing Australia: The Mind and Mood of Australia in the 90s*, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1993, p. 204.

commentary represented an attempted illicit intervention in Japanese Studies scholarship in Australia.  

88 He asserted that this was not the first such attempt he had observed; he had raised concerns in 1990 about the propriety of the Japan Foundation apparently considering political factors in its decisions on whether to award financial support to Australian scholars who voiced criticism of Japan.  

89 While in this case McCormack was partially mollified by Nichibunken, which issued a statement disclaiming institutional responsibility for Haga’s views, he argued that the disclaimer did not solve the underlying problem which had led to the denigration of Australia as ‘enemy territory’: namely, the subjective agenda of Haga in claiming Japanese jurisdiction over the role of defining ‘Japaneseness’.  

90 Debate over the ‘Stirrup, Sail and Plough’ controversy continued for the next year. Several other delegates at the conference responded to McCormack’s attack on Haga and Nichibunken, at least two claiming that McCormack had misinterpreted Haga’s remarks.  

While alleged ‘Japan-bashers’ such as Sugimoto and McCormack typically rejected the label, they also recognised that there was another form of ‘bashing’ going on in Australia, one which bore some resemblance to what American revisionists had described as ‘true bashing’ in the United States. This was a reflection of the real streak of Australian racism towards Japan. Sugimoto argued, for example, that informed commentators who had made reasonable criticism of Japanese institutions, policies or practices had had to fend off racist individuals and groups who attempted to ‘twist and

88 Ibid., pp. 170-1.  
89 Gavan McCormack, ‘Our Japan Scholars Need Yen - But at What Price?’, Australian, 23 May 1990, Higher Education section, p. 20. McCormack’s claims regarding the Japan Foundation were never substantiated.  
90 Ibid., p. 172.  
turn’ such criticism in order to support their ‘racist viewpoints’ about Japan as a whole. He implied that his own criticism of the ‘multifunction polis’ had been so skewed. In the view of journalist Ben Sandilands, Sugimoto and McCormack had thus been unfairly labelled as ‘bashers’, as their valid criticism of Japan had been misconstrued, often deliberately in support of ‘ignorant, racially-motivated Japan-bashing media tirades’.93

While Japan was viewed by some as a potential threat to Australia, it was generally not envisioned as a future military opponent. A federal government review of Australia’s defence in 1986 concluded, for example, that Japan had ‘little or no motivation to threaten Australia, and limited capability to do so’.94 Indeed, one public opinion poll suggested that the majority of Australians regarded Indonesia as the main threat to Australia.95 Nevertheless, a few marginal commentators asserted that Japan remained a danger, such as right-wing nationalist Nicholas Lindeman, who had argued in a self-published manifesto in 1976 that Japan was still a military threat to both Australia and New Zealand.96 Similarly, Sydney radio commentator Ron Casey concluded in 1989 that Japan might pose a military threat to Australia, as ‘something sinister’ was occurring in Japan with its ‘glorification’ of its economic supremacy and

93 Sandilands, 'Why We Get Japan Wrong', p. 44.
the tendency to prefer a ‘sanitised’ view of World War II history. For author Russell Braddon, on the other hand, Japan was already engaged in a war for ‘supremacy’ over Australia, one that was continuing on from World War II.

Rather than a military threat, a significant number of commentators focused on Japan as an economic danger. Despite the usual presumption of ‘complementarity’, a perception that Australia and Japan were engaged in some form of a ‘trade war’ did emerge in certain quarters in the early 1980s, based on the idea that the real, rather than the superficial, conditions of Japanese-Australian trade disadvantaged Australia. According to some commentators, the outlook for Australia was not good: the *Bulletin* announced in 1983, for example, that Australia had already lost the ‘trade war’ with Japan, as shown below.

![Bulletin Cover](image)

**Figure 4.1: ‘The Trade War’, Bulletin, 28 June 1983.**

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Australia had been defeated, in this analysis, because its trade with Japan relied on primary industry commodities whose supply was subject to increasing competition from other exporters, such as Canada, Brazil and South Africa.99 Some observers argued that while Australia was undoubtedly in a better economic position with Japan than was the United States, on the other hand Australia was actually dependent on Japan, and was thus vulnerable to Japanese economic manipulation. Such a perception was reinforced by the acrimonious debates that occurred in government, business and media circles over the proper prices for resources sold to Japan, including iron ore, coal, natural gas and wool, largely because of fears that Japan was taking advantage of Australia’s reliance on the Japanese market to set low prices. As one journalist observed in 1983, Australian companies were like ‘lambs’ being ‘picked off’ by their far more powerful Japanese counterparts. Consequently, it was ‘time for toughness’ with Japan.100

While the debate over trade with Japan was less vociferous in Australia than in the United States, another aspect of the ‘Japan Problem’ was very similar: the negative perception of Japanese investment. The issue of Japanese investment first gained notice in Australia in the 1970s, when the building of a A$10 million international tourist resort at Yeppoon on the central Queensland coast was announced by a Japanese syndicate, Iwasaki Sangyō.101 Considerable public protest ensued and, in November 1980, a small bomb exploded at the resort, presumably planted in protest against the ongoing development although, as no-one has ever been convicted of the crime, the exact motive remains unclear. However, it was not until the late 1980s that Japanese investment attracted sustained, often critical, attention in Australia. By that time,

101 See, for example, Nancy Viviani and Jim Selby, 'The Iwasaki Tourist Development at Yeppoon', Research Paper, no. 5, Brisbane: Centre for the Study of Australian-Asian Relations, Griffith University, November 1980.
Japanese investment had increased to approximately A$5 billion annually, a five-fold increase since the early 1980s, and a figure which represented some A$35 billion dollars in investment in 1989. Analysts soon categorised Japanese investment as the ‘third wave’ of foreign investment in Australia, following earlier, and less contested, waves of investment from Britain and the United States.

While many observers promoted Japanese investment for its presumed economic and technological benefits to Australia, others opposed it. Such opposition was often presented as a complaint about foreign investment generally, but numerous observers pointed out that there was very little critical focus on investment from the United States, the United Kingdom or New Zealand, even though the United States, not Japan, remained the largest foreign investor in Australia. This led to suggestions that opposition to Japanese investment was a Japan-specific issue; meaning that such opposition was not based on cogent economic arguments against foreign investment generally but was based on objections to the source, Japan.

As in the United States, attention soon focused on notable Japanese purchases, as of the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary in Queensland, and on Japanese investment in real estate and property in prominent areas, such as Sydney and the Gold Coast in Queensland. Some observers classed such purchases as an ‘invasion’, or as ‘economic imperialism’, arguing that they reflected Japan’s intention to create a modern version of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere in Australia. Others, such as

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103 See, for example, David and Wheelwright, The Third Wave.
104 See, for example, Jeff Penberthy, 'Invasion of the Gold Coast', Time, 1 August 1988, p. 41.
unionist Abe David and economist Ted Wheelwright, suggested that Australia had already become an ‘economic satellite’ or ‘economic colony’ of Japan.\footnote{David and Wheelwright, \textit{The Third Wave}, p. 178.}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure4_2.png}
\caption{‘Foreign Ownership’, reproduced from Abe David and Ted Wheelwright, \textit{The Third Wave: Australia and Asian Capitalism}, Sutherland, NSW: Left Book Club, 1989, p. 42.}
\end{figure}


The ‘multifunction polis’ proposal excited the most opposition to Japanese investment in Australia. While the proposal was first announced in 1987, it was not until it became a key issue during the federal election campaign in 1990 that it attracted
substantial, and often critical, attention. Much of this massive proposal had been
developed before it reached the stage of public debate during the election campaign and
some observers have suggested that part of the backlash against the federal and state
governments’ support for the ‘multifunction polis’ may have stemmed from this
delay.\footnote{Gavan McCormack, 'And Shall the Multifunction Polis Yet Be Built?', in James,
_Technocratic Dreaming_, p. 134.} However, for many individuals and groups opposed to the proposal, the
delayed public discussion was simply further evidence of Japan’s general duplicity, as
well as of the naïvety, or perhaps even treachery, of various Australian government
figures who continued to develop the ‘polis’ despite public opposition.

A number of groups on the extreme right wing, such as National Action and the
League of Rights, protested and campaigned against the ‘multifunction polis’
specifically because its backers were Japanese. National Action’s opposition formed
part of its wider agitation against the presence of Japanese people and businesses in
Australia, as shown on the cover of its newsletter in early 1982.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{audacity.jpg}
\caption{‘It's Taken Them 40 Years …’, _Audacity_, April-May 1982.}
\end{figure}
National Action’s campaign against the ‘multifunction polis’ included sending intimidating letters to Japanese businesses in Australia warning them that Australian resentment of Japan might ‘spill over into violence and other tragic and unfortunate situations’, a threat which undoubtedly contributed to the citation of National Action by the Australian government’s Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission as an organiser of racist violence in Australia.

While right-wing groups were reasonably overt in their reliance on racism, other opponents of the ‘multifunction polis’ also seemed to be motivated by anti-Japanese feelings. Former Federal Labor Party figure Rex Connor, for instance, founded his own political party and campaigned in 1990 on the basis that the ‘polis’ was an example of ‘oriental deception and treachery’ that would lead to the invasion of Australia, as shown in the advertisement below.

![Figure 4.4: 'Whither Australia?', Daily Telegraph, 8 June 1990, p. 9.](image)

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Perhaps the most prominent campaigner against Japanese investment generally in Australia was Bruce Whiteside, who became the convenor of Heart of a Nation, a short-lived anti-Japanese investment association on the Gold Coast in the late 1980s. From the beginning of Whiteside’s opposition to Japanese investment, he repeatedly denied that his stance was based on racism against the Japanese; rather, he was the first participant in a ‘new wave of good old flag-raising nationalism’. His statements and proposals for action against Japanese investment, however, were reminiscent of the racism of the far right, although typically disguised by populist appeals for protection of the Australian land and future. Whiteside initially attracted considerable interest on the Gold Coast for his movement against Japanese investment. Some fifteen hundred people attended a public meeting he called in May 1988, for example, at which the Heart of a Nation group was organised. Through his leadership of Heart of a Nation, he transformed himself from a self-employed small businessman into a commentator of some notoriety on Japanese interests in Australia. However, the volatility of the apparently racist politics practised by Whiteside ensured that all but the most diehard of his supporters soon deserted him. Heart of a Nation folded almost as quickly as it had formed, having accomplished little, if anything, towards its stated aim of halting Japanese investment in Australia. At the same time, however, Whiteside and his

113 Russell Deiley, 'Bruce Scorns Racist Tag to Stand Up for Australians', Gold Coast Bulletin, 2 June 1988, p. 4.
114 For coverage of the meeting, see Louise Pemble, 'World Focus on Stance Against "Japanvasion"', Gold Coast Bulletin, 21 May 1988, p. 7; Louise Pemble, 'Bomb Threat Disrupts "Japanvasion" Meeting', Gold Coast Bulletin, 25 May 1988, p. 3.
115 See, for example, Whiteside’s chapter on the ‘multifunction polis’ in Ross Mouer and Yoshio Sugimoto (eds), The MFP Debate: A Background Reader, Bundoora, Vic.: La Trobe University Press, 1990, pp. 153-9.
adherents had helped to convey the impression that Australia was somehow ‘at war’ with Japan.\textsuperscript{116}

While opposition to Japanese investment might have been expected from the right wing, even leftist analysts, one observer mourned, were often seemingly unable to debate Japanese investment without resorting to racism.\textsuperscript{117} The left-wing pro-environment Rainbow Alliance movement in Victoria declared its opposition to the ‘multifunction polis’ by organising a protest meeting and march in Melbourne in early March 1990. The Alliance’s campaign against the ‘polis’ may not have been racist by intent but, as one critic pointed out, it still appeared to target Japanese investment alone for criticism and used racist cartoons in its campaign literature.\textsuperscript{118} Similarly, Abe David and Ted Wheelwright apparently intended in their 1989 study of foreign investment, entitled \textit{The Third Wave: Australia and Asian Capitalism}, to produce analysis that would not ‘contribute in any way to the backward looking racist attitude of some sections of Australian society’.\textsuperscript{119} Radio commentator Ron Casey subsequently endorsed the book, declaring it ‘prophetic’ and ‘not a racist book’.\textsuperscript{120} However, in its final form, \textit{The Third Wave} focused almost entirely on Asian investment in Australia and its relation to race. One reviewer labelled the book ‘racist to the core’, declaring that it contained ‘shoddy analysis, intellectual dishonesty and barely concealed appeals

\textsuperscript{116} A Japanese reporter, identified only as Sugishita, who had been present at the public meeting in May 1988, reported to the \textit{Yomiuri shimbun} newspaper that he was ‘seized by the illusion’ that he was ‘attending an anti-Japanese rally in a country at war with Japan’. See the English translation of his article: 'Australia like "Nation at War"', \textit{Courier-Mail} (Brisbane), 14 June 1988, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{119} Abe David and Ted Wheelwright, 'Asian Investments, Strategy Consequences, "The Asian Connection"', foreword of draft outline of proposed booklet, n. d., Robin Gollan papers, National Library of Australia, MS9371/9/38. The final book was David and Wheelwright, \textit{The Third Wave}. It was also translated into Japanese by Tsuru Shigeto as \textit{NichiGō masatsu no shin jidai: Ajia shihonshugi no makuake}, Tokyo: Keisō shobō, 1990.
\textsuperscript{120} John Minns, 'The Third Wave: Racist to the Core', \textit{Socialist}, June 1990, p. 9.
to anti-Asian racism’.\textsuperscript{121} Another concluded that the book constituted ‘badly repressed xenophobia’ that would function as ‘an “intellectual” guide and comforter for Australian racism’.\textsuperscript{122}

Many observers were acutely concerned that Australian ‘Japan-bashing’ – even though it had not attained the heights of, for example, George Friedman and Meredith LeBard’s controversial 1991 book \textit{The Coming War with Japan}\textsuperscript{123} – would precipitate a backlash in Japan, perhaps even ‘Australia-bashing’. Fears were voiced, for example, that Australian ‘Japan-bashing’ would put existing and further Japanese investment at risk, as well as Japanese tourism to Australia.\textsuperscript{124} Thus there were calls for Australians to appreciate and overcome their ‘own Japan Problem’, on the basis that Australia could ill afford to let the ‘crazy errors’ of its historical relations with Japan distort the ‘extraordinary possibilities’ now available.\textsuperscript{125} Prime Minister Bob Hawke directly reassured Japanese Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru in 1988, for example, that Japanese people, and their investment, were most welcome in Australia.\textsuperscript{126}

Despite fears of ‘Australia-bashing’, Japanese criticism of Australia never attained the level of ‘America-bashing’. Some Australian observers interpreted the comparative lack of ‘Australia-bashing’ in Japan as demonstrating Japanese understanding that ‘Japan-bashing’ was not a serious problem in Australia, unlike in the United States.\textsuperscript{127} When Japanese commentato
to imply that such ‘bashing’ was not so much specifically Australian but rather that it was part of a generalised Western attitude.\textsuperscript{128} However, the lack of Japanese attention to Australian ‘Japan-bashing’ was undoubtedly more closely linked to the fact that Australia was at the periphery of Japanese media and scholarly interest compared to the United States.\textsuperscript{129} One survey noted, for instance, that for every article published about Australia in the conservative daily \textit{Yomiuri shimbun} newspaper in 1987, thirty-six were published about the United States.\textsuperscript{130} Moreover, the most common topics on Australia, at least in the 1980s, appeared to be koalas and tourism.\textsuperscript{131} Nevertheless, Australian observers continued to keep a close eye on negative Japanese media coverage, such as reports of Australian opposition to the ‘multifunction polis’.\textsuperscript{132}

In the end, there was little evidence to suggest that the generally amicable relations between Australia and Japan were being damaged by ‘Japan-bashing’. Even at the peak of Australian criticism of Japan in the late 1980s, for example, there appeared to be minimal impact on Australia’s official stance towards Japan. Japan continued to be assessed as a ‘natural’ and vital partner for Australia, and many commentators warmly endorsed official moves to enhance Australian relations with Japan. In 1995, the Joint Declaration on the Australia-Japan Partnership was signed, with both countries

\textsuperscript{129} Sugimoto, 'Australia-Japan', p. 174.
\textsuperscript{130} Reported in Peter Hartcher, 'It's Time for New Friends in Japan', \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 2 July 1988, p. 72.
\textsuperscript{131} Tada, 'Japanese Newspaper Representations of Australia', p. 177.
promising to pursue an ‘enduring and steadfast partnership’. Furthermore, Australian ‘Japan-bashing’, such as it was, appeared to have little impact in Japan itself. In late 1988, for instance, Australia was nominated by Japanese respondents to a survey conducted by the polling company Nippon Research Center, on behalf of the Australian Embassy in Tokyo, as the most ‘trustworthy’ foreign nation from Japan’s point of view ahead of ten other nations, including the United States. This was an improvement on the results of a similar survey conducted in 1986 when Australia was rated fourth.

While the American portrayal of Japan as a ‘problem’ continued well into the 1990s, negative views of Japan were already being reconsidered in Australia as the public debate over the ‘multifunction polis’ wound down in 1990. The short duration of public criticism of Japan perhaps demonstrated that Australian concerns were typically linked to specific issues, such as the ‘polis’, rather than with Japan as a whole, as appeared to be the case in the United States. Moreover, as time passed, Australian attention refocused on Japan’s own economic decline, which was causing Japanese investment rates in Australia to fall. This resulted in the stalling or cancellation of many Japanese development projects, including the ‘polis’, which was eventually shelved in 1997. As elsewhere, commentators in Australia who had once spoken about Japan’s economic power now identified crucial weaknesses in Japan’s political-economic system. For instance, in 1998 Peter Hartcher published a book about Japan’s Ministry of Finance entitled *The Ministry: How Japan’s Most Powerful Institution Endangers World Markets*. ‘Japan-bashing’, even in its less prominent version in Australia, had

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seemingly dissipated by the mid-1990s. However, the term and the alleged practice have continued to influence discourse about Japan in Australia, as they have elsewhere.

Discourses about the supposed ‘Japan Problem’ in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s demonstrated that there was no single, generic understanding of the ‘problem’ in Western countries. Australian discourses revealed differences from as well as similarities to those in the United States. As we have seen, the term ‘Japan-bashing’ was eventually adopted in Australia from the United States to describe criticism of Japan. However, the belief that ‘Japan-bashing’ was a practice occurring in the United States and Europe often allowed commentators to effectively side-step the issue of whether it was also occurring in Australia. Nevertheless, as has been shown, a form of ‘Japan-bashing’ did emerge in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s, leading many observers to argue that Australians had to ‘heal’ themselves of their own ‘Japan Problem’.

While ‘Japan-bashing’ might appear to have been a one-sided phenomenon emanating from the West, it was not. Chapter Five examines the spread of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ to Japan itself, and discusses Japanese responses, including the rise of ‘America-bashing’.

\[136\] Patience, ‘Confronting a Terrible Legacy’, pp. 30-1.
CHAPTER FIVE

JAPANESE RESPONSES TO ‘JAPAN-BASHING’

By the mid-1980s, the concept of ‘Japan-bashing’ had spread to Japan, where it was widely viewed as a synonym for foreign, particularly Western, criticism of Japan. The alleged practice of ‘bashing’ elicited a lively reaction in the general press in Japan, in business magazines, intellectual journals, and elsewhere. Reactions to ‘Japan-bashing’ varied and disagreements arose about what was and was not ‘bashing’, why Japan had become the target of the ‘revisionists’ and, above all, how Japanese people should respond. Such debates ultimately helped to transform Japanese discourse about Japan itself and about how the nation related to the rest of the world, particularly ‘the West’.

This chapter first examines the general media and scholarly reaction in Japan to ‘Japan-bashing’ in the 1980s and 1990s. It argues that the active involvement of numerous Japanese commentators, including politicians, bureaucrats, business leaders, academics and journalists, in the debate over the ‘Japan Problem’ served to distinguish ‘bashing’ from earlier outbreaks of anti-Japanese sentiment, particularly those which had been most deeply affected by ‘orientalism’. In orientalism, the ‘Oriental’ nation is spoken about by ‘the West’, and is more or less silent about, though sometimes complicit in, the creation of negative stereotypes about itself. However, Japanese participation in national and international discourses to counter alleged ‘bashing’ demonstrated that Japanese observers were no longer prepared to leave outside commentary on Japan unanswered.

The chapter then analyses the various Japanese responses to the revisionists and their critics, particularly focusing on the rising tide of opposition to ‘bashing’. While the ‘American dream’, in the form of superstars and commercial goods, certainly
remained very popular in Japan,¹ disdain, dislike or even hatred for the United States simultaneously seemed to be increasing. By the 1990s, this reaction had been given the obvious label of ‘America-bashing’ which, in turn, exacerbated ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States.

‘Japan-bashing’ Spreads to Japan

It is not surprising that Japanese people, who are often said to be acutely preoccupied with Japan’s image as a nation, would find ‘bashing’ an intriguing and, frequently, an offensive phenomenon. The term ‘Japan-bashing’ was apparently acknowledged very early in Japan. Indeed, as noted earlier, Robert Angel contended that it was the Japanese press that first ‘picked up on’ ‘Japan-bashing’ in the late 1970s or early 1980s, and that it was only after extensive Japanese use of the term that it became popular in the United States.² However, the opposite trajectory has been assumed by many Japanese observers, who have argued that the expression ‘Japan-bashing’ was only adopted in Japan in the mid-1980s after widespread media use in the United States in the early part of the decade.³ Certainly, it was not until the mid-1980s that the term first entered into Japanese-language dictionaries, where it was rendered as ‘日本叩き’ (Nihon tataki or Japan-bashing) or transliterated into katakana as ‘ジャパン・バッシンググ’ (Japan basshingu or Japan-bashing).⁴ In many cases, commentators seemed to

⁴ ‘Japan-bashing’ appeared as a ‘new word’ in the 1986 edition of Gendai yōgo no kiso chishiki, Tōkyō: Jiyūkokuminsha, 1986, reported in ibid. It has also appeared in, for example, Samuel E. Martin, Martin's Concise Japanese Dictionary, Tokyo: Charles E.
prefer ‘Japan basshingu’ over ‘Nihon tataki’. As Nanette Gottlieb has pointed out, the choice of a katakana term when an alternative is available sometimes indicates a desire to emphasise the term’s gairaigo (foreign language) status, as well as to imply criticism of it.5

Regardless of the initial trajectory of the term, Japanese observers were well aware by the early 1980s that a resurgence in anti-Japanese views was occurring in the United States,6 although some suggested that the prevalence of these views might have been exaggerated.7 Perhaps the first to use ‘Japan-bashing’ as a label for this resurgence was Funabashi Yōichi, the prominent writer on diplomatic issues for the liberal Asahi shimbun newspaper. Funabashi reported that ‘Japan-bashing’, which he described as the expression of a ‘terrible anti-Japanese emotion’, had arisen in the United States after Theodore White’s controversial 1985 article on ‘The Danger from Japan’.8 Thereafter it was White, not Robert Angel, who was commonly labelled in Japan as the instigator of ‘Japan-bashing’. Political journalist Suzuki Kenji argued, for example, that it was White – a ‘person of great influence in America’s mass communication world’ – who was the ‘first to warn the United States about the shocking problem of Japan’.9 The dominant response among Japanese observers to

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7 See, for example, Murata Kiyoaki, 'Japan as "Bete Noire": Anti-Japanese Sentiments Abroad are Probably Exaggerated', Japan Times, International Weekly edn, 1 May 1982, p. 3.
reports of White’s article was profound shock. ‘Who in 1945 could have imagined’, historian Homma Nagayo asked, that articles about the ‘danger’ supposedly posed by Japan would again be appearing in ‘respected American journals’?\(^\text{10}\) Or, as journalist and author Ishikawa Yoshimi asked, who would have thought that it would be a Pulitzer prize-winning journalist like White who would resurrect the ‘unpleasant’ memories of the ‘yellow peril’? Japanese reactions to reports of White’s article were so intense, Ishikawa reported, that White eventually refused to discuss his views with Japanese reporters.\(^\text{11}\) Nevertheless, at least one enterprising Japanese observer, Andō Hiroshi, discovered by 1991 that Robert Angel had used the term ‘Japan-bashing’ in a speech in 1983 and tracked him down to ask whether he had invented the term. At this stage, however, Angel had not yet publicly admitted his role in relation to ‘Japan-bashing’, and thus he told Andō only that he had heard the term used in the United States in the early 1980s.\(^\text{12}\)

The appearance of more allegedly ‘Japan-bashing’ media articles, intellectual essays, scholarly books and other publications in Western countries in the late 1980s and into the early 1990s was quickly noted in Japan, and many of these works were swiftly translated into Japanese. The *Asahi shinbun* published a thirty-five part series in early 1990, for example, which summarised the views of a large number of Western writers on contemporary Japan, including Chalmers Johnson, Clyde Prestowitz, T. Boone Pickens, Edwin Reischauer, Ezra Vogel and Alvin Toffler, all under the title of

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\(^{10}\) Homma Nagayo, 'Beyond Bashing: Toward Sounder Japan-U.S. Ties', *Japan Review of International Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 2, Fall-Winter 1987, p. 156.


‘Japan-bashing’,

even though some, like Reischauer and Vogel, were clearly not
‘bashers’. The availability and popularity of some translations of Western writings is
suggested in the picture below of stacks of the Japanese-language version of James

![Image: Books authored by "revisionists" are hot sellers in Japan.]

**Figure 5.1: ‘Hot Sellers’, reproduced from**


The Japanese version of George Friedman and Meredith LeBard’s 1991 *The Coming
War with Japan* reached number one on the *Asahi shimbun*’s list of top-selling business
books in late May 1991, stayed in the top ten until the end of the year and, by early

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13 ‘Nihon tataki no shinsō: Amerikajin no Nihonkan’, *Asahi shimbun*, 5-18 January, 6-27
described this as a series presenting the ‘American Japan-basher du jour’; Sheldon
1992, had reportedly sold 150,000 copies.\textsuperscript{15} Even a collection of American jokes about ‘Japan-bashing’ was assembled, translated and published in Japan.\textsuperscript{16}

Such extensive coverage and examination of ‘Japan-bashing’ naturally made the concept better known in Japan than elsewhere. For example, while some twenty-eight per cent of Americans indicated in a 1990 poll that they were familiar with the term ‘Japan-bashing’,\textsuperscript{17} as mentioned earlier, the level was much higher in Japan, at about fifty-four per cent,\textsuperscript{18} probably in large measure because the Japanese media reportedly used the term ‘Japan-bashing’ far more than did the American media.\textsuperscript{19} More extended comment on ‘Japan-bashing’ was produced in both English and Japanese by such noted commentators as historian Homma Nagayo; sociologists Ishi Tomoji and Kashiwagi Hiroshi; journalist and editor Shimomura Mitsuko; politician and former Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro; political scientist and later politician Masuzoe Yōichi; and literary critic Etō Jun.\textsuperscript{20} Various companies also joined in, with the Japanese advertising agency Dentsu Inc., for example, backing the launch of a subscription-only monthly newsletter in the United States in January 1989 entitled \textit{Japan Bashing Alert}, which categorised American media articles on Japan as either positive, negative or neutral from Japan’s

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
point of view. Even the occasional non-Japanese resident of Japan, such as Bill Totten, a prominent and successful American businessman, felt compelled to write at length in Japanese on the topic of ‘Japan-bashing’.

