

EXAMINING HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY
IN JAPAN

by

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Examining historical consciousness and political memory in Japan

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ABSTRACT

Japan's current ruling government, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, has a stated desire for Japan to be a 'normal' state. They believe this would allow Japan to more effectively defend its citizens abroad, to fully participate in international security initiatives, bargain international treaties from a stronger position, and have further positive economic effects. Becoming 'normal' would mean a change from the current pacifist constitution that renounces military action. Changing the constitution would require considerable domestic support from both the general public and lawmakers.

A significant roadblock to becoming 'normal' is the 'contested war memories' issue Japan has both internationally and domestically. LDP leaders would like Japan to move on from this issue. Internationally, 'moving on' is hindered by the politics of memory and the assumptions inherent in western literature and perceptions of Japan, what I will refer to as the 'orthodoxy.' Domestically this is hindered because of a broad spectrum of historical consciousness and the lack of a common national narrative regarding these issues.

Further issues propagate both the international and domestic hindrances. These and their effects are poorly understood internationally and therefore merit discussion because of their significance to the ultimate assessment. It is the assessment of this paper that Prime Minister Abe is attempting to create a more moderate national narrative in

Japan to begin mending the domestic ‘history issue,’ in an effort toward Japanese ‘normalcy.’ He is doing this because a more unified domestic narrative would enable his government to move toward a less conservative and nationalistic official stance: one that would be more acceptable to the international community. He has demonstrated his desire to do this in four ways: through his statement after his last worship at Yasukuni Shrine in 2013; the conclusions of his handpicked committee that investigated the ‘history problem;’ his statement of apology at the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII on August 14, 2015 that was based on the conclusions of the aforementioned committee; and the deal that was reached to conclusively address the ‘comfort women’ issue with the Republic of Korea in December, 2015.

The form and content of this abstract are approved. I recommend its publication.

Approved: Lucy McGuffey

DEDICATION

For Yasmine, Valletta, and Victoria – toward a better world for you, for us all.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

In August 2013 a joint Japan-China poll found that more than 90% of the population in each of these nations held a negative impression of the other. Worse, a shocking 52.7% of Chinese polled said that military conflict would occur between Japan and China in the future. Also surprising, based on the current Japanese constitution's institutionalization of pacifism, are the meager 6.9% of Chinese who see the social/political system in Japan as "pacifism," compared with the 48.9% who view Japan as "expansionist." Clearly there is a high level of misunderstanding here, and history and the military capabilities of these two states are evidence that high levels of animosity coupled with a lack of understanding of the other can lead to devastating war.¹

The preponderance of English literature on the subject of how Japan has dealt with its actions in conducting offensive operations throughout Asia leading up to and including World War II (hereafter 'WWII') paint a general picture of 'historical amnesia' and denial of the commonly accepted narrative. The varying degrees of this perception by states in the international community and specifically by Japan's neighbors have contributed to a number of factors that are preventing Japan from being accepted as a 'normal' state. Japan's current ruling government, the Liberal Democratic Party (hereafter 'LDP'), led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has a stated desire for Japan to move toward international 'normalization.'² It believes this would allow Japan to more effectively defend its citizens abroad, to participate actively (militarily) in international

¹ The Genron NPO, "The 9th Japan-China Public Opinion Poll," accessed October 20, 2016. http://www.genron-npo.net/en/opinion_polls/archives/5260.html#7.

² Koide Reiko, "Critical New Stage in Japan's Textbook Controversy," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 12 (2014), 13-1, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://japanfocus.org/-Koide-Reiko/4101/article.html>.

security initiatives, bargain international treaties from a stronger position, and have further positive economic effects.

Having said this, several questions immediately arise: What does it mean to be a 'normal' state and what evidence is there that Japan is not a normal state? How does Japan exhibit 'historical amnesia' and denial of the commonly accepted narrative, or what actions are being perceived as such by other states? And if normalcy is important, why do those actions continue? Restated, these questions could be posed simply as "what is stopping Japan from being seen as a 'normal' state in the international community of states?" Answering this question is important to understanding why Prime Minister Abe would be taking the actions assessed by this paper.

Among other things, becoming 'normal' would mean a change from the current uniquely pacifist constitution that renounces military action. Changing the constitution would require considerable domestic support from both the general public and lawmakers. Another roadblock to 'normalcy' is the 'contested war memories' issue Japan has both internationally and domestically. LDP leaders think Japan needs to move on from this issue because of its associated negativity. Internationally, 'moving on' is hindered by the politics of memory and the assumptions inherent in western literature and perceptions of Japan, what I will refer to as the 'orthodoxy.' These in turn have an effect domestically. Domestically this is hindered because of a broad spectrum of historical consciousness, contested national memories, and importantly, the lack of a common national narrative regarding 'historical issues.' Both the international and domestic hindrances are caused or propagated by further issues. These and their effects, especially

the domestic ones, are poorly understood internationally and therefore merit discussion because of their significance to the ultimate assessment.

It is the assessment of this paper that Prime Minister Abe is attempting to create a more moderate national narrative in Japan to begin mending the domestic ‘history issue,’ in an effort toward Japanese ‘normalcy.’ He is doing this because a more unified domestic narrative would enable his government to move toward a less conservative and nationalistic official stance: one that would be more acceptable to the international community. He has demonstrated his desire toward a moderate national narrative in four ways: through his statement after his last worship at Yasukuni Shrine in 2013; his hiring of a handpicked committee to investigate the ‘history problem;’ his statement of apology at the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII on August 14, 2015 that was based on the conclusions of the aforementioned committee; and the deal that was reached to conclusively address the ‘comfort women’ issue with the Republic of Korea (South Korea, hereafter ‘ROK’) in December, 2015.

This chapter continues with the methodology and frame of this paper followed by an explanation of the ‘normalization’ issue and other terms with which the reader may not be familiar. In Chapter II the ways in which problems are framed is discussed, followed by four sections that provide the frame for this issue. The first is a discussion of historically pertinent facts. In the second, prevailing issues are presented, followed by a critique of western ‘outside’ perceptions in the third. The fourth and final framing section is a discussion of perceptions on the war, war memory, historical consciousness, and war judgment from an ‘insider’ perspective.

Chapter III examines the politics of history and memory with an eye on discussing how the two are formed and shaped by governments and politicians in order to create national narratives. I begin with a look at some primary works on memory and use these to aid in an examination of how we remember and how national memories are formed. The chapter concludes by contrasting what we remember with what it is that is forgotten, and why. Having explored the history of this problem, how it is framed, and how narratives are created, I move in Chapter IV to a discussion of international perspectives and narratives. This discussion demonstrates some of the problems with those perspectives and the effect of the international community on the problem set as it exists inside Japan. This is followed in Chapter V with domestic narratives, to include a look at media, culture studies, and domestic politics as a final setup for the assessment of Chapter VI. There I tie the ideas from the previous chapters into conclusive support for the ultimate assessment this paper is making: that Prime Minister Abe is attempting to create a common national narrative in Japan in an effort toward Japanese ‘normalcy’ in the international community.

Methodology & Frame

It was with some trepidation that I began to explore this topic, having learned just enough from media reports to know it is one of great controversy. After a year or so researching this problem – predominantly through English-language media sources from the region, and journals and books mostly written in association with some American, British, or Australian University – I began to echo some of the most commonly repeated ‘orthodoxy’ on the topic: that Japan committed numerous atrocities during the war; that the government of Japan has failed to take responsibility for these atrocities; and that the

Japanese people are, by-and-large, complicit in their government's failure. The conclusion is that Japan must do more to address the problem, with some variation in exactly what that entails. Reaching these conclusions is expectable, after all, the facts of history leave little to interpretation, the representation in available literature is stark, and this conclusion is 'safe.'

Dr. Greg Whitesides was first to elucidate for me the lack of depth outsiders will have when looking at a problem despite their best intentions. This includes a person such as myself who has spent more than five years in Japan and two more studying Japanese culture, language, and literature. By 'outsider' in this case I mean coming from a different place both geographically and culturally; more specifically the reality of approaching problems with a 'western' mindset. Dr. Whitesides explained the potentially profound dearth of 'ground truth' an outsider would have, not just by looking at this problem from the outside and without speaking the language but also, and potentially more importantly, the changing of true perception of an 'insider' when their work is translated into another language, especially when that work is for dissemination in another culture. It would be naïve to assume that an exact representation of what was meant by the author will be in the translation. Further, an article written in a person's second language is unlikely to contain the level of exactness the author would have hoped, particularly when it comes to social sentiment.

Perhaps the most useful aspect of this revelation was that it forced me to continue searching for literature on this subject in the hopes of finding a seminal work that was written from an insider's perspective, but that had gone to the greatest possible extent to explain it in a way that allowed outsiders a glimpse behind the proverbial 'curtain.'

Michel-Rolph Trouillot wrote that the more sensitive and important an issue is to civil society the more measured the interpretation and presentation of facts by most professional historians and journalists will be.³ This may be because they must maintain their professionalism and not get swept up in pleas or arguments of passion. When President Trump attacks the New York Times, it matters little if the source of his anger is critical journalism and that the presentation is unbiased. His agenda may be served because the Times editors will find themselves paying extra scrutiny to critical articles, whether consciously or not, because of the very claim of bias and what it means to a professional organization. Similarly, when the bulk of academic writing on a subject such as contested war memory in Japan falls into an easy to argue and ‘morally defensible’ grouping, there is an inclination to proceed with extreme caution in challenging this group. The difficulty is only amplified by the importance of the issue for the affected cultural or social groups.

However, when a work is discovered that challenges the dominant rhetoric and is relevant, significant, and engaging, it bears examination if only to temporarily pause the ceaseless echo-chambering of a single overriding narrative that has drowned out all others, remembering that “all assumptions, and especially the most fashionable, demand constant question.”⁴ Moving beyond the dominant rhetoric surrounding this issue requires such a “significant and engaging study;” a new, well-phrased test of the leading theories. I found such a study to be Philip Seaton’s *Japan’s Contested War Memories*⁵ that

³ Michel-Rolph Trouillot. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 114.

⁴ Catherine Merridale, “Soviet Memories: Patriotism and Trauma,” in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 376.

completely challenges the dominant western narrative, what he calls the ‘orthodoxy,’ on this issue and through careful analysis and research, finds it lacking. Because of this, my thesis will draw heavily from Seaton’s research, and I will use it as the theoretical frame for my work.

When new ideas challenge old ways of thinking and the old methods fail to hold up, they become one of Thomas Kuhn’s old paradigms that will lose dominance and eventually fade completely.⁶ An example of this is Fracastoro and von Plenciz’ germ theory that we understand today as the primary cause of disease, blowing apart the previous ‘miasma theory’ that held diseases were caused by miasma, a noxious form of ‘bad air.’ Kuhn writes that new tools, or new ways of using old tools, allow us to ‘discover’ things that had been there all along, but that hadn’t been seen or hadn’t been given the weight they deserve because they are in opposition to what establishment ‘experts’ hold true, and are therefore roundly dismissed (in the case of my example, for centuries) until a new tool or new use of old tools causes a breakthrough. In the germ theory case, that tool was the microscope, and in this case, Philip Seaton uses media studies to turn the ‘orthodoxy’ on its head. We may disagree with his assertion of the existence of the ‘orthodoxy,’ his assumptions of its statements, his challenge to it, and his conclusion and alternate proposals, however, we do well to pay it mind, lest we find ourselves promulgating the ‘miasma’ of North East Asian relations for additional decades.

⁵ Philip Seaton, *Japan’s Contested War Memories: The ‘Memory Riffs’ in Historical Consciousness of World War II*. (New York: Routledge, 2007).

⁶ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

‘Normalization’

The idea of an ‘abnormal’ Japan may seem peculiar to those unfamiliar with the topic, yet it is fait accompli to those involved in the region. “War Memories and Japan’s ‘Normalization’ as an International Actor” by Lawson and Tannaka opens with the statement, “The paradigmatic case in which an almost permanent impasse exists in coming to terms with a difficult war past and ‘normalizing’ its international relations is that of Japan.”⁷ In *Japan as a ‘Normal Country?’* Soeya, Tadokoro, and Welch, ask what it would take for Japan to become ‘normal,’ and, if the country is capable of doing so. They point to “constraints such as an inflexible constitution, inherent antimilitarism, and its position as a U.S. security client.”⁸

To answer what it means to be ‘normal’ it is easier to start with those things that arguably make Japan ‘abnormal.’ Uniquely, Japan’s Constitution renounces war. The Constitution’s Preamble opens, “We, the Japanese people, [...] resolved that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war through the action of government” and follows, “We [...] desire peace for all time [...] and we have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world.” The first paragraph of Article 9 of the Constitution states, “Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling

⁷ Stephanie Lawson and Seiko Tannaka, “War Memories and Japan’s ‘Normalization’ as an International Actor: A Critical Analysis.” *European Journal of International Relations* 17 (2011), 405-28, accessed October 10, 2015. doi: 10.1177/1354066110365972.

