

# Public Perceptions and Regional Cooperation in East Asia<sup>(1)</sup>

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## Abstract

To promote regional cooperation and integration in East Asia faces a daunting task. Opinion polls constantly show that the publics hold deep distrust of one another. The Japanese history textbook demonstration in China and the Dokdo/Takeshima demonstration in South Korea, both took place on an unprecedented scale in 2005, show how difficult it is to achieve regional reconciliation among ordinary peoples. Using the AsiaBarometer Surveys (2003, 2004, 2006) and the Pew Global Survey (2006), our analysis reveals some relevant results concerning public perceptions and regional cooperation. First, the public perceptions of neighbouring countries are strongly influenced by three key factors: national identity, personal overseas experiences, and trust in national government. Second, the more people trust their incumbent government, the more disapproving views they hold towards neighbouring countries. Third, while the incumbent effect is less important in China, it is more prominent in South Korea and Japan. These findings not only show the conflicting nature of domestic political support and regional reconciliation, but also point to the challenges facing regional cooperation and integration in East Asia.

## 1. Introduction

During the past decade, East Asia has made substantial progress in the areas of regional cooperation and integration. In the aftermath of a regional financial crisis, which struck East Asia between 1997 and 1998, several important regional initiatives were launched. Among them, the ASEAN Plus Three Process, the Chiang Mai Initiative, and the subsequently convened East Asian Summit have all but tied more closely the countries in a broadly defined East Asia (MacIntyre et al., 2008).

Nevertheless, regional cooperative schemes in East Asia are standing in sharp contrast to the European model (Fort and Webber, 2006). Not only are the principle of non-interference and the respect of sovereignty commonly complied with in the region, but these cooperative schemes often fall short of solid institutional and legal foundations. It appeared that the states in East Asia have been more hesitant than their European counterparts to sign binding regional contracts (see Cooley and Spruyt, 2009). However, this is not surprising. Since most East Asian countries emerged as independent states only after the Second World War, state sovereignty remains a politically sen-

sitive issue throughout the region. More importantly, regional norms like non-interference and non-use of force have sustained the successful development of ASEAN (Acharya, 2001). Today, as the regional cooperative schemes centred mostly on the initiatives of ASEAN, East Asian regionalism is heading for a very distinctive path.

There is another important aspect of regional cooperation in East Asia. While the societal elites are beginning to embrace regionalism in a more concrete manner (Pempel, 2005; Shambaugh, 2008), there remains considerable scepticism or distrust among the peoples of neighbouring countries. Particularly in those countries where sovereignty remains a salient political issue, politically sensitive events can easily ignite public antagonism towards neighbouring countries, leaving the regional cooperative process at a standstill. This, for example, was the case during the Chinese demonstration against a Japanese textbook in 2005, the South Korean naval dispatch to the Dokdo/Takeshima islets in 2006, Vietnam's mass protests against China in 2007, and the military confrontation between Cambodia and Thailand in 2008.

What factors have contributed to the public distrust among certain East Asian countries? In which

ways could these factors influence the long-term trajectory of regional cooperation and integration in East Asia? This paper addresses these two related questions against the background of growing public distrust among China, Japan and South Korea. Using the data of the Pew Global Attitudes Project (2006) and the AsiaBarometer Surveys (2003, 2004, 2006), it examines the public perceptions of neighbouring countries among the three most important Northeast Asian countries. As a major finding, the analysis shows that the public perceptions are strongly influenced by three key factors: national identity, personal overseas experiences, and the trust in national government. It shows that domestic politics and regional reconciliation have been intricately linked with each other in East Asia.

The rest of the paper is organised in the following way. The second section first takes a close look at the theoretical literature on public opinion and regional cooperation, most of which has been based on the European experiences. It then attempts to contextualise the discussion in East Asia. Four research hypotheses applicable to the East Asian context are developed. The third section of the paper employs the Pew Global and AsiaBarometer Survey data to analyse the public perceptions in China, Japan and South Korea. The empirical analysis takes two steps. Firstly, related survey items are discussed from a cross-country and cross-time perspective to highlight the increasing salience of the problem. Secondly, multivariate regression analyses are conducted, using the AsiaBarometer Survey in 2006, to test the research hypotheses developed earlier. The implications of our findings, especially the interaction between domestic politics and regional reconciliation, are discussed. The final section summarises the main arguments and concludes the paper.

## 2. Public Opinion and Regional Cooperation: Theoretical Literature and Research Hypotheses

After the Second World War, regional cooperation and integration flourished in Western Europe, Latin America and certain parts of Africa (Fawcett, 1992). Based on the early experience of European integration, the main theorists on regional integration focus on the roles of supranational institutions in generating 'spill-over effect' (Haas, 1958) and the 'low politics' nature of inter-state cooperation (Hoffmann, 1966).

Neo-functionalism and Intergovernmentalism argue against each other, but both agree that European integration is basically the endeavours made by such *elites* as politicians and technocrats. According to these views, ordinary people have very little influence on the regional integration process. Although the Transactionalist theorists focus upon an emergence of the 'sense of community' or 'we-feeling' among ordinary people (Deutsch et al., 1957), the major explanation is that, because of their experiences of the atrocity of the war, the public have reached a 'permissive consensus' on regional cooperation and integration. In an article published in the early 1970s, Ronald Inglehart argues that the future generation would give more support to the integration project in Europe (Inglehart, 1971).

However, the trajectory of European integration told a different story twenty years later. The new generation of European Union (EU) citizens have become much more sceptical about regional integration. Not only do the continuous Eurobarometer surveys show a declining trend of public support for the EU (McLaren, 2007), but a series of referendums met with strong public opposition on the deepening and widening of the integration project (Shu, 2008). It is against the background of growing public dissatisfaction with European integration that wide-ranging enquiries into the relationship between public opinion and regional cooperation began to take shape.

### Theoretical Literature based on the European Experiences

The early research on public support for regional integration stresses the importance of *utilitarian concerns*. It is argued that people who have the opportunity to benefit from the opening of national borders are most likely to lend their support for regional cooperation and integration (see Gabel, 1998b). At the individual level, regionalism-enthusiasts usually involve high-skilled labours, people working in the exporting sector, individuals who speak foreign languages, and those with a higher education. Since these people are more adaptive to the trans-border contacts, they turned out more supportive towards regional cooperation and integration than their fellow countrymen and women. At the country level, state-wide indicators such as GDP growth, trade openness, inflation rate and unemployment rate are also found relevant in the European context. The more a country

has economically gained from regional cooperation and integration, the more likely that its citizens support the regional project. Using the Eurobarometer surveys conducted in the period leading to the European Single Market, researchers identify strong influence of utilitarian concerns on public opinion at both the individual and country levels (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993; Anderson and Reichert, 1995; Gabel and Whitten, 1997; Gabel, 1998a).

In the late 1990s, researchers started to examine the impacts of *political context* on public support for regional cooperation and integration. In a widely cited article, Christopher Anderson argues that most people do not have a clear-cut view on regional issues. Instead of addressing the survey questions on European integration directly, respondents are more likely to employ the proxies of domestic politics to infer their attitudes towards regional cooperation (Anderson, 1998). Such proxies may involve people's satisfaction with domestic democracy, support for the incumbent government, and the trust in mainstream parties. His empirical analysis shows that the satisfaction with domestic democracy is a consistent political predictor for public opinion on regional cooperation. Based on the Eurobarometer surveys conducted in 1993-1994, one could even find a correlation between 'satisfaction with democracy in the EU' and 'satisfaction with national democracy' (Nakamura 2000). Indeed, Sanchez-Cuenca finds out that the public attitudes are based on a relative evaluation about the functioning of national and EU institutions (Sanchez-Cuenca, 2000). People who hold more favourable views on regional institutions and less favourable views on domestic institutions are more likely to be positive towards regional integration. Following a similar approach, Rohrschneider finds that the public support for regional cooperation and region-wide institutions depends crucially on the extent to which people are pleased with their representation at the regional level (Rohrschneider, 2002). Quite importantly, these studies show that the political context takes a strong effect on public opinion independent of utilitarian considerations.