‘Japan-bashing’ from Japan’s Perspective

Many Japanese observers acknowledged that ‘Japan-bashing’ appeared to be very pervasive, not only in the United States but also in Europe, Asia and Australia. Partly for this reason, some commentators perceived ‘bashing’ as further evidence of Japan’s victimisation by other nations, a victimisation which international business scholar Yoshimori Masaru described in 1982 as the ‘perennial curse of the Japanese’. Similarly, political scientist Nakajima Hiroyuki described ‘Japan-bashing’ in 1988 as ‘a kind of international bullying’ (isshu no kokusai ijime). Ten years later, critic Saji Yoshihiko suggested that ‘Japan-bashing’ would more accurately be described as ‘ganging up on Japan’ (Nihon fukurodataki).

26 Saji Yoshihiko, "Fukurodataki" Nihonshi: Japan basshingu wa naze okoruka?, Tōkyō: Bungeisha, 1998. For other commentators who used the term ‘Nihon fukurodataki’, see Ikeda and Aida, ‘Seiō no Nihon tataki ni dō tsukiauka’, p. 130. This expression had also been used in the early 1970s by newspaper editorialist Takeyama Yasuo to describe Western attitudes to Japan: Takeyama Yasuo, Fukurodataki no Nihon: amakunai heiwa kokka no michi, Tōkyō: Saimaru shuppankai, 1972.
While acknowledging that ‘bashing’ appeared to be widespread, many Japanese observers nonetheless tended to focus specifically on the United States. This tight focus was perhaps one consequence of the tendency to view ‘the world’ as synonymous with ‘the West’, and furthermore, to view ‘the West’ as synonymous with the United States, a conflation which somewhat distorted Japanese views of the world. However, it also resulted from a realistic appreciation of the fact that ‘Japan-bashing’ had begun in the United States, and that the United States remained very much in the vanguard of ‘Japan-bashing’ until the late 1990s.\(^{27}\) It was only with the decline of Western ‘Japan-bashing’ around that time that the focus of Japanese observers turned more towards apparent ‘Japan-bashing’ in Asian countries, particularly China and South Korea.

Many Western commentators considered that Japanese observers were extremely, if not overly, sensitive to ‘bashing’, and that they almost universally perceived it as an outright attack on Japan, one that was often racist. Perhaps the loudest proponent of the view that racism was involved was the novelist, nationalist politician and later Governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintarō, who described the ‘root cause’ of ‘Japan-bashing’ as racial prejudice.\(^{28}\) However, contrary to many Western perceptions, there has been no consensus in Japan about how to understand ‘Japan-bashing’. As one Japanese analysis pointed out, there was in fact no ‘well-designed standardized measuring instrument’ of ‘Japan-bashing’, nor of the foreign ‘elements’ considered to be responsible for it. Moreover, this analysis even suggested that ‘bashing’ was not necessarily linked to racism.\(^{29}\)

As in the West, most Japanese observers found it very difficult to establish which practices might qualify as ‘bashing’. Naturally enough, cases of actual discrimination

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\(^{27}\) Funabashi, ‘Dochira ga sensō ni katta no ka?’, p. 4.
or expressions of outright racism against Japan, or against individuals or companies who were or appeared to be Japanese, were routinely included. For instance, American sanctions against Japan’s Toshiba Corporation in 1988 in retaliation against the sale of sensitive strategic technology to the Soviet Union were perceived as ‘Japan-bashing’, as they penalised Toshiba more than Norwegian and French firms which had done the same thing. When a Toshiba product was destroyed on Capitol Hill in 1987, participants such as Republican representative Helen Delich Bentley earned the status in Japan of a ‘big Japan-basher’. Similarly, American opposition to Japanese business presence and investment in the United States was often labelled as ‘bashing’ on the basis that Japanese investment was being viewed as a ‘menace’ (kyōi) or as an ‘invasion’, whereas investment from other nations went almost without notice. For instance, many Japanese commentators noted that while the sale of Columbia Pictures to Sony in 1989 created huge controversy in the United States, there was a general lack of reaction to the sale of the MGM film studio to Australia’s Quintex Group or the sales of Mobil Oil and Holiday Inn to British companies. Similarly, the cancellation in 1992 of a contract for Sumitomo to provide rail cars to the city of Los Angeles after a successful ‘Buy American’ campaign was viewed as ‘Japan-bashing’.

In other situations, however, as some Japanese observers pointed out, it was ‘not a simple thing’ to draw the line between criticism of Japan and ‘bashing’. On the one hand, some Japanese commentators appeared to be so sensitive to foreign criticism that

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33 Ishi and Kashiwagi, Amerika no naka no Nihon kigyō, pp. 4-11, 34-54.
34 Ibid., p. iii.
they viewed all of it as amounting to ‘bashing’, regardless of any justification that might exist. Thus, the ranks of ‘bashers’ could include Japanese commentators, if they appeared to take the side of foreign ‘bashers’. Even Sony chairman Morita Akio claimed that he was occasionally labelled as a ‘Japan-basher’ because of perceptions that he criticised the Japanese political-economic system.\(^{35}\) On the other hand, many other Japanese observers suggested that mere criticism of Japan did not constitute ‘bashing’, which only occurred when there was no reasonable basis for the criticism. For example, according to one analysis, foreign criticism of Japanese politicians for their occasional, apparently racist statements about American society – such as Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro’s assertion in 1986 that the level of education in the United States was low because of the presence of ‘many blacks, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans’ – did not amount to ‘Japan-bashing’ as there was a logical basis for such criticism.\(^{36}\)

While the majority of the criticism characterised in Japan as ‘bashing’ was perceived as American in origin, there were some doubts about whether ‘Japan-bashing’ really was widespread in the United States. On the one hand, ‘Japan-bashing’ was regarded by some Japanese observers as a pervasive practice, one which was ‘no longer limited to a handful of outspoken Japan bashers’.\(^{37}\) A survey of Japanese television news coverage in the early 1990s found, for example, that the second most common impression conveyed of the United States was that Americans were given to ‘bashing’ Japan.\(^{38}\) At the same time, however, some Japanese observers were careful to suggest

\(^{35}\) As reported by Morita in 'Sony Chairman Says Burden is on Tokyo to Improve', *Japan Times*, International Weekly edn, 1-7 February 1993, p. 7.


\(^{37}\) See, for example, Homma Nagayo, 'The Peril of Revisionism', *Japan Review of International Affairs*, vol. 4, no. 1, Spring/Summer 1990, p. 4.

\(^{38}\) The first impression was that the United States was a violent place: Hara Yumiko, 'Images of Foreign Countries in Television News', in Mansfield Center for Pacific Affairs (ed.), *Creating Images: American and Japanese Television News Coverage of the Other*, Washington D.C.: Mansfield Center for Pacific Affairs, 1997, pp. 58-9.
that this might be a flawed perception. Questioning whether 'Japan-bashing' really was 'America’s favorite indoor sport', journalist and editor Shimomura Mitsuko concluded that the answer was both yes and no, as for every American 'Japanophobe' there was a 'Japanophile'. Several commentators pointed out that ‘Japan-bashing’ appeared to be a ‘special problem’ found only in Washington and, more specifically, in Congress. As evidence of the limited extent of ‘bashing’, they pointed to the prevalence of favourable images of Japan in the United States, as demonstrated by polls which revealed ‘overwhelmingly positive’ feelings towards Japan. For these commentators, the prime culprits in overstating the extent of American ‘Japan-bashing’ were in the Japanese media. As Saeki Shōichi maintained, Japanese perceptions of ‘Japan-bashing’ had been skewed because media coverage focused almost exclusively on Washington.

Opinions about the origins of ‘bashing’ varied in Japan, as they did elsewhere. Quite naturally, many Japanese commentators drew a parallel between ‘Japan-bashing’ and the anti-Japanese views which had been expressed in Western countries in earlier periods. However, some pointed out that perceptions of Japan as a ‘problem’ were, perhaps, less about Japan itself and more about the immediate international context. A number of commentators concluded, as did some of their Western colleagues, that ‘Japan-bashing’ bore a marked resemblance to earlier criticism of the Soviet Union as a ‘villain’ (akudama). Thus, as Funabashi Yōichi suggested, the decline of the Soviet

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Union meant that Japan had simply become the ‘new enemy’ for the United States.\textsuperscript{44} This interpretation was bolstered in the late 1980s by Japanese reporting of various opinion polls which concluded that many Americans felt more threatened by Japan’s economic power than they did by the military power of the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{45} For its part, the Japanese government, as well as many commentators, rejected the characterisation of Japan as a ‘threat’ to any Western country.\textsuperscript{46}

Many Japanese observers accurately discerned that American perceptions of the ‘Japan Problem’ were not simply a continuation of old prejudices but, rather, had originated in competing intellectual paradigms about Japan in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s, and particularly in the paradigm identified as ‘revisionism’ (translated into Japanese as ‘\textit{minaoshirō}’), which was reported in Japan in late 1989.\textsuperscript{47}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure52.jpg}
\caption{‘Revise Japan’, \textit{Newsweek}, 26 October 1989.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{44} Funabashi, 'Dochira ga sensō ni katta no ka?', p. 4. Other commentators who made a similar link included Ishi and Kashiwagi, \textit{Amerika no naka no Nihon kigyō}, p. 186; Ōmae, 'Amerika yo', p. 257; Shimomura, \textit{Nihon tataki no shinsō}, pp. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{45} The polls were mentioned in, for example, 'Bei de "Nihon ishitsuron", taiōsaku saguru Gaimushō bunka masatsuka o ken'en', \textit{Asahi shimbun}, 9 October 1989, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{47} For the identification of ‘revisionism’ in Japan, see Tracy Dahlby, 'Taitō suru Nihon minaoshiron', \textit{Newsweek}, Japanese edn, 26 October 1989, pp. 8-15.
Thanks to prominent coverage of the revisionists (who were known in Japan as the ‘shūseishugisha’ or ‘minaoshironsha’) and their opponents, namely, the so-called Japanophiles (chiNichika) or Japan apologists (Nihon no benkaisha), consumers of the Japanese media were soon well aware of the supposed ideological leanings of many American commentators.\(^48\)

As in the United States, the revisionists and their critics were quickly relabelled in Japan as the ‘takakei’ (‘bashing’ group) and the ‘kiku kurabu’ (Chrysanthemum Club).\(^49\)

However, Japanese perceptions of American discourse about Japan did differ somewhat from American perceptions. Historian Satō Ryūzō argued, for example, that not all Japanologists should be considered members of the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’, even if they were pro-Japanese. According to Satō, there were actually three, rather than two, different ideological groups among American commentators on Japan. The third group comprised ‘Japanologists’, who were ‘fluent in Japanese, have a profound knowledge of Japanese history and culture, and are regarded as having a sympathetic understanding of Japan’. Satō thought the best example of a balanced Japanologist was Edwin Reischauer, whereas the orthodox American interpretation of Reischauer was that he was the spiritual leader of the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’. For Satō, the members of the so-called Chrysanthemum Club were ‘mainstream politicians or political advisers’, whereas Japanologists were ‘first and foremost scholars’, although Reischauer, he

\(^{48}\) See, for example, the Yomiuri shimbun’s reproduction of Ronald A. Morse’s famous ‘movers and shakers’ chart which rated American commentators on their ‘hawk’ status regarding Japan: Yomiuri shimbun, 22 October 1991, reproduced in George Akita, Taikoku Nihon Amerika no kyōi to chōsen: Ribijonisuto no shikō to kōdō, Tōkyō: Nihon hyōronsha, 1993, p. 11.

admitted, was an unusual case among scholars given his political influence in both the United States and Japan.  

Japanese reactions to the ideological debates about Japan in the United States were mixed. On the one hand, many observers reflected positively on American commentators who appeared to be members of the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’. Perhaps the chief candidate for praise was Ezra Vogel, who had declared Japan in 1979 as ‘number one’, although Paul Kennedy was equally well regarded for his conclusion in 1987 that Japan was becoming a new ‘great power’ with the decline of the United States.  

Foreign commentators who defended Japan from criticism were judged favourably. Journalist Hirai Takaaki referred to ‘Japanophiles’ like Vogel, for example, as ‘guardian deities’ (shugoshin). Japanese commentators thus sought to sustain their apparent supporters in turn, and the ‘moral crusade’ by some American commentators to label those sympathetic to Japan as ‘Japan handlers’ or ‘Japan apologists’ was denounced by at least one Japanese commentator as the ‘McCarthyism of the 1990s’.  

On the other hand, the ‘Gang of Four’, the so-called ‘yoningumi’ of Johnson, Prestowitz, Fallows and van Wolferen, attracted considerable, generally critical, attention from Japanese scholars and journalists and, frequently, from sections of the government. While the ‘Gang of Four’ was regarded, as in the United States, as the mainstay of ‘revisionism’, Japanese perceptions of the internal dynamics of the group were more murky. As elsewhere, Johnson was usually described in Japan as the

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‘godfather’ of revisionism,\(^{54}\) although he was occasionally also assigned joint ‘head of household’ (shujinkō) status with van Wolferen.\(^{55}\) Individual leadership roles were also sporadically ascribed to van Wolferen, Fallows and Prestowitz.\(^{56}\) Interestingly, despite the fact that van Wolferen was interviewed extensively, both in the Japanese print media and on television, he was occasionally omitted completely from the list of revisionists, perhaps because he was Dutch rather than American.\(^{57}\) ‘Revisionism’ was also said to influence a wide range of other commentators, including Theodore White, Pat Choate, Richard Gephardt, Ronald Morse, Peter Drucker, George Friedman, Meredith LeBard and Michael Crichton, as well as less prominent figures, such as author Robert Whiting, defence strategist Edward N. Luttwak, former Tokyo embassy official Kevin L. Kearns and political economist William S. Dietrich.\(^{58}\)

The major premise of ‘revisionism’ was understood to be that Japan’s political-economic system was ‘different’ from that of ‘the West’. For instance, the Asahi shimbun explained ‘revisionism’ to its readership in 1991 as the foreign view that Japan was a ‘different, closed society’ (ishitsu no heiseiteki na shakai), where ‘market principles and the mechanisms of free trade do not work’ (shijō genri ya jiyü bōeki no mekanizumu ga hatarakanaï).\(^{59}\) ‘Revisionism’ was regarded in Japan as both an ‘intriguing’ and a ‘disturbing’ trend.\(^{60}\) For some observers, particularly supporters of Nihonjinron theories who had consistently upheld Japan as a ‘unique’ nation, the


\(^{55}\) Akita, Taikoku Nihon, p. vi.


\(^{57}\) According to Shimomura Mitsuko, for example, the ‘three opinion leaders’ of revisionism were Johnson, Prestowitz and Fallows: Shimomura, Nihon tataki no shinsō, p. 5.

\(^{58}\) See, for example, the extensive list printed on the cover page of Akita, Taikoku Nihon.


description of Japan as different from other countries was unsurprising. For others, however, such views simply meant that Japan was considered by foreigners to be a ‘problem’. This characterisation quite naturally received much less support from within Japan, and concerns grew about the increasing influence of ‘revisionism’ throughout the late 1980s.

By 1990, the revisionist perception that Japan was a ‘problem’ was considered by many observers, including in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to be very influential in the United States.\(^{61}\) Such influence was most apparent to Japanese observers in Washington, especially in the case of the ‘anti-Japan trade hawks’ (taiNichikyōkōha) in Congress.\(^{62}\) The passage of Democrat Representative Richard Gephardt’s ‘Super 301’ provision in the Omnibus Trade Act of 1988 was a particular watershed in that, as we have seen, Japan was subsequently cited by the George H. W. Bush administration as an ‘unfair’ (fukōhei) trading nation in an attempt to force it to negotiate on a range of trade issues or face retaliation from the United States. Even before the act was passed, political scientist and politician Masuzoe Yōichi openly described the Gephardt amendment as ‘Japan-bashing’. While he acknowledged that Congress often functioned as a kind of forum for the ‘venting’ of opinions (isshū no gasu nuki no ba), Masuzoe argued that this openness was a big problem when it resulted in ‘Japan-bashing’.\(^{63}\) For Japanese observers, the primary impact of ‘bashing’ was on the formulation of American trade policy, but other policy areas relating to Japan were also affected. The ‘hardest blow’ of the heightened ‘Japan-bashing’, political commentator Yayama Tarō


\(^{63}\) Masuzoe, "Nihon tataki" o tatakikaese', p. 71.
asserted, was the Central Intelligence Agency’s controversial ‘Japan: 2000’ report in 1992, discussed earlier.

For many Japanese observers, the revisionists were nothing more than ‘Japan-bashers’, and they could be rebutted and attacked on that basis. Reactions were so extreme that even some Japanese commentators detected ‘ken’okan’ (hatred, disgust or abhorrence) in Japan towards the revisionists. The revisionists themselves often characterised Japanese censure not as a rejection of their ideas so much as personal attack. The explicit claims by certain revisionists that they were not practising ‘Japan-bashing’ were typically discarded in Japan, where such claims were generally seen as disingenuous. George Friedman and Meredith LeBard had proclaimed, for example, that *The Coming War With Japan* was ‘most emphatically not an attack on Japan or an exercise in “Japan bashing”’. However, international affairs expert Kōsaka Masataka noted that when Americans specifically resiled from ‘Japan-bashing’ it was an indication that they felt sufficiently ‘ill at ease about their position’ that they were compelled to defend it.

Reactions in Japan to ‘bashing’ revealed the extent of awareness of international discourses about Japan. They also showed that Japanese forums could in turn become an integral part of such discourses, particularly when those forums drew in foreign participants. For example, Karel van Wolferven’s formulation of the ‘Japan Problem’ provoked a controversy in the pages of numerous influential Japanese-language

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66 Suzuki, *Nichibei 'kiki' to hōdō*, p. 15.
journals, including *Shokun!, Chūō kōron, Gekkan asahi* (Monthly Asahi) and *This is Yomiuri.* The May 1987 issue of *Shokun!*, for example, published no less than seven individual rebuttals of van Wolferen’s original article on the ‘Japan Problem’, written by such notable figures as former Foreign Minister Okita Saburō, Homma Nagayo, Kōsaka Masataka, Diet member Shiina Motoo, and diplomat and jurist Owada Hisashi, the father of future Crown Princess Masako. In *Chūō kōron*, too, both Japanese and foreign commentators, including the academic George R. Packard, responded to van Wolferen’s interpretation of Japan and he, in turn, responded to his critics. However, not all Japanese responses to van Wolferen were entirely critical. Some commentators praised him for raising and widening the level of Japanese debate on Japan, including journalist Shimizu Kunio, who declared that van Wolferen should be thanked for his contribution.

Neither were all Japanese observers convinced that the revisionists could automatically be cast as ‘Japan-bashers’. Shimomura Mitsuko concluded, for example, that characterising the revisionists as ‘bashers’, although convenient, simply ‘distorted’ reality. There was no doubt, certainly, that many of the revisionists had gone beyond exposition of Japan’s ‘differences’ from the West to criticise Japan. However, as Kōsaka Masataka pointed out, such criticism appeared more opportunistic than anything

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70 See, for example, the translation of 'The Japan Problem', in *Shokun!*, vol. 19, no. 4, April 1987, pp. 54-70; and 'The Japan Problem Revisited', in *Chūō kōron*, vol. 105, no. 11, November 1990, pp. 450-61. See also Karel van Wolferen, trans. by Shinohara Masaru, *Nihon: Kenryoku kōzō no nazo*, Tōkyō: Hayakawa shobō, 1990.


72 See, for example, George R. Packard, 'Ribijonisuto sannin shū no gobyū', *Chūō kōron*, vol. 105, no. 1, January 1990, pp. 91-9; Karel van Wolferen, 'Shin no seiji rongi o motenai kuni Nippon', *Chūō kōron*, vol. 105, no. 3, March 1990, pp. 68-89.


74 Shimomura Mitsuko, 'Reisei na ronso shiyō', *Asahi shimbun*, 20 March 1990, p. 4; Shimomura, 'Japan Cannot Have it Both Ways', p. 36.
else, as works written from a ‘critical perspective’ usually sold better. At the same time, Japanese observers acknowledged that criticism of Japan had been sensationalised not only in the United States but also in Japan itself, perhaps deliberately, as some revisionists asserted.

The case of James Fallows perhaps best illustrated this contention. Fallows’ profile in Japan was high: one Asahi shimbun interview described him as an opinion leader of the ‘highest’ influence, who was supposedly living in Japan in order to ‘point out the problems of Japanese society’. It was Fallows’ controversial call to ‘contain’ Japan in May 1989, however, that gained him the most attention; his article was swiftly translated and published in the influential monthly magazine Chūō kōron in July 1989. The spirited Japanese reaction to the article reportedly led to repeated discussions between Fallows and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Fallows defended his ‘containment’ thesis by saying that he had written it for his American readership and had not anticipated it being read in Japan. This explanation was seen as rather specious by some Japanese commentators, who argued that in a ‘borderless world’ everything should be written from the premise that a ‘worldwide audience’ would be reading it. On the other hand, as Satō Ryūzō noted, the Japanese word ‘fūjikome’, chosen as a translation of Fallows’ ‘containing’, had far stronger overtones than its

75 Kōsaka, Satō and Yamazaki, 'Containment Jargon', p. 4.
79 Quoted in Shimomura, 'Reisei na ronsō shiyō', p. 4.
80 Ibid.
English counterpart. In Satō’s opinion, many Japanese readers had therefore overreacted to Fallows’ article. Satō argued that ‘the meaning of contain is necessarily defensive; the overtones of the word fūjikome are a hundred-per-cent offensive and imply a preemptive strike’.\(^8^1\) Interestingly, when Fallows’ book entitled More Like Us was translated into Japanese in 1989 it was retitled as Nihon fūjikome: tsuyoi Nihon vs makikaesu Amerika (Containing Japan: Strong Japan versus Declining America), which, apart from anything else, demonstrated the strength of the connection that had been made in Japan between Fallows and his ‘containment’ thesis.\(^8^2\)

Nevertheless, even if the revisionists were not necessarily ‘Japan-bashers’, they were still viewed as closely linked to the spread of ‘bashing’ in the United States. Homma Nagayo argued, for example, that revisionism helped to provide a ‘theoretical framework for advocates of protectionism to attack Japan’, and thus gave an ‘intellectual base’ to ideas that had previously been dismissed as mere ‘Japan-bashing’.\(^8^3\) This argument echoed the description in the United States of ‘Japan-bashing’ as originally a ‘blue-collar’ phenomenon that was now endorsed in more intellectual fashion by the revisionists. The American media were also considered to have encouraged the spread of ‘bashing’, particularly through their reliance on terminology such as ‘invasion’ (shinnyū), ‘attack’ (kōgeki), ‘war’ (sensō) and ‘battle’ (tatakau) in relation to disputes with Japan,\(^8^4\) even though the Japanese media often used similar terminology about Western countries.\(^8^5\) A particular Japanese target for criticism was Newsweek’s famous ‘Japan Invades Hollywood’ interpretation of Sony’s

\(^{82}\) Fallows, Nihon fūjikome.
\(^{83}\) Homma, ‘The Peril of Revisionism’, pp. 6, 16.
\(^{84}\) Ishi and Kashiwagi, Amerika no naka no Nihon kigyō, pp. 4, 7.
\(^{85}\) Frank Gibney noted, for example, that the arrival of foreign companies in Japan in the post-war period was routinely described in the Japanese media as a ‘landing’ (jōriku), a term which bore connotations of a military invasion: Frank Gibney, 'Fifty Years of Journalism, Japanese and American Style', in Akira Iriye and Robert A. Wampler (eds), Partnership: The United States and Japan 1951-2001, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2001, p. 283.
purchase of Columbia Pictures in 1989, which was extensively covered in Japan. As shown below, the Japanese edition of this issue, published under licence by the Japanese firm TBS-Britannica, was entitled simply ‘Sonī shingeki’, which was widely understood in Japan as meaning ‘Sony’s Advance’ rather than ‘Sony’s Attack’. As this title referred to Sony directly, rather than Japan as a whole, and it had ‘toned down’ the level of rhetoric, it was viewed as far less sensational and inflammatory than the title used in the American edition.

Most Japanese observers took ‘Japan-bashing’ very seriously, not only because of the aspersions it cast on Japan but also because of the impact it appeared to be having on Japanese perceptions of and relations with the United States. More than one


87 See, for example, Andō, Nichibei jōhō masatsu, pp. 104-5.
commentator suggested that relations were at their lowest levels since World War II. 88

In 1989 it was reported, for example, that young Japanese now envisioned the United States as ‘enemy number one’. 89 Such views of the United States were described in Japanese as ‘bubei’ (侮米) or contempt for the United States, or as ‘kenbei’ (嫌米) or dislike/hatred for the United States. 90 The rise of negative views of the United States was attributed by Japanese commentators not only to economic friction between the United States and Japan but, also, specifically to the United States’ treatment of Japan during the Gulf War of 1990-91. In one widespread Japanese view of events, for instance, the United States had pressured Japan to support the war effort despite Japan’s constitutional restraints on military operations, then complained vociferously about the paucity of Japan’s contribution and, to make matters worse, snubbed Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki by failing to invite him to post-war celebrations in Washington. 91

The term ‘kenbei’, the one most commonly used to describe negative Japanese views of the United States, was apparently coined by novelist Tanaka Yasuo in May 1991 in his comparison of perceptions of the United States during the Vietnam War with those of the Gulf War period. 92 Literary critic Etō Jun and Homma Nagayo then used

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88 See, for example, Murakami Kaoru, 'Nichibei kankei ga sengo saiaku', Zaikai tembō, July 1991, pp. 128-33.
90 These terms were apparently harsher than the adjective ‘hanbei’ (反米) or anti-American, which had been used to represent the Japanese left’s ideological opposition to the military alliance between the United States and Japan in the immediate post-war period. See the extensive discussion of all three terms in Itoh Mayumi, 'Japanese Perceptions of the United States', Asian Survey, vol. 23, no. 12, December 1993, pp. 1122-35; Itoh Mayumi, Globalization of Japan: Japanese Sakoku Mentality and U.S. Efforts to Open Japan, London: Macmillan, 2000, pp. 47-65.
91 Nakasone, ‘Beyond Kenbei and Japan-bashing’, p. 1. See also Ishi and Kashiwagi, Amerika no naka no Nihon kigyō, p. 22.
92 Tanaka Yasuo and Asada Akira, 'Yūkoku hōdan', CREA, May 1991, pp. 27-9. Ishikawa Yoshimi also claimed that he had coined the term, suggesting that negative attitudes resulted from ‘Japan’s impotence when faced with America’s demands’ for action during the Gulf War: see Ishikawa Yoshimi, Shinbei, hanbei, kenbei ron, Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, 1992. Ishikawa denied, however, that the term meant ‘contempt’ for the
both ‘kenbei’ and ‘bubei’ in an article for *Bungei shunjū* (Literary Chronicles) in June 1991. By 1992, even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had acknowledged the supposed public trend of ‘kenbei’. The word was reportedly used in Japan to describe a range of emotions about the United States, ranging from a ‘sad, almost nostalgic sense of loss over America’s fall from grace’, as demonstrated by its economic decline, to an ‘open contempt’ or a ‘gut-level dislike of America’. Not too surprisingly, some commentators concluded that because ‘kenbei’ was so widespread, a form of ‘war’ was underway between Japan and the United States. However, other Japanese observers suggested that perceptions of ‘kenbei’ had perhaps been exaggerated. Surveys of public opinion conducted between 1986 and 1992 by the Public Information Division of the Japanese Prime Minister’s Office revealed, for example, that many Japanese respondents still ‘liked’ the United States, even during the apparent peak of ‘Japan-bashing’, as shown in the chart below.