⁸ Yoshihide Soeya, Masayuki Tadokoro, and David A. Welch. *Japan As a ‘Normal Country?’: A Nation in Search of Its Place in the World*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

international disputes.”⁹ As is so often the case, time has put the specific verbiage used in Article 9 to the test, and there is a high level of debate in Japan regarding the exact limits of allowable military action. Today, the generally accepted interpretation is that it restricts Japan to self-defense forces only; offensive or preemptive military action would be a violation, though Japan can support international security initiatives logistically and through other means.

The current Japanese government led by the LDP – a conservative party that has been in power for the vast majority of the post-WWII era – has repeatedly raised the issue of amending the Constitution and specifically Article 9. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe now leads the chorus of voices from the LDP who have been calling for a reform of the official military posture for the past few decades. “Abe wants Japan to become a ‘normal’ country again, with the capacity to defend its interests and citizens wherever they are threatened.”¹⁰ International pressure led by the U.S. for Japan to increase its share of the worldwide security burden is countered by Chinese and ROK reminders of Japanese regional aggression; these countries, for a variety of reasons, find a more militarily active Japan to be against their national interests. LDP members also think achieving ‘normal’ state status will help Japan enter international negotiations and treaties on more ‘equal’ footing with other states.¹¹

⁹ “Japan: Article 9 of the Constitution,” Library of Congress, accessed 6 Feb 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/japan-constitution/article9.php>. This translation of Japan’s Constitution is taken from and available on the “Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet” website at: http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html.

¹⁰ Jamie Metzl, “Japan’s Military Normalization,” *The Japan Times*, March 6, 2015, accessed 6 Feb 2017, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2015/03/06/commentary/japan-commentary/japans-military-normalization/#.WJkZZ4VWIK4>.

¹¹ Lawson and Tannaka, “War Memories,” 417.

On the subject of ‘normalcy,’ Japanese ‘normalization,’ and what is meant by these terms, I found a large number of newspaper articles, academic journals, and books. For further clarity on the concept I recommend the previously mentioned “War Memories and Japan’s ‘Normalization’ as an International Actor” article by Lawson and Tannaka,¹² as well as Soeya, Tadokoro, and Welch’s book *Japan As a ‘Normal Country’?: A Nation in Search of Its Place in the World*.¹³

Terms

A number of terms are used in this paper that require clarification or explanation because of their particular application or their novelty. Following is a brief description of some of these.

Orthodoxy

Philip Seaton uses the word ‘orthodoxy,’ a term I have already employed, to define the “interpretation of Japanese war memories in English-speaking Allied countries.”¹⁴ The orthodoxy frequently references the “‘ignorance,’ ‘amnesia,’ and ‘denial’ of ordinary Japanese people.” He finds that the orthodoxy has two main representations. First of these is a “state-centered approach:

“Government statements, official apologies, the compensation policy, comments by politicians in the ruling LDP elite, and the contents of government-approved textbooks are the core topics of investigation.”

All Japanese are deemed to buy into the official narrative, and if any attention is paid to the discussion of war in Japan the focus is given to nationalists who deny or downplay

¹² Lawson and Tannaka, “War Memories,”

¹³ Soeya, Tadokoro, and Welch, *Japan As a ‘Normal Country’?*

¹⁴ Seaton, *Contested*, 2.

atrocities, while progressives, whose opinion of the war is much more critical and does not align with the official narrative, are ignored.

The second approach is one Seaton calls a “culturally determinist approach” which he defines as “anthropological or sociological” and deals with the way characteristics that are seen as ‘Japanese,’ such as conformity, “make Japanese people reluctant to challenge the inadequate stance of the government and the wider collective memory.”¹⁵

Seaton’s insight here is valuable because it is correct. Nearly all of the literature dealing with this subject that I have been able to find falls into one of these representations or samples from both. Despite a publishing date of 2006, the many works dealing with this subject that have post-dated his book continue to follow this pattern. Seaton takes three issues with the orthodoxy and these will be discussed in more detail in Chapter II. Briefly however, they are that “it shifts ... between issues of war responsibility” and the way or ways in which the war is remembered; it “contains a fundamental assumption that there is a ‘correct’ way for Japanese people to interpret war history;” and finally its focus on state and culture does not explain the diversity of opinion that exists in Japan.¹⁶

Fifteen-Year War

Several terms are used to describe Japan’s military campaigns that culminated in WWII. The term ‘Great War’ is often used interchangeably with the term ‘World War II.’ The term ‘Asia-Pacific War’ focuses more on the period between 1937, the start of hostilities with the People’s Republic of China (hereafter ‘China’), and 1945. The term

¹⁵ Ibid., 3.

¹⁶ Ibid., 3-4.

‘Fifteen-Year War’ is used particularly in Japan “to describe the period from the Manchurian Incident (1931) to 1945.”¹⁷ As this paper focuses rather broadly on the way Japan’s aggression from the period is remembered, the term ‘Fifteen-Year War’ seems most appropriate.

‘Comfort Women’

The term ‘comfort women’ will be used in this paper to describe the women who were employed in Japan’s military brothel system, many of them against their will. In this paper that term will be in quotes because, while it has become a widely recognized term in reference to these women, in reality it is a shocking understatement of their experience and the pain they endured and have carried with them throughout their lives. The related term ‘comfort stations’ will describe the military brothels themselves.

‘Normal’

The use of the idea of ‘normal’ in this paper is not meant to be derogatory or insulting – though it may very well be taken that way by many of those in Japan who use this term and accept that this is Japan’s current status – rather it is meant to point to basic truths that are realities of the situation, such as the fact that Japan is simply unable, based on its constitution, to engage in warfare, or to contribute legally to international security efforts, to include those sanctioned by its neighbors, a fact that China has used to needle Japan and that has rattled Prime Minister Abe.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid., 226.

¹⁸ Lawson and Tannaka, “War Memories,” 417.

History Issue

This term is used frequently in domestic and international literature and typically refers to how Japan and Japanese people are currently dealing with issues relating to actions in the Fifteen-Year War.

A final note here will address the use of the English writing of certain Japanese names and words. In these cases I have simply taken the reading that I was able to find most commonly and employed it throughout this document.

These terms are all necessary parts of a thorough rendering of how the Japanese remember. So too is a general understanding of the history and prevailing perceptions of the Fifteen-Year War, and it is those that will be dealt with next in Chapter II.

CHAPTER II. FRAMING THE PROBLEM

The way in which a topic is presented can be meant to nudge the audience in a predetermined direction, or its complete opposite. This is despite the presentation consisting solely of statements that are accepted as ‘factually accurate.’ Consider the following examples:

“In November 2016 Donald Trump was elected the 45th President of the United States of America in an Electoral College landslide 306 to 232 victory!”

and,

“In November 2016 a highly contentious race for 45th President of the United States of America was won by Donald Trump who secured victory through the Electoral College while losing the popular vote by a count of nearly 3 million!”

Both of these statements are factually accurate but frame the results differently and lay the tone for facts and assumptions that will follow. Sentence structure, how statements are woven together, and in what order will also have an impact here. One can reasonably guess the biases or at least perspectives of the author based on these minimal statements alone. Further, if we knew that these were headlines from major U.S. news outlets, we could probably identify each statement’s association.^{19, 20}

Trouillot discussed how facts are interpreted and framed when he wrote of the ‘discovery’ of previously inhabited lands by Europeans. When that term is used in the discussion of any history involving them it is necessarily an exercise in Eurocentricity, reducing them instantly to a mere consequence, “they were discovered.”²¹ “To call ‘discovery’ the first invasions of inhabited lands by Europeans is an exercise in

¹⁹ “2016 U.S. Election Results,” CNN.com, accessed on February 6, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/election/results>.

²⁰ Seaton, *Contested*, 131.

²¹ Trouillot. *Silencing*, 114.

Eurocentric power that already frames future narratives of the event so described.” In the same way, the frame of this issue *could* be that Japan mimicked the conduct of European nations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, becoming a colonizer of other nations, in part to avoid its own colonization. If one accepts this as a possible or primary narrative however, and that the narrative of most westerners on Japanese expansion in the region is Eurocentric, that individual risks accusations of appeasement or apologist behavior to Japan, or distraction techniques: pointing the finger at the west to cover for Japanese atrocities. This paper approaches the problem from a view that encompasses both, that atrocities were committed, and that the outside narrative, the orthodoxy, is Eurocentric and self-serving.

Another way of looking at how we interpret facts is the very human tendency toward ‘confirmation bias.’ I define confirmation bias as what happens when persons have a pre-existing idea or narrative on a particular topic, and willingly accept information that fits their narrative. However, when it does not, the facts of the information are either reconfigured to fit the bias, or they are rejected outright.

The desire of any objective researcher is not simply to avoid their biases on a topic – this would be nearly impossible – but to be cognizant of these in order to minimize their effect on the material they choose to ‘admit’ into their pool of research, and not allow these biases to pre-determine the outcome of their research. They would also likely address their biases to the audience so that the reader can be aware of them. The existence of biases does not prevent them from taking a stance on an issue, it simply forces the researcher to thoroughly support that stance through research and well-articulated argument.

However, the general public is held to no such standard, nor am I arguing that they necessarily should be. Why then is it important to discuss the ways in which a problem is framed and the notion of confirmation bias? Because these affect the way we interpret and understand what we hear, and this in turn will affect the way we remember.

This chapter provides a frame for the problem. It does this in four sections. First by starting with a discussion of historically pertinent facts. Next it will present prevailing perceptions and show why these are relevant based on the history described. Following this, western ‘outside’ perceptions will be critiqued in the form of the orthodoxy and will be countered in the fourth section by a discussion of perceptions on the war, war memory, historical consciousness, and war judgment from an ‘insider’ perspective.

History

While conflict in some form or other has existed in the region for many centuries, this paper will focus on the events leading up to, including, and following the Fifteen-Year War. Japan’s expansion into Asia began in the late 19th century and experienced its first validation with Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War. Not only was this the first victory of an ‘eastern’ power against a traditional western power, it effectively left Japan in control of the Korean peninsula and with access to Manchuria, both of which Japan had contested with Russia.²² By the time the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, the Japanese Empire covered much of Northeast Asia and at the peak of its expansion it included most of Southeast Asia as well. These five decades of aggressive behavior are pointed to as the source of many issues between Japan and its neighbors to

²² David Wolff et al., ed., *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero. Vol. 2.* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2007).

this day.²³ The problems did not stop with Japan's surrender, however, as an obliterated post-war Japan was administered by the U.S. – or more specifically by General Douglas MacArthur – until 1952. Initial calls among the Allies for justice quickly made way to those of leniency, the memories of post World War I reparations and their effects on Germany being fresh, and the Cold War demanding unity of effort and new alliances.

It was during the U.S. administration that several key occurrences shaped Japan's war memory, first, the U.S. decided to shield Japan from a substantial portion of the backlash from its neighbors that had been victimized. This was done via multiple peace accords, but primarily for Japan's neighbors, the 1952 Treaty of San Francisco and the 1972 Japan-China Joint Communiqué.

“In an effort to establish Japan as an ally in the Cold War, Japan, at the urging of the United States, was positioned in a long-term Cold War confrontation with its principal victim in World War II, China. As a result, little motivation existed for Japan to look deeply at its atrocities against China.”²⁴

“The generosity and non-punitive character” of the provisions of these treaties toward Japan are the subject of much criticism by the orthodoxy and are pointed to as a major contributing factor to the current predicament in the region. Harry N. Scheiber offers a critical review of the 1952 Treaty, finding it was “the U.S. government's determination to conclude a treaty that would protect Japan from any serious economic or fiscal burdens.”²⁵

²³ Akiko Hashimoto, *The Long Defeat: Cultural Trauma, Memory, and Identity in Japan*. (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2015).

²⁴ Clifton B. Parker, “Nationalism Clouds WWII Memories in Asia,” *Stanford News*, April 4, 2014, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://news.stanford.edu/pr/2014/pr-memory-war-asia-040414.html>.

²⁵ Harry N. Scheiber, “Taking Responsibility: Moral and Historical Perspectives on the Japanese War-Reparations Issues,” *Berkeley Journal of International Law* 20, (2002): 237-8.

Second, after initial trials against accused war criminals that resulted in the conviction of many Japanese military and government officials, a sort of ‘general amnesty’ was declared, and ultimately all those who had been found guilty but given life sentences in lieu of the death sentence were pardoned. The result of these and other actions by the U.S. provided the foundation for the issue as it exists today because they allowed Japan to move on from the war without having fully come to terms with its aggression and the jarring war crimes committed by some of its more brutal and notorious events and campaigns, such as the Bataan Death March, the Rape of Nanking,²⁶ and the issue of military sexual slavery, or ‘comfort women.’

A further contributor to future problems that was a result of U.S leadership was its implementation, in an effort to temper the extreme nationalism of Japanese educational textbooks, of a process of editing whereby they could be censored – initially by simply blacking them out, later through textbook screening. This textbook screening remained in place after the occupation, and is problematic in that it institutionalized a form of censorship controlled by whoever holds power in Japan, a practice that continues to this day.^{27, 28}

The U.S. continues to protect Japan from claims for reparations and the U.S.’ part in what Scheiber and many others refer to as “historical amnesia” cannot be overstated.²⁹

²⁶ The Rape of Nanking was covered in detail in a book by that name by Iris Chang that has largely stood up to the criticism that could be expected of a book dealing with that topic. Iris Chang, *The Rape Of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust Of World War II*, (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

²⁷ Jonathan Watts, “Saburo Ienaga,” *The Guardian*, December 2, 2002, accessed October 10, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/dec/03/guardianobituaries.japan>.