The third explanation for public opinion on regional integration deals with *national identity*. Regional cooperation and integration challenges and transforms the territorial nation-states not just in economic and political fields, but also in cultural and

identificational terms. In two articles appeared in 2002, Carey (2002) and McLaren (2002) question the long-time neglect of national identity in the research on public opinion and regional integration. Their analysis shows that identity variables such as national pride, domestic attachment and the fear of cultural and identity loss are essential predictors of public opinion on regional cooperation. Subsequently, McLaren looks further into the threat perceptions of identity loss, and manages to integrate the identity variable into the general explanation of public opinion on regional integration in Europe (McLaren, 2006). Nonetheless, identity is more than a single-layer social phenomenon. National identity often coexists with local, regional and cosmopolitan identities (Guibernau, 2007). In which way does national identity exert the most salient influence on public attitudes towards regional cooperation and integration? Hooghe and Marks (2005) discover that 'exclusive national identity' (that is, people who identify themselves exclusively as a member of their own country) plays the most important part in contributing to the public scepticism towards regional integration. Their findings also show that elite division on regional cooperation may mobilise and strengthen the impacts of exclusive national identity on public opinion.

To summarise, the existing literature on public opinion and regional cooperation focuses on three key explanatory variables: utilitarian concerns, political context and national identity. The argument of utilitarian concerns emphasises the economic costs and benefits resulting from regional cooperation and integration. The perspective of political context stresses the mediating effect of domestic politics in informing, remoulding and strengthening certain public attitudes toward regional cooperation. National identity influences public opinion in terms of national pride, domestic attachment and the threat perceptions of identity loss. The more exclusively one identifies with her own country, the less supportive her views on regional cooperation are. It is worth noting that these explanatory variables are not mutually exclusive. Under certain circumstances, utilitarian concerns, political context and national identity may either reinforce or counterbalance one another. In Greece, Spain and Italy, for example, high level of domestic corruption boosts public support for regional cooperation despite relatively few economic benefits enjoyed by

individual citizens (Sanchez-Cuenca, 2000). In Britain, by contrast, the elite disagreement on the country's role in regional integration reinforced the exclusive national identity to the detriment of Europhiles (Hooghe and Marks, 2005). Therefore, it is essential to take a multi-dimensional approach to understanding public opinion on regional cooperation.

### Going Beyond the Euro-Centric Perspectives

However, the existing literature focuses disproportionately on the experiences of European integration. Thanks to the availability of continuous Eurobarometer Surveys, these studies uncover important mechanisms underlying the relationship between public opinion and regional cooperation. Yet, the distinctiveness of the EU and the regional integration process in Europe limits the generalisation of their findings.

Firstly, the Single European Market has successfully achieved the free movement of goods, capitals, labour and service within the EU. As a result, Europeans may easily acquire first-hand experiences concerning the costs and benefits of regional cooperation, and develop their views on the EU based on utilitarian concerns. Though many other regions have pursued regional economic cooperation and integration in the forms of Free Trade and Investment Agreements, it is still difficult for ordinary people to understand the economic implications of regional cooperation. Secondly, the EU has established several sophisticated regional institutions (such as the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Commission, and the European Central Bank) capable of making binding decisions at the supranational level. In Europe, it is safe to talk about an emerging regional layer of governance above the member states. This is in sharp contrast to other regional institutions where binding regional decision-making remains extremely rare (Acharya and Johnston, 2007). Under these circumstances, it is almost impossible for the public to compare the relative quality and effectiveness of domestic and regional institutions. Thirdly, the ubiquitous EU symbols, including the single currency—the Euro, have reinforced the public anxiety over the loss of national identity in the EU (Hermann et al., 2004; Bruter, 2005). By contrast, regional cooperation rarely endangers exclusive national identity in other parts of

the world. In some countries, national identity may even be strengthened through the process of regional cooperation and integration (see Sutherland, 2009).

Hence, when applying the theoretical arguments on public opinion and regional cooperation, it is essential to contextualize the discussion in the specific regional settings. Regional cooperation and integration in East Asia has several distinctive features. First, East Asian regionalism is in lack of sophisticated institutional and legal foundations. There exist a number of regional forums and frameworks, such as the ASEAN Plus Three Process, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Chiang Mai Initiative, the East Asian Summit. Nonetheless, the functioning of these regional schemes does not rely on institutionalised mechanisms. Instead, their effectiveness is based on the informal consensus being reached outside the formal meetings of regional leaders (Acharya, 2001). There are no institutionalised executives in charge of setting the agenda of regional summits. Neither do these forums and frameworks have the legal authority to pressure the member states into compliance with their decisions.

This leads to the second feature of East Asian regionalism: the importance of informal consensus or the so-called 'ASEAN way'. Originated from the practice of a sub-regional cooperative scheme—the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the 'ASEAN way' is characterised by 'a decision-making process based on [informal] consultations and consensus' (Acharya, 1997, p. 328). Outside the major meetings of regional organisations, East Asian leaders like to pay special attention to those informal occasions where they could meet and exchange their views on regional cooperation. Whether such informal socialisation leads to workable consensus has proved vital in reaching a final agreement at the regional level (Johnston, 2003). Different from the confrontational bargaining in an institutionalised setting, regional cooperation in East Asia depends crucially on the less-structured informal consultation process behind the public scene.

Moreover, there is another important feature of East Asian regionalism: multiple sub-regional cooperative schemes. Within a broadly defined East Asia, there are several notable sub-regional forums and organisations: ASEAN, the Six-Party Talk, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Although their

key members have all participated in the sixteen-member East Asian Summit, these organisations cover different geographical sub-regions and focus on diversified policy areas. When ASEAN was originally launched in the 1960s, it could be regarded as a security alliance against China. Nowadays, ASEAN puts more efforts on economic integration, aiming to become a full-fledged sub-regional community (Narine, 2008). The Six-Party Talk focuses on the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. It involves four key countries in Northeast Asia as well as two extra-regional actors—the US and Russia—in a multi-lateral framework of sub-regional dialogue (Park, 2004). Established in 2001, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation finds most of its member states in Central Asia (Chung, 2004). Initially, its policy agenda focused on the cross-border threats of terrorism, separatism and extremism. Nowadays, the sub-regional cooperation has expanded to economic and cultural fields. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation is the main sub-regional forum in South Asia. Yet, due to the rivalry between India and Pakistan, the organisation has not yet achieved substantial cooperation beyond the declaration of establishing a Free Trade Agreement (Dash, 1996). As a whole, the four sub-regional cooperative schemes have created a unique layer of sub-regional governance in East Asia.