93 Etō and Homma, ‘”Shinbei” to ‘hanbei’ no aida”, pp. 95-102.
96 See, for example, Matsumoto Ken'ichi, 'Kibun wa mō, Nichibei sensō', *Chūō kōron*, vol. 105, no. 2, February 1989, pp. 122-7.
Table 5.1: ‘Do the Japanese Like the U.S.?’

Most observers in Japan recognised that rather than endlessly debating the origins, trajectory or applicability of the term ‘Japan-bashing’, it was necessary to formulate some kind of Japanese response other than anti-Americanism. An editorial in the Japan Times in March 1990 concluded that there was too much at stake to linger on questions of ‘revisionists’, ‘chrysanthemums’ or ‘Japan bashers’.97 For his part, Sony chairman Morita Akio argued that it was ‘simply terrible’ that a word like ‘war’ could be used in relation to the United States and Japan, particularly when, in his view, the destinies of the two countries were so closely linked.98 He therefore also argued that there was ‘no time to bash each other’, only time for ‘constructive action’ to resolve the issues that existed between Japan and the United States.99

Japanese commentators presented a wide variety of recommendations for how to resolve the problem of ‘bashing’. All too often, however, their proposed solutions assumed that ‘bashing’ was simply a one-sided and completely unjustified offensive by the United States, thereby avoiding the question of Japan’s own responsibility. Too many prominent Japanese, economic journalist Komori Yoshihisa argued, were ‘proudly proclaiming that nothing in Japan needs fixing, that the problems are all on the American side’. 100 As journalist Shimizu Kunio observed in 1990, foreign criticism was typically interpreted in Japan as either a ‘misunderstanding’ (kanchigai) or an expression of ‘hostility’ (tekishi). 101 Thus, for some commentators, ‘Japan-bashing’ could potentially be eliminated through education and information, as it was a phenomenon born in foreign misunderstanding and ignorance about Japan. For others, however, ‘bashing’ was less a product of misunderstanding and more a series of deliberate actions on the part of ‘bashers’ in the United States and elsewhere. Such critics suggested a much firmer Japanese response to ‘bashing’, one which involved striking back at the United States with ‘America-bashing’.

Responses to ‘Japan-bashing’: Bridging the ‘Perception Gap’

The interpretation of ‘Japan-bashing’ as the product of widespread misunderstanding of Japan had its origins in the view that there was a ‘mutual perception gap’ between Japan and the rest of the world. Both Western and Japanese observers suggested that this ‘perception gap’ was related to an ‘information gap’: that is, many Westerners had been, and remained, ignorant about Japan because of the relative lack of coverage of Japan in

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101 Shimizu, 'Wolferen ni kansha shiyō', p. 245.
Western media. Although they offered no proof, Katō Shūichi and Miyazaki Isamu suggested in 1982, for example, that one-third of Americans probably did not know that China and Japan were separate nations. Even if Westerners were not entirely ignorant about Japan, it was often presumed by Japanese observers, particularly proponents of Nihonjinron, that true understanding eluded non-Japanese, as illustrated by the Japan Times newspaper cartoon below.

One Japanese analysis in 1990 suggested that the American debate about Japan had been launched on the ‘basis of misunderstandings’, which, to the authors’ mind, meant that ‘most of those engaged in the debate’ were ‘trapped in a labyrinthine blind alley’.

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The problem of the ‘perception gap’, argued globalisation scholar Okuda Kazuhiko, was ‘doubly worsened by some academics, journalists and trade officials contesting and bashing each other’.  

On the other hand, both Western and Japanese commentators pointed out flaws in the concept of the ‘perception gap’. One American observer argued, for example, that the concept of the ‘gap’ assumed that overcoming it would help one nation see the ‘rightness’ of the other nation’s point of view. Most nations, however, are usually ‘convinced that they have “right” on their side’. Indeed, as a Japanese observer pointed out, those in Japan who advocated ‘mutual understanding’ often disregarded the necessity for Japanese to understand other nations, thereby failing to acknowledge that Japanese misunderstandings might also be relevant. Lastly, some argued that in aiming to bridge the ‘perception gap’, commentators were actually ensuring its continuity by continually emphasising the disparities and not the commonalities between the West and Japan. As Homma Nagayo pointed out, the mere belief that Japan was impenetrable or impossible to understand probably sufficed to create friction.

Nevertheless, many Japanese observers did believe that there was a causal link between the ‘perception gap’ and ‘Japan-bashing’ and thus they concluded, logically, that the proper response was to actively promote ‘correct’ and positive images of Japan.


throughout the world. Thus far, argued playwright and critic Yamazaki Masakazu in 1989, Japan bore a ‘large part of the responsibility’ for its own bad reputation on account of ‘not making more of an effort to introduce itself abroad’.¹⁰⁹

Efforts to reduce or eliminate ‘bashing’ by promoting positive images of Japan were undertaken in various ways by the Japanese government, national foundations, politicians, business leaders, academics and the media throughout the 1980s and the 1990s. One of the first official attempts to bridge the ‘gap’ was made by the U.S.-Japan Study Group, a body affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which published a book in May 1982 entitled *100 Questions and Answers: Japan’s Economy and Japan-U.S. Trade*. Despite the book’s name, it contained 103 questions and answers aimed at providing ‘basic material to help Japanese public relations activities in the United States’. The book diplomatically noted, however, that these activities were ‘directed toward resolving American misunderstandings, not toward criticizing such misunderstandings’.¹¹⁰ Similarly, the Japan National Tourist Organization published a bilingual Japanese-English handbook entitled *Make Friends for Japan* in August 1985, which it distributed for free to Japanese travellers. The handbook explicitly aimed at mobilising Japanese to counter ‘bashing’ by encouraging them to play the role of ‘friendship ambassadors’ by ‘informing foreigners of Japan and Japanese people’.¹¹¹

Similar efforts to explain Japan had already been made by private Japanese business interests. The Nippon Steel Corporation, for example, first published its handbook, entitled *Nippon: The Land and its People*, in 1978.¹¹² As the Foreword explained:

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¹⁰⁹ Kōsaka, Satō and Yamazaki, ‘Containment Jargon’, p. 5.
With cooperation between nations being based on mutual understanding, we felt it essential that our employees have an accurate, relevant knowledge of their own country, Japan, to communicate to people of other countries. … We sincerely hope that Nippon, The Land and Its People will help you to obtain a better understanding of Japan.113

While it was ostensibly aimed at Japanese employees, the book was and continues to be widely marketed in Japan, apparently selling over a million copies by 2003.114 By May 1997, Nippon Steel had reportedly sent sets of the audiotape and twelve-volume video version of the book to more than fifty thousand firms, schools and organisations around the world.115 The publisher also now offers the book on the Internet in portable document format.116 Similar volumes were published by Mitsubishi Corporation in 1983, Nisshō Iwai Corporation in 1987 and Taiyō Kōbe Bank Ltd in 1988.117

While official and business publications of this nature raised some eyebrows overseas, it was other kinds of initiatives that attracted the most attention, namely national-level attempts to monitor and manage Japan’s foreign image. The promotion


113 Nippon Steel Corporation, Nippon, pp. iii-iv.
of positive images of a nation through public diplomacy is not an activity exclusive to Japan by any means – as we can see, for example, from France’s Alliance Française, Germany’s Goethe-Institut and the British Council, among others. However, attempts to use such bodies to promote positive images of Japan, as well as the manner in which such activity was undertaken, invited considerable criticism from both Western and Japanese commentators. Even relatively innocuous organisations such as the Japan Foundation, which had been established in 1972 under the direction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote ‘mutual understanding’ between Japan and other nations, were strongly criticised. The Japan Foundation’s efforts to foster the study of Japanese culture in other countries, and particularly its encouragement of Japanese-language teaching, were viewed by some commentators as a kind of Japanese ‘cultural imperialism’ – criticism which itself has been described as ‘Japan-bashing’.

Perhaps the most controversial such organisation linked to the Japanese government has been the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Kokusai Nihon bunka kenkyū sentā or Nichibunken), mentioned in Chapter Four, which was established in Kyoto by the Nakasone Yasuhiro government in May 1987. Former director-general, Yamaori Tetsuo (2001-04), explained the reasoning behind the establishment of the centre:

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119 See, for example, Gottlieb, Language and Society in Japan, pp. 51, 73.
As it made great strides economically in the half-century after World War II, Japan attracted considerable attention. … [However,] misunderstandings of the thought and values of the Japanese people arose fairly often … and Japanese culture was not very well understood. This contributed to the rise of unnecessary friction with other nations. Because of this, there was a growing recognition of the need to show Japanese culture in a way that would be comprehensible to people in other countries, and also to encourage cooperation with Japanese studies researchers around the world.121

While Nichibunken was established to promote comprehensive research on Japanese culture, it has been criticised since its inception for encouraging cultural particularism in the form of *Nihonjinron*. Some critics have argued, for example, that Nichibunken bears some resemblance to the pre-war ultranationalist Kokumin seishin bunka kenkyūjo (Institute for the Study of the Spirit and Culture of Our People),122 which was founded by the Ministry of Education in 1932 and was known for its support, amongst other things, of the concept of Japanese ethnic superiority. Moreover, critics have suggested that Nichibunken researchers have attempted to foster only ‘correct’ images of Japan, as well as implicitly claiming a purely Japanese mandate to judge which images fall into this category. Australian historian Gavan McCormack suggested this agenda following his confrontation with Nichibunken scholar Haga Tōru in 1993, as discussed earlier. McCormack argued that Haga’s accusation that Australian scholars were engaging in ‘Japan-bashing’, and his stated intention to form ‘even closer

122 As reported in Royall Tyler, 'Nichibunken: The Threat is in the Eye of the Beholder', *Asian Studies Review*, vol. 18, no. 1, July 1994, p. 111.
relations’ with ‘real Japan scholars’, demonstrated a ‘mission’ on the part of Nichibunken to interfere in foreign debate about Japan, in this case in Australia. Moreover, the fact that Nichibunken dissociated itself only from Haga’s comments, and not Haga himself, McCormack asserted, strongly suggested that Nichibunken was committed not to vigorous intellectual debate but merely to the promotion of official, and positive, images of Japan.123

In addition to government efforts, various companies established foundations aimed at promoting mutual understanding between the United States and Japan, including, for example, Hitachi, Mitsubishi and Mitsui. Some of these were viewed by non-Japanese observers with great suspicion. Particular questions were raised regarding the United States-Japan Foundation, which was established in 1980 with an endowment of US$44.8 million from the Japan Shipbuilding Industry Foundation (now renamed as the Nippon Foundation). The inaugural chairman of the latter foundation was Sasakawa Ryōichi, who had been indicted, although not tried, as a Class A war criminal at the end of World War II and was reported to have ongoing links to yakuza (gangster) organisations.124 Critics have argued that the United States-Japan Foundation has maintained close contact with Sasakawa interests, a point which reportedly has ‘done nothing’ for the foundation’s credibility.125

While Western critics often claimed that such Japanese initiatives to guide foreign images of Japan were intended to suppress criticism, and condemned them on that basis, these claims were to a certain extent disingenuous. In fact, these Japanese initiatives were frequently undertaken and supported by non-Japanese commentators in Western

124 Sasakawa established the Japan Shipbuilding Industry Foundation with funds derived principally from speedboat racing. For the United States-Japan Foundation, see http://www.us-if.org/, accessed 6 April 2005.
countries. When Robert Angel invented the term ‘Japan-bashing’, for instance, he was president of the Japan Economic Institute of America and he was attempting explicitly to manipulate debate in the United States in a direction favourable to Japan. Moreover, in popularising the expression ‘Japan-bashing’, he helped to foster a more extreme Japanese response to foreign criticism, one that actively denounced ‘bashers’ as well as venturing into a counter-campaign of ‘America-bashing’.

**Responses to ‘Japan-bashing’: ‘America-bashing’**

While some Japanese observers responded to ‘Japan-bashing’ by attempting to bridge the ‘perception gap’, others suggested that this would be a futile exercise, as ‘bashing’ was not really about Japan at all. For instance, economic commentator Shimomura Osamu frequently declared that the ‘Japan Problem’ was actually the ‘America Problem’, as the United States was attempting to blame Japan for its own difficulties.126 This interpretation seemed popular in Japan, with some sixty-four per cent of respondents agreeing in a 1990 survey that negative American attitudes towards Japan were just an attempt to use Japan as a scapegoat for American ills.127 Morita Akio similarly suggested that many American commentators were simply locked into a ‘big nation’ image of the United States and were failing to recognise that this image was now out of date.128 James Fallows, Kōsaka Masataka noted, had not been able to discard the assumption that the United States ‘is (and should be) all-powerful’.129 This view of the United States contributed to a skewed interpretation of the term ‘Japan-

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129 Kōsaka, Satō and Yamazaki, 'Containment Jargon', pp. 4-5.
bashing’, namely that it meant ‘Japan-blaming’; that is, blaming Japan for the United States’ problems.\textsuperscript{130}

Many Japanese observers noted that while denial of the United States’ own economic decline, as well as jealousy of Japan’s success, played a part in ‘Japan-bashing’, inherent prejudice and bias, if not a tradition of outright racism towards Japan, were also relevant. In this context, as mentioned earlier, some commentators equated ‘bashing’ with the ‘second coming’ of the ‘black ships’, recalling the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry’s fleet in 1853, or as the ‘third opening’ of Japan, following the forcible opening of Japan first by Perry and then by the Occupation forces between 1945 and 1952.\textsuperscript{131} The United States’ supposedly proprietary attitude towards Japan was highlighted in one Asahi shimbun cartoon, shown below. A giant American holds out documents entitled ‘Japan’s Reconstruction Plan’ (Nihon kaizō keikaku) and ‘Demand for Reform to Structural Barriers’ (Kōzō shōheki kaizen e yōkyū) to a small, bowing Mount Fuji labelled as the ‘Japan that cannot say no’ (no to ienai Nihon). The caption, in an allusion to the Occupation, asks plaintively ‘the post-war is not over?’

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Many Japanese commentators took particular exception to the prevalence in the United States of terms like ‘containment’ and ‘sanction’ in relation to Japan, which they saw as implying that the West held the moral high ground over Japan. Kuroda Makoto, a Japanese negotiator with the Ministry of International Trade and Industry in the late 1980s, for example, argued that ‘sanction’ related to ‘punishment’, adding that ‘frankly, I do not recall Japan doing anything for which it should have been punished’.132

Many Japanese observers concluded that, as ‘Japan-bashing’ appeared to be based on Western racism towards Japan, retaliation was an appropriate, and justifiable, response. Both Western and Japanese commentators thought that the rise of ‘bubei’ and ‘kenbei’ attitudes towards the United States amounted to ‘アメリカ叩き’ (Amerika tataki or America-bashing) or ‘アメリカ・バッシング’ (Amerika basshingu or America-bashing), terms which had been first used in English in the late 1980s.133 This new term proved just as difficult to define as its predecessor, ‘Japan-bashing’. One of

133 See, for example, Jeff B. Copeland, 'America-bashing: A New Japanese Sport', Newsweek, 13 April 1987, p. 42.
the few Japanese commentators to specifically write about the term was Shimomura Mitsuko, who suggested that ‘America-bashing’ consisted of the intentional stressing in Japan of only the bad aspects of the United States, such as its apparent general national decline or its reputation for high crime rates.\(^{134}\) There was also a literal form of ‘America-bashing’; namely, deliberate attacks on American products, mirroring the literal attacks on Japanese products, as shown in the picture below of Japanese farmers protesting in 1988 at American demands for Japan to increase its agricultural imports from the United States.

![](image)

Figure 5.6: 'America-bashing', reproduced from Bradley Martin, ‘Pacific Slings and Arrows’, *Bulletin with Newsweek*, 7 June 1988, p. 80.

‘America-bashing’ was something that non-Japanese could engage in as well. For instance, Bill Totten, a leading American businessman, was described as one of Japan’s favourite ‘America-bashers’ because of his spirited attack on ‘Japan-bashing’ in his 1990 book *Nihon wa warukunai: Amerika no Nihontatakī wa haisha no kensō da* (publisher’s English title: Japan is Not Bad: Japan Bashing by America is their Cry and

\(^{134}\) Shimomura, *Nihon tataki no shinsō*, p. 4.
Scream), as well as subsequent works critical of the United States’ treatment of Japan.¹³⁵

Both Japanese and Western observers were almost unanimous in declaring Ishihara Shintarō as the ‘godfather’ of ‘America-bashing’, largely because of the book he published jointly with Morita Akio entitled ‘No’ to ieru Nihon (The Japan that Can Say ‘No’),¹³⁶ and its Japanese-language-only sequels.¹³⁷ For many observers, Ishihara and Morita’s ‘timely compendium’ of ‘prickly “America-bashing”’¹³⁸ came to represent the most significant and enduring Japanese response to ‘Japan-bashing’, even though it merely reinforced ideas that had already been articulated by other commentators.¹³⁹ While it was charitably said by some reviewers that ‘No’ to ieru Nihon merely advanced the notion that Japan’s economic power meant it could no longer be silent on the international stage,¹⁴⁰ the book was labelled in other quarters as a ‘manifesto of the New Greater East Asian [sic] Co-Prosperity Sphere’¹⁴¹. It was also viewed as part of a wider movement in Japan, as well as in other Asian nations, that appeared to be partially

¹³⁹ See, for example, Etō Jun, NichiBei sensō wa owatte inai, Tōkyō: Nesco, 1987.
inspired by ‘occidentalism’; that is, a discourse that inverted ‘orientalism’ in its reliance on stereotyped, often negative, views of ‘the West’.\textsuperscript{142}

The views of Morita Akio surprised many in the United States, for his public image had been that of an eminent Japanese figure who both liked and appreciated the United States. Thus, his book was described as a public relations ‘fiasco’ for Sony, the company he chaired.\textsuperscript{143} Not surprisingly, Morita promptly distanced himself from the book and refused to be associated with the official English translation, which appeared in 1991. He reportedly commented: ‘It was a mistake to have written a book with someone with such different opinions. I’m not saying Ishihara’s opinion is wrong but I should not have written the book with him’.\textsuperscript{144} Fellow Japanese commentators agreed that Ishihara, far more than Morita, was an ‘America-basher’.\textsuperscript{145} Homma Nagayo called Ishihara an uninfluential ‘maverick’,\textsuperscript{146} opining that:

The arrogant nationalism of Ishihara, who exaggerates Japan’s technological power, does not represent mainstream thinking in Japan, nor does his unilateralist view that from now on Japan can go it alone without America’s assistance.\textsuperscript{147}

While Ishihara has often been held up as the central figure in ‘America-bashing’, it is undeniable that other Japanese commentators also indulged in similar practices. Some suggested, for example, that ‘Japan-bashing’ was part of a deliberate anti-Japan

\textsuperscript{143} See, for example, Peter Ennis, 'Sony's PR Fiasco', \textit{Tokyo Business Today}, December 1989, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{145} Ishi and Kashiwagi, \textit{Amerika no naka no Nihon kigyō}, p. ii.
\textsuperscript{146} Quoted in Amy Borrus and Paul Magnusson, 'The Book that’s Creating a Firestorm', \textit{Business Week}, 23 October 1989, p. 78.
\textsuperscript{147} Homma, 'The Peril of Revisionism', p. 19.
conspiracy on the part of ‘the West’, typically meaning the United States. Journalist Itō Kan noted in 1990 that bookstores in Japan were at the time offering more than ten books that ‘claim to prove America’s “evil design” to destroy and eliminate the Japanese challenge’, some of which were ‘selling well’. Some right-wing Japanese commentators also revived the idea of a Jewish plot to control Japan (and the rest of the world) by controlling the United States from within. One of the prime dispensers of such thought was a Christian fundamentalist pastor named Uno Masami, the self-described head of the Osaka-based Middle East Problem Research Center. In 1986 Uno published a book entitled *Yudaya ga wakaru to sekaiga miete kuru* (If You Understand Judea, You Understand the World), allegedly ghost-written by an obscure Tokyo editor named Takahashi Teruo, which drew on the fabricated *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* to demonstrate that the supposed anti-Japan conspiracy was American-Jewish in origin. Uno argued that Jewish-controlled companies in the United States, among which he included IBM, General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, Standard Oil, Exxon

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and AT&T, and other ‘Jewish-dominated interests’, had begun a ‘targeted bashing of Japan’ which was allegedly causing an economic slowdown in Japan.\textsuperscript{154} Uno’s book and its sequels were reported to have sold over a million copies by 1996.\textsuperscript{155} Another book in this genre was Oshino Shōtarō’s \textit{Saigo no kyōteki: Nihon o utte: zoku Yudaya sekai shihai no giteisho} (The Last Enemy: Attack Japan: The Jewish Protocol for World Domination), published in 1993, which described a supposed Jewish plan to destroy Japan.\textsuperscript{156} Disturbingly, these books often received an imprimatur of respectability and a boost in sales from mainstream newspapers, such as the conservative daily \textit{Yomiuri shimbun}, which freely published lengthy advertisements for them.\textsuperscript{157}

For many observers on both sides of the Pacific, the true significance of ‘America-bashing’ was that it exacerbated ‘Japan-bashing’. As Satō Ryūzō noted, Ishihara and Morita ‘provided America with a number of excuses for Japan-bashing’, which made their book a ‘classic example of how Japan’s nationalistic rhetoric can play into the hands of its opponents’.\textsuperscript{158} In an open letter to Ishihara and Morita, American economist Lawrence Summers agreed, suggesting their ‘America-bashing’ may have made a ‘stronger case for a new American policy toward Japan than any American ever could’.\textsuperscript{159} The apparent cycle of reciprocity between the United States and Japan led Itō Kan to describe American ‘Japan-bashers’ and Japanese ‘America-bashers’ as each

\textsuperscript{158} Satō, \textit{The Chrysanthemum and the Eagle}, p. 49.
other’s ‘greatest allies’, as both gained in influence by ‘seizing upon foolish, mean-spirited remarks by the opposite side’.\textsuperscript{160}

By the early 1990s, Japanese perceptions of ‘Japan-bashing’ were reflected in a popular joke about the phenomenon, in which President George H. W. Bush, the Soviet Union’s President Mikhail Gorbachev and Japanese Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki each petition God for the answer to one question. Bush and Gorbachev enquire about recessions and troubles and are informed by God that neither will cease during their respective administrations. Kaifu, on the other hand, asks God ‘when will the “bashing” stop?’ and is informed that it will not cease within God’s own term of administration.\textsuperscript{161} However, many Japanese observers clearly found ‘Japan-bashing’ in Western countries far from amusing.

The transmission of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ to Japan arguably helped to foster Japanese criticism of those nations where ‘bashing’ was allegedly practised, particularly the United States. Some commentators believed the result was the rise of ‘bubei’ or ‘kenbei’: that is, contempt for or hatred of the United States, which came to be described as ‘America-bashing’. Together, ‘Japan-bashing’ and ‘America-bashing’ were thought by many observers in the United States, Japan and elsewhere to be creating a damaging cycle of recrimination between the United States and Japan that had the potential to impact on the entire world.

‘Japan-bashing’ had also become an encultured phenomenon by the early 1990s, with negative images of ‘Japan’ and ‘the Japanese’ re-emerging in a large variety of works of Western popular culture. Despite widespread Japanese criticism of this development, ‘Japan-bashing’ and ‘America-bashing’ also began to influence Japanese popular culture. Chapter Six examines the influence and significance of ‘Japan-

\textsuperscript{160} Itō, ‘Trans-Pacific Anger’, p. 136.
\textsuperscript{161} Tōyama, ‘Nihon tataki jōku shū’, p. 31.
bashing’ and ‘America-bashing’ in Western and Japanese popular culture in the 1980s and 1990s.
CHAPTER SIX

THE ENCULTURATION OF ‘JAPAN-BASHING’

For the foreseeable future, expectations of strategic rivalry, let alone renewed military conflict, between Washington and Tokyo, are more the grist of fanciful novels than compelling analysis.¹

As the label and practice of ‘Japan-bashing’ spread in Western nations and Japan throughout the late 1980s and into the 1990s, both Western and Japanese observers warned that it was spreading into popular culture. This was particularly observable in the United States, the centre of English-language global culture, but was also evident in other Western countries, as well as in Japan itself. Observers noted the re-emergence of many negative images of Japan and the Japanese in Western cultural forums as diverse as fiction-writing, television, film, plays, songs, poetry, cartoons and jokes. Even anti-Japanese products appeared, as companies attempted to capitalise on the prevailing ‘Japan-bashing’ mood. The theme was very familiar: Japan was an identifiable military, economic and social danger to the West, one that had to be overcome to protect the future of the Western world, or at the very least could be exploited for profit.

This chapter will first examine the emergence of ‘Japan-bashing’ in Western popular culture by assessing images of Japan and the Japanese in a broad range of works and goods that were produced and disseminated in the 1980s and 1990s. It shows that the paramount example of encultured ‘Japan-bashing’ was Michael Crichton’s *Rising Sun*, published as a novel in 1992 and produced as a film in 1993.²

While the production of works of popular culture labelled as ‘Japan-bashing’ had a variety of consequences, many observers feared that in particular they would exacerbate negative images of Japan in the real world, thereby perpetuating ‘bashing’. The chapter then examines Japanese responses to ‘Japan-bashing’ in Western popular culture, including what were arguably Japan’s own cultural forms of ‘America-bashing’. Lastly, the chapter discusses a variety of commercial products that appeared to be inspired by the ‘Japan-bashing’ phenomenon.

The chapter argues that the spread of ‘Japan-bashing’ to popular culture was a significant development in Western and Japanese discourses on Japan, as it demonstrated just how entrenched some anti-Japanese and anti-American views had become. The obvious re-emergence of historical images of Japan confirmed that negative stereotypes can have an ongoing influence well after their initial period of dissemination and, moreover, can retain such influence despite radical historical changes. However, this chapter argues as well that cultural forms of ‘bashing’ helped to distinguish the 1980s and the 1990s from earlier points in the post-war period, in which negative views of Japan had occasionally also been prevalent.

While many cultural works were shaped by the ‘Japan-bashing’ that was happening in the real world, such works in turn became an integral and influential part of the overall ‘bashing’ phenomenon, particularly in the case of Rising Sun. In the end, cultural expressions may well prove to be the most enduring of all forms of ‘Japan-bashing’ and ‘America-bashing’.