²⁸ It would be hypocritical to omit that all nations employ some form of textbook screening, typically justified by the quest for accuracy, but also in efforts to remove bias or religious influence.

²⁹ Scheiber, “Taking Responsibility,” 240.

“American complicity in the ‘historical amnesia’ of Japan’s governments and people since 1945 does not only consist of the U.S. role in writing the waiver into the Peace Treaty and hiding information of possible precedents for private claims against Japan by U.S. and other foreign citizens. It also consists of the entire fabric of the U.S.-Japanese relationship during the Occupation years.”

Noted British diplomat Sir Arthur Gascoigne was critical of the American occupation of Japan. “Whatever the accomplishments of the Occupation” Gascoigne found, there had been

“An abject failure by the United States in getting the message across to the Japanese government that other nations did not view postwar Japan or its burden of moral responsibilities in the way that General MacArthur viewed them.”

Gascoigne’s statement later refers to the “abiding bitterness” toward Japan felt by Allied nations who were struggling to recover from the war.

We can understand that even the perception of preferential treatment of a prior aggressor at a time when many in the world were struggling would create “abiding bitterness.” We should also understand that the person placed ultimately in charge of Japan was not a diplomat or a politician, but rather a military general, and it is primary in the fiber of a military officer to win, and secondarily to protect one’s charge, potentially above all others. If we would criticize General MacArthur’s diplomatic and political postwar actions, then perhaps we should consider a more severe criticism of the U.S. government that appointed him the ‘Supreme Commander.’

An additional note of importance in this history is that nearly every western nation had a record of brutality in its colonies: the U.S. in the Philippines (and with its own Japanese population during the war); the British in India and Burma; the French in Indochina; and the Dutch in Indonesia – actions the Indonesians ultimately replicated in East Timor. All these nations likely saw some hypocrisy in holding Japan to task for

copying their imperialistic behavior, and this may have played a part in the leniency of the various treaties signed.

Externally in the region, the Fifteen-Year War was followed almost immediately by the outbreak of civil war in two of Japan's primary victims, China and Korea. This meant there were no unified governments with whom to broker a reasonable peace accord that included the type of reparations, admission of guilt, and apologies that might be expected. This is another reason that the peace treaties were non-stringent and so favorable for Japan.³⁰ The San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1952 was firmly backed by the U.S. and this was enough to secure the backing of the leadership of what would become the Republic of Korea, the U.S. being a major ally and supporter in its war against the future Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). In China, the fledgling communist government sought legitimacy and recognition by the international community and this could be used as a major bargaining chip in securing their support for signing on to the 1972 Treaty they otherwise may have rejected.

It wasn't until the end of the Cold War that regional and political stability allowed for possible redress for the atrocities that Japanese troops had committed in places like Nanking. Accounts began to emerge of atrocities such as those in 'comfort stations' and a general call to make things right emerged domestically and internationally. Many of the eyewitness and survivor reports eventually received documentary backing, leading to public and official apologies by the Japanese government, as well as a revisiting of reparations in some cases, such as the case of the 'comfort women.'³¹ Popular knowledge

³⁰ Roger P. Alford, "On War as Hell," *Chicago Journal of International Law* 3 (2002): 207-18.

³¹ Carol Ruff, "'Comfort Women' Deserve a Memorial: Their Ordeal Must Not be Forgotten," *The Guardian*, April 3, 2014, accessed October 10, 2015,

in Japan itself was clouded by the lack of information previously available on the subject, leading to the surprise and disbelief of many Japanese upon hearing the accusations for the first time. This lack of information has a direct correlation with how we remember, and it is that topic this paper discusses later in Chapter III.

Justifications for Prevailing Perceptions

There are a handful of reasons for the prevalence of the current perceptions that this paper will present. These range from historical factors to those of national identity and the politics of memory. While some of the issues are externally sourced, being raised by neighboring states, many of them spring from inside Japan. The internal issues will be the primary focus of this paper; however a look at some of the issues that frame the outside perspective follows here. Having a basic awareness of and familiarity with these is imperative to understanding the existing dynamics inside Japan and between Japan and outside states.

The opinion of many outsiders that Japan suffers from ‘historical amnesia’ and fails to accept the commonly recognized historical narrative is based predominantly on the existence of several controversial issues. In the order they will be discussed, they are first, the issue of Japanese educational textbooks that gloss over or fail to discuss Japanese aggression. Second is prime ministerial worship at Yasukuni Shrine, a memorial to deceased military. Third, an extremely sensitive topic is the so-called ‘comfort women’ issue – the women who were recruited, often forcibly, to work in military brothels behind the front lines. A fourth is the continued refusal of Japan’s courts to hear individual cases and claims for reparations. Next is the claim of ‘weak’ or ‘insincere’ apologies made by

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/03/comfort-women-deserve-a-memorial-their-ordeal-must-not-be-forgotten>.

Japan's leadership. Finally there is the very real existence of historical revision in Japan. This includes the outright denial of both forcible recruitment of 'comfort women' and the accepted Rape of Nanking narrative, as well as the promulgation of 'alternative' views of history. These alternative versions portray Japan's East Asia campaign as 'colonial liberation,' or argue that Japan was provoked into war by its neighbors and the United States. The history behind these will be discussed in further detail in the history section of this chapter, however it is useful to include a brief discussion of each here.

Textbooks

The education ministry of Japan has in place a system of textbook screening it "inherited in 1952 from the departing U.S. administration."³² This means the nation's ruling party can exert a large amount of influence over the content of school textbooks and "can directly determine appropriate topics to cover and 'correct' understandings of textbook topics."³³

The case that has caused and continues to cause international controversy and consternation regards the content of history textbooks. In 2001, a group called the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform published a textbook that was approved by the Ministry of Education that whitewashed war crimes during WWII and earlier conflicts, triggering major protests overseas and "widespread anti-Japanese rioting in China." This scenario has played out every few years since 2001 with the Ministry of Education approving controversial textbooks. One notable instance occurred in 2007 when,

³² Watts, *Saburo*.

³³ Koide Reiko, "Critical New Stage in Japan's Textbook Controversy," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 12 (Mar 30, 2014), 13-1, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://japanfocus.org/-Koide-Reiko/4101/article.html>.

“the ministry instructed publishers to delete a passage stating that the Japanese military ‘forced’ residents of Okinawa to commit mass suicide in 1945. More than 100,000 Okinawans staged a protest to complain that Japan’s role in the suicides should not be forgotten. The government then allowed publishers to correct their texts.”³⁴

The textbook issue is relevant to the perception problem because it also serves to undermine official apologies by making them appear less genuine, since they are offered by the same government that later sanctions ‘whitewashed’ textbooks.³⁵ The unfortunate truth is that all nations have episodes in their past that they would rather forget, and certainly issues that many adults find inappropriate to discuss or teach to small children, whether because they feel these topics are unnecessary, or simply too graphic in nature.

A further development resulting from the rewriting of some textbooks is a general shift in the content of other textbooks through indirect pressure on the remainder that has forced them to adopt what nationalist conservatives call a more ‘positive’ or ‘patriotic’ view of Japanese history.³⁶ The flaws in the international discussion of Japanese textbooks will be discussed in Chapter IV under “History and textbooks in Japan and other states.”

Yasukuni Shrine

The Yasukuni Shrine located in Tokyo, Japan is where all Japanese who die in war are memorialized and since 1978 this has included 1,618 convicted or accused war criminals in addition to the remains of Hideki Tojo (Japan’s wartime Prime Minister). It had been a tradition for Japanese Prime Ministers to officially visit the Shrine and pay

³⁴ Alan Greenblatt, “Rewriting History – Can Nations Come To Terms With Their Own Legacies?” *CQ Global Researcher* 3, no. 12 (December 2009): 328, accessed November 24, 2015, www.globalresearcher.com.

³⁵ Jennifer M. Lind, *Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

³⁶ Reiko, *Critical*.

homage to those who died in service to the country. Emperor Hirohito (Japan's wartime Emperor) himself participated in this tradition but discontinued the practice, specifically crediting the enshrining of Class-A war criminals as his reason for breaking with the tradition.³⁷

Any visit by a Japanese Prime Minister to the Shrine stirs criticism and animosity from Japan's neighbors who have come to see it as a memorial to Japanese wartime aggression and a symbol of Japan's past militarism.³⁸ Despite this, official visits increased in pace beginning in the 1990s, as did the international protests that inevitably accompanied them, until they became an annual event in the Premiership of Junichiro Koizumi in the early 2000's, who had made visiting the Shrine part of his election campaign platform. Such visits have tapered recently, though the current Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, visited the Shrine as recently as 2013.³⁹

'Comfort Women'

The so-called 'comfort women' issue is one of the most sensitive topics having to do with the way the Fifteen-Year War is remembered in Asia. For that reason it will be presented here in more detail.

Military brothels were a common occurrence in pre-21st century warfare, and a nation's military typically either relied upon enterprising civilians to provide this service or set up its own. Today we can easily identify the potential a brothel system would create for human trafficking, sexual slavery, exploitation of the economically

³⁷ Kyodo Jiji, "Changing Times Affected Yasukuni Shrine Visits," *The Japan Times*, September 9, 2014, accessed February 10, 2017, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/09/09/national/changing-times-affected-yasukuni-shrine-visits/#.WMx-24VWIK5>.

³⁸ Lind, *Sorry States*.

³⁹ "Prime Minister's Visits to Yasukuni Shrine," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, accessed March 17, 2017, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/yasukuni/>.

disenfranchised, and crimes against women and girls. It is approximated that 200,000 women were part of Japan's military brothels during the war, most of them Korean but also from China, the Philippines, and the Netherlands to name just a few. Many of these women are believed to have been coerced, tricked, or outright enslaved in this employment. The suffering of these women was tremendous and the conditions shocking, horrendous, and disturbing based on both academic research and the testimony of survivors and perpetrators.

The double tragedy in these cases is that the end of the war does not bring the recognition of heroic sacrifice as it does for soldiers on both the winning and losing sides in a conflict. In many cases, for personal or cultural reasons, the few who survive the atrocities are unable to publicly address what happened so that justice can be sought. Instead they bear the pain and humiliation silently, their lives forever ruined.⁴⁰

For a number of reasons, including the above-described silence on the part of victims, the 'comfort women' issue went relatively unknown to the international community for many decades after the war. When 'comfort women's' stories were finally aired, there was shock and outrage – including domestically in Japan – and in 1992 the Japanese government formally apologized for the sexual slavery and 'comfort women' issue.⁴¹ Japan has reiterated these apologies in one form or another on a frequent basis since then.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ruff, "Comfort Women."

⁴¹ Scheiber, "Taking Responsibility," 233.

⁴² Chun, Ja-hyun, "Beyond "Dissatisfaction" and "Apology Fatigue": Four Types of Japanese Official Apology," *Pacific Focus* 30 (2015): 249-69.

In 1994 after extensive secret negotiations between officials of the Japanese and ROK governments, Japan implemented the Asian Women's Fund (hereafter 'AWF')⁴³ with the expressed desire of assisting surviving 'comfort women.' Sarah Soh offers that the fund is:

“[an] imperfect, limited, and yet substantive project ... [that] ... has served as a 'constructive compromise' measure ... improving ['comfort women's'] living conditions and helping them to heal their long-silenced inner wounds--in the face of the continuing stalemate of the international redress politics.”⁴⁴

If the initial atrocity and lack of recognition are a double tragedy because of the nature of the crimes committed against them and the burdens they carry privately, then a third tragedy against 'comfort women' is the way they are re-victimized by those who deny their claims or seek to use them to further a political agenda. The agreement that was reached between the two governments in private counsel for implementation of the AWF was found to be unacceptable by organizations and victim support groups such as the Association of the Bereaved that represent 'comfort women,' who “labeled the Fund as 'payment for services.’”⁴⁵ Women who accepted aid from the Fund were ostracized in the ROK media, and the victim support group “publically mentioned the names of the women who accepted aid from the Fund and in addition, telephoned them and criticized them for receiving money [...] saying that by doing so, they voluntarily recognized themselves to be 'prostitutes.’” At the same time, some in Japan were questioning the

⁴³ Sarah Soh presents a balanced and pragmatic discussion on the Asian Women's Fund in this article: Sarah C. Soh, “Japan's National/Asian Women's Fund for 'Comfort Women,’” *Pacific Affairs* 76 (2003): 209-33.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Keiichi Tadaki et al., “Details of Exchanges Between Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) Regarding the Comfort Women Issue – From the Drafting of the Kono Statement to the Asian Women's Fund –,” p. 23, Provisional Translation, June 20, 2014, Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, accessed December 1, 2015, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2014/140620.html.

women's testimonies, asking if they hadn't been willing participants at the brothels and if they were simply looking for a 'handout.'⁴⁶

It is useful in this discussion to briefly explore the effects of denial. Richard G. Hovannisian, an Armenian history expert at the University of California-Los Angeles refers to denial as "the final phase of genocide." He writes, "Following the physical destruction of a people and their material culture, memory is all that's left and is targeted as the last victim."⁴⁷ Philpott and Powers refer to denial as "the redoubling of the basic violation" by "the refusal (publicly) to acknowledge it."⁴⁸ These examples show how severely denial can impact victims, making the perception of denial by the Japanese government a very sore issue in the region. However, it is important to note that the 'official' government policy in Japan is not one of denial, despite the outright denial in statements by nationalist leaders and individuals.^{49, 50}

It is too soon to determine the success of a December 2015 agreement between Japan and the ROK. The Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se claimed this would "irreversibly" resolve the issue of comfort women "as long as Tokyo sticks to its side of the deal." But scarcely had the deal been announced when the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery denounced the deal, referring to it as "a

⁴⁶ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁷ Greenblatt, *Rewriting*, 318.