### Research Hypotheses on Public Opinion in East Asia

The distinctive features of East Asian regionalism make it necessary to modify the original theoretical arguments derived from the European experiences in order to understand the relationship between public opinion and regional cooperation in East Asia. In their original formulation, the utilitarian concerns of public opinion deal both with individual educational, professional, linguistic backgrounds, and with several country-level macroeconomic indicators. Different from European integration, regional economic cooperation in East Asia has not yet established a single regional market. Most of the regional economic activities have been oriented towards the global market. Regional economic cooperation in the forms of Free Trade Agreements is widely perceived as compatible with the globalisation process (Aggarwal and Urata, 2006). Under these circumstances, the connection between individual well-being and regional economic

cooperation appears less tangible than the European case. Meanwhile, the macroeconomic indicators of East Asian countries have been more closely related to the growth of the global market than that of the regional market. Hence, although East Asian regionalism has made substantial progress in the economic areas, it is difficult to identify substantial impact of utilitarian concerns on public attitudes toward regional cooperation in East Asia.

*Hypothesis 1: Utilitarian concerns based on individual characteristics (such as education and household income) do not have a significant impact on public opinion on regional cooperation in East Asia.*

How, then, does the political context matter to the public opinion on regional cooperation in East Asia? Before answering this question, there are several issues worth considering. First, the political regimes vary a lot across East Asian countries. Unlike the EU, the political systems in East Asia range from military dictatorship and authoritarian governments to instable democratic systems and liberal democratic countries. It makes little sense to refer to the public satisfaction with domestic democracy to infer their views on regional cooperation. Second, one of the main features of East Asian regionalism is the lack of institutional and legal infrastructure at the regional level. Apart from the intergovernmental agreements drawn at the regional summits, there is little information about the operation of various regional cooperative schemes. There is no regional representative institution in East Asia, either. As a result, the functioning and representation of regional institutions is not easily detectable by the public. Instead of evaluating of the relative effectiveness of domestic and regional institutions, it is more realistic to expect that ordinary people rely on the proxy of domestic politics to develop their views on regional cooperation (Anderson, 1998). Third, the special ‘ASEAN way’ indicates that informal consultation and consensus among the government officials play a crucial part in East Asian regionalism. The incumbent governments are standing at the forefront of regional cooperation in East Asia. Under these circumstances, the public trust in the incumbent government should be the most important political mediating factor influencing public opinion on regional cooperation.



*Hypothesis 2: The public trust in the incumbent government plays a central part in remoulding public opinion on regional cooperation in East Asia. The more one trusts the incumbent government, the more likely that she will support for the government's regional cooperative policy.*

As far as the role of national identity is concerned, the East Asian experience is not very different from the European ones (Shu, 2009). The fear of identity loss or other forms of exclusive national identity clearly work against regional cooperation and integration. Generally speaking, the more nationalist one identified herself, the more likely that she should oppose regional cooperation and integration. The impact of national identity may even be strengthened because of the respect of state sovereignty and the principle of non-inference in East Asian regionalism. The question, however, is whether national pride, domestic attachment, and the fear of identity loss operate in the same way on the east side of the Eurasian continent. In contrast to the European model, regional cooperation in East Asia has not seriously endangered the state sovereignty of individual countries. In some cases, regional cooperation not only is regarded as compatible with state sovereignty, but is considered to have facilitated the domestic state-building process (Narine, 2004; Sutherland, 2009). Because of such a trend, strong national pride and domestic attachment may not necessarily weaken favourable attitudes towards regional cooperation in East Asia. As Alan Milward describes the early history of European integration as the 'European rescue of the nation-state' (Milward, 1992), East Asia may now be in the similar process of making regional integration compatible with state sovereignty.

*Hypothesis 3: Exclusive national identity weakens favourable attitude towards regional cooperation.*

*Hypothesis 4: If regionalism strengthens state sovereignty, national identity becomes compatible with public support for regional cooperation in East Asia.*

In short, the distinctive features of East Asian regionalism make it essential to reconsider the existing theoretical arguments about public opinion and

regional cooperation. In East Asia, the layer of sub-regional cooperative schemes offers the most tangible objective for the public evaluation of regional projects. With regard to the roles of utilitarian concerns, political context and national identity, additional modifications are necessary in order to make them applicable to the specific situations in East Asia. Based on these research hypotheses, the next section takes a close look at the public perceptions of neighbouring countries in the three Northeast Asian states.

### 3. Public Perceptions of Neighbouring Countries in China, Japan and South Korea: An Empirical Analysis

China, Japan and South Korea stands at a rather awkward position in the process of East Asian regional cooperation. China is the most populous country in the region; Japan has been the largest economy in East Asia; South Korea is a recently democratised country with a dynamic economy. Despite their complementary strengths and substantial influences, the three countries have so far failed to lead sub-regional, let alone regional, cooperation and integration in East Asia. There are several reasons behind the lack of sub-regional initiatives, the most important perhaps being the competition between China and Japan. The bitter memories of war-time experiences lend no favour to the inter-state reconciliation, either. Between 2001 and 2006, the repeated visits by Koizumi—the Japanese Prime Minister—to the Yasukuni Shrine had almost frozen the diplomatic relations in Northeast Asia.

If the sub-regional layer of regional governance in East Asia offers a good proxy of public opinion on regional cooperation, public perceptions of neighbouring countries in China, Japan and South Korea deserve careful investigation. In 2005, two large-scale public protests against Japan broke out in China and South Korea. In the Chinese case, the demonstration was against the Japanese government's approval of a school history textbook which downplays the atrocities committed by the Japanese army in the Second World War. Self-organised public protests took place in the major cities throughout China. In some cases, demonstrators attacked Japanese business and official consulates, causing damages. In the South Korean case, the public were angry about the decision of a Japanese prefectural government to set up a memorial date for the disputed Dokdo/Takeshima islets. Public

protests and demonstrations occurred all over the country, with some extreme cases like self-immolation. Because of these incidents, the Northeast Asian regional cooperation experienced a historically low point towards the end of 2005.

Admittedly, it is debatable whether the public perceptions of neighbouring countries are equivalent to public support for regional cooperation. It is true that mutual public perceptions among the neighbouring countries are more related to the bilateral interstate relations rather than to multilateral regional cooperation. However, Northeast Asia is a special case where multilateral regional cooperation has been long delayed by the still-to-be-improved bilateral relationships among China, Japan and South Korea (Rozman, 2004). Without dealing with the bilateral distrust among China, Japan and South Korea, it is simply impossible to conceive any substantial progress of regional cooperation in both Northeast and East Asia. Because of this, the Sino-Japanese relations and the Japanese-Korean relations have almost become synonyms of region cooperation in Northeast Asia. Using the public perceptions of neighbouring countries as a proxy, the following empirical analysis attempts to identify the potential factors which influence sub-regional and regional cooperation in East Asia.