‘Japan-bashing’ Appears in Popular Culture

As we have seen, both Western and Japanese commentators issued warnings about the alleged dangers of ‘Japan-bashing’ for relations between Western countries and Japan

from the late 1970s onwards. However, it was over a decade before concern turned to
the influence of ‘bashing’ on Western popular culture. This delay can perhaps be
attributed to the widespread intellectual tendency to overlook popular discourses, and
particularly cultural works, as a potential tool for shaping Western images of Japan. By
the 1980s, however, the significance of popular culture in shaping perceptions was
increasingly recognised, undoubtedly as a consequence of the ‘boom’ of Western
cultural interest in Japan after the publication of such works as James Clavell’s novel
Shōgun in 1975, and its appearance as a television mini-series in 1980.\(^3\) John Dower,
for one, recognised that while sources such as ‘songs, movies, cartoons, and a wide
body of popular … writings’ were not considered to be ‘respectable sources’ in some
circles, they were ‘invaluable for re-creating the ethos’ which underlay the periods in
which they became popular.\(^4\)

One of the first observers to note the apparent enculturation of ‘Japan-bashing’ in
the United States was journalist Edwin McDowell, who reported in June 1990 that
Japan was ‘increasingly being portrayed as the land of a rising threat to the United
States’ in works of both fiction and non-fiction, a trend which was ‘distressing’ some
scholars of Japan.\(^5\) However, McDowell merely commented that action-thriller writer
Clive Cussler’s 1990 novel Dragon, described by one reviewer as a ‘substantial dose of

\(^3\) James Clavell, Shōgun, New York: Delacorte Press, 1975; 'Shōgun' (1980-81), Internet
boom, see Paul Bernstein, 'Making of a Literary Shōgun', New York Times, 13
September 1981. For critical analysis, see Henry DeWitt Smith (ed.), Learning from
Shōgun: Japanese History and Western Fantasy, New York: University of California

\(^4\) John W. Dower, War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War, New York:

\(^5\) Edwin McDowell, 'After the Cold War, the Land of the Rising Threat', New York
Times, 18 June 1990, p. C13; Edwin McDowell, 'In Print, Japan Looms as Villain',
International Herald Tribune, 19 June 1990, p. 20. See also Lawrence Malkin, 'In the
U.S., Book Writers Go after a Hot Subject', International Herald Tribune, 13 February
1990, pp. 1, 6; Choo Ai Leng, 'The Japanese Villain, in Fiction', Asian Wall Street
Journal, 8 November 1993, p. 10.
Japan-bashing in the tradition of the Yellow Peril of times past, had reached the no. 5 position on the *New York Time*’s hard-cover fiction best-seller list that week, and that a few similar works of fiction were also forthcoming.

What observers like McDowell apparently did not realise was that a number of works of popular culture relating to ‘Japan-bashing’ had already appeared throughout the 1980s. Indeed, the expression ‘Japan-bashing’ had appeared in fiction as early as 1983. In Steven Schlossstein’s novel *Kensei* of that year, one character observed that American politicians appeared to be ‘more interested in bashing the Japanese than they are in learning from them’. The enculturation of ‘Japan-bashing’ proceeded throughout the 1980s, with Tokyo-based journalist Mark Schreiber noting in an analysis of Western fiction on Japan that at least thirty such works presenting anti-Japanese views were published prior to 1991. Such novels are easily identifiable, as they often depend on a limited range of visual markers that have been developed to position Japan in relation to the West. The cover of Peter Tasker’s 1992 novel *Silent Thunder*, for example, shows a Japanese *ninja*, silhouetted against a giant rising sun, drawing a sword while kneeling on the American flag, as shown below. To use Roland Barthes’ terms, the form of ‘myth’ here is of the active warrior, the ‘concept’ is hidden danger and the ‘signification’ is Japan’s ascendancy over the United States. The covers of other popular novels displayed similarly familiar images.

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Such novels became so numerous that in 1995, professor of English John Honey declared that the ‘anti-Japan novel’ had become a ‘distinctive’ literary genre of its
own. In the meantime, however, ‘Japan-bashing’ had also become an established feature in other forms of popular culture, including films, television programmes, plays and even computer games.

The enculturation of ‘Japan-bashing’ was singled out for criticism by a variety of observers because it tended to push the boundaries far beyond what would be deemed acceptable in non-fictional forums. For some observers, this creative freedom was an advantage, as it permitted discussion of topics which appeared to be ‘too painful and risky’ for the real world. However, for others, it meant that such works had all the vehemence of propaganda while enjoying the defence of being fiction. In one observer’s opinion, they could be about as ‘subtle as a World War II anti-Japanese poster showing a moustachioed Tojo [Hideki] bayoneting Caucasian babies’.

Western and Japanese observers alike feared that ‘Japan-bashing’ in popular culture would give anti-Japanese views in ‘the West’ a longer life, just as ‘yellow peril’ and World War II-era propaganda had demonstrably continued to influence post-war views of Japan. In a sense, these fears reflected a new appreciation of the role of popular culture in society. Yet, criticism of ‘Japan-bashing’ in popular culture, no matter how sincerely articulated, often relied upon a relatively unsophisticated interpretation of cultural theory: namely, that such ‘bashing’ would be accepted uncritically by consumers. John Honey, for instance, portrayed ‘Japan-bashing’ in popular culture as a circular and self-reinforcing trend when he warned that Tom Clancy’s 1994 novel Debt of Honor was ‘simple Japan-bashing’, which would be

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communicated to ‘millions of uncritical readers and viewers’, making the effect of the novel all ‘the more damaging and the more deplorable’, because readers would be inclined to uncritically believe the novel’s portrayal of Japan.\textsuperscript{15}

While observers generally agreed that ‘Japan-bashing’ in popular culture should be opposed, there was less consensus about which works were engaging in it in the first place. For example, while some American film critics took exception to the portrayal of Japanese wartime brutality towards Western female prisoners-of-war in Sumatra in the 1997 Australian film \textit{Paradise Road}, describing it as racist ‘Asia-bashing’, the film’s director and producer argued that such criticism itself only demonstrated an ignorance of history and unjustified political correctness.\textsuperscript{16} Similarly, while one reviewer described the cultural empire surrounding the television and film series \textit{Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles} from the late 1980s onwards as ‘Japan-bashing’ because of its stereotypical images of ‘Japanese’ characters,\textsuperscript{17} another argued that it was actually satirising anti-Japanese views in the United States.\textsuperscript{18} Perhaps the most convoluted contest over the labelling of a work as ‘Japan-bashing’, however, related to Australian playwright Jill Shearer’s ‘Shimada’, which opened in Australia in 1987 and on Broadway in the United States in 1992. The play described the tensions arising when a Japanese businessman, who may or may not be a former prisoner-of-war camp guard from World War II, takes over an ailing Queensland bicycle factory. The Broadway production was promoted with radio advertising intoning: ‘We buy CD players, they

buy Columbia Records. We buy radios, they buy Radio City. ... Is it just business? Or is it war?' 19 Other promotional material described the play as a 'night of Japan-bashing', and the play was reviewed by many critics in a manner supporting that conclusion. 20 At the same time, however, the production was partially financed by Osaka real estate developer Furuyama Nobunao; and it avidly sought Japanese audience members through Japanese-language advertising and press conferences with the Japanese media. 21 When stung by the critical reaction following opening night, the cast wrote an open letter to the New York Times strenuously opposing the description of the play as 'Japan-bashing'. 22

 Neither was there much consensus about why ‘Japan-bashing’ was emerging in Western popular culture at all. As with ‘Japan-bashing’ in the real world, some saw its cultural forms simply as an inevitable product of the times. Ethnic studies scholar Ronald Takaki opined in 1990, for example, that non-fiction and fictional ‘books that bash Japan’ merely reflected the ‘rush to fill the vacuum created by the winding down of the cold war’. 23 Naturally, historical experiences with Japan also appeared to play a significant role. Robert Reich suggested in 1992, for example, that American ‘sensitivities’ to Japan had perhaps been ‘running high’ in light of the fiftieth anniversary in 1991 of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. 24 Underpinning commemorations of the attack was a wealth of cultural images from the ‘yellow peril’

and World War II periods regarding Japan\textsuperscript{25} and ‘the Orient’ in general, including those embodied in the figure of Sax Rohmer’s evil Chinese character of Fu Manchu from the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{26}

‘Japan-bashing’ works, however, were demonstrably not just about the re-emergence of old fears of Japan, although those fears clearly still resonated. First and foremost, the concept of Japan as a ‘problem’ was topical, and could easily be moved from the non-fictional to the fictional realm to produce any number of sensational and alarmist scenarios about Japan attacking, taking over or destroying ‘the West’. Indeed, a number of fictional works were actually produced by participants in real-world debates about Japan, including, for example, author Michael Crichton, journalist Fred Hiatt, financial analyst Peter Tasker and international strategist Steven Schlossstein.\textsuperscript{27} As scholar Nora Cobb suggested, ‘Japan-bashing’ works of fiction simply addressed, alleviated and validated the ‘general public’s growing fears’ in the real world about Japan, by ‘(re)implementing a figurative “Japan-bashing”’.\textsuperscript{28} In other words, these fictional works resonated with both creators and consumers because they offered an opportunity that the real world seemingly did not: the chance to explore fully and even to resolve the ‘Japan Problem’, typically in favour of ‘the West’, and to engage in

\textsuperscript{25} See, for example, the broad discussion of Western and Japanese culture during World War II in Dower, \textit{War Without Mercy}. For Hollywood films in particular, see Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, \textit{Hollywood Goes to War: Patriotism, Movies and the Second World War from ‘Ninotchka’ to ‘Mrs Miniver’}, London and New York: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2000, pp. 60-1, 72-81, 248-77.


\textsuperscript{28} Cobb, ‘Behind the Inscrutable Half-Shell’, p. 89.
‘bashing’ without facing up to any actual consequences. Alternatively, some works had yet another function: to allow those who were ideologically opposed to ‘Japan-bashing’, or simply amused by it, to ridicule both ‘bashing’ and those who succumbed to it. Either way, ‘bashing’ works were tapping into what other observers described as the ‘recently developed and extremely marketable cultural tradition of Japan bashing’ or, more simply, as ‘Japan-bashing for profit’. As one commentator noted, there appeared to be a large audience in the United States that was ‘hungry for fast-paced stories about Japan the enemy’.

The nature of the new cultural expressions of ‘Japan-bashing’ helped to mark anti-Japanese activity in the 1980s and 1990s as different from that of earlier periods. Thus, political scientist David Campbell argued in 1994 that the ‘Japan-bashing’ phenomenon was ‘unique’, specifically because it led to the ‘imagery and language of threats’ dominating not only the ‘corridors of power in Washington’ but also the ‘cultural domains beyond’. In fact, a broad range of cultural works had expressed anti-Japanese or more general anti-Asian views in earlier periods as well, and these older views certainly lingered on throughout the twentieth century. The enculturation of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the 1980s and 1990s functioned to reinforce those earlier views, particularly as they were expressed in such a wide range of print and visual forums. At the same time, however, the negative views of Japan aired as ‘bashing’ were for the most part new ones, sharply attuned to the specific dynamics of the contemporary period and especially to Japan’s post-war economic success and what this entailed for ‘the West’. For journalist Michael Shapiro, this was one of the few benefits of ‘Japan-

30 Malkin, 'In the U.S., Book Writers Go after a Hot Subject', p. 6.
bashing’ in popular culture: it provided ‘moments of clarity’ in which the ‘real fears felt on both sides of the Pacific [have] come to life’.

As such, cultural expressions of ‘Japan-bashing’ provide the clearest insight into Western perceptions of Japan in the late twentieth century. Moreover, the popularity and apparent influence of such expressions ensured that ‘Japan-bashing’ in popular culture, particularly in the case of *Rising Sun*, became in turn a vital part of the overall ‘bashing’ phenomenon.

**The ‘Novel’ Form of ‘Japan Bashing’: *Rising Sun***

Michael Crichton’s *Rising Sun*, the novel published in 1992 and the film directed by Philip Kaufman in 1993, was the most significant work of ‘Japan-bashing’ in Western popular culture in the 1980s and 1990s.

![Image](image.jpg)

*Figure 6.5: Michael Crichton, *Rising Sun*, London: Arrow Books, 1992.*

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The narrative centres on two American police detectives – Captain John Connor, an ‘old Japan hand’, and Lieutenant Peter Smith (in the film version, Web Smith) – who are investigating the highly-sexualised death of a young American model, Cheryl Austin, which took place during a party held by the Japanese company Nakamoto Corporation in Los Angeles. Behind the murder mystery, the novel advances the concept that ‘business is war’ for Japan. Unfortunately for the United States, it is a ‘war’ that Japan appears to be winning. One American character asserts that the Japanese now own ‘seventy, seventy-five percent of downtown Los Angeles’. He continues: ‘Hell, they own Hawaii – ninety percent of Honolulu, a hundred percent of the Kona coast … Many Americans feel that the Japanese are taking over our industries, our recreation lands, and even our cities’.

*Rising Sun* was rather typical of cultural works ‘on Japan’ in the 1980s and 1990s, in that it relied heavily and unreflectively on generalisations about the national-cultural ‘identity’ of ‘the Japanese’. For instance, Connor advises Smith about ‘the Japanese’ by stating:

The Japanese find big arm movements threatening ... The Japanese are educated, prepared and motivated. They get things done. There’s no screwing around ... The Japanese are masters of indirect action ... The Japanese have all these ways of indirect communication ... The Japanese have very little faith in the truth.

The aim of this advice is to inculcate the idea that the Japanese are ‘different’ from ‘Westerners’ and, indeed, Connor expressly warns his colleague that ‘Japan is

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34 Crichton, *Rising Sun*, pp. 7, 162.
35 Ibid., pp. 52, 263.
different’. As in the real world, Japan’s apparently successful takeover of the United States is attributed to its allegedly ‘unique’ political, economic and social system, which is itself predicated on the assumption that Japan is a homogeneous, feudally-inclined nation.

At the same time, however, *Rising Sun* is also distinguishable from other works of popular culture in the 1980s and 1990s in the degree to which it actually contributed to ‘Japan-bashing’. Crichton was accused of ‘delivering Japan bashing to the American masses’ or, perhaps even worse, supporting ‘Japan-loathing’ among his readership. Such claims were supported by the Japanese American Citizens’ League, which listed *Rising Sun* in its collection of ‘Japan-bashing’ material in the early 1990s. For other observers, however, *Rising Sun* could not be dismissed as mere ‘bashing’; more than this, it focused attention on Japan’s ‘adversarial trade strategy’ and ‘our inadequate response to it’. In one admiring reviewer’s opinion, the novel was, therefore, a ‘cautionary tale for the ages’, on a par with Harriet Beecher Stowe’s 1852 novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which has been credited with inspiring the campaign to abolish slavery in the United States. The analogy implied that *Rising Sun* would assist in awakening the American public to the dangers posed by Japan, a subject which Crichton thought was insufficiently discussed in the United States. For this reason, *Rising Sun* was praised by some of the ‘revisionists’. Pat Choate, for example, argued that Crichton had illuminated ‘real issues’ in the United States’ relationship with Japan, issues that had

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37 Ibid., p. 83.
often been censored by claims of ‘Japan-bashing’. For that reason alone, he concluded, *Rising Sun* was worth reading.\(^{42}\)

The pre-eminence of *Rising Sun* as a cultural example of ‘Japan-bashing’ stemmed in part from Crichton’s status as a well-known novelist and, also, from his subsequent participation in debates about the ‘Japan Problem’ in the United States. While it has been not uncommon for Japan experts to write novels, as mentioned earlier, the reverse trend of a novelist participating in intellectual discourse about Japan is far more unusual. Crichton’s revisionist leanings in *Rising Sun* and other writings on the need to talk ‘tough’ to Japan were so obvious and widely known that journalist and author Bill Emmott labelled revisionism as the ‘Crichton School’ on Japan,\(^{43}\) criticising Crichton for distorting the American public’s opinion of Japan.\(^{44}\) *Rising Sun* was also criticised for its resemblance to famous anti-Semitic works, such as the late-nineteenth-century *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, or Veit Harlan’s 1940 film *Jew Süss*.\(^{45}\) All that was missing from *Rising Sun*, one reviewer opined, was some fictional Japanese version of the infamous *Protocols* that would explain Japan’s plan for taking over the United States, if not the world.\(^{46}\) Another reviewer joked that the cover image for the paperback release of *Rising Sun* should depict a ‘caricature of World War II-era Prime Minister Tojo skulking off into [the] Rockefeller Center with Doris Day over one shoulder and an eighteen-inch dildo sheathed where his samurai sword would have been’.\(^{47}\) Indeed, the fictional murder of Cheryl Austin by a Japanese character has been

\(^{42}\) Choate, ‘Bashing Japan?’, p. 50.


\(^{44}\) Emmott, *Japanophobia*, pp. 3-6.


\(^{46}\) George Will, ""Shadow World"?", *Newsweek*, 4 May 1992, p. 32.

widely interpreted as building on Western wartime propaganda about the supposed Japanese sexual desire for and exploitation of white women.48

While *Rising Sun* was a best-selling novel, there appeared to be some initial reluctance from Hollywood to produce a film version, although major Japanese-owned studios Columbia (Sony) and Universal (Matsushita) denied that they were avoiding making such a film.49 *Rising Sun* was in the end produced by (non-Japanese-owned) Twentieth Century Fox and released in 1993, as mentioned earlier. While the film deliberately toned down criticism of Japan, to the extent that the murderer of Cheryl Austin became American instead of Japanese, it was still greeted by protesters, often from the Japanese-American or Asian-American communities, who waved placards reading “‘Rising Sun’ cashing in on Japan-bashing’.50 Some film commentators agreed, arguing that the film was based firmly ‘within the American tradition of Japan-bashing’.51

Perhaps understandably, Crichton did not like the term ‘Japan-bashing’ as applied to *Rising Sun*,52 even though one of the reviewers chosen to promote his novel on its cover had described it as a ‘combination of Japan-bashing and murder mystery’ which made for ‘provocative reading’.53 In Crichton’s opinion, the term ‘Japan-bashing’ was deliberately used by ‘apologists’ for Japan, and for this reason it threatened to transform discourse on Japan into an ‘area of unreasonableness’.54 Nevertheless, Crichton himself

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53 Attributed to journalist Marilyn Willison.
54 Quoted in Ian Buruma, *The Missionary and the Libertine: Love and War in East and West*, London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1996, p. 263. As Buruma pointed out, this presumably meant that Crichton believed his presentation of Japan in *Rising Sun* was 'reasonable'.

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coined another similar epithet: as mentioned earlier, it was he who labelled critics of the revisionists as ‘Chrysanthemum-kissers’.\(^{55}\) Crichton’s vehemence about commentators who appeared sympathetic to Japan led one academic to describe *Rising Sun* as the most extreme expression of all the rhetoric in this period about the ‘Chrysanthemum Club’.\(^{56}\)

While Crichton’s participation in intellectual debates on Japan was the focus of some concern, most critics of *Rising Sun* focused their attention specifically on the novel itself and its deliberate blurring of the line between fiction and reality. While the novel began with the usual disclaimer that it was fiction, Crichton also remarked that references to certain events and activities concerning Japan were ‘true’.\(^{57}\) Many reviewers of the novel strongly disputed its claim to be fiction rather than a polemic about Japan. Gary Okihiro referred to it as ‘Michael Crichton’s best-seller novel (?) *Rising Sun*’.\(^{58}\) As Robert Reich concluded:

> Here is the latest, and least subtle, of a great tide of recent books demonising the Japanese. Almost all are classified as nonfiction; a few, like ‘Rising Sun,’ as fiction. But in this genre the distinction blurs.\(^{59}\)

What distinguished *Rising Sun* from other cultural works of ‘Japan-bashing’ in this period was the extent of Crichton’s didacticism, which stemmed from his engagement with real, and mostly critical, commentary on Japan. Crichton said that he endeavoured to follow ‘a well-established body of expert opinion [on] Japan’s economic behaviour,
and America’s inadequate response to it’ while writing *Rising Sun*. As one reviewer complained, ‘we never go for long without hearing the whack of Professor Crichton’s classroom pointer against the slate of the blackboard’. Crichton’s desire that the book should be considered as a serious study of Japan was even more apparent, however, in his inclusion of two addenda: an extensive bibliography in which he listed his sources of ‘expert opinion’, and an Afterword in which he openly warned of the very ‘real’ danger posed by Japan.

The publishers of *Rising Sun* also endeavoured to relate the novel to the real world. Alfred A. Knopf (Random House) rushed the first edition of nearly a quarter of a million copies into publication some months earlier than scheduled in 1992 in order to capitalise on the downturn in relations between the United States and Japan following President George H. W. Bush’s controversial visit to Japan in January 1992, mentioned earlier. As well as bringing forward the publication date to coincide with the fallout from the visit, Knopf reportedly attempted to aid advance readers in understanding the context of the novel by providing a sheaf of newspaper clippings which described, amongst other things, the decline of American industry relative to Japan’s industrial strength. In addition, the publisher had copies of the book hand-delivered to every member of Congress.

Many critics of *Rising Sun* feared that its deliberate blurring of the lines between non-fiction and fiction meant that readers and viewers would be likely to accept it as a realistic portrayal of Japan. Karl Taro Greenfield suggested that *Rising Sun* might be the only book that the public would read about Japan and concluded that:

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60 Crichton, *Rising Sun*, p. 404.
its portrayal of the Japanese as inscrutable, technologically proficient, predatory aliens who communicate through telepathy, subsist on unpalatable foods, manipulate everything and everyone and enjoy kinky, violent sex with white women will be more influential in shaping opinions about Japan and the Japanese than any of the more thoughtful and insightful books recently published.64

Similarly, historian Richard Gehrmann averred that the film of Rising Sun would ‘influence tens of thousands, and perhaps millions … who will view it as truth’.65 He argued that while the film clearly represented a ‘specifically American anti-Japanese narrative’, it nonetheless had the ‘potential to do much to develop and reinforce’ negative attitudes towards Japan in other places, including Australia.66 Another reviewer concluded that a prayer ought to be said that Rising Sun would not ‘send people running hysterically into the streets, crying for another bombing of Japan’ but would instead move them only to ‘thoughtful debate’.67

While the degree to which Rising Sun influenced readers cannot ultimately be determined, the novel was undeniably a paramount example or, as one critic punned, a ‘novel form’ of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the 1980s and 1990s.68 The Chalmers Johnson-directed Japan Policy Research Institute has even listed it as a ‘classic’ in its ‘recommended library’ about Japan.69 Perhaps the strongest mark of the impact of Rising Sun, however, is that it has gone on to be referenced in other works of popular culture. For instance, in Jay Russell’s 1996 novel Celestial Dogs, a Japanese character

64 Greenfield, ‘Return of the Yellow Peril’, p. 636.
asks an American character, ‘Do you know much – anything – of Japan?’ and receives the reply ‘I think I read Rising Sun’.\textsuperscript{70}

**Other Cultural Forms of ‘Japan-bashing’**

Many other works of popular culture in the 1980s and 1990s also placed Japan in the role of a military, economic or social problem for ‘the West’ and, as such, appeared designed to promote a specific agenda. One novel to contrast with Rising Sun is John Lane’s 1991 novel *Sayonara Australia*, the cover of which is shown below.

![Figure 6.6: John Lane, Sayonara Australia, Perth: Leader Press, 1991.](image)

A self-published, semi-autobiographical first novel by Lane, an Australian former prisoner-of-war of the Japanese, *Sayonara Australia* consists of the story of Joe Barry, who enlists in the Australian Imperial Force in 1940 and is captured by the Japanese at the fall of Singapore and tortured. Returning home in 1945, Barry thinks that his ‘future

duty’ must be to alert Australia to the ‘potential threat of a Japanese takeover’. ‘A hundred years – the Japs had boasted – would they be prepared to wait for their conquest of Australia’.71 Years later, Barry preaches against Japanese investment in Australia, which he views as the ‘invidious Japanese conquest of our Nation’.72

Returning to Singapore in 1992 for a ceremony commemorating the war, he attempts to assassinate the Australian prime minister, who fortunately is wearing a bullet-proof vest, in revenge for allowing Australian flags to be displayed at half-mast when Emperor Hirohito died in 1989.73 While Sayonara Australia sold far fewer copies than Rising Sun, and was produced by a much less prominent author, both novels shared the ideological agenda of endeavouring to persuade their readers of the seriousness of the Japanese threat to ‘the West’. Other works, by contrast, have engaged with ‘Japan-bashing’ less as a means to an ideological end and more because anti-Japanese views were topical.

Some such works displayed a sharp awareness of Western intellectual and popular discourses about Japan in the 1980s and the 1990s. For example, a character in Thomas Hoover’s novel The Samurai Strategy commented that ‘a lot’ of publications in the United States were taking an ‘anti-Japanese tone’, including the New York Times, whose editorial pages featured ‘Japan-bashing’ by some ‘op-ed sour-grape academics’. Hoover even listed a few suspects by name, including prominent critics of Japan Robert Reich and Lester Thurow.74 As mentioned earlier, ‘Japan-bashing’ was sometimes fictionalised by actual participants in intellectual discourses on Japan, who brought their inside knowledge to their imaginative writing. For instance, the author of The Secret Sun, Fred Hiatt, was a former Tokyo-based correspondent for the Washington Post

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72 Ibid., p. 209.
73 Ibid., p. 244.
74 Thomas Hoover, The Samurai Strategy, London: Sphere Books, 1988, pp. 222, 244. See, for example, Reich, 'Is Japan Really Out to Get Us?', p. 244.
(1987-90). He described the Foreign Correspondents Club in Tokyo in the novel as a ‘hotbed of ageless vendettas’ between ‘Japan defenders and Japan bashers’. One of Hiatt’s fictional ‘bashers’ – who appeared to be partially based on James Fallows – was magazine journalist Theo Zarsky, who had spent three months in Tokyo and had then written a book ‘telling the world everything that was wrong with Japan and the Japanese’. Zarsky, according to the novel, had perfectly timed the publication of his diatribe against Japan, ‘both feeding and taking strength from the growing anti-Japan hysteria’ in the United States, which made him a ‘star of the Japan-bashing set’ in Tokyo.

Many cultural works attacked those who promoted clichés about the supposed differences between Japan and ‘the West’. Australian novelist and playwright Roger Pulvers described his fictional Professor of Japanese Studies, William Stick, in his 1994 novel *General Yamashita’s Treasure*, for example, as being ‘at the forefront of foreign scholars’ of Japan who had ‘locked horns’ in a ‘battle to demonstrate to the Japanese new ways of explaining how successful they have become in the world’. In a mockery of a great deal of real Western and Japanese *Nihonjinron* literature on ‘the Japanese’, Professor Stick’s opus was entitled *Splittable Chopsticks: Key to Japanese Uniqueness*. It purported to explain Japan’s ‘uniqueness’ through an examination of the different ways in which disposable chopsticks were split for use. In *The Secret Sun*, ‘Japan-bashing’ journalist Theo Zarsky was renowned for his ‘twenty-second sound bite’ aphorisms on ‘the Japanese’, while his fictional colleague Clive Christopher of the *New York Times* was reviled by his colleagues for his ‘sociological features [on Japan] that

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76 Ibid., pp. 68-70.
78 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
skimmed over the surface of Japanese society as lightly as a sparrow on ice skates’.  
As their long-suffering, and presumably more erudite, fictional fellow journalist John Piper pointed out, ‘[a]nybody who talks about “the Japanese” more than ten times in every paragraph has to be full of shit’. 
Piper also noted the tendency for Westerners to describe Japanese people in negative terms. In his opinion, foreigners were:

   eager to hear that the Japanese … were monsters – and not only monsters, 
    but unhappy monsters, repressed, robotic monsters who led inferior lives, 
     probably had low sex drives and secretly wished that they could be Americans, too.