⁴⁸ Daniel Philpott and Gerard F. Powers, ed., *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 94.

⁴⁹ "Measures Taken by the Government of Japan on the Issue known as 'Comfort Women,'" Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, October 14, 2014, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/women/fund/policy.html>.

⁵⁰ "The views of the Government of Japan on issues of history including 'comfort women,'" Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, November 6, 2013, accessed December 1, 2015, http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/page3e_000118.html.

diplomatic humiliation.” Time will tell if this latest agreement truly puts the issue to rest.⁵¹

This issue, that touches a raw nerve with victims, their families, victims of other atrocities, and women’s rights groups around the globe, is sensitive to the extreme and can quickly lead to emotional confrontation. For that reason it has arguably the largest impact on both domestic and international voices that are seeking a diplomatic resolution for the countries involved.

Individual Reparations Claims

Though not expressly labeled ‘reparations’ in most cases, since the end of the war Japan has made payments in the form of confiscation of approximately \$50 billion in assets located outside of Japan at the end of the war, through individual agreements and treaties, through efforts such as ‘Official Development Assistance’ that went to many nations in Asia, and the AWF.⁵² Whether or not they have been officially termed ‘reparations,’ these are viewed by many Japanese people as payments for damages inflicted in a war in which Japan was the aggressor nation. However, the vast majority of payments that *have* been made went to states rather than individuals, and therein lies the controversy surrounding reparations, since most current claims against Japan do not come from states, but individuals. These are usually surviving victims of forced labor, prisoner of war (hereafter ‘POW’) camps, or sexual slavery. The post-war treaties specifically barred this sort of “compensation claim by private individuals against Japan and its

⁵¹ Holly Yan, KJ Kwon, Junko Ogura, and Tiffany Ap, “South Korea, Japan reach agreement on ‘comfort women.’” *CNN*, December 29, 2015, accessed May 6, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/28/asia/south-korea-japan-comfort-women/index.html>.

⁵² Scheiber, “Taking Responsibility,” 245.

nationals for wartime acts,”⁵³ meaning that compensation claims could only legally be brought by a state.

Keisuke Minai discussed the treaties, offering that their purpose,

“The United States asserts, was to limit the exposure of Japan only to those amounts claimed by the Allied Powers and to preclude the rights of victims of the war to claim directly against Japan and her nationals.”

He found that the treaties focused predominantly on the relationship between the victor and the vanquished (the ‘Eurocentricity’ alluded to earlier), and did so at the expense of individual victims of the war.⁵⁴ Under this protection, Japan and Japanese courts have taken the official position of refusal to hear any claim from an individual. While strict adherence to this official line has come under scrutiny from progressives inside Japan and from some states, particularly those whose citizens are seeking for their cases to be heard, many states, and the U.S. in particular, have firmly supported the official position.⁵⁵

While there is nothing in the law prohibiting the hearing of an individual’s claim and Japan has the option to entertain these if they desire, they have yet to do so. One of a few arguments against doing so is that Japanese courts, once they accept a single claim, would find themselves overwhelmed and inundated by claims, some possibly false and/or unreasonable. However, the key reason that there has been no movement on this issue is the lack of international pressure to do so, as will be discussed in Chapter IV.

⁵³ Mark A. Levin, “Japan-China Joint Communique of 1972 - San Francisco Peace Treaty Article 14(b) - Individual Victims of Japanese Wartime Forced Labor and Sexual Slavery - World War II Restorative Justice - Denial of Right to Compensation in Domestic Litigation,” *American Journal of International Law*, 102 (2008), 148.

⁵⁴ Keisuke Minai, “Qualitative Alleviation Of War Reparations In Jus Post Bellum: Analysis Of Travaux Préparatoires Of Article 16 Of The Treaty Of Peace With Japan,” *Baltic Journal of Law & Politics*, (2015).

⁵⁵ Scheiber, “Taking Responsibility,” 245.

Apologies

Apologies are an important part of mending wounds in the region, as is evidenced by the frequency with which this topic is covered in Japanese and international media. A discussion on apologies is vital to understanding how the war is remembered and continues to be discussed in the region. In examining the utility and limits of apologies, *Strategies for Peace* indicates,

“Because that collective dimension lives on beyond the individual perpetrators, a subsequent leader can apologize for past evil as well. What leaders cannot do, though, is supplant the perpetrators’ obligation to apologize for their own role in the deed or the prerogative of citizens or other group members to endorse or refuse that apology. [...] There are proper roles, then, for both leaders and individual group members in apologizing.”⁵⁶

Jennifer Lind’s research into state apologies and their effectiveness is quite extensive and refers frequently to the case of Japanese apologies. It is her research into the problematic nature of official apologies that is particularly applicable to this case. Lind concludes,

“Contrition can be highly controversial and is likely to cause a domestic backlash that alarms rather than assuages outside observers. Apologies and other such polarizing gestures are thus unlikely to soothe relations after conflict.”⁵⁷

Domestic backlashes do indeed follow official apologies and other types of ‘peaceful overtures’ in Japan, resulting in exactly the type of alarm regionally that Lind found to be generally the case. Though this behavior is not limited to the Japanese, it is a poorly understood aspect of human behavior and thus proceeds regionally in an almost cyclical pattern of domestic and international outrage that induces contrite official statements and

⁵⁶ Philpott and Powers, *Strategies*, 111.

⁵⁷ Lind, *Sorry States*.

apologies, that spark “domestic backlash,” that “alarms outsiders” and insiders alike, who seek further assurances.

As mentioned, there have been a number of official apologies by Japan to its neighbors beginning in 1957 and continuing to present day.⁵⁸ The rarity or complete lack of apologies in the decades immediately following the war is very much a function of the post-war dynamic that is covered in the history section of this chapter. However, once they began, apologies came with increasing regularity. To this day they are offered publicly during official visits between Japanese leaders and neighboring states, at visits to memorials and sites, and at commemorative markers such as the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII.

Appropriately to Japan and in looking at apologies, the authors of *Strategies for Peace* also note,

“Criticisms and controversies surround all forms of public acknowledgment. They are taken to task for lacking balance, focusing on the misdeeds of one side disproportionately to another, or imposing a version of the truth that suits one side. Museums and monuments rarely escape criticism from those discontented with their portrayal of victims and perpetrators. Then, does acknowledgement truly restore? Or does it just open the wounds and rekindle agnostic emotions?”⁵⁹

In *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence* Gavan McCormack informs us, “financial compensation ... would be hollow without honest confrontation with the historical record in Tokyo and the assumption of a moral responsibility,” in other words, actions that were accompanied by an official apology.⁶⁰ An example of this ‘hollowness’

⁵⁸ There are many lists of official and unofficial apologies by Japan, often including how well they had been received, or compared with some other data. Seaton compared official apologies by prime ministers with Yasukuni Shrine worship between 1972-2005 in Seaton, *Contested*, 77-80.

⁵⁹ Philpott and Powers, *Strategies*, 107.

⁶⁰ Gavan McCormack, *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 245.

was the rejection of the compensation offered by the AWF because it was not officially sanctioned by the Japanese government and therefore not accepted as an official admission of guilt by Japan – this despite the presence of a ‘personal’ apology from the Prime Minister of Japan in the compensation to each victim who did accept.

A major challenge in this case is successive governments who ‘renew’ on the apologies of previous governments, if not overtly, than by diluting the wording of future apologies, presenting the dilemma of breaking open freshly healing wounds. Researching Japan’s efforts at ‘normalization,’ Lawson and Tannaka wrote,

“Although successive Japanese governments have apologized over the last few decades, these have been countered by periodic episodes [involving] the quest by nationalists to restore national pride in the past [and] met by a serious backlash of nationalism in Japanese politics, rendering the already weak apology completely ineffective.”⁶¹

A good example of backtracking that undermined a previously made official apology occurred in March 2014 when Prime Minister Abe’s administration indicated that it would “re-examine an apology issued to former sex slaves in 1993.” Abe eventually conceded that his government would stand by previous apologies, but these types of episodic outbursts have the potential for irreparable damage.⁶² On the 70th anniversary of the end of the war Abe delivered a highly anticipated apology. This effort will be discussed further in this paper as an example of Abe’s willingness to resolve these issues domestically, however, in his effort to compromise between conservative and progressive domestic views the apology was poorly received by both sides as well as by international audiences where it was headline material. The Xinhua News Agency, a

⁶¹ Lawson and Tannaka, “War Memories,” 417-419.

⁶² Justin McCurry, “Wartime sex slaves urge Japan’s PM to drop plans to re-examine 1993 apology,” *The Guardian*, March 5, 2014, accessed October 10, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/07/japan-south-korea-china-protest-textbooks>.

Chinese media outlet headlined it as “Abe’s watered-down apology fails sincerity test,” adding,

“The watered-down statement, in essence, is a retrogression from the 1995 statement by then Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama, which bravely and honestly admitted Japan's war past and expressed ‘deep remorse’ and a ‘heartfelt apology’ for its war crimes.”⁶³

Interestingly, Murayama’s apology had not been especially well received in China either, but came across as more sincere than Mr. Abe’s because of its word usage.⁶⁴

Abe is among many in and outside Japan who ask if apologies and reparations are indefinitely necessary from people who had nothing to do with the aggression and crimes. Moderate voices can wonder too if education on the topic and the shame and embarrassment that comes with it are enough. “Public acknowledgement can take other forms as well, including museums, monuments, rewriting school textbooks, and other forms of commemoration.”⁶⁵ However the Xinhua News Agency answered this question thusly:

“Those countries which suffered from Japan’s aggression would never forget that dark period of history, as Japanese would always remember the horrific scenes of A-bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.”⁶⁶

Revisionist History

Historical revision comes in varying degrees and exists in all states, nations, and cultures, whether overtly or subconsciously. The way history is remembered and how that

⁶³ Shannon Tiezzi, “The Abe Statement: Did Abe Apologize?” *The Diplomat*, August 14, 2015, accessed August 20, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/08/the-abe-statement-did-abe-apologize/>.

⁶⁴ Tian Dongdong, “Commentary: Abe's watered-down apology fails sincerity test,” *Asia&Pacific Edition*, August 14, 2015, accessed August 20, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-08/14/c_134518061.htm.

⁶⁵ Philpott and Powers, *Strategies*, 107.

⁶⁶ Tian Dongdong, “Commentary.”

applies to the thesis question will be discussed at significant length in Chapters III and IV, however it is appropriate to include the specific issue of historical revision here as it affects regional perspectives and is one of the ‘hot-button’ issues.

Of the subjects discussed above in this section, a few are also part of the conversation surrounding historical revision. In short, Japan is accused of ‘whitewashing’ its past in order to temper or mute the outrage some of the atrocities committed have caused and continue to cause. The most significant topics that apply here are denial or downplaying of the Rape of Nanking and justifying it as a part of normal warfare; the previously discussed issue of ‘comfort women’ who are claimed to have been “willing prostitutes, hired by brokers who took advantage of wartime demand to make easy money;”⁶⁷ denial or downplaying of the horrific treatment given to POWs; denial of official responsibility for media campaigns that encouraged mass-suicide in Okinawa ahead of advancing U.S. troops; portraying Japan as a colonial liberator in Asia; arguments that Japan was duped or controlled by its military and militarists during the war that also play into the ‘victim mentality’ that will be discussed in Chapter III; and finally that Japan was provoked into war by its neighbors and the United States. Historical textbooks also enter into this conversation as the primary medium through which historical revision is affected.

The particulars argued in each case are nuanced and tend to be highly selective of facts, dismissing those found incompatible with the preferred narrative. Denials regarding the Rape of Nanking, then capital of China, include that casualty numbers have been inflated by Chinese historians with political motivation, that many of the casualties including civilians were the result of bombing and artillery campaigns, and that the

⁶⁷ McCurry, “Wartime.”

remainder were merely part of regular military clearing operations. While Chinese historians do tend to publish numbers that reflect the higher end of casualties at greater than 300,000, this number is not terribly far from the internationally accepted figure of 200,000, and is significantly greater than the revisionist claim of 20-30,000.

The other of the above-mentioned topics that bears further discussion is Japan's treatment of POWs. The amount of photographic evidence and eyewitness and survivor testimony makes it virtually impossible to deny the brutal treatment endured by its captive POWs. In addition to such shocking episodes as the Bataan Death March that are undeniably well-documented, there is photographic and video evidence of the use of live POWs for target practice and bayonet training, actions that are clearly violations of the Geneva Conventions and the Law of Armed Conflict. One angle taken by revisionists here is to look at comparative numbers of POW casualties: approximately 30,000 POWs died in Japanese captivity, a number much smaller than the three million POWs (Soviet alone) estimated to have died in Nazi camps.