### The Findings of Public Opinion Surveys

Between March and April 2006, the Pew Global Attitudes Project conducted public opinion polls in China and Japan. The China survey was conducted in April, with a sample size of 2180; The Japan survey was fielded between March and April, with a sample size of 500. Both ask the respondents whether they 'have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, some-

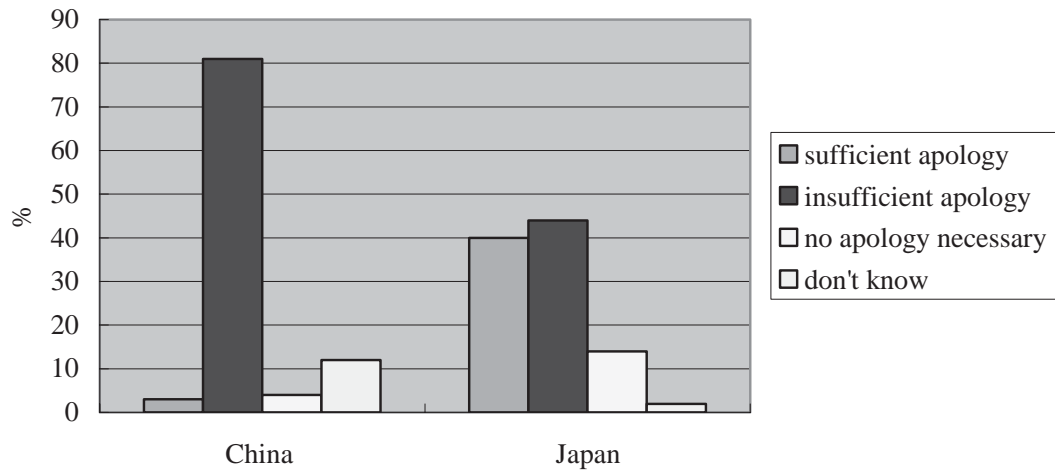
what unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of their own country and of each other. The results show quite similar trends in the two countries. Whereas 71% of the Chinese respondents hold unfavourable views about Japan, 70% of the Japanese respondents turned out to be negative towards China (see Table 1). As the Chinese protests in 2005 was triggered by a history textbook, it is essential to examine the public opinion on war history. The Pew Global surveys also asked the respondents to evaluate whether Japan has made sufficient apology for the war and whether they support Koizumi's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine. The answers could not be more different between the two countries. More than 80% of the respondents in China believe that Japan has not made sufficient apology for the war; the corresponding figure in Japan is 44% (see Figure 1). Regarding Koizumi's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, over half (52%) of the Japanese respondents support his visit; 78% of the Chinese respondents oppose the visit (see Figure 2). No doubt, the memory of the war still deeply divides the public opinion in China and Japan.

However, the China sample of the Pew Global Project was disproportionately urban. It relies on a probability sample in six Chinese cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xinxing, Jinzhong and Luzhou) and their surrounding areas only; The Japan sample, on the other hand, was based on telephone households (PewResearchCenter, 2006). Considering the anti-Japanese protests occurred mostly in urban China, the results could bias towards unfavourable views on Japan. Moreover, the Chinese and South Korean protests in 2005 might have exacerbated the public perceptions of Japan. Therefore, it is essential to look into another series of cross-country opinion

Table 1 Pew Global Attitudes Project 2006

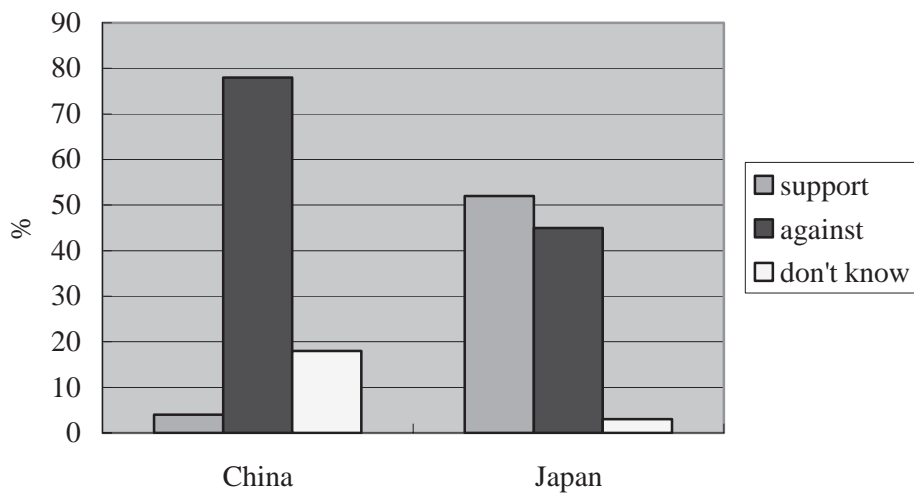
	China		Japan	
China survey	Very favorable	58%	Very favorable	3%
	Somewhat favorable	36%	Somewhat favorable	25%
	Somewhat unfavorable	4%	Somewhat unfavorable	49%
	Very unfavorable	1%	Very unfavorable	22%
Japanese survey	Very favorable	2%	Very favorable	27%
	Somewhat favorable	19%	Somewhat favorable	50%
	Somewhat unfavorable	41%	Somewhat unfavorable	20%
	Very unfavorable	29%	Very unfavorable	2%

Note: The survey question reads 'Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of [the following country]'.



Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project 2006

Figure 1 Has Japan apologised sufficiently for its military action in the Second World War?



Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project 2006

Figure 2 Do you support or oppose PM Koizumi's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine?

polls to cross-validate the results of Pew Global Project.

The AsiaBarometer surveys, directed by Prof. Inoguchi, offer a useful comparison in this regard. Between 2003 and 2008, the AsiaBarometer has conducted public opinion surveys in a number of Asian countries. Japan, China and South Korea were among the survey countries in 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2008. As the 2008 surveys have not been released, our analysis focuses on the previous three rounds of poll results. In the AsiaBarometer Surveys, the respondents were asked to evaluate whether a certain country has a good or bad influence on their own country. The original survey questions offer five alternatives to the respondents: 'good influence, rather good influence, neither good nor bad influence, rather bad influence, and bad influence'. In contrast to the Pew Global Project, the

inclusion of a neutral answer—'neither good nor bad influence'—makes it very difficult to compare the results of the two surveys. In order to minimise the problem, the five alternatives are collapsed into three categories (i.e., good influence, neutral influence and bad influence) in the aggregate results reported in Table 2. Even so, these results should be treated with cautions.

The data indicate that Chinese people do hold quite negative views on Japan in 2006: 61.3% of the respondents think that Japan had a bad influence on China. The anti-Chinese sentiment among the Japanese respondents is relatively muted in the same year: 37.8% of the respondents believe that China had a bad influence on Japan. The inclusion of survey results in 2003 and 2004 reveals a dynamic picture of mutual perceptions between the two countries. Before the



Table 2 AsiaBarometer Survey 2003, 2004, 2006

China's Perceptions of Neighbouring Countries		2003	2004	2006
Japan	good	29.7%	21.2%	7.5%
	neutral	30.4%	35.1%	29.4%
	bad	39.8%	39.0%	61.3%
South Korea	good	44.5%	40.3%	53.2%
	neutral	50.1%	45.4%	40.0%
	bad	5.4%	5.1%	4.4%
Japan's Perceptions of Neighbouring Countries		2003	2004	2006
China	good	23.3%	23.0%	20.6%
	neutral	56.4%	46.4%	37.2%
	bad	18.2%	23.6%	37.8%
South Korea	good	24.7%	37.0%	23.6%
	neutral	42.1%	46.1%	40.2%
	bad	31.6%	11.2%	31.6%
South Korea's Perceptions of Neighbouring Countries		2003	2004	2006
China	good	33.9%	43.4%	35.6%
	neutral	44.4%	28.3%	35.5%
	bad	18.8%	24.3%	26.5%
Japan	good	25.3%	33.9%	16.0%
	neutral	42.4%	32.1%	24.7%
	bad	29.9%	30.7%	58.3%

Note: the survey question reads, 'Do you think that the following countries have a good or bad influence on your country?'

Chinese protests against Japan, only about 40% of Chinese respondents perceived the bad influence of Japan. The equivalent figure in Japan is around 20%. Obviously, the protests have had a substantial impact on public perceptions.