Nevertheless, many works agreed with Nihonjinron theorists to the extent of claiming that Japanese ‘differences’ from Western norms meant that Japan could not be understood by non-Japanese. For a character in Fred Hiatt’s 1992 novel The Secret Sun, for example, trying to understand the Japanese was like ‘an exhausting and, for a gaijin [foreigner], unwinnable game’. However, all was not lost: a Japanese character in this novel instructed the hapless foreigner to view a traditional Japanese screen depicting maple and cherry trees at a temple in Kyoto in order to understand the inscrutable Japanese, as ‘[o]ne look at that will give you a better understanding of our country than a hundred trade negotiations’.

Many features of Japan as a fictional nation in such works derived from the intellectual world of ‘revisionism’. For example, Karel van Wolferen’s claim that there was no obvious centre of power in Japan was also made in fiction, where the void in

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79 Hiatt, The Secret Sun, pp. 25, 71.  
80 Ibid., p. 75.  
81 Ibid., p. 69.  
82 Hiatt, The Secret Sun, p. 74.  
83 Ibid., p. 324.
Japan’s leadership was filled with a mixture of secretive organisations, ranging from corrupt politicians, to wealthy industrialists, right-wing militarists, nationalists, *yakuza* (gangster) organisations and *ninja* clans. In Peter Tasker’s 1992 novel *Silent Thunder*, for example, the Japanese government is allegedly controlled by the ‘black curtain men’, a group of powerful leaders known to the reader only by such pseudonyms as ‘Heavy Industry-san’, ‘Regulations-san’, ‘Wheels-san’ and ‘Diplomacy-san’. These men have been meeting in a private and unadvertised restaurant near the Imperial Palace in Tokyo since 1936 and have overseen
dying industries killed off, new technologies planned, scandals hushed up, takeovers, marriages, and trade pacts arranged, company presidents dismissed while they caroused in nearby nightclubs, prime ministers chosen who had no idea that they were even running.

In *The Secret Sun*, too, ‘politicians and bureaucrats and businessmen’ meet in ‘private rooms at night’, sitting on tatami mats ‘with their shoes and jackets off, their ties loosened … as they cut the real deals of running Japan’. Often, however, these secretive groups had a further agenda, one that closely reflected Western fears about Japan expressed at the height of the ‘yellow peril’ period in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was Japan’s intention to dominate the entire world or, at least, what one character in *The Secret Sun* glumly referred to as ‘whatever choice, juicy parts of it Japan felt like biting off’.

The sense that Western countries were in danger of being Japanised was almost always linked in cultural works, as it was by commentators in the real world, to Japan’s

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84 Tasker, *Silent Thunder*, pp. 21-6.  
85 Ibid., p. 23.  
87 Ibid., p. 156.
control of technology. Such fears were seemingly articulated in the ‘Star Trek: The Next Generation’ television series in 1998 through the introduction of a new ‘race’ of beings. ‘The Borg’ consisted of a collective of cybernetic drones travelling through the galaxy forcibly assimilating other ‘races’ by means of their technology. As a consequence, ‘the Borg’ were often interpreted by observers as the ‘American fear of Japan writ large’. Similarly, in a 1988 episode of the NBC television series ‘The Highwayman’, a mysterious Japanese electronics company run by ‘slant-eyed, malevolently calm men’ was shown to be manufacturing electronic replicas, or clones, of Americans. The company’s actions were justified by a Japanese character who suggested that the United States had invited Japan to invade when Americans became ‘consumers, not producers’. As one reviewer noted, the producers of this episode seemed to think that ‘Japan-bashing’ was ‘good business’.

Many cultural works took great delight in explaining just how bad a ‘Japanese’ future would be for Western countries, particularly for employees forced to work for Japanese companies. As one American character pointed out in *The Secret Sun*:

> It’s very cute that you [Japanese] all do calisthenics and shout out company slogans in unison every morning before work. But if my kid is going to end up having to work for Toyota and do calisthenics, too, then it’s not so cute.

> It’s insidious, and downright un-American.

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89 See, for example, Ziauddin Sardar, ‘Science Friction’, *New Statesman*, 31 May 1999, p. 36.
92 Hiatt, *The Secret Sun*, p. 76.
This scenario was played out in the 1986 film *Gung Ho* (also known as *Working Class Man*), as well as a short-lived television sitcom based on the film, in which a failing American automobile company is sold to a Japanese corporation. Many works went further in suggesting that other unwanted by-products would come with ‘Japanisation’, including the movement into Western countries of underworld groups, such as the *yakuza* (gangsters). Australian crime writer Peter Corris’ 1992 novel *The Japanese Job*, for example, warned that in the future there would be a ‘full-scale’ war among *yakuza* in Queensland for control of gangster territory, which would be ‘bloodier than anything you’ve ever seen’. Some works resurrected other secretive groups, such as the Black Dragon Society, which was a name sometimes given to the pre-war Japanese right-wing organisation, the Kokuryūkai (more properly, the Amur River Society). The CBS television series ‘Raven’ (1992-93), for example, presented a fictional Black Dragon Society, this time a *ninja* clan, which freely operated in Japan and in Hawaii, where the series was set.

Many fictional works assumed that Japanese people and organisations wanted revenge because of the ignominy of defeat in World War II, particularly the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan, and also desired to finally achieve a Japanese world order. As fictional Japanese industrialist Suma Hideki ranted in the novel *Dragon*:

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95 Peter Corris, *The Japanese Job*, Pymble, NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1992, p. 73. See also Schlossstein, *Yakuza*.
Fifty years ago, we were a defeated people, reviled by the United States! Now, all of a sudden, we are the winners, and you have lost to us. The poisoning of Japan by the United States and Europe has been stopped. Our culture will prevail. We will prove to be the dominant nation in the twenty-first century.\(^98\)

Japan’s modern activities, in business for instance, were thus seen as continuing an old battle. Jack Anderson’s 1993 novel *The Japan Conspiracy* suggested that Japan had only surrendered in the ‘first battle of the hundred-years war’ at the end of World War II, and there were ‘still ninety-six years to fight’.\(^99\) The intricate plans by the fictional Sonno Group – which took its name from the Bakumatsu-era (1853-68) slogan ‘sonnō jōi’ (revere the emperor, expel the barbarians) – aimed to ‘bring glory to the emperor’ and ‘honor to Japan’ by again attacking the United States.\(^100\)

Most works dealing with fictional scenarios of revenge by Japan against ‘the West’ acknowledged that Japan’s actual military forces were limited and, therefore, warfare had to be waged in other ways, often using subterfuge. The main tool in these revenge scenarios was Japan’s economic power, particularly as displayed in Japanese investment, which was viewed as part of a conspiracy aimed at de-facto (or actual) economic colonisation by Japan of other nations. The sale of Columbia Pictures to Sony in 1989, for instance, inspired various fictional versions of Hollywood icons being ‘lost’ to the Japanese.\(^101\) The sale of ‘Century Pictures’, in one example, is opposed in Anderson’s novel *The Japan Conspiracy*, on the grounds that it is ‘not just another

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\(^{98}\) Cussler, *Dragon*, p. 393.


\(^{100}\) Anderson, *The Japan Conspiracy*, p. 204.

\(^{101}\) See, for example, Jina Bacarr and Ellis A. Cohen, *Avenue of the Stars*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1990; Russell, *Celestial Dogs*. 

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company’ but ‘part of the voice of America’.\textsuperscript{102} A Japanese takeover of Hollywood was even presented as a fait accompli in a 1990 episode of the popular television drama ‘21 Jump Street’ (1987-91), showing characters from the future visiting their past selves and commenting that ‘even Hollywood films are dubbed into English from the original Japanese’.\textsuperscript{103}

Japanese investment in Australia, too, was described in some creative works as part of Japan’s intention to construct a new Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. The noted Australian poet Bruce Dawe, for example, underscored the perceived continuity between World War II and Japanese investment in Australia in his 1990 poem entitled ‘All Aboard for Changi’, a reference to the notorious Japanese prisoner-of-war camp in Singapore. In the poem, it was time to say an ‘official Sayonara to Australia’, as the ‘rising sun that shone on digger hats’ of the Australian army, a reference to an Australian army badge, could not ‘hold a candle to the incandescent omnipotence of the yen’.\textsuperscript{104} The Japanese-Australian ‘multifunction polis’ proposal was a specific target of playwright Mary Fallon, who parodied the jargon-laden rhetoric surrounding the ‘polis’ in a play published in 1990. Fallon described an Australia completely transformed by the presence of the polis, a ‘heaven on earth, a Biosphere … a prestigious international brand name, a commuter destination with scientifically validated knowledge glorification’.\textsuperscript{105} With the ‘multifunction polis’, Australia’s future was that of an ‘Authentic Oz Theme Park’, described as the ‘very heart and home of our

\textsuperscript{102} Anderson, The Japan Conspiracy, pp. 63-4.
nationhood winked’, existing thanks to the ‘applied expertise of our international, Multifunction Polis knowledge-workers and investors’.  

Scenarios involving revenge by Japan sometimes included supernatural, technological or biological warfare. In Graham Masterton’s 1983 novel *Tengu*, for example, a Japanese businessman uses techniques learned from ancient Japanese mythology to raise a demon to take revenge on the United States for the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. John D. Randall’s 1991 novel *The Tojo Virus*, on the other hand, features a highly destructive virus that originated in Japan and aims to cripple computer networks in the United States. Alternatively, in Steve Pieczenik’s 1988 novel *Blood Heat*, the findings of bacteriological experiments conducted by the Japanese military on American prisoners-of-war during World War II are transformed into a plan to disseminate genetically-engineered diseases, including bubonic plague, in the United States.

Alternatively, many works suggested that Japan either already maintained or was building up a nuclear weapons stockpile under the cover of its official post-war pacifism. Hiatt’s *The Secret Sun*, for example, suggested that Japan had begun its own Manhattan project during World War II, one which was continued after the war by a clandestine group of researchers and ‘the people with real power’ – not necessarily the prime minister and other ministers – in Japan. A Japanese physicist on the fictional project observed that there was a sense that ‘we were redressing a national humiliation’ and that ‘[s]ome day it [the research] could be a trump card’ against the United

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106 Ibid., pp. 40, 46.  
States.\textsuperscript{111} A project scientist was even transferred to Russia to help with atomic bomb research there, a scenario which effectively partially blamed Japan for exacerbating the Cold War with the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{112} Even worse was the vision of miniature nuclear bombs, which were implanted in Japan in products destined for Western countries. This scenario occurs in both \textit{The Secret Sun} and \textit{Dragon}, where bombs have been inserted into consumer electronics or car engines like ‘nuclear Trojan horses’ and shipped overseas.\textsuperscript{113} As one character observes in \textit{The Secret Sun}, Japan has long watched ‘the Japan-bashing, the rising racism, the anti-Japan rhetoric’ and the ‘collusion between Europe and America against the yellow people’. Nuclear weapons would be the ‘deterrent’ Japan could use to ward off other countries, and ‘Japan will finally be safe, and the world will be at our mercy’.\textsuperscript{114}

Other works envisioned a direct Japanese military assault against ‘the West’. Peter Albano’s series of Seventh Carrier books, for example, involves a long-lost Japanese warship completing its original mission to attack Pearl Harbor.\textsuperscript{115} Similarly, in M. E. Morris’ 1990 novel \textit{The Last Kamikaze}, a retired Japanese navy pilot attacks Pearl Harbor once more in his vintage Zero fighter.\textsuperscript{116} Apart from Pearl Harbor, Saipan is another popular subject. In Clancy’s \textit{Debt of Honor} a Japanese force invades Saipan, thus beginning a war between the United States and Japan. The novel also picks up on enduring fears of a pan-Asian ‘yellow peril’, with Japan teaming up with China and India against the United States.\textsuperscript{117}

Generally, fictional ‘Western’ responses to these scenarios of Japanese revenge followed a specific pattern: an initial stage of Western weakness and partial defeat,
followed by a successful counter-attack on Japan and then, finally, a triumphant victory that restores Western dominance over Japan. In *Rising Sun*, for example, an American politician suggests that the necessary counterattack against Japan would be another bomb:

‘We are at war with Japan.’ He smiled wryly. ‘Loose lips sink ships.’

‘Yes,’ Connor said. ‘And remember Pearl Harbor.’

‘Christ, that too.’ He shook his head. He dropped his voice, becoming one of the boys. ‘You know, I have colleagues who say sooner or later we’re going to have to drop another bomb. They think it’ll come to that’.118

The solution in Cussler’s *Dragon* is exactly that. The American hero uses an old atomic bomb, located after having been lost at sea when the plane carrying it crashed in 1945, to destroy his enemy’s secret base in Japan.119

**Popular Culture Bashes Back: Western Critiques and Parodies of ‘Japan-bashing’**

Some works of popular culture referred to ‘Japan-bashing’ only to criticise or parody it. Visual media, such as cartoons and comic strips, were extremely popular for this purpose, although films, novels, poems and plays also had a notable role. Unlike the ‘Japan-bashing’ works already discussed, however, these works tended to target ‘the West’, far more than Japan, for criticism. Such criticism had a familiar rationale: ‘Japan-bashing’, it was implied, was essentially an unjustified attack on Japan as a whole, and one which perpetuated stereotyped images of ‘the Japanese’ in the process.

Noting the negative mood about Japan in the United States in the early 1990s, economics professor George Dawson wrote a poem entitled ‘Blame the Japanese’ which

118 Crichton, *Rising Sun*, p. 269.
was published in the *New York Times* in 1992. This poem mocked the widespread attempts to hold Japan responsible for the United States’ economic decline:

When the ’phone is out of order, and the roof has sprung a leak,
When the money in your paycheck barely gets you through the week,
When the baby has the colic, and your dog is full of fleas,
Don’t complain to Washington – just blame the Japanese.
When the crooks are running rampant, and the judges are too lax,
When letters from the I.R.S. demand some extra tax,
When your son is quitting college, and your daughter’s getting D’s,
Just do what Iacocca does – and curse the Japanese.
When your taxes keep on rising, while your bank-book starts to shrink,
When pollution clouds your city, so the air begins to stink,
When the temperature is falling, and your pipes are sure to freeze,
Call upon your Congressman to bash the Japanese.
When everyone around you is complaining of the news,
And some condemn the Arabs while others blast the Jews,
Stiffen up your lip, my son, and never bend your knees –
Just be a true American, and blame the Japanese.120

Other cultural works satirised Western fears of a Japanese investment takeover of other countries. Satirical author Ishmael Reed poked fun at American fears of Japan in his 1993 *Japanese by Spring: A Novel*, which was advertised as a ‘radically comic treatment’ of ‘Japanophobia’.121 The title reflected the ambitions of Benjamin

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'Chappie' Puttbutt, a young professor at the fictional Jack London College in California, who aims to learn Japanese by spring in order to best position himself in a world he views as increasingly dominated by Japan. The novel depicts Puttbutt’s experiences after Jack London College is taken over by Japanese investors and renamed Hideki Tojo University, after the wartime Prime Minister of Japan. This takeover turns out to be part of a ludicrous plot by the Black Dragon group to take revenge on the United States for Japan’s defeat in war, as well as to assassinate the emperor and return rule of Japan to the descendants of the Tokugawa shōgun.\(^{122}\)

However, reviewers of *Japanese by Spring* were divided about whether Reed had successfully satirised negative stereotypes of Japan or had merely perpetuated them. Literary scholar Patrick McGee, for example, suggested that while Reed was perhaps not ‘bashing’ the Japanese, his characters’ discourse on racism, including that of Reed, who appears as himself in a fictionalised cameo, made it difficult to decide whether the novel was ultimately critical of the xenophobia about Japan then current in the United States, or merely reproduced it.\(^{123}\)

**‘Japan-bashing’ in Japanese Popular Culture**

As in the West, many Japanese commentators voiced considerable alarm at the apparent enculturation of ‘Japan-bashing’ in Western popular culture and what this implied for Japan. Also, as in the West, the majority of commentators tended to focus on Michael Crichton’s *Rising Sun*, which was released in Japanese in 1992, in the editions whose covers appear below.\(^{124}\)

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\(^{122}\) Ibid., p. 136.


While some Japanese commentators acknowledged that *Rising Sun* was by no means representative of the views of Japan held by the wider American public, others argued that the novel would only cement anti-Japanese views further in American culture. Most notably, even Crichton’s Japanese translator labelled *Rising Sun* as a ‘Japan-bashing bible’.

One part of the controversy in Japan over both the novel and the film centred on references to the *burakumin*, or Japan’s former ‘untouchable’ class. The character of Theresa Asakuma (in the film, she is renamed as Jingo Asakuma) is described in the novel as even lower in status than a *burakumin* due to a physical disability and the fact that she was an ‘ainoko’ (mixed blood child) born to a Japanese mother and a black American father. The Japanese publisher excised this reference to the *burakumin* from the Japanese-language edition of the novel. However, the issue of references to

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127 Sakai Akinobu, Afterword, in Crichton, *Raijingu san*, p. 541
the *burakumin* again arose when the film was slated for release in Japan in late 1993, as the Japanese distributor refused to show the original English-language cut which contained dialogue about the *burakumin*. Eventually, the film was released in an altered form. Although it was still labelled as ‘bashing’ by some Japanese commentators, the dominant reaction in Japan to the film appeared to be amusement at the stereotypical and outdated images of Japan and poor use of the Japanese language by American actors.

A number of other Western cultural works were also attacked in Japan for allegedly engaging in ‘bashing’. For instance, the 1989 film *Back to the Future II* was criticised for presenting Marty McFly as a downtrodden American worker unceremoniously fired by his Japanese boss at Fujitsu. While this was only a tiny scene in the film, it was regarded seriously by the real Fujitsu company, which suggested that attaching the firm’s name to ‘such an unpleasant figure’ as the Japanese boss was ‘another instance of Japan-bashing’. Other works which were openly described in Japan as examples of cultural ‘bashing’ included the 1989 American film *Black Rain*, which featured Michael Douglas as an American police officer working with the Japanese police in Osaka, and the American production of Jill Shearer’s play *Publishing Industries in Relation to the* *burakumin*, see Nanette Gottlieb, *Language and Society in Japan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 103-6.

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130 Laura King, 'Rising Storm over "Rising Sun" - But Over Taboo Words, not Japan-Bashing', *Associated Press*, 16 September 1993.
‘Shimada’ in 1992, as noted earlier. The Japanese magazine Sapio was also sharply critical of a 1990 issue of the American parodical magazine National Lampoon which depicted ‘Mr Futomaki’, the ‘President, Chairman of the Board and CEO’ of the United States of America, welcoming readers to the 1990s, as shown on the cover below.

![Figure 6.8: ‘Welcome to the Nineties’, National Lampoon, February 1990.](image)

Sapio opposed this issue as a ‘Japan-hating special’.

Such complaints often did not recognise, however, that Japanese cartoonists, as well as Western cartoonists, also employed stereotypical images of the United States and of Japan itself. For despite Japanese concerns, both ‘Japan-bashing’ and ‘America-bashing’ had been embedded in Japan’s own culture by the late 1980s. Some Japanese works showed Western countries and Japan at war, drawing upon the solid base of Japanese works of popular culture which revised Japan’s participation in World War II,

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and the conclusion of the war, in a more pro-Japanese manner.\textsuperscript{138} Novels were published that invented such occurrences as the wartime death of General Douglas MacArthur, the wartime military commander and then Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in the Occupation of Japan; Australia surrendering to Japan; or a successful Japanese invasion of the United States.\textsuperscript{139} The 1991 film \textit{Gojira tai Kingu Gidorā} (Godzilla vs King Ghidorah), for instance, depicted the giant pre-historic monster Godzilla, first seen in film in 1954, travelling back in time to 1944 and slaughtering American soldiers while saving a garrison of Japanese Imperial Army troops before battling King Ghidorah, another Japanese monster character.\textsuperscript{140} The film was viewed by some American critics as a form of ‘America-bashing’.\textsuperscript{141}

Other Japanese works relating to ‘Japan-bashing’ were set in the contemporary period, or in the future. Manga proved to be a particularly popular vehicle. Kawaguchi Kaiji’s controversial manga series \textit{Chinmoku no kantai} (The Silent Service), for example, was published in thirty-two volumes between 1989 and 1996.\textsuperscript{142} It illustrated futuristic warfare involving the United States, the Soviet Union and a rogue Japanese submarine, the \textit{Yamato}, a reference to a famous battleship of the Imperial Japanese Navy, sunk in World War II, itself named after the Yamato people of ancient Japan. In the manga, the \textit{Yamato} single-handedly decimated the entire United States Third Fleet,

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\textsuperscript{139} See, for example, Hiyama Yoshiaki, \textit{Amerika hondo kessen: senkan "Yamato" Bei kantai o senmetsu!}, Tōkyō: Kōbunsha, 1982.
\textsuperscript{142} Kawaguchi Kaiji, \textit{Chinmoku no kantai}, vols 1-32, Tōkyō: Kodansha, 1989-96. This manga was also made into a computer game and an animated film, released in both Japanese and English in 1995. See, for example, \textit{The Silent Service} (1995), directed by Takahashi Ryōsuke, Internet Movie Database, \url{http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0243560/}.
\end{flushleft}
including six submarines and several other vessels, leading fictional President Nicholas J. Bennet to threaten to re-occupy Japan or use nuclear weapons against Tokyo and Osaka in the event that the *Yamato* used its own nuclear missiles against the United States. A winner of the 1990 Kōdansha Manga award, the series had sold some 2.5 million copies by 2004.\(^{143}\) It was reportedly read avidly by members of Japan’s Self-Defence Forces, leading some Japanese politicians to argue that it was an ‘ominous sign of a nationalist revival’ in Japan.\(^{144}\) The series was also apparently very popular with the right wing in Japan, with right-wing critic Suzuki Kunio claiming that the manga had become the ‘bible’ of ‘young rightists’ who regarded the author as a new Mishima Yukio, a reference to the prominent novelist and hero of the right wing who staged a spectacular public suicide in 1970.\(^{145}\)

Rather than a fictional military conflict, some works of Japanese popular culture highlighted the real economic tension between the West, particularly the United States, and Japan. Ishinomori Shōtarō’s best-selling *Manga Nihon keizai nyūmon* (An Introduction to Japanese Economics in Manga), published first in the financial broadsheet *Nihon keizai shimbun* (Japan Financial Times) in 1986, was the first manga to extensively fictionalise the trade friction between the United States and Japan.\(^{146}\) It was subsequently published in English as *Japan Inc.: Introduction to Japanese Economics*.

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\(^{145}\) Quoted in Frederik L. Schodt, ‘Chinmoku no kantai’, *Mangajin*, vol. 13, December 1991, p. 60. Schodt’s article speaks of ‘Suzuki Yoshio’; however, he has acknowledged that he meant Suzuki Kunio: Frederick L. Schodt, email to Narrelle Morris, 26 June 2006.

Ishinomori suggested in the manga that trade friction might be lessened if the yen and the dollar were merged into a single currency, to be called the ‘dolen’, as shown in the extract below.

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Similarly, Nitta Tatsuo’s manga Torishimariyaku Hira Namijirō (Director Hira Namijirō), published in 1992, followed the contentious debate between the United States and Japan over the trade in automobiles and automobile parts. The manga fictionalised Lee Iacocca, the chairman of Chrysler, as ‘Chairman Icepocca of Chrosler’, who wore a Stars and Stripes suit and was domineering, dogmatic, emotional and also drunk as he complained that Japan practised unfair trade, as indicated on the page from the manga shown below.

The subject of economic friction between the West and Japan was not limited to manga about business topics. The manga *Oishinbo* (Feast), drawn by Kariya Tetsu and Hanasaki Akira, which began as a series about gourmet food in 1983, also focused at one stage on the trade friction between the United States and Japan. In a 1990 issue entitled ‘Nichibei kome sensō’ (Japan-America Rice War), Japanese characters explained to a fictional American congressman, Dan Foster, that Japanese consumers were reluctant to buy rice imported from the United States because rice is an integral part of the ‘soul’ of the Japanese people.148

‘Japan-bashing’ was the direct subject of a number of works produced in this period. A music record entitled *Japan Bashing Volume-1*, for example, was produced by Osaka-based noise rock band Hanatarash in 1990.149 The cover of the record is shown below.

![Figure 6.11: Hanatarash, Japan Bashing Volume-1, 7" EP, Public Bath PB-7D, 1990.](image)

‘Japan-bashing’ was also the subject of former *Yomiuri shimbun* newspaper journalist and Tokyo Broadcasting Station commentator Akimoto Hideo’s 1987 novel entitled

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Like Crichton’s *Rising Sun*, the novel contained a short Afterword explaining the author’s views on economic relations between the United States and Japan. Akimoto argued that the two countries were engaged in a monetary exchange rate ‘war’, which had been fuelled, at least in part, by the economic policy failures of the Reagan administration. He hoped, therefore, that the Americans would soon recognise the futility of ‘Japan-bashing’.

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*Figure 6.12: Akimoto Hideo, *Japan basshingu: Nichibei keizai sensō*, Tōkyō: Futami shobō, 1987.*

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**‘Japan-bashing’ for Profit**

While Western and Japanese commentators complained about the influence of ‘Japan-bashing’ and ‘America-bashing’ on popular culture, this did not stop some individuals and companies from deliberately tapping into ‘bashing’ with commercial products. In the United States, many of these products were linked to the widespread perception that the Japanese presence in the United States, particularly in the form of investment, was

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excessive. In 1990, for example, Global Product Marketing Ltd, a Minnesota-based company, produced and sold the ‘Japan Land Owners Kit’ which, for the price of US$12, allowed purchasers to nominally own one square foot of land in Japan. The company’s owner, John Gabos, denied, however, that the kit was aimed at ‘bashing the Japanese’, pointing out that it included a note in Japanese announcing that it was ‘meant in good fun’. 152 Similarly, a Virginia-based company named Yen Free Inc. advertised t-shirts in 1990 that bore the slogan ‘Keep America Yen-Free’, urging wearers to ‘Tell them [presumably Japanese investors] how you feel this summer’. The marketing manager of Yen Free admitted the advertisements were poorly thought out and could be considered racist but responded:

People were finding out that [the] Rockefeller Center was sold, Columbia
Pictures were sold. … Our national institutions were going to the Japanese.
We just wanted to give people a chance to express their outrage.153

Other products that appeared during the ‘Japan-bashing’ period were inspired by World War II. An Arkansas company, Delta Press Ltd, advertised nationally in 1991 the availability of its ‘Pearl Harbor Anniversary Revenge T-Shirt’, which bore a picture of a mushroom cloud and the logo ‘Made in America, Tested in Japan’, as shown below.