While the above components of historical revision truly exist and the nationalist agenda that pushes this narrative makes worldwide headlines, it is not reflective of the way that the majority of Japanese people remember the war. As with all of these issues, a wide range of opinions exist, and "if there is a dominant narrative in Japan it is the pacifist narrative" that "considers war as the enemy and leads to the conclusion that no one country – including Japan – can be held wholly responsible for WWII."⁶⁸

Outside Perceptions – the Orthodoxy

As mentioned in Chapter I, while researching war memory in Japan and its historical consciousness, Seaton found that much of the English speaking western media

⁶⁸ Parker, "Nationalism."

and academia echoed the same general sentiment toward this issue, namely in its focus on “history education in Japanese schools, diplomatic spats in East Asia, official government statements, acts of commemoration, and inflammatory comments by right-wing politicians and academics.”⁶⁹ This pattern is exactly what I found in my research into this topic. Seaton refers to these interpretations of Japanese war memories as “the orthodox interpretation of Japanese war memories in English-speaking Allied countries.” Looking at the orthodoxy is imperative as its narrative is the one that is most accessible and therefore shapes the opinions of the majority of those outside the region. The reader may, like myself, be completely unaware of its existence and the flaws in its tenets.

Briefly, the four main tenets of the orthodoxy can be described as follows: first, Japan was an aggressor and committed atrocities during the Fifteen-Year War. Second, the Japanese government has yet to adequately address its responsibility for the actions in the first tenet. Third, the general public in Japan also fails to acknowledge Japanese aggression. Fourth, as a result of all this, Japan must do more to ‘properly’ atone for atrocities and aggression. Generally this will be demonstrated by the Japanese government’s actions.⁷⁰

Seaton offers a strong critique of the ‘inadequate remembering’ stance taken by so many outside the problem, and supports his critique with research and polling data. He finds that the orthodoxy contains three critical flaws. First, the way it shifts between the important issues of war responsibility and war memory. An example of this is the Japanese government’s denial to hear any individual compensation cases as discussed earlier (a war responsibility issue), and what an individual, or even a large portion of the

⁶⁹ Seaton, *Contested*, 1.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

population, think about the war and the compensation issue (war memory). Second, the orthodoxy proceeds from an outside assumption that there is a ‘right’ way for Japanese people to interpret war history, that being to assume guilt for Japanese military atrocities and adopt an apologetic stance. This assumption is flawed because it assumes how another group of individuals ‘ought’ to remember events and, as will be discussed in the memory portion of Chapter III, history and remembrance are subject to many factors including lived experience and familial remembrance. Those of us from Allied nations typically view the war from a ‘just war’ perspective that is as close to black and white as can be imagined. Beginning from this place does not make allowance for the lived experience of a schoolgirl in Japan who survives the horrific firebombing of Tokyo and loses everything, for example, or a boy whose only interaction with the war is his elder brother’s required participation, from which he never returns.⁷¹

The third flaw that becomes quite clear when one begins to dig just beneath the surface is the lack of accounting for diversity in Japanese opinion.⁷² I refer back to my own experience when, after two years of reading and research into this topic, I realized that domestic polls would be the best way to justify an ‘outsider’s’ take on ‘Japanese opinion.’ The surprise (shock may be a better word) came when I found poll after poll spanning decades that showed not just a large percentage, but a majority of the Japanese population rejected their government’s official stance, or agreed the war had been a war of aggression, or that more ought to be done to help, for instance, the victims of ‘comfort stations.’ The exact extent of diversity in Japanese public opinion will be discussed next under the “Inside Perceptions” heading.

⁷¹ Ibid., 2.

⁷² Ibid., 3.

These flaws show those on the outside the ways in which the orthodoxy is not delivering a complete picture of the problem. Additionally, commonly used orthodoxy terms like ‘historical amnesia’ remove any self-implication from our conscience and allow the problem to be framed as the ‘evil empire’ versus the world, while ignoring the model of British and American military expansion that Japan mimicked. ‘Historical amnesia’ and similar terms set the table and “ensure that by just mentioning the event one enters a predetermined lexical field of clichés and predictable categories that foreclose a redefinition of the political and intellectual stakes.” No matter popular opinion, domestic voice, or what we are able to discover and learn through research to the contrary, a nation is reduced to a catch phrase: they have already forgotten.⁷³

More than a hundred years ago Okakura Tenshin observed that “when Japan was engaging in the peaceful arts” the West regarded it as uncivilized and forcibly opened its borders through Commodore Perry’s gunboat diplomacy. However, “when it massacred thousands on the battlefields of Manchuria, it was embraced as a ‘civilized’ – and therefore ‘normal’ – country.”⁷⁴

Inside Perceptions – The Historical Consciousness Spectrum

As mentioned above, contrary to the orthodoxy there is more than a single way that Japanese people remember the war. While ‘historical consciousness’ and ‘war narratives’ cover a broad spectrum of perspectives ranging from progressive to nationalist, the population can realistically be divided into five general groupings based on how an individual judges the justness of the war, and the justness of the war’s conduct

⁷³ Trouillot. *Silencing*, 115.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Shogo Suzuki, “Japan’s Socialization into Janus-Faced European International Society,” *European Journal of International Relations* 11(1), (March 2005): 137.

(Table 2.1). The groupings are: progressives; a ‘progressive-leaning’ group; a ‘don’t know/don’t care’ group; conservatives; and finally, nationalists.⁷⁵ The method for defining these groupings, as well as their particular narratives will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI, however I will briefly discuss each group’s narrative here.

Table 2.1 Japan’s historical consciousness spectrum⁷⁶

Don't Know / Don't Care			
Progressives	Progressive-leaning	Conservatives	Nationalists
Unjust War / Acts		Just War / Acts	

Progressives see the war as aggressive and its conduct as the same. They are critical of official statements and apologies if these are not deemed ‘sincere’ enough, and they think the official stance should be one of admission of Japanese aggression in the war and its conduct. Those in the ‘progressive-leaning’ group also see the war and its conduct as aggressive, however they see Japan’s actions as somewhat typical of the geopolitics of imperialism that was popular at the time. The main difference between them and outright progressives is that they draw direct similarities to Japanese atrocities and actions of the Allies such as the firebombing of Japanese cities and the dropping of atomic weapons.

Those in the third, ‘don’t know/don’t care’ group are typically of the mindset that the war is a thing of the past and do not see much sense or relevance in dwelling on it or making it a major part of ‘modern’ life. Conservatives also think that Japan should move on from the war, at least as far as further apologies are concerned. They consider the issue of reparations to be settled and want to stick to the terms of signed treaties. They

⁷⁵ Seaton, *Contested*, 18-21.

⁷⁶ Seaton, *Contested*, 19.

agree that there were aggressive actions committed, however they prefer to blame these on individual ‘bad actors’ and focus on military bravery and national sacrifice rather than atrocities. Nationalists see the war and its conduct as just and think the only reason some say otherwise is because Japan lost. They argue that ‘right’ in warfare is usually granted to those who win, and the losers are ‘wrong’ by default. They see claims of atrocities as exaggerated and prefer to follow the narrative that Japan was freeing Asia of ‘western imperialism.’

Summary

As this chapter has shown, there are variations of how history is accepted and the facts selected to populate a group’s narratives. It is the process of selecting facts and the methods of employment that will be discussed next in Chapter III. Doing so will help us to understand the wide disparities of opinion internationally and also among the different groups domestically.

CHAPTER III. THE POLITICS OF HISTORY & MEMORY

“So very difficult a matter is it to trace and find out the truth of anything by history, when, on the one hand, those who afterwards write it find long periods of time intercepting their view, and, on the other hand, the contemporary records of any actions and lives, partly through envy and ill-will, partly through favor and flattery, pervert and distort truth.”⁷⁷

This popular quote from Greek historian and essayist Plutarch was written about two thousand years ago and still holds truth today. Taken in conjunction with his fellow countryman and dramatist Aeschylus’ proclamation that, “in war, the first casualty is truth,”⁷⁸ and that of noted British biographer Lytton Strachey after World War I that history is “not an accumulation of facts but a relation of them,”⁷⁹ and we begin to gain a small notion of the challenges faced by those who strive for a ‘true’ version of history or ‘accuracy’ in the historical narrative.

For a given state, the historical narrative is the way events of the past are remembered, in other words, its own political memory. The question that asks, “what can be done to make Japan a ‘normal’ state?” cannot be answered without an exploration of memory and its prominence in history, its use in politics, and its role in construction of national identity. The way Japan remembers the Fifteen-Year War and is seen to remember it by its victims and other states alike is at the heart of the issue of Japanese ‘normalization’ and integration into the community of states.

To explore this issue I am going to be using the theoretical frame of the politics of memory because at issue here are the interpretation of facts and memories, and the

⁷⁷ Plutarch, *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*, trans., John Dryden (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1875), 339.

⁷⁸ Scott Shane, “An Officer and a Whistleblower,” *The New York Times*, February 5, 2012, accessed March 5, 2017, https://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/05/an-officer-and-a-whistle-blower/?_r=0.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Greenblatt, “Rewriting,” 325.

contested meaning of facts. This chapter answers the ‘inadequate remembering’ argument through the logic that “memory is active, forging its past to serve present interests,” and that the politics of memory practically lends itself to controversy because “it is always [over-determined] and unstable, the consequence of incessant human intervention.”⁸⁰

Understanding the politics of memory helps us look at how we interpret facts. Chapter III will examine memory from group, political, and human perspectives. It begins with a look at some primary works on memory and uses these to aid in an examination of how we remember and how national memories are formed. Next it discusses the politics of history and memory and how the two are formed and shaped by governments and politicians in order to create national narratives. The chapter concludes by contrasting what we remember with what is forgotten, and why.

Authorities on Memory

As it pertains to research and discovery into memory a pivotal work, and one I have relied on heavily in this paper, is *Memory – Histories, Theories, Debates*, a compilation of works on memory edited by Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz. The key concepts therein of how we remember, what we remember, and what that means for humanity have influenced my understanding of memory and its effect on states, politics, and humankind. For Radstone and Schwarz “there is no way of thinking about memory outside its histories and politics – histories in politics that inform understandings of memory inside the academy as well as outside.”⁸¹ Their book and its essays tend to be less focused and concerned with the “accuracy and factuality” in particular accounts of the past, but rather with their importance and utility to a group and what it is that makes

⁸⁰ Radstone and Schwarz, *Memory*, 3-4.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

some of them acceptable as “‘truthful’ representations of the ‘actual’ past.” This approach is relevant for this topic where what is acceptable as truth is different for the groups involved.⁸²

Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s previously referenced work, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* provides an excellent look at how we interact with our history. He says that we “participate in history both as actors and as narrators,” and describes history as “both the facts of the matter and a narrative of those facts, both ‘what happened’ and ‘that which is said to have happened,’” with the difference being the emphasis placed on the “socio-historical process” by the prior, and on “our knowledge of that process or on a story about that process” by the latter. The story about the socio-historical process – the narrative of the facts – is how we remember.⁸³

Trouillot is key in bringing about an understanding of memory from what I’ll refer to as ‘the losing side.’ By this I do not explicitly mean losers in a war. Here I (and Trouillot) are referring to those who do not ‘get’ to write their own history – black Americans, the colonized, and sometimes too, the losers in war. His writing brings into focus the idea of what or who is *not* remembered, and this is important when discussing war, atrocities, winners, and losers.

A thorough rendering of history and memory from a national and political perspective as well as national identity and memory and their importance to nationalism is provided by Alan Greenblatt’s *Global Researcher* article “Rewriting History.” In it he explains the desire of states to unify their populations around particular core ‘values’ and ‘traditions.’ Importantly he shows that “the process of creating a sense of what the

⁸² Stephan Palmié, “Slavery, Historicism, and the Poverty of Memorialization,” in *ibid.*, 375.

⁸³ Trouillot. *Silencing*, 2.

Germans call *Wir-Gefühl*, or unity or ‘us-ness,’ leads to exclusion, a sense that others are not like ‘us.’”⁸⁴ This is the clear effect of social grouping: when an ‘inside group’ is created, an ‘outside group’ must exist.

How We Remember

The concepts of history and memory are inextricably intertwined socially; it is therefore unfeasible to deal with either in the social construct without reference to the other. The concept of ‘historical remembrance’ helps us understand the connection between memory and history because it deals with how memory and history are used to influence actions. Our actions in this regard are represented through commemoration, and that differs from pure memory or history because it is the effect: the action associated with memory. These actions would not exist without an historical connection, “but then the contestation begins. Whose history, written for whose benefit, and on which records?”⁸⁵

Commemoration is important to this thesis because in addition to disputing each other’s official narratives, the states in this case interpret actions associated with remembering – the commemoration – in ways that make sense from their own perspective, while dismissing the perceptions of that commemoration by, or its significance to, the other side.

The Types of Remembrance

In “Sites of Memory” Jay Winter explains the three types of remembrance, that is, the three ways in which we actively remember: historical remembrance, familial remembrance, and liturgical remembrance. Historical remembrance is how he describes

⁸⁴ Greenblatt, “Rewriting,” 316.