Because of the inclusion of South Korea in the AsiaBarometer Surveys, it is also possible to check the Korea-Japan public perceptions. The aggregate survey data reveal that the Korea-Japan mutual perceptions in 2006 are not very different from the distrust between China and Japan. As Table 2 shows, 58.3% of the Korean respondents feel negative towards the Japanese influence, while 31.6% of the Japanese respondents are unhappy with South Korea. In 2004, the corresponding figures were only 30.7% in South Korea and 11.2% in Japan. The impacts of South Korean protests appeared even stronger than the Chinese ones.

By comparison, the mutual perceptions between China and South Korea are more positive. About half of the Chinese respondents think positively towards South Korea. Only around 5% of the respondents feel

South Korea had a bad influence on China. In South Korea, the positive-view holders are almost always 10 to 15% more than the negative-view holders. Compared with the bilateral perceptions between China and Japan and between Japan and South Korea, the China-Korean figures are much more stable over the three surveying years.

### The Multivariate Regression Model

In order to understand the determinants of public perceptions in China, Japan and South Korea, it is necessary to conduct in-depth multivariate regression analysis. The ideal solution would be a comparative analysis of the three waves of AsiaBarometer surveys in 2003, 2004 and 2006. However, the AsiaBarometer surveys in 2003 and 2004 do not have a representative sample in China. The sample sizes were smaller (800 in 2003 and 1000 in 2004), and the respondents were drawn mostly from big cities (Inoguchi et al., 2005; Inoguchi et al., 2006).

The AsiaBarometer survey in 2006, by compari-

son, offers a much more balanced cross-country opinion poll. Its fieldwork was conducted in the summer of 2006 in a number of East Asian countries, including China, Japan and South Korea. Its China sample not only involved 2,000 respondents, but relied on a three-stage sampling technique covering the total population (Guo and Shu, 2009). Its Japan sample had 1003 valid respondents who were drawn from a four-stage nationwide sampling procedures. The South Korean sample drew 1000 respondents following a six-stage sampling procedures. To take advantage of these high-quality cross-country surveys, our multivariate analysis focuses on the AsiaBarometer survey in 2006.

As it is mentioned earlier, the survey asked each respondent to rate his/her perceptions of a neighbouring country based on a five-alternative choice. Because these alternatives can be ranked from the most favourable to the least favourable, the dependent variable of the regression is discreetly ordinal. A suitable econometric model to tackle it is *ordinal logistic regression* (Long, 1997). The multivariate analysis uses the original five-category answer to the survey question, to take advantage of all information provided by the dataset. The dependent variable is coded as 1 if the respondent perceives a good influence of a neighbouring country, and coded as 5 if she perceives a bad influence.

Based on the research hypotheses developed in the earlier section, four groups of explanatory variables are included in the regression analysis. Firstly, to test the relevance of utilitarian concerns, four individual characteristic variables are used to check the impacts of age, gender, educational level and household income on the public perceptions of neighbouring countries. From a utilitarian perspective, those who tend to benefit from transnational activities are more likely to support regional cooperation and integration. Therefore, it is expected that a typical young male with more education and higher household income have better views on other counties and support regional cooperation. These individual variables also provide the demographic controls of the sample.

Secondly, the analysis uses the survey question about 'trust in national government' to identify the impact of political context on public perceptions in the three Northeast Asian countries. The original survey question reads, 'Please indicate to what extent you

trust the central government to operate in the best interests of society'. The respondent may choose her answer among 'trust a lot', 'trust to a degree', 'don't really trust', and 'don't trust at all'. As most regional cooperative schemes in East Asia are more intergovernmental than supranational, it is expected that the more one trust her national government, the more likely she would hold better views on neighbouring countries and support regional cooperation.

Thirdly, regarding the role of national identity, the analysis uses three explanatory variables to measure the underlying dimensions of national identity in East Asia. The first variable is national pride, with four different options from 'very proud' to 'not proud at all'. The second variable deals with cultural superiority. The survey question states, 'my country's traditional culture is superior to that of other country'. The respondent may choose between five answers ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The third variable concerns patriotic education, something specific to China and Japan. The survey asked the respondent whether she agrees with the statement that 'government should emphasize patriotic education to breed patriotism' with a similar five-category answer.

Fourthly, the regression analysis includes several variables concerning overseas connections or experiences of the survey respondents. These variables include 'overseas family members', 'travelled abroad more than 3 times', 'overseas friend(s)', 'watching foreign TV programs', 'internet communication with foreigners' and 'job contacts with foreigners'. The aim is to check whether personal experiences with foreigners or foreign countries help to reshape the perceptions of neighbouring countries. According to the Transactionalist theories, such experiences can become very important in promoting regional cooperation and integration (see Deutsch et al., 1957). These variables help to test whether this argument is applicable to East Asia. Finally, the two variables of 'trust in others' and 'local variations' are used to control unobserved individual characteristics.

Overall, the regression model takes the following form:

$$P_i = \alpha + \text{Utilitarian}_i \beta + \text{Political}_i \gamma + \text{Identity}_i \delta + \text{Overseas}_i \theta + e_i$$

In this equation,  $P_i$  denotes the dependent variable 'public perceptions of a certain neighbouring country';  $\alpha$  is the intercept;  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ ,  $\delta$  and  $\theta$  are the coeffi-

cients of the independent variables that the analysis intends to focus on;  $e_i$  is the error term. With regard to the four groups of independent variables, Utilitarian<sub>i</sub> represents the explanatory variables which record the individual characteristics of the respondent (i.e., age, gender, education and income); Political<sub>i</sub> is the explanatory variable of 'trust in national government'; Identity<sub>i</sub> denotes the three explanatory variables of 'national pride', 'cultural superiority' and 'patriotic education'; Overseas<sub>i</sub> represents the explanatory variables concerning the overseas experiences and contacts of the respondent. Two controlling variables—'trust in others' and 'local variations'—are not included in this equation.

The descriptive statistics of the dependent and independent variables are reported in the Appendix (Table 1, 2 and 3).

## Results and Discussion

In total, six ordinal logistic regressions are conducted with regard to the public perceptions of neighbouring states in China, Japan and South Korea.

Due to the inclusion of multiple explanatory variables in each thematic category (e.g., overseas connections, nationalist feelings), it is possible that these regressions suffer from multicollinearity. To check it, we calculate the variance inflation factors (VIF) of each independent variable regarding the China, Japan and South Korea samples (Mansfield and Helms, 1982). The results are reported in the Appendix (Table 4). Under normal circumstances, if a regression model has the problem of multicollinearity, individual VIFs usually appear greater than 10 and the average VIF should be greater than 6 (O'Brien, 2007). In our regression models, none of the individual VIFs is greater than 1.5. The mean VIF for the China, Japan and South Korea samples are 1.12, 1.17, and 1.21 respectively. Thus, the analysis shows that multicollinearity is not an issue of concern here.

The outcomes of the six ordinal logistic regressions are reported in Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5. Compared with the gloomy picture of the aggregate data, the regression analysis leads to some encouraging findings and reveals several important mechanisms underlying the public perceptions in the three Northeast Asian countries.

As far as utilitarian concerns are concerned, the four variables of individual characteristics have not

provided consistent evidence for the theoretical arguments originated from the European context. In China, gender, age, education and household income all appear relevant to the public perceptions of neighbouring countries. Specifically, a typical young female with less education appears more favourable towards Japan, while a typical young male with higher education and low household income appears more favourable toward South Korea. In particular, gender and age play quite an important role in shaping public perceptions in China. Females are more likely than males to hold a positive opinion on Japan. The young generation tends to possess more positive views on neighbouring countries than the old generation. In Japan, the only significant individual characteristic is age: the younger the respondent is, the more favourably she thinks about China and South Korea. In South Korea, individual backgrounds do not exert significant influences on public perceptions.

