

- The JEC's 'Japan-bashing' campaign
- Bashing the Protectionists
- Bashing the whalers?

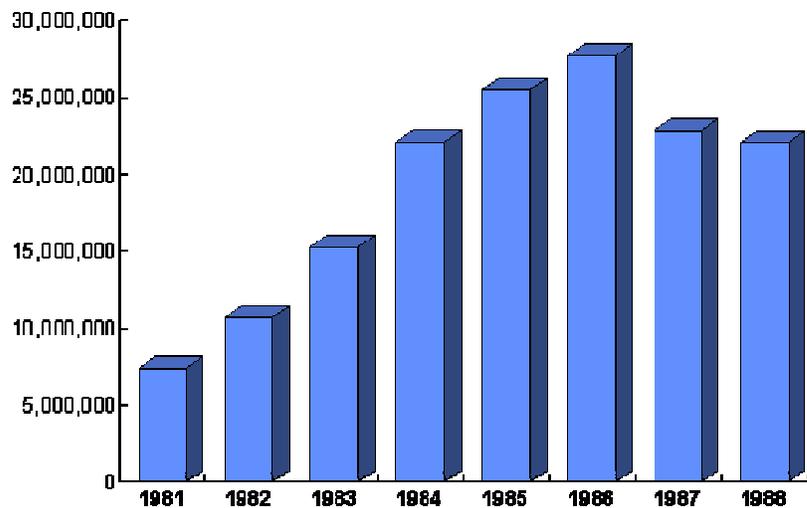
THE IDEA OF JAPAN [II]

WEEK 7 Media trade wars: (III)

READING 1: JAPANESE IMPORTS AND PROTECTIONISM

**IN WEEK 2** we studied Japanese automobile exports. By 1970 Japan was exporting \$19 billion worth of goods worldwide, \$6 billion of it to the USA. Honda and Yamaha only began exports to the US in 1960. By 1966, Honda, Yamaha and Suzuki between them notched up 85% of all US sales. In **1964**, Toyota shipped 50 Coronas to the US. In **1974** Toyota sold 238,135 cars in the US. In **1984**, Toyota sold 482,790 cars. In 1984 Japanese car exports to the US totalled 1.85 million. In 1985 Japan announced a 25% increase in car exports to the US: another 450,000 cars.

At the same time, the numbers for VCR imports to the US were staggering.



**HOWEVER, IN TRADE TALKS BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE US,** the most

sensitive issue was car imports. In the US, the Japan Lobby argued Japan's case first, through the United States-Japan Trade Council (USJTC) and the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), then in the 1970s and 80s through the Japan Economic Council. The Japan Lobby argued that American consumers wanted Japanese cars because they were cheap (the \$ was strong), and they were good cars made in factories that were more modern than US factories because they were new (they did not say that the US had bombed all the old ones, but that was the implication). Japanese cars were not the product of cheap, sweated labour: Japanese wages were lower than US car workers' wages, but the US and Japanese standard of living were comparable.

**THE US PROTECTIONIST MOVEMENT GREW AS JAPANESE IMPORTS INCREASED.** To halt the protectionists, the Japan Lobby came up with the Japan-bashing campaign.

## READING 2: The JEC and the Japan-bashing campaign



IN THE 1970s, Robert Angel, President at the Japan Economic Council, came up with the most successful campaign ever used in a media trade war: ‘**Japan-bashing**’

- The idea of Japan as victim has a long pedigree, nourished some part of the way by Western guilt, and nurtured by the experiences and memories of many Japanese.
- This is an unspent currency, as we can see from the success of Angel’s elegant and ingenious contribution to Japan’s informal diplomacy, the expressions *Japan-bashing* and *Japan-basher*.
- Angel designed these terms to deflect the force of criticism of Japan by raising doubts about the motivation of the critic. If you criticised Japan, you were a Japan-basher. You were Japan-bashing.
- This meant that you probably disliked Japan and the Japanese in an illogical, visceral way. You might be a simple racist. You might want Japan to suffer more than they already had done. You might just have a psychological problem. Nobody wanted to be a Japan-basher.
- In the 1970s and 1980s, Angel’s phrases *Japan-bashing* and *Japan-basher* crept into reportage on Japan and the shoptalk of Japanese studies. They succeeded in much the same way that allows the man who does not believe in advertising to swear that Guinness does him good. These expressions got into the fabric of discussion about Japan and they are still around.
- In the 1990s, Japan-bashing entered academic discussions of the image of Japan (like these pages), with frequent references in Phil Hammond (ed.) *Cultural Difference, Media Memories* (1997). In this analysis, Japan-bashing is cited unconsciously, for what it seems to be: the unfair criticism of Japan. Thus we have: “Some argued that the Japan-bashing of 1995 was simply a hangover from the past...(p.xiii); “However Morley and Robins suggest that this argument is insufficient to explain the outburst of Japan bashing in recent years” (p.xiv); “This is not to suggest that contemporary Japan-bashing is purely a matter of international politics and world economic rivalry” (p.xv). And so on, with or without a hyphen.