⁸⁵ Jay Winter, “Sites of Memory,” in Radstone and Schwarz, *Memory*, 314-5.

remembering that is more ritualistic and includes the qualities that will be ascribed to national memory in the next section, including the ability to bring groups together that otherwise have nothing in common. Familial and liturgical remembrances on the other hand begin from the common shared points of lineage and religion respectively. In North East Asia national governments have found ways to include elements of the familial and elements of the sacred in historical remembrance, and “when all three are fused” in this way, “historical remembrance is a phenomenon of enduring power.”⁸⁶

How We Use Memory

In discussing how we *use* memory, Winter writes that it is something we employ to create our stories of events when those with lived experience of them pass on. When they do, the events remembered will matter less, or at least differently, to others who remember them only as a representation, acceptance, or appreciation of the actual event.⁸⁷ The connection between how we use memory, how we remember, and what is *not* remembered is evident here, but the idea of ‘that which is forgotten’ is one that I will discuss later in this chapter.

When it comes to “that which is said to have happened,” Trouillot claims that history is not simply the reminiscence of important past experiences because “[r]emembering is not always a process of summoning representations of what happened.” There are many things we do on a daily basis that require memory but do not involve us recreating the images of learning how we do them, or of the process(es) of

⁸⁶ Ibid. 315.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 313.

doing them. This is useful in understanding that what we think of as an “historical account” could be the account of how the history has been told before.⁸⁸

But Trouillot does not place his primary emphasis on the idea that everything is an interpretation – a ‘version’ or narrative of history. He instead asks what is it that makes some narratives “powerful enough to pass as accepted history if not historicity itself?” He points out that there is a social, cultural, and time/place factor to the relevance of a narrative to a group. The historical narrative is important because of how we got to where we are, with our group, in our moment in history.⁸⁹ He also offers that the difference between what happened and what we say happened could be historical, in the same way, there may be historical reasons why what happened is never said to have happened – in other words, why it is forgotten.⁹⁰ He further provides us with the concept that there are events that affect the future memory of events that already happened. For example, a person who finds out they are adopted may from that point on ‘remember’ events that happened before the revelation quite differently than they did previously.⁹¹ Understanding these nuances or how we remember are critical in understanding the ‘memory’ behind the tension in North East Asia.

National Memory & the Politics of Memory

If the previous discussion fell appropriately under the sub title “how we *use* memory” than the following could easily be titled “how memory is used for and/or against us,” or used by those who create and recreate the national narratives, because

⁸⁸ Trouillot. *Silencing*, 14.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

“identities, individual and collective, are formed and re-formed through narrative, in history, and through adversity.”⁹² In “Rewriting History” Greenblatt notes that humans used to define nationality by ethnicity, language, culture, or religion, however, Charles W. Ingrao, an historian at Purdue University offers that nationality is no longer “based on anything but the choice individuals make to be part of a given group, which means that there are others who aren’t part of this group.” Recently many historians are moving toward the idea that “what truly binds a people together is a shared sense of the past,” or put another way, our ‘group’ are those who remember the way that we do.⁹³

How Memory is Used on our Behalf

Armed with Ernst Renan’s understanding that placed “shared memory at the core of nationality,” national leaders and politicians strive to create a sense of unique history around which their state can unite, based on actual or imagined historical people and events. This includes a tendency to focus on the positives of formally or internationally accepted narratives of history, while not dwelling on or completely ignoring the negatives, such as atrocities, war crimes, or wars in which their state is seen as the aggressor.⁹⁴

“Short of outright censorship,” Greenblatt writes, “most national leaders simply prefer not to dwell on past disgraces.” Desirable though this may be to national leaders, it is extremely challenging in this information age to completely clear what is already public record. In cases where censorship is deemed effective, it is only so with a national audience, and partially at that, leaving some segments of the population ignorant or

⁹² Radstone and Schwarz, *Memory*, 3.

⁹³ Greenblatt, “Rewriting,” 316.

⁹⁴ Ernst Renan quoted in *ibid.*

misinformed, and encouraging the voices of critics and outside sources. This was the case in Japan immediately following the war, where a significant amount of information regarding the war, such as the after effects of radiation on the residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, was kept from the public. This can contribute to the creation and survival of extremist narratives such as those that periodically come from nationalists in Japan. Notably, in many cases the headline-grabbing nationalistic narratives do not tell the full picture of national opinion or sentiment in the same way that a charged statement from a U.S. presidential candidate directed to the party's base would not necessarily reflect the opinions of more than a small fraction of Americans.⁹⁵

Most states employ rhetoric that would not stand up to critical review as completely historically accurate. "Wartime narratives serve the needs of regimes in China, Korea and Japan," says Daniel Snider, the associate director of research at Stanford's Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center. "The existence of distinct historical memories is a central obstacle to the ability of Asian nations to finally reconcile their still profound tensions over the wartime past."⁹⁶

"International historical debates remain very much part of the politics of the present" throughout the state construct, but Greenblatt's article specifically points to this in North East Asia.⁹⁷ These historical debates exist because of the significant differences that are present in the historical narratives that provide the foundation for the national memory in the different sides of a 'conflict.' While these conflicting narratives can play

⁹⁵ Justin McCurry, "China Angered by Nanjing Massacre Film," *The Guardian*, January 25, 2007, accessed October 10, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2007/jan/25/china.world>.

⁹⁶ Parker, "Nationalism."

⁹⁷ Greenblatt, "Rewriting," 313.

well for the governments in China, Korea, and Japan, they create a substantial hurdle for reconciliation because of the powerful feeling of connection to the national group, and the hostility that can be garnered against the ‘outsider’ or ‘other.’ This is particularly true in states that are more closed such as China, where the national narrative is relatively unchallenged.

In her “Soviet Memories: Patriotism and Trauma” essay Catherine Merridale used specific research into political memory in the Soviet Union to prove the power of the state’s narrative, particularly in cases where alternate versions are unavailable or outlawed. Her findings bear “testimony to the power of politics to distort and even replace collective, shared, and individual memories, making the value of interpretation ever more precarious.” In cases like the Soviet Union, the state is able to do this because its official narrative on ‘what happened,’ the state’s memory, *is* its unchallenged history.⁹⁸

It is precisely the malleability of history that makes it so appealing as a construct for national identity in contrast to such ‘stable identifiers’ as ethnicity, religion, or geographical boundaries. Memory fades. People reconstruct their own memories through the use of their favorite anecdotes or stories of similar events that they have read. “Memory left to itself renders history, a documented account of the past, impossible,”⁹⁹ and because of this history can be shaped comparatively easily to be inclusive or

⁹⁸ Catherine Merridale, “Soviet Memories: Patriotism and Trauma,” in Radstone and Schwarz, *Memory*, 377.

⁹⁹ Winter, “Sites,” in Radstone and Schwarz, *Memory*, 314.

exclusive of a variety of ‘groups’ as those attempting to form the national identity see fit.¹⁰⁰

War Memory

How we remember war, or ‘war memory’ is an important sub-category of political or national memory, since “war is a mere continuation of politics by other means” and modern wars are usually waged on a national level.¹⁰¹ War memory is central to this discussion and answering the thesis question because at the center of the question are the ways in which war specifically is being remembered. There are a couple ways in which war memories typically differ from those of other events in history. This paper will discuss two of these due to their relevance to this topic. First there is the collective myth that surrounds war between states, whether lost or won, and second, the availability and full range of media that covers nearly every war.

Collective myth. Concerning the first, there is typically a national and international narrative on any war that is waged between states. This narrative will generally fall into one of a few categories that we can base on Michael Walzer’s authoritative work *Just and Unjust Wars*. Walzer states that wars can be judged twice, first on why the states are fighting, and second on their conduct in fighting. These concepts he referred to as *jus ad bellum*, or the ‘justice of a war,’ and *jus in bello*, or ‘justice in warfare.’¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Daqing Yang quoted in Greenblatt, “Rewriting,” 322.

¹⁰¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans., J. J. Graham (London: N. Trubner & Co., 1873), 12.

¹⁰² Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 21.

Taken together, these two concepts produce four possible categories by which to judge a war, with only three being actually applicable to an entire war: first, the war and its conduct are just; second, the war is just but the conduct is not; third the war and its conduct are unjust. The anomalous condition created by the fourth is that an entire war that is unjust cannot be conducted in a just manner because any acts of war committed in an unjust war are by definition unjust. However, if we narrow our view to consider the actions of an *individual* who is engaged in a war that is deemed unjust, these can be understood to have been conducted properly: bravely, ethically, and in accordance with the Laws of Armed Conflict. The reason this fourth category bears mentioning is because a war that is deemed ‘unjust’ is at the heart of the thesis question. It is also one that was conducted unjustly by the state (by definition). However we can empathize with the *individual* whose personal actions can seem ‘proper.’ The conduct of Robert E. Lee in the Civil War comes to mind, and Erwin Rommel too is frequently considered an example of this sort of behavior.¹⁰³

It is the fourth category, coupled with the types of ethical questions that frequently besiege the violent conduct of warfare that can lead to a situation where a consensus narrative does not exist domestically. Earlier the tendency for state leaders to avoid focusing on the negative in their quest for building national pride and unity was discussed. A losing war therefore, or one that is or was deemed to be unjust, requires a carefully constructed narrative and remembrance.

We can think back to the way the U.S. public ‘remembers’ the Vietnam War and the sense of disagreement that is prevalent in its war memory, at least until it became less a part of public conversation. The Vietnam War may be looked at from the international

¹⁰³ The idea of these categories is taken from Seaton, *Contested*, 17-8.

perspective as an unjust war, although, and as if to prove the point, this is a topic for debate. However it is not debatable that there is no small percentage of the domestic population that still believe it was a just war, to include many politicians who are in power in the U.S. at this time.

The difference between U.S. domestic remembrance of the Vietnam War, in which there also exists no national ‘collective myth’ and Japanese domestic remembrance of at least portions of the Fifteen-Year War, is that in Japan, this is still a topic that is frequently discussed, whereas the discussion of the U.S.’ role in Vietnam is less of a discussion. The reasons for the lack of a ‘collective myth’ in Japan is highly controversial and will be discussed further in this chapter and the next. However, in keeping to the topic, it seems likely that the catalyst for the decrease in discussion of the ‘justness’ of the Vietnam War is the engagement in another war, also of questionable (or in the very least, disputed) judgment, so that now when we speak of ‘contested war memory’ in the U.S., we can reasonably, and unfortunately ask, ‘which war?’ This speaks to the diffusion of focus and saturation of topics discussed in the ‘*What We Remember*’ section that follows: the dissipation that takes away from the focus and concentration on any single issue that is required to make the energy expended in research, debate, and public memory worthwhile.

Media coverage. The second way that war is remembered is the abundance of media devoted to the topic. When it comes to national war, there are never shortages of media discussing a full range of war’s topics: books, magazines, newspaper articles, movies, TV series, documentaries, talk shows, and forums will combine to create narratives of national implication in a just or unjust war, and of conduct in the war, both

by the nation as a whole and by individuals and groups of individuals. Whether or not there is a strong national narrative, media sources will serve to augment fading memories of soldiers and survivors.¹⁰⁴ For the victor especially exists the collective myth that was the unifying call to fight in a cause that was ultimately deemed righteous, if only by its success. The collective myth – the ‘why we are fighting’ – becomes ‘why we fought’ and can even provide the justification for ‘why we won,’ that many will understand as ‘why we were and are just.’ These play a prominent role in war memory that is hard to find in other types of remembrance.

Critics of war memory and of commemoration of war argue that it idolizes, idealizes, and sacralizes war and serves as a political prop for those that govern. It is interesting to note, however, that commemoration of war is not limited to those who promote war and seek to strengthen its part in a state. War memory is also used by those who point to the atrocities of war and work toward a state construct without interstate violence.¹⁰⁵ The relevance here is that war is remembered by both hawks and pacifists and the entire spectrum between to further their own goals, and as such is clearly an important part of how we remember.

A final note on war memory is how the focus and consumers of war stories, histories, or narratives has changed over time from being centered on kings, generals, soldiers, and battles, to victims, civilians, and non-combatants; specifically women. “War brings family history and world history together in long-lasting and frequently devastating ways. That is why women as well as men now construct the story and disseminate and consume it.” The connection to the thesis issue may not be readily

¹⁰⁴ Merridale, “Soviet Memories,” in Radstone and Schwarz, *Memory*, 378.

¹⁰⁵ Winter, “Sites,” in Radstone and Schwarz, *Memory*, 315.

apparent, however, when family and national historical narratives clash with “world history,” they are indeed “brought together” in “long-lasting” and “devastating ways,” creating what Jay Winter called “the great war” between history and memory; a war at the center of the thesis question.¹⁰⁶

What Is Remembered

Staying relevant – the competition for our attention. Far beyond a simple ‘desire for a new thing,’ in today’s media age things that seek to grab our attention continuously bombard us. Media outlets and Internet giants speak openly of the “competition for eyeballs,”¹⁰⁷ a competition that becomes more and more difficult due to effortless accessibility of data on a wide variety of interests in this information age. What we remember, and perhaps more importantly what we will not remember, is directly related to mass media and those things that are able to compete most successfully for the attention of the most people. With so many important issues in competition, those that do so most successfully and appealingly will be those that are retained while the rest will be “consigned to oblivion.”¹⁰⁸

What is not remembered. The topics chosen for remembrance through public commemoration or education become important because they are given precedence. When our phones and tablets are turned off in the elementary classroom, what is it that we are taught to remember? Who gets a say in the history that will become part of the

¹⁰⁶ Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 6.