From a utilitarian perspective, more education and higher household income should be positively correlated with favourable public perceptions of neighbouring countries. However, the regressions have not provided consistent and meaningful results as to the influences of utilitarian concerns in shaping public perceptions across China, Japan and South Korea. The educational level and household income are only relevant in the Chinese public perceptions of South Korea. Even in this case, the direction of the influences is not consistent. Yet, the lack of conclusive findings confirms the first research hypothesis that 'utilitarian concerns in terms of individual characteristics do not have a significant impact on public opinion on regional cooperation in East Asia' (see also Jhee, 2009).

In contrast to the lack of evidence regarding utilitarian concerns, the role of political context in terms of 'trust in national government' turns out to be a crucial factor in explaining public perceptions in Northeast Asia. Across China, Japan and South Korea, 'trust in national government' appears consistently to the detriments of favourable attitudes towards neighbouring countries. The more one trust her national government, the more likely she perceives a negative influence of neighbouring countries. The coefficients of the political context variable are statistically significant in all three cases, but their sizes vary to some degrees between the three countries. On the one hand,

Table 3 Public Perceptions of Japan and South Korea in China

Dependent Variable	Public Perceptions of Japan	Public Perceptions of South Korea
<u>Domestic politics</u>		
Trust in national government	0.107* (0.055)	0.294*** (0.058)
<u>Nationalist feelings</u>		
National pride	-0.082 (0.056)	0.073 (0.058)
National culture is superior	-0.132** (0.051)	0.069 (0.053)
Patriotic education is necessary	-0.230*** (0.061)	0.099 (0.064)
<u>Individual Characteristics</u>		
Gender	0.274** (0.084)	-0.174* (0.088)
Age	0.130*** (0.036)	0.091* (0.016)
Education	0.160** (0.059)	-0.197** (0.062)
Household income	0.085 (0.064)	0.177** (0.067)
<u>Overseas connections</u>		
Overseas family members	-0.302* (0.149)	-0.245 (0.156)
Travelled abroad more than 3 times	-1.076*** (0.287)	-0.533 (0.301)
Overseas friend(s)	-0.111 (0.223)	-0.073 (0.233)
Watching foreign TV programs	0.261** (0.100)	-0.202 (0.105)
Internet communication with foreigners	-0.482 (0.381)	-0.878* (0.403)
Job contacts with foreigners	-0.171 (0.346)	0.534 (0.364)
<u>Social capital</u>		
Most people can be trusted	-0.187* (0.090)	-0.139 (0.094)
<u>Intra-national variation</u>		
Eastern China	-0.265* (0.118)	0.099 (0.124)
Central China	-0.043 (0.119)	0.175 (0.124)
N	1902	1890
-2 log likelihood	4801.939	4002.091
Model improvement (chi-square, df = 17)	101.041***	91.215***
Nagelkerke Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.056	0.053

Standard errors in parenthesis; \* denotes  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* denotes  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* denotes  $p < 0.001$

Source: AsiaBarometer Surveys 2006

Table 4 Public Perceptions of China and South Korea in Japan

Dependent Variable	Public Perceptions of China	Public Perceptions of South Korea
<u>Domestic politics</u>		
Trust in national government	0.306** (0.102)	0.535*** (0.104)
<u>Nationalist feelings</u>		
National pride	0.004 (0.100)	-0.035 (0.101)
National culture is superior	-0.059 (0.096)	-0.048 (0.097)
Patriotic education is necessary	-0.227** (0.082)	-0.095 (0.082)
<u>Individual Characteristics</u>		
Gender	-0.145 (0.145)	-0.116 (0.146)
Age	0.135* (0.058)	0.227*** (0.059)
Education	0.170 (0.126)	0.148 (0.128)
Household income	0.038 (0.094)	0.035 (0.095)
<u>Overseas connections</u>		
Overseas family members	0.338 (0.246)	0.025 (0.257)
Travelled abroad more than 3 times	-0.443 (0.273)	-0.273 (0.279)
Overseas friend(s)	0.162 (0.254)	0.457 (0.256)
Watching foreign TV programs	0.188 (0.175)	-0.072 (0.176)
Internet communication with foreigners	-0.039 (0.384)	-0.736 (0.390)
Job contacts with foreigners	-0.316 (0.317)	0.497 (0.323)
<u>Social capital</u>		
Most people can be trusted	-0.127 (0.146)	-0.273 (0.147)
<u>Intra-national variation</u>		
Hokkaido/Tohoku	0.160 (0.300)	0.052 (0.306)
Kanto	0.013 (0.254)	0.282 (0.256)
Chubu	-0.054 (0.275)	0.071 (0.277)
Kinki	0.627* (0.276)	0.844** (0.277)
Chugoku/Shikoku	0.371 (0.325)	0.592 (0.325)
N	667	664
-2 log likelihood	1811.205	1722.469
Model improvement (chi-square, df = 20)	42.511**	67.871***
Nagelkerke Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.066	0.104

Standard errors in parenthesis; \* denotes  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* denotes  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* denotes  $p < 0.001$ 

Source: AsiaBarometer Surveys 2006



Table 5 Public Perceptions of China and Japan in South Korea

Dependent Variable	Public Perceptions of China	Public Perceptions of Japan
<u>Domestic politics</u>		
Trust in national government	0.414*** (0.092)	0.509*** (0.091)
<u>Nationalist feelings</u>		
National pride	-0.100 (0.097)	-0.158 (0.097)
National culture is superior	-0.007 (0.082)	-0.127 (0.081)
Patriotic education is necessary	-0.004 (0.086)	-0.131 (0.085)
<u>Individual Characteristics</u>		
Gender	0.096 (0.126)	0.009 (0.125)
Age	-0.016 (0.064)	-0.048 (0.063)
Education	-0.180 (0.120)	-0.162 (0.118)
Household income	0.024 (0.088)	-0.058 (0.087)
<u>Overseas connections</u>		
Overseas family members	-0.143 (0.150)	-0.049 (0.147)
Travelled abroad more than 3 times	0.309 (0.286)	0.588* (0.285)
Overseas friend(s)	0.05 (0.326)	-0.359 (0.317)
Watching foreign TV programs	0.278* (0.135)	-0.412** (0.134)
Internet communication with foreigners	-0.128 (0.341)	-0.610 (0.336)
Job contacts with foreigners	-1.623** (0.472)	-0.758 (0.443)
<u>Social capital</u>		
Most people can be trusted	-0.113 (0.136)	-0.374** (0.135)
<u>Intra-national variation</u>		
Seoul metropolitan area	0.469** (0.155)	0.400** (0.152)
Middle area	0.236 (0.206)	0.809*** (0.205)
South-west area	0.371 (0.230)	0.924*** (0.230)
N	889	897
-2 log likelihood	2262.045	2376.416
Model improvement(chi-square, df = 18)	53.147***	95.414***
Nagelkerke Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.063	0.108

Standard errors in parenthesis; \* denotes  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* denotes  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* denotes  $p < 0.001$ 

Source: AsiaBarometer Surveys 2006

'trust in national government' is least capable of remoulding the Chinese attitudes towards Japan. On the other hand, 'trust in national government' appears most influential in shaping the Japanese perceptions of South Korea. Among the three countries, South Koreans are most likely to refer to their 'trust in national government' when assessing the influence of a neighbouring country.