## Reading 3: John B. Judis: Bashing the Protectionists

**“IF REPORTERS’ USE OF “PROTECTIONIST” REFLECTS A LACK OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE, THEIR USE OF THE TERM “JAPAN BASHER” REFLECTS A NAIVETE ABOUT HOW WASHINGTON LOBBYISTS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS FLACKS SHAPE POLICY DEBATES.** The label “Japan basher” first appeared in the early 1980s. Its inventor was Robert Angel, the former president of the Japan Economic Institute, a Washington institute financed and overseen by Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Angel, who is now a political scientist at the University of South Carolina, wanted to counter the mounting public criticism of Japan’s trade policies. “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," Angel says.

Angel's goal was to discredit opposition to Japan's trade practices by insinuating that it was based on racism and xenophobia. His model was the pro-Israel lobby's use of the term anti-Semitism to stigmatize opponents of Israel's policies. He first tried out the term "anti-Japanism" in speeches and interviews but it didn't stick. Then, inspired by the British term "Paki-bashing," he tried "Japan bashing" - and it worked. "The first people to pick up on it were the Japanese press," Angel says. "However, within a year the American press began to use the term." The term became a weapon in the public relations war being waged in Washington over trade policy and U.S.-Japanese economic relations.

Angel is now embarrassed by his triumph. "I view that modest public relations success with some shame and disappointment," he says. "Those people who use [the term] have the distinction of being my intellectual dupes."

Still, the term continues to be widely used -- not only by the Japanese press and officials, but also by the American press. In the last year, columnists and editorial writers used it frequently against Japan's critics and against proponents of trade legislation. On January 6, for example, syndicated columnist Edwin Yoder described Republican presidential candidate Buchanan as having emerged "as an incipient trade protectionist and Japan basher." On February 7, *Washington Post* business columnist Hobart Rowen cited without comment Japanese opinion that on his strip to Tokyo "Bush succumbed to pressures of the Republican right from Pat Buchanan, and from the entire range of Democratic candidates, to bash Japan."

Reporters have also used the term uncritically. In a January 6 *Los Angeles Times* story, Donald Woutat described Representative John Dingell as a "reputed Japan basher." In the February 6 *New York Times*, R. W. Apple wrote that "the only foreign policy topic on which the Democratic candidates have spent much time so far has been trade, especially trade with Japan. Some bash Japan and some don't.

On February 25, Tom Brown wrote in *The Seattle Times* that when "Senator Slade Gorton talks about the value of free trade, nobody in Japan listens because he is drowned out by Japan bashers in Congress." The next day, Judi Hasson wrote in *USA Today* that "the Japanese are paying closer attention to this year's U.S. presidential race because of increased 'Japan bashing' on the campaign trail."

One might argue that "protectionist" and "Japan basher" are just minor terms in a larger analysis of a politician or policy-maker's position. Unfortunately, that's not the case. In a scholarly treatise, in which terms are carefully explained, the whole can be greater than its parts, but in news articles and analyses, loaded terms with long histories or damaging connotations can obscure subtler distinctions.

That has been particularly true in the last year. As the debate over trade has moved onto the front pages, reporters with little expertise in international economics have used these terms as hooks on which they can hang what appear to be weighty analyses. In the process, they have misled both the public and themselves.

Undoubtedly, some reporters and editors have used these terms to slander

politicians and to discredit positions they disagree with. But most of the press has probably not been guilty of over bias. Rather, reporters and editorial writers have been left behind by historical changes that have undetermined the way we have been accustomed to thinking about politics and economics. The debate over trade -- like the debate over post-cold war foreign policy or government economic intervention -- is largely without precedent.

Not just economic terminology, but the major political terms of the last five decades - liberal, conservative, internationalist - have lost their clear application.