¹⁰⁷ Aj Agrawal, “Competition For Online Eyeballs: Here's How To Break Through The Noise,” *Forbes*, February 22, 2016, accessed March 10, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ajagrwal/2016/02/22/competition-for-online-eyeballs-heres-how-to-break-through-the-noise/#5f8c0d435132>.

¹⁰⁸ Paula Hamilton, “A Long War: Public Memory and the Popular Media,” in Radstone and Schwarz, *Memory*, 303.

narrative? Celebrations, commemoration, and remembrance in their various forms ought to be contrasted – at least in our own minds – by events that are not celebrated and the silences imposed on what is being ignored, and the way commemoration fills “that silence with narratives of power about the event they celebrate.”^{109, 110, 111}

When it comes to choosing the narrative, the one that is accepted will bias to one side at the expense of the other.¹¹² History may no longer be exclusively written by the victors, “but,” Eric Gordy, a senior lecturer at University College London reminds us, “the winners never put one another on trial,”¹¹³ and it is indeed consequential, in answer to Trouillot’s question, that “the history of America is being written in the same world where few little boys want to be Indians[.]”¹¹⁴ It is consequential to Japanese historical narratives that they lost the war, but also that the war was deemed to be ‘unjust’ despite Japanese behavior following a pattern that had been acceptable to the West for centuries.

History’s relevance to the young. Given the elapsed time since the disputed events and atrocities at the center of the problem, it is reasonable to ask how much longer we can expect they will continue to be of merit. More than just a question of how long these issues will be a convenient way for politicians in China, Japan, and the Koreas to whip up nationalistic fervor, I pose the question on a more social level, inquiring how long we can realistically expect young people and future generations to remain connected to issues of

¹⁰⁹ Merridale, “Soviet Memories,” in Radstone and Schwarz, *Memory*, 377.

¹¹⁰ Trouillot. *Silencing*, 26.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 118.

¹¹² Ibid., 22.

¹¹³ Quoted in Greenblatt, “Rewriting,” 317.

¹¹⁴ Trouillot. *Silencing*, 22.

the ‘distant’ past. In 2006 regarding some of these historical issues Adam Hochschild wrote, “To feel outrage at a dreadful crime in history is natural and right, but does it make sense to extend the principle of guilt and responsibility [...] over generations?”¹¹⁵

I have been asked in academic discussions whether or not these issues will die with the last generation directly impacted by them. This question is relevant coupled with the previously mentioned struggle for attention in the information age. On visits to Japan and in discussion with Japanese or ROK young people I have often been informed by friends that, while they were vaguely aware of this history, their awareness was related to the issue’s importance to their parents or grandparents, and held little in the way of personal significance.

However, M. Lane Bruner wrote of a “desire for community and belonging,” noting that, “There’s a point where people say they need to hold onto their culture in order to have meaning in life.”¹¹⁶ Considering this statement, the answer to the question of generational memory is these issues will continue to have significance as long as they are connected to current events and are a part of the national conversation. If they do, then either through the next generation’s continued exposure over time, or simply with the maturity, affinity, belonging, and assimilation that comes with aging in a culture, these issues will continue to strike a chord with domestic populations in the region.

Summary

A discussion on the politics of history and memory is necessary to understanding the depths to which these can be forged, all the while having been integrated with the feelings one associates with what it is that makes them part of a particular group. Having

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Greenblatt, “Rewriting,” 331.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

learned how this can happen, we can now look at the ways this occurs, first internationally, then domestically.

CHAPTER IV. INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Having established how we remember, who has a say in what is remembered, and the types of things that are remembered, I turn to what is remembered by those on the outside looking in on this issue. There are two general categories of “what is said to have happened” from an outside perspective. The first is the view from Japan’s neighbors, many of whom are its victims in the Fifteen-Year War. The loudest of these voices are those of China and the ROK. Due to a lack of insight into how the topic is perceived in those countries aside from translated news articles, journals, and a few books, this paper will focus on the second category. That second is that of the orthodoxy, or “what is said to have happened” by the preponderance of ‘western,’ English-language media and academics. As mentioned earlier, the dominant theme of the orthodoxy regarding this issue is one of ‘inadequate remembering’ on Japan’s part. The question answered thus far however, has centered not on what the orthodoxy is stating, but why it is stated, and what it is that gives these statements credence.

It has become a new norm in international relations that ‘truth’ and acknowledgment are the path to reconciliation.¹¹⁷ “The willingness of states to confront an ugly past is often regarded as essential not only to achieving some justice for victims, but also for allowing those held historically responsible to move on.”¹¹⁸ This view internationally places Japan in an interesting predicament with its neighbors, and that is the focus of this section. If it was Western interference in the region that created many of Japan’s dysfunctional memories and can be credited for much of the nationalism that is

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 318.

¹¹⁸ Lawson and Tannaka, “War Memories,” 406.

prevalent, then it is events outside the region that can be looked to as a catalyst for the Japanese desire for ‘normalization’ in the community.

There are a few ways in which this sort of behavior is demonstrated by the countries in the region, and this leads to my account on international comparisons; these being both how states see each other, as well as some of the views from the orthodoxy, and how all of these combine to paint the messy picture we have today. In this chapter I will first discuss international narratives and selective memories and their effect on the issue. Next I will look at how this type of issue is accepted internationally. I will follow this with a discussion on the perception of a hierarchy of victims and a look at the issue of what is taught in history lessons to future generations and how this applies to international narratives. This chapter will conclude with a look at international comparisons and the compliancy of the international community in maintaining the status quo for Japan today.

International Narratives & Selective Memory

In these three largest military and economic regional powers, the Fifteen-Year War remains a central topic of national discussion and culture. However, it is the silences, the omissions, which tend to be most noticed by neighboring states. In China, “wartime collaboration with the Japanese, which was widespread,” is simply not a popular topic of discussion.¹¹⁹ The sites and dates that are chosen to commemorate and memorialize speak to what a government is keen on remembering, but can point as well to those it would like to forget. In February 2014 for instance, China set aside two official

¹¹⁹ Rana Mitter, “The Japanese finance minister’s Nazi comments hark back to a dark past,” *The Guardian*, August 2, 2013, accessed November 24, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/02/japanese-finance-minister-taro-aso-nazi-comments>.

days of remembrance pertaining to the last war with Japan. However, there are no national holidays revolving around the ground campaigns in Korea, a war in which there were a high number of Chinese casualties, but where some view China as one of the aggressors. Meanwhile, politicians' official statements are often laden with thinly veiled accusations of the other side, but always seem to include apparently genuine offers or referrals to peace that can be used to demonstrate to the national audience just how 'peace-loving' their own politicians are, and remind them that when aggression is sought, it is by the 'other.'¹²⁰

Foremost among the international narratives that lend themselves to nationalist voices inside Japan are the criticisms, typically from the U.S., but also from China, that Japan has been a 'free-rider' when it comes to international security.¹²¹ These accusations resonate with Japan's conservative leaning LDP government. The trouble is that if Japan attempts to act on this sort of provoking claim, it will then play into the 'regional aggression' perceptions that were clearly demonstrated by the previously cited poll of Chinese who see the Japanese government as 'expansionist.' This creates a double-edged sword for the Japanese government in its dealings with the international community.

The key takeaway here, and it is a point worth reiterating, is that there are many occasions where the national governments of the primary antagonists in this long story do not see it in their own best interests to portray the other in a positive light. Worse, they often find it to their benefit to engage in nationalist and hostile rhetoric as a means of inciting support and cohesion domestically – international consequences be damned. As a

¹²⁰ "China Remembers Nanjing Massacre," *The Guardian*, December 13, 2014, accessed November 24, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/13/china-remembers-nanjing-massacre>.

¹²¹ Lawson and Tannaka, "War Memories," 417.

result of different versions of history being impressed upon generation after generation of national audiences, national identity, war memory, and unique historical narratives have combined to create a continuous state of negative peace, “the fomentation of revenge, hatred, and resentment” that can at any moment lead to open hostility and war.¹²²

Levels of Acceptance of ‘Historical Issues’

To better understand the ways in which we view Japan, we can use a core concept of the ‘just war’ matrix in combination with how that nation not only responds, but also is perceived to have responded to its past. The first part of the equation looks at states that can be seen as ‘aggressors’ or are generally perceived to have committed atrocities. The second part is whether or not the aggressive narrative is accepted, how they have responded, and how well that response is received by the international community.

There are many ‘levels of acceptance,’ but there are three primary levels: one, a state accepts the aggressive war or atrocities narrative and acts in such a manner as is deemed satisfactory by the international community; two, a state accepts the aggressive war or atrocities narrative, but acts in such a manner as is *not* deemed satisfactory by the international community; and finally, a state does not accept the aggressive war or atrocities narrative, effectively leaving the satisfaction of the international community a mute point.¹²³ The tendency toward international comparisons alluded to here and the flaws inherent in these will be discussed later in this chapter, however for now it is sufficient to say that these comparisons are typically biased but are used as a natural ‘shortcut’ to quickly judge a state’s behavior.

¹²² Philpott and Powers, *Strategies*, 95.

¹²³ Seaton, *Contested*, 17-8.

Germany is clear example of the first level. It engaged in an aggressive war and atrocities against Jews, Gypsies, gays, and the mentally and physically challenged, to name just a few groups. Germany's response is full official acceptance of an 'aggressive war' narrative and a full apology. Germany has paid significant reparations to its victims. It has censored dissenting opinion and outlawed certain types of speech, specifically anything that glorifies, promotes, or even sympathizes with Nazi ideology and behavior. Germany has done this at a level that satisfies the international community and neighboring states.

Often compared with Germany, Japan falls into the second level. It engaged in an aggressive war and atrocities were committed against prisoners of war and civilian populations to be brief. Japan has paid reparations, officially apologized and generally accepted the 'aggressive war' narrative. However, Japan differs markedly from Germany in its response because of its refusal to censor dissenting opinion, allowing for those that challenge the unjust and aggressive war narratives. For this and a variety of reasons that are discussed throughout this thesis, Japan's approach to its past aggression does not satisfy the international community or its neighbors.

There are a number of examples of the third level. The official position in Turkey is denial of the Armenian genocide, despite it being generally accepted as an historic fact. Turkey offers strict censorship of the issue and punishment for dissenting opinion. There are many other examples of the third level with or without censorship to accompany, but this is enough to make the point.

Hierarchy of Victims

Alon Confino, an historian at the University of Virginia, writes,

“There is a phenomenon we can call ‘Holocaust envy.’ The Holocaust has given us the language to talk about mass killing, witnessing, trauma and survivors [...] People want to have the legitimacy that comes with being identified as being like Holocaust [victims] – it means you really suffered a lot.”¹²⁴

Confino’s statement serves well in explaining the desire for human suffering to be recognized at the level of the victims. However, it also demonstrates the simple reality that not all victims are viewed equally. For the purposes of this paper I refer to this inequality as a ‘hierarchy of victims’ or ‘victimization,’ and it is important to the topic because these hierarchies have a major influence on how people in and outside Japan approach this issue, especially as it relates to the sympathies they allow themselves to feel.

At the top of the hierarchy of victims pertaining to the Fifteen-Year War are those whose treatment cannot be debated: ‘comfort women’ and massacred civilians are clear examples. POWs, regardless of the harshness of their treatment, are likely considered to be a separate level because we expect that many of them signed up to fight and therefore knew some of the risks, whether or not this was true on an individual basis.

We can feel sympathy too for the civilian population of the aggressors for bearing the ‘revenge’ of war: bombing of population centers, the loss of family, losing the war, and the horrors of survival in the aftermath of that loss. However, we do not grant them the same level of sympathy as those whose military was not responsible for the atrocities to begin with. Finally, we can see as victims, but to the lowest degree, the soldiers –

¹²⁴ Alon Confino quoted in Greenblatt, “Rewriting,” 322.

especially those conscripted unwillingly and gradually turned into those willing to carry out the most atrocious actions.

Among these participants in war too there are levels of association with the violence that allow levels of guilt, levels of perceived guilt, or levels of assumed guilt to be assigned without knowing the individual or their actions at all. The assignment of guilt is obvious in Japanese popular media: if a member of the Imperial Japanese military is to be portrayed sympathetically they are most likely to be a member of the Air Force or Navy. Airmen and Sailors are the most obvious candidates for the loyal patriot: knowingly sacrificing themselves in a losing – and maybe unjust – cause. Conversely, discussions of ground troops and soldiers are much more likely to focus on military atrocities and portray the Imperial military in a less favorable light.¹²⁵

History & Textbooks in Japan and Other States

The international view regarding the ‘textbook and history issue’ is one that receives much attention and is therefore worth exploring further here. It is also worth examining the many misperceptions and inconsistencies present, we could say ‘hypocrisy,’ regarding textbooks and educating future generations. In *Confronting Memories of World War II*, Daniel Sneider, Daniel Chirot, and Gi-Wook Shin, performed a relevant study of textbooks in the U.S., China, Japan, and the ROK examining the levels of nationalistic rhetoric and historical omission in textbooks from those four countries.¹²⁶ Their study found Japanese history textbooks (omissions and all) were yet more accurate than those of the other states in the four-nation study. In discussing these

¹²⁵ Understanding of the use of levels of guilt in Japanese media came from Seaton, *Contested*, 137.