The analysis thus confirms the second analytical hypothesis that 'the public trust in the incumbent government plays a central part in remoulding public opinion on regional cooperation in East Asia'. However, the direction of the influence is the opposite of our original expectation. Since regional cooperation in Northeast and East Asia has been lack of supranational engineering, it was initially hypothesised that 'trust in national government' would lead to favourable opinions on neighbouring countries. Nonetheless, the regression analysis shows that 'trust in national government' actually reduces the positive images of neighbouring countries. Such a puzzling relationship between domestic politics and regional reconciliation deserves further discussion.

In the existing literature, it is argued that the public refer to their trusted political actors such as the incumbent government or a political party for heuristic cues on regional cooperation and integration (Andersen, 1998). If the government favours regional cooperation, their supporters are more likely to adopt a similar opinion on regional issues. Importantly, there are two underlying assumptions of this argument. First, the government has a clear-cut policy on regional cooperation. Second, the information process operates in a one-way direction from the government to the public. However, these two assumptions may misrepresent the reality in East Asia. Among China, Japan and South Korea, there is no agreed roadmap of regional cooperation and integration. It is difficult to tell the concrete regional cooperation policies of the Chinese, Japanese and South Korean governments. At the same time, the public seems to have some deep-seated opinions on neighbouring countries. The anti-Japanese feelings have been widespread in China and South Korea for quite a long time. Because of these factors, the two assumptions mentioned above fail to hold. Rather than the government cuing the public, it is more plausible to assume that the governments in Northeast Asia also respond to the public distrust of

neighbouring country in order to win their political support. In other words, the information process may operate in a two-way fashion between the public and the government.

If this is the case, the results of the regression analysis have revealed a more complex picture of the impacts of political context on the public attitudes towards neighbouring countries. A relatively small coefficient of 'trust in national government' not just indicate that the government is less capable of influencing the public opinion on neighbouring countries, but also reflect the fact that the government is less able to profit from the public distrust to boost its own popularity in domestic politics. Interpreting in such a way, it appears that presenting negative images of neighbouring countries benefits the Chinese government the least among the three Northeast Asian countries. By comparison, the South Korean government may benefit the most from promoting the negative feelings of neighbouring countries. Some commentators have argued that the Chinese government tends to use anti-Japanese sentiment to bolster its domestic credentials (e.g., Fukuyama, 2005, p. 84). The regression analysis tells a much more nuanced story in this regard.

With regard to the impact of national identity, the multivariate regression has not offered an unequivocal answer to the hypotheses. Firstly, national pride does not influence the public perceptions of neighbouring countries in a significant way. The direction of the influence, if any, appears to be context-based. Only in South Korea, national pride leads to more negative images of neighbouring countries in a consistent but insignificant manner. Secondly, cultural superiority is a significant predictor of public perceptions in China, but it is only applicable to the Chinese perceptions of Japan. The more the respondent feels the superiority of Chinese culture, the more likely that she holds a negative opinion on Japan. In all other cases, cultural superiority does not significantly influence public perceptions.

Thirdly, support for patriotic education is a significant determinant of public attitudes between China and Japan. As it is mentioned earlier, patriotic education was a political issue in China and Japan, but not in South Korea. On the one hand, China implemented a wide-ranging patriotic education programme from the beginning of the 1990s. On the other hand, whether patriotic education should be written into the

*Basic Law of Education* has been hotly debated in Japan. The regression analysis shows that the Chinese and Japanese respondents are indeed more likely to hold a negative image of each other if they feel the necessity of patriotic education. Notably, the size of its influence is the highest among the three national identity variables. If the support for patriotic education offers certain clue to one's exclusive national identity, then the results give partial support to the third research hypothesis that 'exclusive national identity weakens favourable attitude towards regional cooperation'. The fourth hypothesis states that 'when regionalism strengthens state sovereignty, national identity becomes compatible with public support for regional cooperation in East Asia'. Unfortunately, the regression analysis has not offered a conclusive proof in this respect.

Looking as a whole, the analysis shows that nationalist feelings *per se* have not strongly influenced the public perceptions of neighbouring countries among China, Japan and South Korea. In relative terms, the influences of national identity on public perceptions are stronger in China, and weaker in South Korea. This is in contrast to the images of radical nationalism one often finds in the news articles about the anti-Japanese demonstrations took place in China and South Korea in 2005. It is probable that radical nationalism did influence public opinion to some degrees in these two countries, but apparently nationalism itself could not fully explain the extensive mobilisation of negative attitudes.

Concerning the role of overseas experiences and connections, the regression analysis shows some interesting but still ambivalent results. In China, the image of Japan is positively correlated with overseas family members and recent overseas trip, but is negatively correlated with the experience of watching foreign TV programs. In addition, the Internet communication with foreigners contributes to a positive image of South Korea. In South Korea, watching foreign TV programs is positively correlated with the respondent's perceptions of Japan, but is negatively correlated with her perceptions of China. Meanwhile, jobs contacts with foreigners may help the Koreans to develop a favourable view of China. In the Japanese case, overseas experiences and connections appear almost irrelevant to public perceptions of neighbouring countries. As a whole, the analysis indicates that overseas

experiences and connections exert an important, but not consistent, influence on public opinion.

Finally, with respect to the two controlling variables, 'trust in others' is consistently correlated with a positive image of neighbouring countries, but it is only statistically significant in the cases of Chinese and South Korean perceptions of Japan. The 'local variation' variable also turns out to be informative. In China, the respondents who live in the Eastern provinces are more likely to hold a positive image of Japan. In South Korea, people live around the Seoul metropolitan area are more inclined to cultivate the negative images of China and Japan, while those live in the Southeast are more likely to hold a positive image of Japan. In Japan, those who live in the Kinki area tend to hold a relatively negative view on China and South Korea.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper has examined the public perceptions of neighbouring countries in China, Japan and South Korea against a broad trend of the growing enthusiasm for regional cooperation and integration in East Asia. The aim is to understand which factors have contributed to the public distrust of neighbouring countries, and to find out how these factors may influence the long-term trajectory of regional cooperation in East Asia. To achieve these aims, the paper first tries to re-interpret the existing theoretical arguments about public opinion and regional cooperation in the East Asian context. Then, based on the revised research hypotheses, a series of empirical analysis have been conducted with regard to the public attitudes towards neighbouring countries in China, Japan and South Korea at both aggregate and individual levels.

The empirical analysis has led to several important findings. First of all, the public opinion at the aggregate level reveals a high degree of public distrust among China, Japan and South Korea in 2006. The two cross-country opinion surveys—the Pew Global Attitudes Project and the AsiaBarometer Surveys—have shown a similar result. This is not surprising. In 2005 both China and South Korea witnessed large-scale public protests and demonstrations against Japan. Compared with the poll results in 2003 and 2004, the aggregate results indicate that these protests have seriously deteriorated the public views on neighbouring countries.

Nevertheless, the individual-level regression analysis has revealed a more nuanced picture. Firstly, national identity plays a relatively weak role in contributing to the negative images of neighbouring countries. Across China, Japan and South Korea, national pride does not significantly influence public perceptions at all. It is only the feelings of cultural superiority and the support for patriotic education that lead to a heightened distrust between China and Japan. Quite similar to the European case (Hooghe and Marks, 2005), exclusive national identity appears to discourage inter-state trust and regional cooperation. Secondly, like their counterparts in Europe (Andersen 1998; Sanchez-Cuenca, 2000), people in East Asia tend to rely on domestic politics to infer their views on regional issues. The analysis shows that trust in national government encourage negative views on neighbouring countries in all the three Northeast Asian countries. The impact of political context matters the most in South Korea, and the least in China.