The company owner, Billy Blann, reported that he had sold about five thousand of the ‘joke’ shirts in the past two or three years.\textsuperscript{154} This product may have partly inspired Democrat Senator Ernest Hollings’ controversial remark in March 1992 to the effect that American workers should draw a mushroom cloud and write ‘Made in America by Lazy and Illiterate Workers and Tested in Japan’ on their goods.\textsuperscript{155} Hollings’ remark had also been prompted by suggestions in early 1992 by Japanese Lower House speaker Sakurauchi Yoshio that Americans were lazy and lacked a work ethic.\textsuperscript{156} Also drawing on Pearl Harbor imagery was a Florida man named Robert McKesson who set up a ‘Pearl Harbor II’ company in 1992 to sell anti-Japanese bumper stickers and shirts depicting a Zero aeroplane dropping Japanese consumer goods on the United States under the slogan ‘Buy American Before Its [sic] Too Late’. McKesson estimated to the media that he had sold twenty thousand such items, mostly to ‘blue-collar’ workers in the automobile, steel and electrical industries.\textsuperscript{157} He denied, however, that he was a ‘Japan-basher’; rather, he was merely advocating that consumers should ‘Buy

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American’. A Japanese critic of the Pearl Harbor imagery claimed that its use, whether in commercial products or otherwise, illustrated the extent to which ‘malicious parties’ would go in their ‘desperate efforts to market Japan-bashing’.

However, perhaps the most overt example of a company taking profitable advantage of ‘bashing’ occurred in Japan itself. In early 1992, the Fukuoka-based software company SystemSoft Corporation released a Japanese-language-only computer game entitled ‘Japan-bashing’. The game was described as being ‘full of reality and tension’: ‘winning isn’t the only thing’. One American reviewer characterised it as a game that made ‘auto quotas, whaling, drift-net fishing and protectionism’ into entertainment. A spokesperson for SystemSoft, Kinoshita Seika, announced that the company expected ‘favourable’ sales due to the intensification of ‘Japan-bashing’ in 1992, and that it hoped to have the game on fifty thousand Japanese computers by the end of the year. Following criticism of the game in the United States, including negative coverage on the NBC network’s evening news programme, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that it would investigate the contents of the game, although no follow-up reports appeared in the media regarding any investigation. While the game’s release was obviously an attempt to cash in on the popularity of ‘Japan-bashing’, it also neatly demonstrated the Japanese perception that

161 Quoted in Hardy, ‘This Game Will Never Sell Here’.
the United States and Japan were embroiled in a long-term confrontation: the fictitious events in the game started in the early 1990s and took place over eleven imaginary years.\textsuperscript{165}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Japan_Bashing.png}
\caption{SystemSoft Corporation’s PC game ‘Japan Bashing’, 1992.}
\end{figure}

While works of Western popular culture that engaged in ‘Japan-bashing’ could elaborate on the dangers posed by Japan to the West, they could also offer something the real world, at least until the mid-1990s, could not: the vision of the West triumphantly regaining its dominance over Japan. With the exception of \textit{Rising Sun}, which was renowned for its pessimism from the American point of view, most works depicted the United States overcoming the Japanese danger, typically by a combination of rugged American individualism, resourcefulness and tenacity. In Japan, ‘America-bashing’ works could offer a similar but reversed cathartic victory by Japan over the United States, often one that dealt at least in part with the past in order to rewrite the ending of World War II. By the mid-1990s, however, such works were declining in number, just as Japan itself was suffering economic decline.

\textsuperscript{165} Hardy, 'This Game Will Never Sell Here'.

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Only the passage of time will show whether the fears of numerous commentators regarding the effect of the enculturation of ‘Japan-bashing’ and ‘America-bashing’ were valid. *Rising Sun* was described in 1999 as being as quaint and outdated as Sax Rohmer’s evil Chinese figure of Fu Manchu from the early twentieth century.166 On the other hand, it is certainly interesting to speculate whether the term ‘yellow peril’, for instance, would still be in the modern lexicon to the degree it is if magazines, novels and then films had not continued to popularise the term. Popular culture scholar Gary Hoppenstand has argued, for example, that it was Rohmer’s Fu Manchu novels that made the ‘yellow peril’ stereotype ‘one of the most frequently used negative stereotypes in our popular culture’.167 One may suspect that the phenomenon of ‘Japan-bashing’ will live on in Western popular culture regarding Japan, just as the ‘yellow peril’ has done. Chapter Seven goes on to examine the gradual decline and lingering impact of ‘Japan-bashing’ in Western and Japanese discourses since the late 1990s.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DECLINE OF ‘JAPAN-BASHING’ AND ASSESSMENTS OF ITS IMPACT

‘In the 1980s, it was “Japan bashing.” In the early 90s, it was “Japan passing.” Now, it’s “Japan nothing.”’¹

By the mid-1990s, nearly two decades after Robert Angel invented and began to use the term ‘Japan-bashing’ to ward off criticism of Japan, the use of the label and, indeed, the alleged practice of ‘Japan-bashing’ were winding down. The term itself had been discredited, as many commentators came to realise that it was not as straightforward and transparent as it had first appeared to be; rather, like all labels, it was a deliberate rhetorical tool that had been deployed in pursuit of various agendas. Critics of ‘Japan-bashing’ therefore applauded the beginning of a new, supposedly positive age of Western discourse on Japan, one in which it was hoped that the ‘bashing’ of old would have little influence. ‘Japan-bashing’, however, had no sudden end-point.

This chapter examines first the rise of two new expressions – ‘Japan-passing’ and ‘Japan-nothing’ – which appeared to have taken over from ‘Japan-bashing’ to describe dominant Western discourses about Japan by the late 1990s. As we shall see, however, episodes labelled as ‘Japan-bashing’ continued to occur in the second half of the 1990s, triggered by certain critical events, notably the Asian economic ‘crisis’ in 1997. Indeed, while the term ‘Japan-bashing’ did decline in use during the 1990s, it has nonetheless remained an ongoing, if less prominent, feature of both Western and Japanese discourses on Japan.

Accordingly, the chapter goes on to discuss the existence of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the early twenty-first century, arguing that the term is still deployed as a way of averting or dismissing unwelcome criticism of Japan, regardless of whether such criticism is well-founded. Moreover, the label ‘Japan-bashing’ has also been expanded by some commentators to include not only criticism of Japan in general but also disagreement with or opposition to specific Japanese actions. Lastly, the chapter examines the various assessments made in the 1980s and 1990s of the impact of ‘Japan-bashing’ in Western countries and Japan. While most observers labelled ‘Japan-bashing’ as a destructive discourse, others suggested that its influence and impact had been unduly exaggerated.

The End of ‘Japan-bashing’?

As we have seen, the phenomenon of ‘Japan-bashing’ peaked in the late twentieth century. By the mid-1990s, popular use of the term in Western countries had begun to peter out. This decline corresponded with Japan’s own economic decline, which had in turn undermined the widespread characterisation of Japan as an international ‘problem’ and, consequently, the presumed validity of ‘bashing’. Apparently changing attitudes towards ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States, for example, forced a Ford dealership in Iowa to cancel plans for a ‘Japan Bashing Day’ promotion in February 1994, at which the ‘bashing’ of three Japanese cars had been scheduled to take place. Such an event would perhaps have been cheered on by the American public only two years earlier; now, widespread complaints from Iowa residents about the literal ‘bashing’ aspects of the scheduled event, as well as coverage by the Japanese media, persuaded the dealer, Robert Lyons, to change it to an ‘America Day’ promotion instead. Lyons reported that many American complainants seemed to think that a ‘little Ford store in the middle of Nowhere, Iowa, might affect them’. He therefore
concluded that ‘a lot’ of Americans must depend on employment with Japanese manufacturers in the United States which might be threatened by ‘Japan-bashing’.2 Even in popular culture, ‘Japan-bashing’ began to decline in popularity, as novels and films depicting a more ‘exotic’ and, therefore, attractive Japan re-emerged, such as David Guterson’s Snow Falling on Cedars (1995) and its film version (1999); Arthur Golden’s Memoirs of a Geisha (1998) and its film version (2005); Liza Dalby’s The Tale of Murasaki (2000); and the Edward Zwick-directed film The Last Samurai (2003).3

Many Western and Japanese observers now began to speak not of ‘Japan-bashing’ but rather of ‘Japan-passing’ (translated into Japanese as ‘ジャパン・パッシング’ or Japan passhingu). This ambiguous new term was apparently first used in Japan in 1995 to suggest that the United States was not only surpassing Japan economically but was also bypassing it in favour of diplomatic and economic involvement with other nations, notably China.4 For instance, Yomiuri shimbun commentator Shibata Yasuhiko used the term ‘Japan-passing’ that year to lament that Japan was no longer a ‘rising economic power competing for first place’ in the world and was seemingly about to be replaced as the ‘centre of Asia’.5 However, a term even more telling than ‘Japan-

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passing’ soon began to emerge as well: ‘Japan-nothing’ (translated into Japanese as ‘日本なし’ or Nihon nashi, or sometimes as ‘日本無用論’ or Nihon muyōron). This expression provided a revealing glimpse of how far Japan’s international status had apparently slipped in only a few short years for, as one American commentator noted in 1995, the ‘battle’ used to be ‘persuading people that Japan is different’ but now it was ‘persuading them that it matters’. In contrast to the boom of interest in Japan from the late 1970s onwards, surveys of the American media revealed that the number of newspaper articles relating to Japan dropped in the late 1990s, with a thirty-seven per cent decline in the New York Times, for example, in the period 1996 to 2000 compared to the period 1985 to 1995. A survey of American television news reports on Japan, too, revealed that by 1996 the annual total had fallen to less than one-third of the 1989 total. Such evidence led one observer to conclude that Japan had come ‘close to being an invisible country’ in the American media, as well as in the consciousness of the public.

To Western observers, it was by no means clear that the emergence of the expressions ‘Japan-passing’ and ‘Japan-nothing’ represented an improvement over ‘Japan-bashing’, particularly when it seemed to result in a renewed ambivalence about and a lack of diplomatic focus on Japan. In Australia, for example, complaints were

voiced in the late 1990s that relations with Japan were drifting, with ‘prime ministerial visits cut short’, ‘ministerial meetings that do not meet’ and a general ‘absence of diplomatic focus’. In the United States, commentators raised concerns that official Washington appeared to be suffering from ‘Japan fatigue’, particularly as it failed to appoint an ambassador to Japan, even an interim one, between Walter F. Mondale’s departure from Tokyo in December 1996 and Thomas S. Foley’s arrival in November 1997. In response to the apparent lack of priority now given to Japan, military strategist James Auer called in 1998 for the United States to reject ‘Japan-passing’ and to embark instead on the process of ‘deep engagement’ with Japan. For other commentators, however, it was not the lack of opportunity for engagement represented by this new phase that was the problem; rather, inattention to Japan was unwise in itself, because Japan was unpredictable or even devious, and had not necessarily been surpassed at all. Echoing earlier calls for American vigilance in matters relating to Japan, John Judis concluded in 1997 that the United States had to ‘pay closer attention’ to Japan, otherwise Americans could ‘find themselves looking across the Pacific in the early twenty-first century and talking about “America-passing”’ in an era of Japanese resurgence.

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For many Japanese observers, too, the emphasis on ‘Japan-passing’ and ‘Japan-nothing’ was unwelcome. The failure of President Bill Clinton even to mention Japan in his 1997 State of the Union address, for example, was a stunning blow – although it was perhaps not a surprising omission given that every single political appointee, bar one, who had been involved in the formulation of the Clinton administration’s original Japan policy had left by that year.\footnote{The exception was United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky: Robert Uriu, ‘The Impact of Policy Ideas: Revisionism and the Clinton Administration’s Trade Policy toward Japan’, in Gerald L. Curtis (ed.), \textit{New Perspectives on U.S.-Japan Relations}, Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2000, p. 233.} As a columnist for Japan’s \textit{TBS News} pointed out:

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China was mentioned six times [in the 1997 State of the Union address], and North Korea, South Korea and Russia were also mentioned. In recent years there have been various phrases that depict the U.S. attitude towards Japan, such as ‘Japan bashing,’ ‘Japan passing’ and now ‘Japan nothing’. It seems the president’s message exactly proved the reality of the relationship. It gives the impression that the U.S. no longer takes account of Japan.\footnote{‘Today's Column’, \textit{TBS News}, 6 February 1997, \url{http://www.tbs.co.jp/news23/taji/s70206-e.html}, accessed 10 January 2004.}
\end{quote}

Many Japanese commentators believed this inattention to Japan reflected a reduction in Japan’s status, similar to that experienced following defeat in World War II. Hoshino Shinyasu, the president of Tokyo’s National Institute for Research Advancement, a Japanese government-supported policy research institute, therefore expressed a preference for the ‘attention from “Japan bashing”’ over the ‘neglect of “Japan passing”’.\footnote{Quoted in Edward Neilan, ‘Japan Prefers Being Bashed to Being Passed Over’, \textit{Washington Times}, 11 January 1995, p. A13.} Perhaps understandably, American ambassador to Japan Thomas S. Foley rejected the idea that the United States was engaged in ‘Japan-passing’ in 1998, asking
that the term be ‘retired’ from the lexicon of commentators. Nevertheless, the sense that Japan was being actively ‘passed over’ by the United States for China only intensified that year, when President Clinton literally flew over Japan to China, spending as much as ten days in China compared to an earlier visit to Japan of only three days. Concerns over such matters demonstrated the very real fear in Japan that relations with the United States were ‘adrift’, and that if efforts were not made to redefine and renew them, the United States might well establish some kind of special relationship with China that would further isolate Japan.

Many Western and Japanese observers have thus concluded that ‘Japan-bashing’ was effectively supplanted by emphases on ‘Japan-passing’ and ‘Japan-nothing’ in the late 1990s. As one Japanese analysis optimistically observed in 1997, ‘Japan-bashing’ seemed to have ‘disappeared’ in the years since 1993. However, ‘bashing’ did not in fact end; it merely declined relative to its peak in the early 1990s. There have been ongoing, if less prominent, complaints about ‘Japan-bashing’ since the mid-1990s, again often directed at the United States but also at other Asian countries such as China and South Korea. In some periods, criticism of Japan has even intensified to the point where it seemed to amount to a temporary resurgence of earlier ‘Japan-bashing’ discourses.

The original ‘revisionists’, for instance, have continued to be labelled as ‘bashers’, for despite the fundamental change in Japan’s economic outlook after the early 1990s, many revisionists maintained well into the second half of the decade that

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their previous interpretation of Japan was accurate, and their theories remained influential.\textsuperscript{22} Japan was again criticised when the United States’ trade deficit once more increased in Japan’s favour in 1997; some observers labelled this familiar criticism of Japan as ‘neo-revisionism’.\textsuperscript{23} Certain newer critics of Japan, such as journalists John Judis, Michael Lind and Thomas Friedman, were gradually elevated in the late 1990s to a level of prominence in the United States that at times seemed to exceed even that of the original ‘revisionists’.\textsuperscript{24} To some observers, such revived criticism was an alarming, if temporary, sign of ‘re cidivism’ in earlier ‘Japan-bashing’.\textsuperscript{25}

A major proponent of the view that Japan was still a potential ‘number one’ and that its supposed economic decline was nothing more than a dangerous ‘myth’ was financial commentator Eamonn Fingleton, who produced the 1995 book \emph{Blindside: Why Japan is Still on Track to Overtake the U.S. by the Year 2000} and subsequent writings identifying himself explicitly with the old ‘revisionist’ line.\textsuperscript{26} Fingleton’s thesis was that a monolithic ‘Japan’ was ‘blindsiding’ the United States: that is, ‘Japan’ as a whole was disguising or concealing its actual economic progress in order to remain ‘on track

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{22} Nigel Holloway, ‘Less Like Us: Revisionists Stick to their Critique of Japan’, \emph{Far Eastern Economic Review}, 31 July 1997, p. 49. See also Clyde V. Prestowitz, ‘Revising Revisionism?’, \emph{Far Eastern Economic Review}, 18 September 1997, p. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{23} See, for example, Paul J. Scalise, ‘The Birth of Neo-Revisionism’, \emph{Dead Fukuzawa}, 20 July 1998, \url{http://www.mail-archive.com/fukuzawa@ucsd.edu/msg00513.html}, accessed 7 September 2005.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Economist Jagdish Bhagwati argued that the new revisionists had become more prominent than those he considered as the original ‘Gang of Four’, namely Chalmers Johnson, Clyde Prestowitz, James Fallows and Pat Choate: Jagdish Bhagwati, ‘The US-Japan Car Dispute: A Monumental Mistake’, \emph{International Affairs}, vol. 72, no. 2, April 1996, p. 269.
\item \textsuperscript{25} ‘Not This Again, Please’, \emph{The Economist}, 20 September 1997, p. 18.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Eamonn Fingleton, \emph{Blindside: Why Japan is Still on Track to Overtake the U.S. by the Year 2000}, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995. ‘The school of Japanology with which I am associated is known as the Japan revisionists’: Eamonn Fingleton, ‘The Revisionists and "Yellow Peril"’, n. d., \url{http://www.fingleton.net/therealperil.htm}, accessed 12 January 2004. Some observers thought that ‘neo-revisionist’ would be a more accurate description of Fingleton: see, for example, the comments on Fingleton made by Robert C. Neff, Richard Katz and Paul Scalise on \emph{Dead Fukuzawa}, \url{http://www.mail-archive.com/fukuzawa@ucsd.edu/}, accessed 30 September 2005.
\end{itemize}
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toward its reputed goal of surpassing the United States to become the world’s biggest economy by 2000’.  

He argued that Japan was supported in this deception by numerous commentators in the American media, who ‘persisted in peddling the America-vanquishes-Japan story’.  

Fingleton anticipated correctly that his ‘blindside’ thesis would see him labelled as a ‘conspiracy theorist’ but he was also forced to deny that he was a ‘Japan-basher’ or a racist and that the book had a ‘yellow peril’ subtext.  

Many of the original revisionists initially supported Fingleton’s ‘blindside’ analysis, as did Business Week magazine, which lauded Blindside as one of the top ten business books of 1995.  

James Fallows, for example, thought Fingleton offered ‘crucial and prescient guidance’ on how the United States should deal with Japan.  

Some of the revisionists developed theories similar to the ‘blindside’ thesis in their own writings. For instance, Chalmers Johnson claimed that accounts of Japan’s economic woes were actually part of a Japanese campaign of ‘deception’ that was designed to buy time for Japan to implement its ‘true post-cold war strategy – its attempt to recreate the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, this time not at the point of a bayonet’.  

Intellectual historian Ivan Hall, too, equated the ‘blindside’ thesis with Japan’s successful ‘bamboozlement’ of the United States.  

At the same time, however, many
commentators dissociated themselves from Fingleton, including several prominent ‘neo-revisionists’. R. Taggart Murphy noted in 1996, for example, that it was getting ‘harder and harder’ to argue that Japan’s economic decline was ‘all some kind of show staged by the [Japanese] authorities for the benefit of gullible foreigners’. Patrick Smith was even more critical in 1997, blaming certain commentators for spreading ‘paranoia’, including the view that ‘Japan did not really enter a recession in the early 1990s: It was “blindsiding” us, a sort of sneak attack, the better to achieve economic domination’.

The renewed ‘revisionist’ or ‘neo-revisionist’ criticism of Japan came to a head with the Asian economic ‘crisis’ in 1997, as mentioned earlier. As the crisis in various Asian countries spread, Western commentators began to seek the reasons for the economic difficulties in the region and Japan came in for a share of the blame. Although Japan was in economic decline itself, it was nevertheless expected by many commentators to aid its less robust neighbours. Complaints were made that Japan appeared unwilling to ‘take responsibility for its enhanced position within the world capitalist system’. This supposed unwillingness was viewed by some as representative of a broader systemic failure in Japan to cope with changing national, regional and global economic circumstances. In 1999, for example, Gavan McCormack reported that the new Japanese ‘problem’ was ‘[v]acillation and inaction’, exacerbated by Japan’s own economic woes. Thus, in McCormack’s view, the expression ‘Japanese threat’ was still ‘common parlance’ but now it was ‘not takeover

but collapse’ by Japan that threatened other nations. Damned at an early point for being economically successful, Japan was now further damned for its economic weakness, as well as its apparent reluctance to institute wide-ranging political, economic and security reforms that many observers deemed necessary for Japan and, perhaps more importantly, for the global system as a whole. Some commentators were quick to notice the irony in arguments of this nature. International trade scholar Brink Lindsey noted, for example:

It was only a few years ago that Japan’s strength was thought to pose a clear and present danger; now its weakness is supposedly a threat. Indeed, some of the same people who were sounding the (false) alarm then are doing it again now …. Like the eco-hysteric who flip-flop between predictions of a new ice age and catastrophic global warming, some ‘experts’ on Japan aren’t happy unless they’re spreading panic. Their track record is a good indication of how seriously they should be taken today.

Some commentators suggested that renewed criticism of Japan could incite another round of official-level ‘Japan-bashing’ in Western countries, particularly as certain American politicians might find the temptation to attack Japan quite ‘irresistible’. This prediction was soon fulfilled, with analyst Jeff Faux remarking in

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1998 that ‘[h]ardly a day goes by without a statement from the President, his Treasury Secretary or an editorial writer bashing the Japanese for their slowness’ in reforming their political-economic system to cope with the regional ‘crisis’.40 Economist Edward Lincoln, for example, criticised Japan’s macroeconomic policy in 1998. For this, he was quickly labelled as a ‘Japan-basher’, a charge which he expressly denied.41 By 1999, indeed, the beginning of a ‘new wave’ of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States had been hailed,42 one that appeared to some Japanese observers to be, regrettably, even ‘more intense’ than earlier criticism had typically been.43 However, one Japanese newspaper labelled observations about the new trend of ‘bashing’ as mere ‘trumped-up verbiage’. Many Japanese commentators, it pointed out, were similarly criticising their government for prolonging Japan’s economic stagnation, and surely not all of them could be ‘bashers’.44

Eventually, however, the criticism of Japan again wound down, with even the original revisionists acknowledging that there really were serious problems with Japan’s economy. For instance, Clyde Prestowitz noted in 2000 that ‘Japan Inc.’ was no longer an accurate description of Japan, which was more like ‘Japan Wreck’ or ‘Japan Confused’.45 By contrast, Eamonn Fingleton continued to assert that he was ‘more convinced than ever’ that his analysis of Japan’s covert plan to overtake the United States was accurate, as Japan’s economic troubles were truly nothing more than an

exercise in ‘mock distress’ acted out by a ‘Japanese elite that has always believed in cloaking its true agenda’. For most observers of Japan, however, ‘revisionism’ was effectively ‘dead’ as a paradigm for interpreting Japan, and that meant such views were ‘no longer even worth refuting’.

Despite these resurgences of ‘Japan-bashing’ in Western countries in the late 1990s, there were again suggestions by the turn of the twenty-first century that ‘bashing’ really had ended. Journalist Tim Larimer claimed in 2001, for example, that the ‘era’ of Japan-bashing had been ‘made irrelevant by stuff nobody had heard of’ in the 1980s and early 1990s, ‘like portals and dotcoms and e-business software’. For many other commentators, however, it simply appeared that Western views of Japan had changed greatly by the early twenty-first century. As one Japanese observer noted in 2000, Japan had apparently ‘receded so far in American thinking’ that ‘one had to wonder if the perceived Japanese threat of just 10 years earlier could have really occurred’. For some observers, the end of ‘Japan-bashing’ meant that the term could now be used entirely in jest, and in a manner which underscored the excesses and the exaggerations of earlier discourse. When it was reported in 1999 that beavers had damaged valuable Japanese cherry blossom trees in Washington, for example, a correspondent to the *Mainichi Daily News* complained, tongue-in-cheek, that the ‘Japan-bashing rodents’ were clearly motivated by racism. He concluded that the Japanese government should demand an official apology for this ‘potent’ insult to such

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a cherished Japanese symbol. Such humour certainly demonstrated the prevailing sense that ‘Japan-bashing’ was now a ‘quaint’ historical, rather than real contemporary, phenomenon.

‘Japan-bashing’ in the Twenty-First Century

Even though the term ‘Japan-bashing’ has been problematised since the early 1990s, its origins questioned and its agenda deconstructed, it has, nonetheless, become thoroughly entrenched in both Western and Japanese discourses as a means of discrediting criticism of Japan emanating generally, if not exclusively, from non-Japanese commentators. Demonstrating the lingering power of the term, some commentators have continued to ward off suggestions that they themselves might be indulging in ‘bashing’ even before any such accusations are made. The term seems to have lost little of its earlier stigma, and even commentators who have at one time willingly embraced the label have often later recanted. Business scholar Declan Hayes was one who changed his mind in a remarkably short time. Welcoming readers to his 2005 book about the supposed ‘disease’ of sex and sleaze in Japan by claiming that his work was the ‘mother of all Japan bashing books!’ , he nevertheless did an about-face in his conclusion, arguing that while he would be subject to the ‘hoary’ charge of ‘Japan-bashing’, it was ‘not the case at all’ that he was a ‘basher’.

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52 For instance, linguist William C. Hannas opened his 2003 book on Asian writing styles and their supposed stultifying effect on creativity by discussing Angel’s role in inventing the term. He concluded, almost plaintively, with the hope that in ‘exposing’ the origins of ‘Japan-bashing’, he had ‘preempted its application’ to his own research: William C. Hannas, Writing on the Wall: How Asian Orthography Curbs Creativity, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003, p. 12.
The endurance of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ has saddened and incensed some observers. Robert Angel himself regretfully noted in 1992 that those who had used his term were his ‘intellectual dupes’, as they had unknowingly disseminated the term as if it were transparent and straightforward when in fact it was a label bearing a specific agenda. Angel’s regret over ‘Japan-bashing’ was undoubtedly fuelled in part, however, by the fact that the term has reportedly overshadowed his academic career. While Angel initially escaped castigation by the revisionists for inventing the term ‘Japan-bashing’, his subsequent ‘defection’ from the ‘Japan lobby’ earned him so much enmity from his supposed former colleagues in that group that he has referred to his residence in South Carolina as ‘Dazaifu’ (modern-day Kyūshū), a traditional place of exile in Japanese history.  

Angel’s regret over ‘Japan-bashing’ may also stem from the fact that the term came full circle in 1991, when his own work on Japan’s economic policy failures was criticised as ‘bashing’.