What should the press do? It should be extremely cautious about using political labels as objective descriptions. It should not try to reduce complex arguments to simple slogans. And it should acknowledge in its coverage that it is traveling on uncharted terrain.”

**John B. Judis**, *Columbia Journalism Review*, November-December 1992.

Online at: <http://archives.cjr.org/year/92/6/trade.asp>

### Reading 3: Bashing the whalers

# Stop bashing the Japanese in the whale war

by Joanna Gordon Clark

For years Japan has been the chief and favourite target of the conservationist countries who assemble again in Brighton today for the annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission. Yet again, determined efforts will be made to stop Japan hunting sperm whales off her coast and to force a ban on all commercial whaling. But the conservationists are now aiming at the wrong target, risking species and stocks of whales that are close to extinction to save Japanese sperm whales that are not.

The stock of sperm whales that Japan hunts is not in the best of shape. Maybe only 100,000 adults are left. But Japan's present take of 890 a year makes little or no difference to that. The sacrifice may be well worth making in favour of far more urgent issues. Bryde's whales off Peru, for example, may number only 1,000. Yet the catch agreed last year and sought now is 320 — enough to wipe them out in three years. Spain is taking 146 fin whales from a stock that may number only 800. Bowheads and humpbacks, hunted respectively by Alaskan and Greenland Eskimos, are in serious danger as species. These aboriginal hunts present far greater difficulties in both human and conservation terms than today's commercial whaling. Last year, all these species went by the board in the battle over Japan's sperm whales. The same may happen this year.

Japan, of course, is no angel. Dishonest, even dishonourable, would seem the better

word. She has refused to supply data essential to checking sperm and minke whale populations; she has put pressure on conservationist countries to change their votes or leave the IWC; she has imported whale meat from the pirate ship *Sierra* and from Taiwan, an illegal whaling nation; in the scientific committee she has urged higher catch limits for Spain and Peru to keep their votes in the main commission.

But Japan has supplied far more data and scientific work than any other whaling country. Part of her behaviour now is a reaction to the incessant and often hysterical attacks on her whaling. These have ranged from her delegates being drenched in red dye in 1978 (with the Chinese mistakenly pelted with tomatoes last year), to more subtle forms of yellow racism.

She is now isolated, and wrongly depicted as the only villain of the piece. Her reaction is to fight harder and dirtier and certainly never to lose face. Rather than that, she may leave the commission. At the very least she will exercise her right under the IWC's rules to object and carry on the hunt.

It is plain bad politics to force Japan that far when other nations, Norway and Iceland, for example, will not stop whaling yet. If she objects, much effort will have been wasted, nothing gained. If she leaves, the consequences are far worse. She can still hunt

Antarctic minke whales, while the Soviet Union will be entitled to the whole quota set for these by the IWC. The result will be over-exploitation of minke whales, and no data worth having.

The IWC would be disastrously weakened, just as it is becoming a real force for conservation. All that we have gained—the ban on factory ships, the Indian Ocean sanctuary, the ban on the cruellest killing methods, lower quotas everywhere—would be lost or jeopardized.

Once out, nothing can bring Japan back against her wishes, and little can influence her actions. The USA will look somewhat foolish if it carries out threats to impose sanctions on Japan one week after itself announcing that it will not ratify the Law of the Sea Convention. All this is risked for a few sperm whales and some minke whales which can take a year more of the hunt.

The approach should be to allow Japan some sperm whales and minkes, on condition she provides the missing data; to stop the hunts that must be stopped—Spain's fins and Peru's brydes; and to tackle the difficult issue of aboriginal whaling of species at risk of extinction. It is time to stop simply bashing the Japanese.

*The author is a director of the Marine Action Centre, Cambridge, has chaired the Cetacean Wildlife Link, the UK conservation bodies' coordinating committee, and is a former member of the UK delegation.*

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**Reading 4** *The Times* of July 19 1981 pleads Japan's case in the language of victimisation. Japan bashing. Whatever the details, the headline says the victims are not the whales but Japan.

<b>QUESTIONNAIRE</b>	<b>CLASS NAME</b>	<b>WEEK No.</b>
<b>NAME</b>	<b>STUDENT No.</b>	<b>DATE</b>
<b>1. WHAT WAS THIS CLASS/FILM ABOUT?</b>		
<b>2. WHAT ARE THE MAIN QUESTIONS IT RAISES?</b>		
<b>3. WHAT IS IMPORTANT ABOUT THIS SUBJECT?</b>		
<b>4. ANY OTHER COMMENTS?</b>		