Although public distrust among the three Northeast Asian countries turns out to be a joint 'product' of national identity and domestic politics, political context appears more influential than national identity in relative terms. This is important because it means that domestic politics and regional reconciliation are linked with each other in an intricate way in Northeast Asia. The governments may play an important part in reversing the trend of growing public distrust. The individual-level analysis shows that the mobilisation effects of the national government vary across China, Japan and South Korea. While the South Korean government can play quite a large role in reshaping the Korean opinion, the Chinese government is less competent to change the deep-seated distrust among its people.

When it comes to the impacts of utilitarian concerns and overseas experiences, the picture is less clear than the European case. Neither do the individual characteristics like education and household income play a significant part in shaping the public perceptions of neighbouring countries, nor have the overseas experiences of the respondents exerted a consistent influence on public opinion. This leads to one of the key arguments of our paper. That is, the distinctive features of East Asian regionalism make it difficult to apply the existing theoretical arguments originally developed from the experiences of European integra-

tion. Indeed, the importance of sub-regional cooperation, the respect of state sovereignty, the lack of institutional and legal foundations have all led to a distinctive regional context where public opinions are formed, reshaped and mobilised. It is therefore essential to reconsider the existing theories in light of the special regional context. This paper has made a contribution in this respect by developing the analytical hypotheses directly applicable to East Asia.

However, our paper has a notable limitation. The empirical analysis looks only into the public perceptions of neighbouring countries in Northeast Asia. While empirically important and theoretically relevant, the analysis has not provided direct evidence of the relationship between public opinion and regional cooperation in East Asia. Future research may further develop the analytical hypotheses and test them with the opinion data on East Asian regionalism.

#### NOTE

- (1) An early version of the paper was presented at the 2009 American Political Science Association Annual Conference in Toronto. The authors wish to thank Christopher Anderson and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

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## Appendix: Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 Public Perceptions in China

	Average	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Perceptions of Japan	3.86	0.981	1 (good)	5 (bad)
Perceptions of South Korea	2.41	0.745	1 (good)	5 (bad)
Trust in National Gov.	1.76	0.777	1 (trust a lot)	4 (don't trust at all)
National pride	1.63	0.776	1 (very proud)	4 (not proud at all)
National culture is superior	2.36	0.880	1 (strongly agree)	5 (strongly disagree)
Patriotic education is necessary	1.88	0.737	1 (strongly agree)	5 (strongly disagree)
Gender	0.51	0.500	0 (female)	1 (male)
Age	2.66	1.253	1 (youngest)	5 (oldest)
Education	2.73	1.306	1 (lowest)	6 (highest)
Household income	2.66	2.770	1 (lowest)	20 (highest)
Overseas family	0.10	0.296	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Travel abroad	0.02	0.150	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Overseas friends	0.04	0.194	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Watching foreign TV	0.25	0.434	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Internet communication	0.01	0.115	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Foreign job contacts	0.02	0.127	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Most people can be trusted	0.64	0.480	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Regions in China	1.78	0.756	1 (Eastern)	3 (Western)

Source: The China sample of the AsiaBarometer Survey (N=2000).

Table 2 Public Perceptions in Japan

	Average	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Perceptions of China	3.23	0.975	1 (good)	5 (bad)
Perceptions of South Korea	3.11	0.928	1 (good)	5 (bad)
Trust in National Gov.	2.66	0.707	1 (trust a lot)	4 (don't trust at all)
National pride	1.88	0.754	1 (very proud)	4 (not proud at all)
National culture is superior	2.46	0.800	1 (strongly agree)	5 (strongly disagree)
Patriotic education is necessary	2.77	0.929	1 (strongly agree)	5 (strongly disagree)
Gender	0.50	0.500	0 (female)	1 (male)
Age	2.54	1.156	1 (youngest)	5 (oldest)
Education	2.95	1.326	1 (lowest)	5 (highest)
Household income	5.35	3.615	1 (lowest)	20 (highest)
Overseas family	0.11	0.308	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Travel abroad	0.09	0.282	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Overseas friends	0.10	0.302	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Watching foreign TV	0.23	0.423	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Internet communication	0.04	0.207	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Foreign job contacts	0.06	0.246	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Most people can be trusted	0.47	0.500	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Regions in Japan	3.11	1.522	1 (Hokkaido/Tohoku)	6 (Kyushu)

Source: The Japan sample of the AsiaBarometer Survey (N=1003).

Table 3 Public Perceptions in South Korea

	Average	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Perceptions of China	2.91	0.920	1 (good)	5 (bad)
Perceptions of Japan	3.62	1.020	1 (good)	5 (bad)
Trust in National Gov.	3.05	0.693	1 (trust a lot)	4 (don't trust at all)
National pride	1.95	0.674	1 (very proud)	4 (not proud at all)
National culture is superior	2.10	0.835	1 (strongly agree)	5 (strongly disagree)
Patriotic education is necessary	2.24	0.812	1 (strongly agree)	5 (strongly disagree)
Gender	0.50	0.500	0 (female)	1 (male)
Age	2.42	1.088	1 (youngest)	5 (oldest)
Education	3.09	0.966	1 (lowest)	5 (highest)
Household income	2.97	2.154	1 (lowest)	20 (highest)
Overseas family	0.24	0.428	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Travel abroad	0.05	0.228	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Overseas friends	0.04	0.207	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Watching foreign TV	0.35	0.477	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Internet communication	0.04	0.207	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Foreign job contacts	0.02	0.148	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Most people can be trusted	0.68	0.466	0 (no)	1 (yes)
Regions in Japan	2.14	1.283	1 (Seoul metropolitan area)	4 (South-east area)

Source: The South Korea sample of the AsiaBarometer Survey (N=1000).

Table 4 Checking Multicollinearity of the Regression Models

	<u>China Sample</u>		<u>Japan Sample</u>		<u>South Korea Sample</u>	
	VIF	Tolerance	VIF	Tolerance	VIF	Tolerance
<u>Domestic politics</u>						
Trust in national government	1.03	0.9705	1.08	0.9276	1.06	0.9437
<u>Nationalist feelings</u>						
National pride	1.06	0.9443	1.13	0.8867	1.13	0.8874
National culture is superior	1.14	0.8764	1.14	0.8790	1.27	0.7872
Patriotic education is necessary	1.13	0.8866	1.15	0.8698	1.25	0.7970
<u>Individual Characteristics</u>						
Gender	1.01	0.9855	1.06	0.9416	1.05	0.9502
Age	1.14	0.8788	1.15	0.8698	1.48	0.6745
Education	1.36	0.7335	1.24	0.8053	1.71	0.5857
Household income	1.27	0.7859	1.22	0.8180	1.13	0.8835
<u>Overseas connections</u>						
Overseas family members	1.11	0.9035	1.14	0.8790	1.08	0.9283
Travelled abroad more than 3 times	1.08	0.9277	1.22	0.8188	1.22	0.8167
Overseas friend(s)	1.09	0.9181	1.16	0.8609	1.13	0.8830
Watching foreign TV programs	1.07	0.9375	1.14	0.8773	1.08	0.9280
Internet communication with foreigners	1.13	0.8853	1.43	0.7005	1.30	0.7710
Job contacts with foreigners	1.11	0.9038	1.30	0.7697	1.33	0.7500
<u>Social capital</u>						
Most people can be trusted	1.06	0.9437	1.07	0.9343	1.05	0.9502
<u>Intra-national variation</u>						
Local dummies	1.08	0.9236	1.03	0.9746	1.10	0.9092
<b>Mean VIF</b>	1.12		1.17		1.21	