As we have seen, the revisionists have been the chief complainants about the ongoing and typically uncritical use of the term ‘Japan-bashing’, and their vehemence only increased after Robert Angel’s role was publicly exposed by journalist John Judis in 1992. Michael Crichton responded to the revelation by observing that the list of Angel’s ‘dupes’ was still growing. He argued in 1994 that the ‘casual indifference’ with which the term was used in the United States was a ‘wonder to behold’, noting that ‘[o]ne might have thought once its history were known, “Japan-bashing”, like “nigger”

56 Hannas, Writing on the Wall, p. 296.
would become an unacceptable term in intelligent discourse’. Yet, he observed, ‘against all logic, “Japan-bashing” is making a comeback’. 59

Perhaps the most persistent critic of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ has been intellectual historian Ivan Hall, who questioned wearily in 2004 whether people would never learn that it was a term ‘deliberately concocted by an American formerly in the employ of the Japanese embassy’. 60 Hall argued that the widespread failure to appreciate that the expression ‘Japan-bashing’ had been consciously invented for and used in pursuit of a specific agenda amounted to the ‘Great Intellectual Train Robbery’ of the twentieth century. In his opinion, ‘Japan-bashing’ was a classic example of how a ‘wisp of American self-critical hyperbole’ could become a commonplace term in Japan, allowing Japanese commentators to ‘indulge their sense of victimization, unite against an allegedly hostile world, and slake their own pangs of conscience’. 61 The popularity of the label therefore represented, for Hall, Japan’s successful ‘bamboozlement’ of the United States, although Americans were also complicit, as there was a ‘pattern of professional intimidation’ by the ‘Japan lobby’ of those who criticised Japan. 62 Hall reserved his specific ire for C. Fred Bergsten, Takatoshi Ito and Marcus Noland, who entitled their 2001 book No More Bashing: Building a New Japan-United States Economic Relationship, even though, in Hall’s opinion, they ought to have known better than to use the book’s title to perpetuate the concept of ‘Japan-bashing’. 63 Hall

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60 Hall, ‘Bamboozled’.
61 Hall, Bamboozled, pp. 139-40.
noted with some irony, however, that his own view, given that it was critical of Japan, might also be labelled as ‘bashing’.  

While it might be presumed from such complaints that Western discourse remains the main site of claims of ‘Japan-bashing’, it is in Japan itself that the term has become most strongly entrenched. There appears to have been little change to many Japanese observers’ understanding of and preoccupation with ‘bashing’. In 2003, for example, an examination paper at the University of Tsukuba in Ibaraki Prefecture defined a ‘Japan-basher’ as ‘someone, usually a foreigner who prefers to destructively criticize Japan rather than constructively engage in dialogue to solve the real problems’. Thus, foreign commentators who have identified problems in and criticised Japan’s political-economic system have continued to be labelled as ‘bashers’. For instance, Alex Kerr, author of the controversial 2001 book *Dogs and Demons: The Fall of Modern Japan*, was labelled in Japan as a ‘basher’ because of his criticism of the apparent obsession of Japanese government and business with infrastructure construction projects, regardless of their environmental or social impact. Kerr had attempted to pre-empt suggestions that he was engaging in ‘bashing’, remarking in his book that it was a ‘big mistake’ to believe that to point out Japan’s problems was to ‘attack’ or ‘bash’ Japan. He therefore rejected later accusations that he was a ‘basher’; rather, he was ‘speaking for the Japanese who are unhappy with their country’ but dared not voice their own criticism, perhaps because they feared that they, too,  

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64 Hall, Bamboozled, p. xv.  
might be labelled as ‘bashers’. In Kerr’s own view, his book was, consequently, the ‘opposite of bashing’, it was ‘Japan helping’ and ‘Japan supporting’.  

The apparent Japanese preoccupation with ‘bashing’ is a sign of the seriousness with which anti-Japanese commentary has been viewed there during and after the late twentieth century, as demonstrated by repeated official Japanese admonitions about ‘bashing’, particularly in relation to the United States. Japanese ambassador to the United States, Saitō Kunihiko (1995-99), for example, made repeated complaints about American ‘Japan-bashing’ throughout the late 1990s. In 1998, when the American media described Japanese Liberal Democratic Party presidential candidates as uniformly ‘unqualified’ for leadership, Saitō claimed that this amounted to ‘bashing’ and, in 1999, he said the same about American criticism of alleged product-dumping by Japanese steel exporters. In mid-2005, Toyota’s imminent surpassing of General Motors as the world’s number one maker of automobiles also prompted Japanese suggestions that there might be a ‘replay’ of earlier ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States. Some ‘bashing’-like practices did eventuate. For example, a ‘Buy American’ advertising campaign produced in late 2005 by the Level Field Institute, an American automobile industry lobby group, asserted that Toyota was conducting business in Iran, a nation hostile to the United States. However, unlike in earlier years, this apparent smear campaign against Toyota reportedly struck the ‘wrong chord’

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68 Alex Kerr, quoted in Gamble and Watanabe, *A Public Betrayed*, p. 3.  
in Washington. Even President George W. Bush, at least publicly, blamed the American automobile industry for its own problems.

In Japan, the term ‘Japan-bashing’ has continued to be applied not only to foreign criticism of Japan in general but also to disagreement with or opposition to specific Japanese actions, a use of the label that appears to confirm earlier Western views that Japanese observers invariably perceived any criticism at all as ‘bashing’. From the early 1980s onwards, for instance, foreign criticism of Japan’s supposedly ‘scientific’ whaling programme, and of the Japanese government’s support for a return to commercial whaling, resulted in complaints of ‘bashing’ by Japanese government and scientific representatives, pro-whaling lobby groups, and some concerned Western commentators. As early as 1982, for instance, British conservationist Joanna Gordon Clark called for an end to ‘bashing the Japanese’. She argued that further strong criticism of Japan in relation to whaling might result in Japan rejecting its membership of the International Whaling Commission, thereby undermining the effectiveness of the commission’s relatively new stance on whale conservation.

By the late 1990s, some Japanese commentators were claiming that there was an insidious undertone to the criticism of Japanese whaling: that once more it was connected to the United States’ frustration over Japan’s economic success, despite Japanese economic decline since the early 1990s. Morishita Jōji, a chief spokesperson for the Japan Fisheries Agency, argued in 2002 that Japan was suffering discrimination from anti-whaling nations such as the United States and Australia because of ‘cultural

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factors going back to the 1980s when Japan-bashing was fashionable’. 75 Similarly, Misaki Shigeko, a former counsellor to Japan’s Institute for Cetacean Research and the author of three pro-whaling books, labelled the anti-whaling protests of Greenpeace environmental activists at the 2004 International Whaling Commission summit as ‘Japan-bashing’. 76 By 2006, the extent of international criticism of Japanese whaling had resulted in renewed claims of ‘Japan-bashing’, including the assertion by one Japanese commentator that ‘bashing’ appeared to be becoming a ‘more regular pastime’ in Australia. 77 An unnamed Ministry of Foreign Affairs official declared, for example, that suggestions in the foreign media that Japan effectively bribed smaller nations to support its pro-whaling agenda in the International Whaling Commission were clearly motivated by ‘Japan-bashing’. 78

In an attempt to establish whether foreign criticism of Japan’s whaling institutions, policies and practices did amount to ‘bashing’, economist Tanno Dai and ecologist Hamazaki Toshihide surveyed American college students about the basis of their criticism of Japanese whaling in 1998. They concluded that it was ‘extremely difficult’ to establish whether ‘Japan-bashing’ was an influential factor, as ‘when you ask an American whether he is opposing whaling to bash Japan, the likely answer is “no”’. 79 Nevertheless, they noted that American respondents consistently ranked Japan last in a list of five nations or groups they would ‘tolerate’ engaging in whaling, following American Inuit, Icelanders, Greenlanders and Norwegians. They concluded

on this basis that claims that criticism of Japanese whaling amounted to ‘bashing’ ‘cannot simply be discredited’, and that claims that anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States was a ‘thing of the past’ were, therefore, erroneous.80

The broader scope of the term ‘Japan-bashing’ in recent years can also be seen in relation to foreign analysis of certain Japanese interpretations of twentieth-century history. From the late 1990s onwards, right-wing history ‘revisionists’ such as Tokyo University professor Fujioka Nobukatsu and other members of the Fujioka-founded Liberal View of History Study Group (Jiyūshugi shikan kenkyūkai) and Society for the Making of New School Textbooks in History (Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho o tsukuru kai) have painted foreign criticism of Japanese actions in World War II as deliberate ‘Japan-bashing’. For instance, Fujioka argued that the so-called ‘comfort women’ issue regarding wartime sexual abuse of principally non-Japanese women was an ‘unfounded scandal’ which had been created by outsiders in the 1990s for the ‘political purpose of bashing Japan’.81 In this view, Japanese commentators who perpetuated the ‘scandal’ by discussing the ‘comfort women’ were also ‘Japan-bashers’, or were being used as tools of foreign ‘bashers’.82 Outside Japan, those who have blocked foreign efforts to persuade the Japanese government to take responsibility for its wartime actions, including those actions relating to the ‘comfort women’, have again been labelled as the ‘Japan lobby’.83

82 See, for example, the labelling of journalist Matsui Yayori, who helped to organise the December 2000 Tokyo International Tribunal on the 'comfort women', reported in 'Backtalk: Pushing Japan's Buttons', Asiaweek, 30 March 2001, p. 1.
83 See, for example, Ken Silverstein, 'Cold Comfort: The Japan Lobby Blocks Resolution on WWII Sex Slaves', Harpers.org, 5 October 2006,
Generally speaking, use in Japan of the expression ‘Japan-bashing’ to cover any criticism of Japan has been discredited, just as it was in the late twentieth century. One American analysis complained in 2002 that the term ‘Japan-bashing’ simply had to ‘mean something more than just disagreeing with the Japanese’, and that attempts by some Japanese commentators to paint the United States as fundamentally anti-Japanese in fact amounted to ‘America-bashing’.

There have been some encouraging signs, in fact, that not all negative comments are now reflexively labelled in Japan as ‘bashing’. Forbes magazine correspondent Benjamin Fulford observed in 2005 that there was a changing Japanese reaction to foreign criticism which meant that outsiders could criticise specific Japanese actions without giving the impression that they were ‘bashing’ Japan as a whole:

In the old days they [the Japanese] would have called anything negative said by foreigners Japan-bashing. Now they know that it is LDP-bashing [Liberal Democratic Party-bashing], bureaucrat-bashing. It’s not Japan-bashing.

Japanese attention to apparently deliberate ‘bashing’ appears to have been refocused in the early twenty-first century on criticism of Japan in Asian countries. Anti-Japanese activities in China and South Korea have indeed centred on specific Japanese actions while also making broad generalisations about the supposedly negative


characteristics of the Japanese state, if not all Japanese people as well. The publication of ‘revisionist’ works of history in Japan and repeated visits by prominent Japanese officials, including then Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichirō, to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, where Japanese convicted of war crimes during World War II are among the enshrined war dead, for instance, have sparked numerous protests in other Asian countries. Moreover, Japanese claims of sovereignty over various remote islands, including the Senkaku islands, which are claimed by China as the Diaoyu, and the Takeshima islands, which are claimed by South Korea as the Dokdo, have prompted diplomatic disputes with China and South Korea, often accompanied by threats of further action to secure sovereignty. Such protests and disputes, however, have often appeared to be not spontaneous, but subtly guided by the establishment: in China, for example, ‘Japan-bashing’ has been declared a ‘favoured sport for the Communist party’, as well as an obsession for the Chinese media. Likewise, ‘Japan-bashing’ in South Korea has been labelled as a ‘generally accepted practice’, which appears designed to ‘distract public attention’ from the ‘failings’ of the government, as well as to benefit the publishing industry. Former Japanese diplomat and president of the Japan Foundation Ogura Kazuo claimed in early 2005 that ‘strong anti-Japanese sentiment’ in China and South Korea was nothing more than ‘bashing’, and stemmed from the ‘polito-social immaturity’ of those countries. Whether or not this is so,

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89 See, for example, Byun Eun-mi, 'Japan-Bashing Books Top Bestseller List: Publishers Eager to Increase Sales through Sensationalism', Korea Herald, 2 September 1998.
official Japanese approaches to countering criticism of Japan have proved to be remarkably consistent with the actions of earlier years. Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced in August 2005, for example, that it intended to counteract contemporary ‘Japan-bashing’ in Asia by strengthening its online public relations operations.91

**Western and Japanese Views of the Impact of ‘Japan-bashing’**

Thus far, there has been a curious tendency on the part of some observers to minimise or overlook the existence of ‘Japan-bashing’, even with regard to its peak in the 1980s and early 1990s. Certainly, those commentators who were labelled as ‘bashers’ in that period have usually been willing to forget the experience, perhaps understandably. However, some have also preferred to overlook the whole context of Western criticism of Japan, including their own role. Chalmers Johnson, for example, had seemingly forgotten the widespread American depiction of Japan as an ‘enemy’ throughout the 1980s and 1990s when he wrote in 2005 that:

> it has long been an article of … faith that the U.S. must do everything in its power to prevent the development of rival power centers, whether friendly or hostile, which meant that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, … attention [turned] to *China* as one of our probable next enemies.92

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The reluctance to focus retrospectively on ‘Japan-bashing’ probably also results from a desire by commentators to emphasise a new, supposedly positive age of Western discourse on Japan. ‘Bashing’ has often been relegated to a few short remarks or has been overlooked entirely in favour of emphasising the long-term positive relationships that supposedly prevail between Western nations and Japan. This kind of idealised perspective was even given the American presidential seal of approval in 2002, when President George W. Bush announced in a speech to the Japanese Diet that ‘for a century and a half now, America and Japan have formed one of the great and enduring alliances of modern times’, a comment that not only overlooked ‘Japan-bashing’ but World War II as well.93 Bush’s remarks were subsequently described by the White House as an unintentional error and an official transcript which amended the timeframe to ‘half a century’ was immediately issued.94 However, this new version still ignored the ‘Japan-bashing’ of the late twentieth century.

Such passing over of ‘Japan-bashing’ distorts the historical record regarding Western discourse about Japan, and the record of Japan’s responses. It erroneously suggests that ‘Japan-bashing’ had little or no long-standing influence, whether on discourses about Japan or on the many people and places involved. Moreover, it suggests that ‘Japan-bashing’ has little to contribute to broader knowledge and


understanding of how intellectual and popular discourses can be manipulated. In short, disregarding ‘Japan-bashing’ might be convenient for those who would prefer to dwell on the positive aspects of relations with Japan, but sweeping ‘Japan-bashing’ under the scholarly carpet merely serves to compound its destructive impact.

For many Western and Japanese observers, the term ‘Japan-bashing’ had been an ‘awful phrase’, one which whiffed of ‘irrationality, emotionalism and jealousy’.95 ‘Japan-bashing’ practices were often described using words such as ‘pointless’, ‘useless’ and ‘hypocritical’.96 As Elizabeth Dahl concluded in her 1999 analysis, ‘Japan-bashing’ was a ‘destructive, misguided, and diversionary’ discourse.97 Only a few commentators have found in it anything to praise. Some pointed out that ‘bashing’ contributed to the raising of Japan’s international profile in the late twentieth century, although most Japanese commentators certainly disliked the way this had come about. Nevertheless, as political scientist Richard Samuels suggested, the Japan ‘boom’, of which ‘bashing’ was a part, did help to draw a ‘new generation’ of scholars into Japan-related fields.98 Some Japanese observers similarly recognised that ‘bashing’ had promoted discussion of and further research into Japan within Japan itself. Homma Nagayo, for one, believed the revisionists had offered a ‘beneficial intellectual challenge’ to Japan.99 Others thought that the revisionists had provided the impetus necessary to spur policy changes within Japan that perhaps would not have

been possible without outside pressure. This particular reasoning led Robert J. Samuelson to conclude, ‘only half in jest’, that Japan should create its own ‘Ministry of Japan Bashing’ to criticise itself, as this would ultimately save the West from suffering Japanese counter-attacks in return for ‘bashing’.

For those Western and Japanese individuals and companies able to take advantage of the heightened profile of Japan-related issues, there were undoubtedly some tangible financial benefits in engaging in ‘Japan-bashing for profit’. The publishing industry, for example, rode the crest of the wave of Western interest in Japan throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Strong reader interest in Japan-related subjects prompted the introduction of numerous new magazines and journals in the United States in the late 1980s. By 1990, the subject of ‘Japan’ had been declared the ‘hottest’ property in American publishing, with at least one new publishing house, Stone Bridge Press, established to take advantage of apparent reader interest. Writings on Japan which had initially appeared with relatively mundane titles were renamed, apparently to take advantage of widespread interest in critical views of Japan. Bill Emmott’s 1991 book Japan’s Global Reach, for example, became Japanophobia: The Myth of the Invincible Japanese for the American market in 1992. Other

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100 Ōmae Ken'ichi, 'Amerika yo, Nihon niwa keizai yokushiryoku ga aru', Chūō kōron, vol. 104, no. 8, August 1989, p. 266.
105 Malkin, 'In the U.S., Book Writers Go after a Hot Subject', p. 1.
companies which received a positive boost from ‘bashing’ included lobbying and legal firms, particularly those which represented Japanese clients in the United States.  

By and large, however, most observers agreed that ‘Japan-bashing’ represented a destructive discourse, because of the manner in which the term operated, and the chain of consequences that arose from its popularisation. Whether the term was used naively or deliberately, it functioned more or less in the way that Robert Angel had intended, by sensationaly conflating criticism with racism, regardless of whether racism was actually involved. While it is impossible to establish the precise degree to which the label ‘bashing’ did discredit genuine and serious critics of Japan, anecdotal evidence suggests that it was at least partially successful in doing so. In an interview in the early 1990s, for example, at a time when Angel had already publicly regretted his involvement with ‘Japan-bashing’ and thus had no real need to inflate the term’s impact, he reported that “many prominent Americans – especially in the fields of business and academia” were “so afraid of being tagged Japan-bashers” that they had “toned down their criticisms of Japan”. In short, being labelled as a ‘basher’, or the converse, a ‘Japan lobbyist’, could be detrimental to the person or institution targeted, even if such charges were unjustified. As Naoki Sakai has pointed out, such epithets are difficult to oppose, as they function as ‘part of hearsay, party jokes and professional but private knowledge among specialists in Japanese studies’. In Sakai’s opinion, they cannot be easily identified or directly countered and are ‘all the more insidious because of this unofficial nature’.

On the other hand, so-called ‘bashers’ do not seem to have suffered severe consequences in the medium term. The perception among the revisionists that the

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109 Quoted in Fallows, Looking at the Sun, p. 435.
term ‘Japan-bashing’ was being used deliberately to inhibit the frank and reasoned exchange of views on Japan led to the labelling of ‘bashing’ as a ‘new McCarthyism’, as mentioned earlier. Yet, few observers ranked ‘Japan-bashing’ alongside McCarthyism in terms of its actual impact. Even Ivan Hall concluded that the revisionists were largely able to ‘ride out the assault by the Japanese establishment and its American confederates’ that came in the form of charges of ‘bashing’.111 John Creighton Campbell similarly pointed out that no pro-Japanese commentators had lost their employment in the 1980s and 1990s, unlike those who were seen as pro-Communist during the 1950s.112 Nevertheless, some individuals did complain of damage stemming from accusations of ‘bashing’. Chalmers Johnson claimed in 1991, for instance, that his university library was the only one among those in thirteen top American universities to be denied funding from the Japan-United States Friendship Commission.113 The most highly-publicised episode centred on Pat Choate’s departure from his position with American defence contractor TRW Inc. shortly before his book on the ‘Japan lobby’ was published in 1990. The media speculated that he had been asked to leave because the pre-publication word-of-mouth about his ‘outspoken views’ had ‘disturbed important TRW customers in Japan’, although this speculation was denied by both the company and a Japanese embassy official.114

As many observers noted, by far the greatest response to ‘Japan-bashing’ occurred in Japan itself. As we have seen, the apparent unreasonableness of ‘bashing’ encouraged reciprocity by some Japanese commentators in the form of ‘America-bashing’, thereby reinforcing American apprehensions of Japan and encouraging further ‘Japan-bashing’. This self-perpetuating cycle suggested to many American

111 Hall, Cartels of the Mind, p. 164.
113 'Bashing a "Japan-Basher": UC San Diego Denied Book Grant' (Editorial), Los Angeles Times, 10 May 1991, p. 6.
commentators that one of the ‘great success stories’ of American diplomacy in the post-war period was being undermined – good relations between the United States and Japan.  

At the peak of ‘Japan-bashing’ in 1992, for instance, a Congressional briefing paper warned that the United States-Japan relationship was ‘more uncertain’ and subject to greater strains than at any time since World War II. While many commentators were thus concerned at the apparent impact of ‘Japan-bashing’ and ‘America-bashing’ on relations between the two countries, others also pointed out that any deterioration in relations would by no means be confined to the United States and Japan themselves. Rather, any breakdown in relations or major policy changes might impact on the stability of the global political and economic system as a whole. Some Asian leaders, for example, warned that the ‘strident posturing’ of Japanese ‘America-bashing’ was dangerous, as it might encourage isolationism in the United States that would impact on the Asian region. Fortunately, however, the slow decline of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the 1990s rendered fears of any confrontation between Western nations and Japan more or less moot.

Nevertheless, many observers agreed that Western perceptions of Japan had altered for the worse because of ‘bashing’. W. Lawrence Neuman asserted in 2001, for example, that Americans had become less positive towards Japan than at any time in the past three decades, and that anti-Japanese views had extended well beyond the traditional cohort of the aged, the less educated and the poor. Despite numerous such Western and Japanese declarations that ‘bashing’ was an influential and

destructive discourse, however, some observers noted evidence to the contrary. As we have seen, public opinion in Western countries during the 1980s and 1990s did not always reflect widespread negative views of Japan. Many Americans, for example, consistently held friendly views of Japan. Moreover, polls also demonstrated that the percentage of American respondents who regarded relations with Japan as ‘bad’ only marginally increased throughout the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, with the greatest upswing occurring at the peak of ‘Japan-bashing’ in 1992, as shown in the graph below.

![Graph showing relations with Japan from 1980 to 1998](image)


Similarly, as noted earlier, many Japanese had consistently positive feelings towards the United States. The percentage of Japanese respondents to surveys who viewed relations with the United States as ‘bad’ only marginally increased throughout the late 1980s and into the early 1990s. The upswings in Japan, however, occurred at the time of the ‘bashing’ of Toshiba products in the United States in 1987, at the peak of bilateral discord in 1992 and during the Framework talks regarding automotive trade in 1995, as shown in the graph below.

The results of such opinion polls lent weight to suggestions that the influence, as well as the extent, of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the United States had been overestimated or deliberately exaggerated in the media in the 1980s and 1990s. Certain commentators suggested that ‘America-bashing’ in Japan had also been inaccurately perceived. Political scientist Itoh Mayumi, for one, contended that anti-American views in Japan were not entirely home-grown; rather, they had been influenced by media reports from the United States. She noted that the two ideographs for ‘bubei’ (侮米), or contempt for the United States, had been prominently featured on the front page of the *Washington Post* on 1 March 1992, linked to two articles about the emergence in Japan of increasingly negative views of the United States, and argued that it was only after this was covered as ‘news’ by the *Yomiuri shimbun* that Japanese readers began to be aware of attitudes in their own country that could be described as ‘bubei’ or ‘kenbei’ (dislike/hatred of the United States).  

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conducted a 1991 survey in Japan for the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, found that well-publicised polls which claimed that ‘kenbei’ was on the rise, particularly in younger people, were ‘entirely misleading’. Satō concluded that ‘kenbei’ among the young was ‘no more pervasive than it was thirty years ago’, and that ‘as it stands it is very marginal’.  

Whether or not the influence of ‘Japan-bashing’ has been overestimated, dominant Western views of Japan have undoubtedly improved since the decline of ‘bashing’ in the mid-1990s. For instance, surveys conducted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations revealed that whereas sixty-two per cent of American respondents believed that Japan was an economic threat to the United States in 1994, this figure had dropped to forty-five per cent by 1998 and then to twenty-nine per cent by 2002. In a Japanese poll conducted in the United States in 2005, ninety per cent of surveyed ‘opinion leaders’ and seventy-two per cent of respondents in the general public expressed a view that Japan was a dependable friend and ally of the United States. Similarly, in a Japanese poll conducted in Australia in 2006, the number of Australian respondents who said that Australia and Japan should have closer relations jumped from fifty-eight per cent in 1998 to seventy-one per cent by 2006. For some observers, the recent improvement in Japan’s image in Western countries implies that while

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‘bashing’ may have caused some short-term shift in public opinion at an earlier period, it has not engendered an enduring mistrust or dislike of Japan.\footnote{318}

Other commentators, however, have continued to express the view that ‘Japan-bashing’ has proved enduring not only as a practice but also in its less tangible influence. They have argued that criticism of Japan from the 1980s and 1990s added to and reinforced pre-existing negative images of Japan, and that such views have remained in public consciousness in ‘the West’. Journalist Charles Burress argued in 2000, for instance, that stereotypes of Japan as ‘ruthless’ and intent on ‘destroying the economic vitality’ of the United States did not just disappear when Japan’s economy declined. Rather, these images had reopened a ‘Pandora’s Box’ of negative Western attitudes towards Japan, adding greatly to the ‘stock of latent resentment’ of Japan.\footnote{325} In his opinion, therefore, the problem was not so much that negative views of Japan could re-emerge in the future but, rather, that such images were inevitably intertwined with Western perceptions of Japan on a permanent basis. He identified a continuing tendency of the Western media to cover Japan in a distorted, if not openly biased, fashion as indicative of this ongoing problem.\footnote{326}

Clearly, assumptions that ‘bashing’ plays little or no role in discourse about Japan in the twenty-first century are flawed. Even though ‘bashing’ no longer dominates Western and Japanese discourses about Japan, having certainly declined in prominence since its peak in the early 1990s, it has nonetheless remained a tenacious and influential phenomenon. In the 1980s and 1990s, many observers claimed that ‘Japan-bashing’

would have long-lasting effects, particularly in light of its negative impact at the formal, national level between Western countries and Japan, as well as on those people who either directly participated in debates about Japan or who became unwittingly, often unwillingly, involved. While perspectives on the long-term impact of ‘Japan-bashing’ have since changed for some observers, the phenomenon continues to play a significant part in the larger concept of ‘bashing’ in the twenty-first century, as we shall see in the Conclusion.
CONCLUSION

The Significance of ‘Japan-bashing’

While ‘Japan-bashing’ remains a feature of contemporary Western and Japanese discourses about Japan, its years of greatest influence were in the late twentieth century, and it had its own distinctive characteristics in that period. The phenomenon of ‘Japan-bashing’ in fact revealed much about the dominant national and international themes of the late twentieth century in a global context. For many Western observers, this period was a time of uncertainty and anxiety about how to identify a new and overarching political, economic and cultural framework for international relations generally, and for approaching Japan specifically. Since World War II, Western relations with Japan had been almost exclusively articulated in terms of the geo-political and ideological confrontation between the West and the Communist world, particularly by American commentators who viewed Japan as a potential or actual bastion against Communism. The eventual decline of the Soviet Union, the main focus of Western concern about Communism, thus necessitated not the identification of a new enemy, but certainly a new framework for understanding and dealing with Japan. However, the search for this new framework produced different, typically competing, paradigms for interpreting Japan. It was in this ambiguous stage, when the world had been ‘cut loose’ from ‘cold war moorings’, one analysis argued, that a distinct and specific evolution in Western discourses on Japan occurred, in the process producing the practice of ‘Japan-bashing’.1

Japan’s spectacular rise to the position of economic superpower in the post-war period meant that some outside criticism was perhaps natural and inevitable, particularly as

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Japan’s success contrasted so dramatically with the relative economic decline in many Western countries from the 1980s onwards. At the same time, however, the nature and extent of anti-Japanese views in the 1980s and 1990s were reminiscent of earlier times, in that they revealed an underlying sense of ‘orientalist’ entitlement, and a lingering sense of racial superiority, on the part of some Western observers, who apparently could not accept that Japan deserved to be so successful or could be trusted as a responsible international power. While such attitudes were unjustified, and eventually proved unwarranted given Japan’s own eventual economic decline, the invention of the term ‘Japan-bashing’, and its application not only to excessive comment but also to legitimate criticism of Japan, did nothing to broaden debates about Japan or its repositioning as a global economic power.

What the spread of ‘Japan-bashing’ in Western countries did reveal, however, was that contemporary anti-Japanese views were often shaped far more by Western thinking about the world than by developments in contemporary Japan itself. As David Campbell pointed out, the depiction of Japan as the ‘other’ was less about Japan than about containing challenges to and preserving the identity of the Western ‘self’. In the United States, the primary site for ‘Japan-bashing’, the popularity of anti-Japanese rhetoric and practices thus arguably amounted to a battle to preserve the ‘self’ as universal in an era when that linkage was being increasingly challenged by Japan. Steven Schlossstein, for instance, argued passionately that the United States had to remain the ‘world’s most pre-eminent power’ so that the global system could ‘continue to be driven by its values of freedom, liberty and justice’. ‘Japan-bashing’ was less prevalent in Australia; however, anti-Japanese rhetoric and practices there were demonstrably still about preserving the ‘self’ as a vital part of the

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broader ‘Western’ universal, and were certainly inspired by the awareness that Australia was a relatively weak power in an increasingly competitive world. In casting Japan as the ‘other’, certain commentators in both the United States and Australia promoted the idea that Japan was largely incompatible with the West, and shared few, if any, Western values, interests or goals. Thus, while the assumed confrontation between Western countries and Japan might have originated in an economic context, it quickly solidified into an ‘econocultural’ conflict in which the cultural features of the countries in question were examined and, in the case of Japan, found problematic.

The widespread characterisation of Japan as an international ‘problem’ in Western intellectual discourse was strongly contested by both Western and Japanese commentators. However, the labelling of critical views of Japan as ‘bashing’ was an ineffective method of countering such views in most cases, as it simply encouraged their wider and more effective dissemination in both elite and popular discourses throughout Western countries. The emergence of such anti-Japanese views in Western popular culture represented the very pinnacle of ‘Japan-bashing’, as these views reinforced images that had existed, although with shifting levels of popularity, since the concept of the ‘yellow peril’ had appeared in the late nineteenth century.

It was the Japanese responses to it, however, that made ‘Japan-bashing’ truly distinctive. Japanese commentators faced the difficult question of how to appropriately counter often illogical and inappropriate Western fears about Japan while, at the same time, promoting Japan as a responsible economic power. Their responses to ‘bashing’ therefore not only shaped contemporary discourses about the ‘self’ within Japan, but also helped to

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transform ‘bashing’ into a truly international discourse. While many Japanese responses to ‘bashing’ were reasonably measured given the level of criticism in this period, the emergence of equally rampant criticism of Western countries was perhaps understandable. However, ‘America-bashing’ in practice had the effect of reinforcing ‘Japan-bashing’ in Western countries, thereby suggesting to many observers that a cycle of reciprocity was forming between the West and Japan that could, and would, end badly, perhaps even in renewed conflict.

The relative decline of ‘Japan-bashing’ in the late 1990s also had its own distinctive characteristics and significance. While it was partially due to Japan’s economic deterioration having undermined conceptions of the ‘Japan Problem’, it was also caused by the emergence of new and competing global issues of concern for Western nations – and for Japan – including those associated with political ideologies and military security, as well as the rise of religious fundamentalism. In place of ‘Japan-bashing’, Western observers hailed the rise of a new, positive age of discourse on Japan, even if it was sometimes characterised in negative terms as ‘Japan-passing’ or as ‘Japan-nothing’. In this new age, Japan is generally not viewed as inexorably ‘different’ from some sort of ‘Western’ norm. Rather, it is again perceived by many commentators as a natural, inevitable and necessary partner of the West, one that has important similarities with Western countries. On the one hand, the degree to which such a view of Japan has been promoted in Western countries underscores what is perceived by Western leaders as the paramount issue of the early twenty-first century: the need to uphold such commonalities in an era in which it seems not at all certain that countries with differing political, economic, social and religious ideologies can locate common ground. At the same time, however, the rapidity with which ‘Japan-bashing’ has been diplomatically forgotten in the rush to acclaim partnership between the West and
Japan aptly demonstrates the fluid nature, as well as the often tenuous basis, of Western perceptions of Japan.

The recent rhetoric of partnership between the West and Japan has been promoted at the highest levels, both in Western countries and in Japan itself. President George W. Bush drew attention in November 2005 to the alleged similarities between the United States and Japan when he declared that the United States-Japan relationship was an ‘equal partnership based on common values, common interests, and a common commitment to freedom’. ‘Freedom’, he asserted, was in fact the ‘bedrock’ of the United States’ ‘friendship’ with Japan.\(^5\) In early 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice repeated the mantra about shared values between the United States and Japan, declaring that the United States indeed ‘had no better friend than Japan’.\(^6\) While such declarations are a common marker of international diplomacy, and in the eyes of some observers have therefore become effectively meaningless,\(^7\) the view that Japan is now a close friend and ally to the United States appears to be increasingly accepted by the American public. A Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs survey conducted in the United States in 2005 found, for example, that respondents generally ranked Japan in front of Germany, France and Russia, and behind


\(^7\) Secretary Rice had previously declared that the United States had ‘no better friend’ than Jordan, Greece, Italy, Australia, Singapore, Britain and, separately, the United Kingdom: see Mark Glassman, ‘The Best (Almost) of Friends’, *New York Times*, 7 May 2006, p. 3.
only the United Kingdom, in terms of countries that share common values with the United States.8

Similar rhetoric regarding ‘partnership’ with Japan has been voiced elsewhere, including in Australia, and apparently with similar success. Japanese Consul-General in Melbourne, Kaku Shisei, argued in 2005, for example, that Australia and Japan are ‘strong natural partners’, which enjoy a ‘complementary relationship based on shared values and concepts, democracy and free trade, respect for individual freedoms, tolerance, commitment to international cooperation and contribution, among others’.9 This emphasis on partnership has also been acknowledged at the highest levels of Australian leadership, with Prime Minister John Howard declaring in March 2005 that Australia had ‘no greater friend in Asia than Japan’.10 Former Western Australian Premier Geoff Gallop has also declared that Japan is Australia’s ‘closest partner and best friend’ in Asia.11 Moreover, this ‘partnership’ was declared ‘stronger than ever’ in 2006, the thirtieth anniversary of the 1976 Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Australia and Japan.12 As Shiozaki Yasuhisa, a Vice Minister of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pointed out in June 2006, Australia and Japan are ‘Partners of Democracy along 135 degrees east

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longitude’. Perhaps the most stunning recent development in this ‘partnership’, however, was the joint deployment of Australian and Japanese forces between April 2005 and June 2006 to Al-Muthanna Province in southern Iraq, where Australian Defence Force soldiers provided protection to Japanese Self-Defence Force personnel as they engaged in engineering and humanitarian work. While Prime Minister Howard admitted that he had considered the lingering sentiment in Australia regarding Japan’s World War II conduct when making his decision to provide such support, the generally muted response from the public suggests that such concerns have been largely overcome. The new extent of Australia-Japan relations has also been acknowledged in Japan, with Japanese ambassador to Australia, Ueda Hideaki (2004- ), voicing his appreciation for Australia’s military support in April 2006, noting that it marked closer ties between Australia and Japan, not only in a bilateral context but also in the regional and global spheres.

While ‘Japan-bashing’ may have largely subsided as an issue for Western countries in the rush to promote Japan as a valuable partner, it has not vanished entirely, as demonstrated by the ongoing use of the term in relation to sporadic outbreaks of Western criticism of Japan. There remains in Japan a sensitivity to foreign criticism, and fears still linger that the ‘severe Japan-bashing’ of the late twentieth century might be repeated, although in the opinion of former diplomat Okazaki Hisahiko, such fears are ‘groundless.

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Okazaki’s judgment rests on a relatively realistic appraisal of recent times. There has been little that might prompt the revival of widespread ‘Japan-bashing’, such as the dramatic recovery of the Japanese economy, the rise of militant neo-nationalism in Japan or, as earlier, a significant economic downturn in Western countries.

Of course, some problems between Western countries and Japan have persisted, but they generally centre only on a few ongoing issues and unexpected events, which rarely differ in essence from the negative incidents that occasionally occur in relations between any countries. The economic relationship between the United States and Japan, for example, has continued to cause friction, largely in relation to the United States’ seemingly perpetual trade deficit with Japan, to ongoing concerns about access to Japanese markets and to complaints about Japanese negotiation strategies and aims at the World Trade Organization, the multilateral forum which has virtually replaced the bilateral negotiations of earlier years. By contrast, Australian economic relations with Japan have remained relatively affable, although Japan’s reluctance to lower its agricultural trade barriers has hindered the negotiation of a Free Trade Agreement between the two countries. Security relations between Western countries and Japan have also been a niggling source of tension, particularly in terms of the ongoing American military presence in Japan and associated matters, and the accidental sinking of the Japanese high-school training vessel _Ehime Maru_ by the American submarine _USS Greeneville_ in February 2001. The tone of security negotiations between the United States and Japan in late 2005 even reminded one American

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observer of ‘the dark days of Japan bashing’.19 Moreover, while Japan has supported the United States’ so-called ‘war on terror’ since the Al Qaeda attacks in New York and in Washington D.C. on 11 September 2001, popular opposition to the ‘war’ has raised concerns about a renewed trend of anti-Americanism in Japan.20 For most Western and Japanese observers, however, ‘Japan-bashing’ and ‘America-bashing’ are no longer the key issues defining relations between Western countries and Japan.

The general belief among Japanese observers that widespread ‘Japan-bashing’ is unlikely to recur in the early twenty-first century underlines the degree to which concerns about ‘bashing’ have remained focused on Western countries, despite the fact that considerable, and potentially more harmful, ‘bashing’ now emanates from Asian countries, especially China and South Korea. The disputes between Japan and China and South Korea over contested islands, for instance, have been described as a ‘diplomatic war’ by one commentator,21 a war that is emblematic of Japan’s difficult history in the Asian region. However, some Japanese commentators appear unwilling to interpret any ‘Japan-bashing’ from Asia other than as practices deliberately instigated or encouraged by Chinese and Korean officialdom for their own purposes; that is, they tend not to regard criticism of Japan as having any justification or as worthy of serious consideration. As such, Japanese responses to Asian ‘Japan-bashing’ have often revealed a sense of entitlement, and of


21 See, for example, 'Rocky Relations' (Editorial), Wall Street Journal Asia, 28 April 2006, p. 12.
superiority, regarding Asia which is quite reminiscent of similarly groundless Western attitudes towards Japan in earlier periods.

**The Spread of ‘Bashing’ Beyond Japan**

While ‘Japan-bashing’ has receded in Western discourse on Japan in the early twenty-first century, and has become less of a concern in Japanese discourse as well, the concept of ‘bashing’ itself has only strengthened. As early as 1991, linguist Ludwig Deringer described ‘bashing’ as a term of great ‘iridescence’, which was ‘enjoying continuing, if not rising, popularity’ in a number of permutations.²² In 1992, Michael Crichton expressly blamed the popularity of ‘Japan-bashing’ for the rise of new ‘bashing’ terms, including ‘American-bashing’, ‘gay-bashing’, ‘male-bashing’ and ‘Olympics-bashing’,²³ even though several of these terms actually predated ‘Japan-bashing’ by decades. What can be attributed to the popularity of ‘Japan-bashing’, however, is the use of the label ‘bashing’ as a ubiquitous, almost reflex response to criticism of or disagreement with the actions of one nation by commentators in another. In essence, ‘Japan-bashing’ contributed to the shaping of other forms of ‘nation-bashing’, several of which have targeted Western countries themselves, particularly the United States. Despite the chequered history of the label ‘Japan-bashing’, commentators have shown little reluctance to continue to employ the inflammatory terminology related to ‘bashing’.

One of these newer forms of ‘bashing’ has been directed against France. While critical views of France in the United States, Britain and elsewhere are scarcely new, it was in the context of American criticism of French opposition to the American-led Iraq war of

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2003-04 that the term ‘France-bashing’ was widely applied. As journalist Fred Barnes observed in 2003, ‘Americans of nearly all stripes appear to appreciate France-bashing’. 24 Even Congress participated in the widespread criticism of France, with the cafeteria menu in the House of Representatives famously renaming ‘French fries’ as ‘freedom fries’. 25 In turn, the French were said to revel in ‘America-bashing’ or ‘Yank-bashing’. 26 In practice, both these forms of ‘nation-bashing’ were short-lived expressions of patriotism or nationalism towards one nation at the expense of the other. However, they bore almost none of the racist connotations that had previously given ‘Japan-bashing’ its poor reputation; rather, perceived cultural differences of a fairly minor kind were the basis of criticism on both sides. Nevertheless, commentators complained that ‘bashing’ was doing little for relations between the United States and France, and that the reach of ‘France-bashing’ and ‘America-bashing’ had extended to individuals and organisations that had nothing to do with official American or French policy towards Iraq. 27

The broadening of ‘nation-bashing’ to include forms that appear not to feature racism may be regarded by some observers as an improvement upon ‘Japan-bashing’. However, racism has remained a crucial feature of other forms of ‘nation-bashing’, particularly ‘China-bashing’, which has lasted significantly longer than ‘France-bashing’, and has

24 Fred Barnes, 'How Many Frenchmen Does it Take to Truffle the US?', Australian, 18 February 2003, p. 11.
demonstrated many, and regrettable, parallels to ‘Japan-bashing’. The term ‘China-bashing’ first appeared in the Western media in the mid-1980s, although it was not until a decade later that it began to be widely applied in Western countries, as well as in Japan. As The Economist reported in 1997, ‘Japan-bashing used to be a popular sport’ but now it was ‘more fashionable to worry about China’. Some Western observers have characterised China as a potential international ‘problem’, in writings with titles such as The Coming Conflict with China, China’s Military Threat, The China Threat and China’s Plan to Dominate Asia and the World. Unlike the ‘Japan Problem’, the ‘China Problem’ has been considered as both economic and military, as concerns about China’s surging economic growth are mirrored by concerns about its apparent strategic aims in the Asia-Pacific region. Naturally, the characterisation of China as a contemporary ‘problem’ has been strongly contested, and has been rejected by both Western and Chinese commentators. Official Chinese responses have typically dismissed the ‘China threat’ as a groundless Western myth, and have reiterated China’s intention to develop into a ‘peaceful’ international power. Public responses in China to such negative views have been

29 'America's Dose of Sinophobia', The Economist, 29 March 1997, p. 35.
somewhat more aggressive, and anti-Chinese views have been regarded as part of a deliberate attempt by Western powers to constrain China from attaining a position of hegemonic power. Chinese opposition to Western criticism has even included a bestselling book entitled Zhōngguó yě kěyī shuō bù (China Can Say No), which severely criticised the United States’ China policies and urged Chinese people to boycott American products.\(^{33}\)

The level of Western animosity towards China has sufficiently resembled earlier anti-Japanese feeling that it has been labelled as the ‘old story with a new villain’.\(^{34}\) However, ‘China-bashing’ has never quite reached the same levels as its predecessor, ‘Japan-bashing’. Successive administrations in the United States have found it politically expedient not to ‘bash’ but rather to constructively engage with China in order to promote closer economic relations, maintain the fragile balance of security in the Asia-Pacific region and deal with wider global issues. While presidential candidate George W. Bush was said to be ‘out in force bashing [President Bill] Clinton’ for being ‘soft on China’ in 1999, the Bush administration has similarly followed a policy of diplomatic engagement with China.\(^{35}\) Since the turn of the twenty-first century, concerns about China have often appeared to take second place to American concentration on the so-called ‘war on terror’, of which China has been an enthusiastic supporter. The apparently low level of ‘China-bashing’ in the United States prompted economist Ronald McKinnon to declare in 2005


\(^{34}\) Frank Ching, 'It's that Old "Invasion" Story with a New Villain', *New Straits Times*, 30 June 2005, p. 19.

that ‘China-bashers’ were far ‘less of a force’ than the earlier ‘Japan-bashers’. Similarly, Clyde Prestowitz, asked about the subject as a ‘recovering Japan-basher’, contended that the suggested parallels between criticism of Japan and contemporary criticism of China had been ‘overdrawn’.

Nevertheless, Western fears of China’s growing economic and military power have been renewed since mid-2004, and some familiar patterns have begun to emerge in the rhetoric directed at China. As with the ‘Japan Problem’, differing political, military and geo-economic perceptions of China have prompted different conceptions of the ‘China Problem’ across Western countries. The United States has remained the main site of alleged ‘China-bashing’, with certain observers issuing strong warnings about the military and economic rise of China. While some have highlighted the opportunities for increased engagement between the United States and China that are expected to result from China’s rise, so long as China becomes a ‘responsible stakeholder’ in the international community, others have contended that a military confrontation between the two powers may be inevitable. For instance, Robert Kaplan speculated in 2005 on the topic of ‘How We Would Fight China’, and posited that a military contest between the United States and China would ‘define the twenty-first century’, as China would be a ‘more formidable adversary than Russia ever was’. Similarly, in 2006, Ted Galen Carpenter echoed George Friedman and Meredith LeBard’s earlier *The Coming War with Japan* in a new book

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entitled *America’s Coming War with China*.\(^{40}\) Underscoring the similarities to earlier ‘Japan-bashing’, some of the most vehement warnings about China have been articulated by familiar faces. Clyde Prestowitz, for example, while denying the parallels with ‘Japan-bashing’, nevertheless praised Carpenter’s work as a ‘must read’ description of the inevitable ‘collision course’ between the United States and China.\(^{41}\) Prestowitz, as well as Chalmers Johnson and Pat Choate, amongst others, have taken up their pens again over the apparent China ‘threat’.\(^{42}\) Various novelists, including Steven Schlossstein and Tom Clancy, have also published novels portraying China as a present and future enemy of ‘the West’.\(^{43}\)

By late 2006, ‘China-bashing’ was declared to be a ‘common pursuit’ in Washington D.C., leading critics to warn that ‘branding China as an enemy could prove to be a case of self-fulfilling paranoia’.\(^{44}\) However, as with earlier ‘Japan-bashing’, such warnings about China still seem to be principally driven by elite rather than popular opinion. While thirty-six per cent of American respondents agreed in a survey conducted in mid-2006 that China would be a ‘critical threat’ to American interests in the next ten years, this figure was


\(^{41}\) For this endorsement by Prestowitz, amongst others, see the publisher’s website at: http://www.palgrave.com/newsearch/Catalogue.aspx?is=1403968411, accessed 19 May 2006.


substantially lower than the results of surveys undertaken in the 1990s and early 2000s. Moreover, respondents rated nine other ‘threats’ higher than that of China, including seventy-four per cent of respondents who were more concerned by international terrorism, sixty-nine per cent by nuclear proliferation, and fifty-nine percent by a disruption to energy supplies, amongst others. In any event, asked about the United States’ response to China’s rise, sixty-five per cent of respondents believed that the United States should engage with China rather than work to limit China’s potential for military and economic growth.45

Versions of the so-called ‘China Problem’ have also emerged in other nations. In Australia, for example, many observers have acknowledged China’s rising military and economic power in the Asia-Pacific region, recognising that China’s interests may well come to threaten Australia.46 However, such views of China have not reached a level comparable to that in the United States, despite Australia’s relative proximity to China compared to that of the United States. For instance, while thirty-six per cent of American respondents agreed that China was a ‘critical threat’ in mid-2006, as noted above, only twenty-five per cent of Australian respondents held the same belief about China towards Australia.47 Perhaps as a consequence, criticism of China has generally not been labelled in Australia as ‘China-bashing’.

Rather, perceptions that China may represent a ‘problem’ for Australia have been tempered by the great political and business enthusiasm for the economic opportunities represented by closer Australian engagement with China. By 2004-05, for example, China

46 See, for example, Cameron Stewart, 'ASIO to Hit China on Spies', Australian, 2 June 2005, p. 1; Cameron Stewart, 'The Spy Revolution', Australian, 3 June 2005, p. 15.
had already become Australia’s second-largest trading partner, with trade valued at some A$32.8 billion.\textsuperscript{48} The desire to further cement this relationship was demonstrated by the decision to begin negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement between Australia and China in 2005.\textsuperscript{49} There is nonetheless an acute awareness in Australia that a strong wariness of China is evident in certain quarters in the United States, and that this difference in perceptions of China might cause problems for Australia’s relations with the United States (and with China) in the future.\textsuperscript{50} In other words, Australia’s attitude to China depends in part on perceptions of the trilateral relationship that includes the United States, just as Australia’s official attitude to Japan did and still does. However, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer categorically denied in late 2005 and again in early 2006 that any difference with the United States in approach to China would result in Australia being forced to choose between the United States and China.\textsuperscript{51} The fact that such concerns exist nonetheless demonstrates the ongoing sense that Australia remains a middle-rank nation forever caught between other powerful nations such as the United States, Japan, China, and perhaps in the future, India.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{49} For the official Australian Government website for the proposed agreement, see http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/china/fta/index.html.
\textsuperscript{52} Paul Kelly, 'Living among Giants', \textit{Australian}, 4 June 2004, p. 32.
For Japan, on the other hand, ‘China-bashing’ has offered considerable danger and few opportunities. Many Japanese observers have voiced concerns about the military and economic rise of China, with the added awareness that China is a close neighbour bearing substantial historical enmity towards Japan. Moreover, as we have seen, the evolution of closer diplomatic and economic relations between Western countries and China has been viewed by some Japanese observers as disconcerting evidence of the West passing over Japan for China, or at least the willingness of Western countries to use the threat of closer relations with China as leverage over Japan. As before, such evidence of ‘Japan-passing’ has focused on statistics of official visits. Journalist Akita Hiroyuki reported in early 2006, for example, that American government officials and political figures had visited China 113 times in the period 2000-05, making it the fourth most-visited country. He pointed out that Japan, by contrast, had received only thirty-nine such visits, leaving it languishing in fifteenth place. As a result of this apparent ‘Japan-passing’, some Japanese commentators have attempted to solidify relations with Western countries by actively distinguishing Japan from China, typically by emphasising the similarities and commonalities that are alleged to exist between Japan and ‘the West’ and not, presumably, China.

The extent to which such diplomatic attempts have been successful remains unclear. However, earlier Western ambivalence towards Japan, as represented by ‘Japan-passing’ and ‘Japan-nothing’, has been partially overcome, at least rhetorically. As Funabashi Yōichi reported in 2004, Japan could now be characterised as ‘ジャパン・サーパシング’

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53 For Japan’s attempts to manage these concerns by engaging with China through development assistance, see Tsukasa Takamine, Japan's Development Aid to China: The Long-running Foreign Policy of Engagement, London and New York: Routledge, 2006. See also Peng E. Lam, Japan’s Relations with China: Facing a Rising Power, London: Routledge, 2006.
54 See, for example, Funabashi, 'A Japanese Perspective on Anti-Americanism', p. 50.
(Japan sāpashingu or Japan-surpassing), an expression which was reportedly coined by security studies scholar Ralph Cossa to describe Japan’s successful transformation into a strong international power and a reliable ally that surpassed the expectations of the United States. While the expression continued the rhetorical pattern from ‘Japan-bashing’ to ‘Japan-passing’ to ‘Japan-nothing’, this time it reflected positively upon Japan and, therefore, was not meant to imply that Japan itself was being surpassed. Thus far, ‘Japan-surpassing’ has yet to attain the levels of popularity of its predecessors. Nevertheless, the sense that both the United States and Australia tacitly support Japan as an economic and security partner over China has been palpable in such forums as the inaugural Trilateral Strategic Dialogue between the United States, Australia and Japan in March 2006, even though participants were careful not to portray the dialogue as an incipient Asian version of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation directed at containing and managing China’s rise.

While ‘China-bashing’ has thus reinforced the concept of ‘nation-bashing’ as a way of demonstrating criticism of or disagreement with another nation or its actions, it added very little that was new to the concept. Rather, ‘China-bashing’ merely affirmed the belief of many observers that Western nations require an enemy, and the persistent if mistaken sense that an orderly transition in the role of the enemy took place from the Soviet Union to Japan and, now, to China. For Japan, fears of China have not only been shaped by the sense that China is a potential enemy, but also by fears of being passed over by Western


\[58\] See, for example, Alan Dupont, 'We Need to Tell Condi Some Blunt Truths', Australian, 15 March 2006, p. 12.
countries for China. In the future, ‘China-bashing’ may well, as Edward Lincoln predicted in 2005, ‘end up looking just as quaint’ as ‘Japan-bashing’. 59

While ‘France-bashing’ and ‘China-bashing’ did not really change the concept of ‘nation-bashing’, the impact and consequences of the Al Qaeda attacks on the United States in 2001 have certainly done so. Those actions served to expand ‘bashing’ to include not only criticism of or disagreement with the actions of another nation, but also real, physical attacks on that nation as an entity. As Lee Harris observed in 2003, ‘America-bashing’ has become, in part, ‘anti-Americanism at its most radical and totalizing’, demonstrating nothing less than the goal for some persons of utterly destroying the United States. 60 The United States’ response to the attacks – the ‘war on terror’ – has led to further outbreaks of ‘America-bashing’ around the world, including within the United States itself. As one observer pointed out in 2004, ‘America-bashing’ might be a ‘global sport’ but ‘[n]o one has had more fun America-bashing than Americans’. 61 Nevertheless, fears of further literal ‘nation-bashing’ have since incited a considerable degree of xenophobia towards the Islamic world in the United States and elsewhere, expressions of which might be viewed as ‘Islam-bashing’ or ‘Muslim-bashing’. For Australian journalist Tony Walker in 2006, for example, American fears of growing Islamic influence in the United States bore obvious

parallels to earlier ‘Japan-bashing’, except that in his opinion such fears have a ‘much harder and more emotional edge’ and have, therefore, been even ‘less subject to reason’.  

Ultimately, ‘Japan-bashing’ marked a discrete period in Western relations with Japan, one that reflected concerns not only about Japan but also about broader global changes in the late twentieth century. While ‘Japan-bashing’ eventually declined in the late 1990s, it has nonetheless remained a tenacious and influential rhetorical tool, one that not only gave definition and form to the ‘Japan-bashing’ period itself but also gave rise to the subsequent expressions of ‘Japan-passing’, ‘Japan-nothing’ and ‘Japan surpassing’, as well as shaping other forms of ‘nation-bashing’. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the emergence of these other forms of ‘bashing’, commentators often fail to appreciate that labelling commentary as either positive or negative – as ‘loving’ or ‘bashing’ – is an exercise in reduction with few, if any, redeeming characteristics. In the end, ‘bashing’ was primarily a destructive discourse, although only a longer historical perspective will enable us to assess its true impact. On the other hand, the label ‘Japan-bashing’ and the discursive battles that surrounded it in the 1980s and 1990s are undoubtedly crucial in any assessment of the relationship between Japan and Western countries. More broadly, ‘Japan-bashing’ provided a major arena in which commentators in various countries, including Japan, articulated their anxieties over the future. As such, ‘Japan-bashing’ in both discourse and in practice should now take its place as an integral part of the history of the late twentieth century and beyond.

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