¹²⁶ Daniel Chirot, Gi-Wook Shin, and Daniel C. Sneider, *Confronting Memories of World War II: European and Asian Legacies*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014).

findings, Sneider states that in Japan, most history textbooks are factual and not overly nationalistic.

“One misleading perception of Japan in the West, China and Korea is that Japan’s most nationalistic textbooks are in widespread use [however] heavy media coverage of a few provocative Japanese textbooks somewhat distorts reality. Those textbooks – produced by one Japanese publisher – are used in less than 1 percent of Japanese classrooms.”

The authors found Chinese and ROK textbooks to be the most nationalistic: dealing with the war, “the assertion of China's role as the architect of Japan's defeat is now central,” while in Korea “the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are not even mentioned.”¹²⁷

‘Sins of omission’ are not restricted to dealing with international events. The 2006 Frontline documentary “The Tank Man” featured the questioning of four Beijing University students, showing them the iconic photo of a man stopping a column of tanks during the Tiananmen Square protests that led up to the massacre on June 4, 1989 and asking them what that photo meant to them. The students, from the same university as hundreds of the protesters, though appearing to be highly educated and well spoken, could not offer an explanation of the photo.¹²⁸ The reason for this is simple: in China, media discussion of the Tiananmen Square protests and the following massacre are prohibited. The government also employs what is know as the ‘Great Firewall’ that limits Internet access and blocks searches for particular terms, such as those that reference the square in relation to the protests and massacre.

Textbooks in the fourth nation in the study, the United States, were also found to be less-than-completely forthright with history. How many high school students in the U.S. are aware that it was in most of our lifetimes that interracial marriages – specifically

¹²⁷ Chirot, Shin, and Sneider, *Confronting Memories*.

¹²⁸ Greenblatt, “Rewriting,” 317.

between white and black individuals – were banned in many American states? Or that it was a crime to engage in same-sex intercourse in fourteen states as recently as 2003? It may be, however, that this understanding provides some insight into why it is we are susceptible to the orthodoxy to begin with. “Most Europeans and North Americans learn their first history lessons from media that have not been subjected to the standards set by peer reviews, university presses, or doctoral committees.”¹²⁹ But we scarcely needed Trouillot’s brilliance to deduce that.

Accusations of nationalistic and inflammatory rhetoric in textbooks go both ways in the region. From a Japanese perspective,

“[T]he Chinese government has come to be seen as denying Japan’s self-identity as a peaceful state that has provided China with substantial amounts of official development aid [...] during the post-war era. This is mainly because China teaches patriotic education, which is viewed as the root cause of ‘anti-Japanese’ incidents.”¹³⁰

This example is a near mirror image of those typically made by China or ROK against Japan and provides an interesting perspective on the fear of ‘othering’ by the ‘other.’

International Comparisons & Compliancy

A major factor influencing how the states in the region approach ‘historical issues’ is the international perspectives that we have been discussing. Those discussed above generally play to a domestic audience, with the effects being felt by international audiences, or at least offering a large amount of the negative media attention and focus. Following is a discussion on how state actions affect the status of these historical issues. To explain, previously the different levels of acceptance taken by various states to

¹²⁹ Trouillot. *Silencing*, 20.

¹³⁰ Karl Gustafsson, “Identity and recognition: remembering and forgetting the post-war in Sino-Japanese relations,” *The Pacific Review* 128, vol. 1 (October 2014): 117-38, accessed May 8, 2016, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09512748.2014.970053>.

historical issues, and how the international community deals with these approaches was discussed, as well as the idea of a hierarchy of victims of atrocities. These two discussions are necessary to understanding the two following important problems of international comparisons: comparing the way one state has responded to another state's response in similar circumstances; and the issue of conscious or subconscious compliancy by states in behavior that is later roundly criticized as 'unsatisfactory.'

International Comparisons

As has been mentioned, a consistent theme in the orthodoxy is the comparing of Japan's war memories to other states, most frequently Germany. This usually leads to the conclusion that Japan should follow Germany's behavior in order to 'properly' address its past. Charles Maier argues that comparisons are inevitable in historical memory because the only way moral dimensions can be weighed is by comparing more or less similar situations and how states acted.¹³¹ The flaw in international comparisons should be obvious to even the lightly indoctrinated in the International Relations field, where from the start we learn that no two situations in the international arena are the same, and that factors involved and governing responses will always differ greatly. Therefore, despite the *desire* to compare that Maier articulates, the *act* of comparison will be highly subjective.

It is always difficult to understand exactly why a state has acted in a given way in a given circumstance, for example, how the United States acted during the Cold War. It is even more difficult to prove if any of its actions directly caused historical events such as victory in the Cold War, or if victory was in fact due to actions of the USSR, or a specific combination of individual actions by each side, but not others. The complexity of these

¹³¹ Cited in Seaton, *Contested*, 69.

situations then, used for comparison or theoretically to ‘learn’ or explain the ‘right’ actions that ‘ought’ to be taken in a given situation, are subjective to say the very least and grounds for disagreement to put it mildly.

Having thus expounded on the inherent flaws in international comparisons, I yet make a few observations on these comparisons due to their inevitable inclusion in orthodox literature, if only to explain the reasons why they are invalid.

When it comes to state-orchestrated violence to exterminate particular groups or atrocities against POWs, a Nazi-Soviet comparison may be more appropriate.¹³² Numbers of casualties are not the traditional grounds for comparison however, rather, the fact that both these nations are guilty of attacking and invading their neighbors, and committing a number of atrocities in their execution of war. If we accept that these two states will be primarily compared to each other based on both losing to the Allies, and both waging aggressive and unjust war, then we can move past the validity of the comparison between the war conduct of the two states and look solely at those typical of the orthodoxy: apologies, acceptance of guilt, and payment of reparations. Seaton finds that all of these are complicated by the Holocaust, an event the likes of which only took place in one of the two antagonists. And while Germany has paid forty times the reparations of Japan, if one removes those that are directly for Holocaust crimes, their number is much more similar.¹³³ Too, Seaton argues that many of the more widely symbolic gestures that have demonstrated Germany’s acceptance of guilt to the world revolve around its approach

¹³² Seaton, *Contested*, 69. The generally accepted number of lives lost to Nazi purges and cleansing of particular groups is around 6,000,000. Similar episodes of “purges” on a large scale against particular groups occurred under Stalin in post-WWII USSR. Regarding POW casualties, as estimated 30,000 allied POWs died in Japanese camps, while just the Soviet POW casualties in German captivity are approximated at 3,000,000.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 70.

toward the Holocaust and its victims in that tragedy and not, for instance, its invasion of the Soviet Union and associated military atrocities.

If we completely ignore what were clearly significant differences in construct and motivation that existed in these states between the years of 1930 and 1945, we yet cannot ignore the incomparable situations in which they found themselves after the war, and which would have necessitated different responses 25, 50 and 70 years on. Sneider offers that geopolitics required different responses in the two states from the outset. As was mentioned in the history section in regards to Japan but is true also of Germany, both were called upon as allies to the U.S. against the spread of communism almost immediately after the war. Germany's situation was such that in order to be positioned as a leader in Europe against the Soviet block it needed to quickly confront its past and seek reconciliation. Conversely, Japan was set up by its primary post-war ally, and the country that was its occupier, in "a long-term Cold War confrontation with its principal victim in World War II, China." For Japan then, reconciliation was of much less significance.¹³⁴

Often the trouble with the comparison offered by the orthodoxy is that it does not stay true to itself. Take for instance Greenblatt's mention of Philipp Jenninger, the President of Germany's national parliament who gave a speech in 1988 that was rather wrongly viewed as excusing Nazism in Germany, and for which he was forced to resign the following day.¹³⁵ This example is used to demonstrate Germany's determination to do the 'right' thing, a determination that practically required the firing of this public official despite the misunderstanding. A reader unfamiliar with the Japanese case would be excused for assuming that if such a public figure were ever to be fired for that sort of

¹³⁴ Sneider cited in Parker, "Nationalism."

¹³⁵ Greenblatt, "Rewriting," 327.

blunder in Japan, the effect on the nation would be sobering and perhaps act as a needed ‘wake up call.’

However, Greenblatt continues immediately to discuss Japan’s “contentious relationship with its history” in direct contrast to Germany. He soon offers, as an example of Japanese nationalistic thinking, Toshio Tamogami, who while serving as chief of Japan’s Air Force won an essay contest “in which he said that Japan had been trapped into bombing Pearl Harbor and that ‘many Asian countries take a positive view’ of Japan’s wartime role.”¹³⁶ He mentions that Tamogami was removed from his post after this essay, but this example serves to prove two points that are common in the orthodoxy. The first is that very similar examples are used to make very distinct, or nearly opposite points. In this case, that the firing of the German parliament president proves German determination to do the right thing, whereas Tamogami’s removal from his post is indicative of the persistence of the ‘wrong’ attitude in Japan. This also speaks to the framing issue examined earlier: one was “forced to resign” and the other was “removed from his post,” though in fact, the same thing happened to both. The second, and this omission is again prevalent throughout the orthodoxy, is the failure to note that it was due to a domestic backlash and Japanese public outcry that Tamogami was sacked. This public voice will be shown to represent a majority in Japan and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter V.

International Approaches: Compliance or Complicity?

As discussed in Chapter II, the large number of claims for compensation sought by individuals for injustice or atrocities committed during the war continue to be a pressing issue in regional diplomacy and the domestic politics of the states in the

¹³⁶ Ibid., 328.

region.¹³⁷ However, I will show that Japan's official position has been overtly supported by the U.S. government and U.S. courts, and tacitly supported by other states as well for a few key reasons. The existence of this support makes this a relevant discussion to 'international perspectives.'

The official position Japan has taken to individual reparations is that either the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1972 or the other treaties that Japan signed with nearly every country it had occupied or invaded "discharge it from taking on any such obligation."¹³⁸ Each of these treaties included some form of reparations and compensation for the state signatory, but also waived the right of claims by individuals. The Japanese Supreme Court has repeatedly handed down rulings that abide strictly by these treaties, echoing the government's official position.¹³⁹

Seaton explores this argument by opening with the idea that "if Japanese compensation has been 'inadequate,'" at least a part of the blame must rest with the signatories of the treaties.¹⁴⁰ The Japanese government has stood ardently by treaties that allow it to settle reparations claims at a state level, and it is therefore incumbent upon the treaty's signatories to negotiate adequate terms on behalf of their citizens that have been wronged. If, however, states fail to do so, then it can be expected that individuals will

¹³⁷ Levin, "Japan-China."

¹³⁸ Scheiber, "Taking Responsibility," 245.

¹³⁹ An example of this is taken from Levin, "Japan-China:" "One strand in this tangled web-involving claims for compensation in Japanese domestic courts-was firmly cut by the Japanese Supreme Court in a linked pair of decisions handed down in April 2007. The Court dismissed two cases-Nishimatsu Construction Co v. Song Jixiao (Forced Labor) brought by kidnapped Chinese victims of forced labor for the Nishimatsu Co near Hiroshima, and Ko Hanako v. Japan (Sexual Slavery) brought by kidnapped Chinese victims of sexual slavery in Shanxi Province in northern China. The decisions presented verbatim identical reasoning that the terms of the Japan-China Joint Communiqué of 1972 implicitly incorporated by reference provisions of the San Francisco Peace Treaty to bar compensation claims by private individuals against Japan and its nationals for wartime acts."

¹⁴⁰ Seaton, *Contested*, 59.

seek compensation from Japan directly, regardless of a treaty's contents. It is in this way that states can show overt or tacit endorsement of these treaties – we can call them 'the status quo,' or 'international order' – through the support of the plaintiffs in these cases, or lack thereof. U.S. courts have overtly supported the treaties in these instances, often expressing sympathy for the victims, nevertheless rejecting the argument that Japan is liable time and again. The U.S. government's proactive support for the treaties also comes through explicit statements by officials, such as Secretary of State Colin Powell's statements on the fiftieth anniversary of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 2001.¹⁴¹

Unlike the open support from the U.S. government, most other governments have chosen to be quite mum on the issue, following a 'hands-off' approach that amounts to tacit support for the 'status quo.' They also take actions such as issuing statements that sound supportive but leave the outcome between their citizens and Japanese courts to what can be considered a predetermined conclusion of the legal system. Seaton offers examples that include Britain, Indonesia, and China in this category, his one exception being ROK, and it is this exception that I will discuss further below.¹⁴²

Before discussing the exception, it is worth taking a look at possible reasons for the rule. Beyond a desire to maintain the status quo or the international order of things, a motivation for states with active militaries in seeing Japanese courts abide by the specific wording of treaties is that these states would themselves balk at the possibility of being held liable for war crimes committed by their armed forces. 'Mistakes' in war are not limited to individual soldiers, sailors, and airmen, offering the basis behind the term

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 59-60.

¹⁴² Ibid., 60-1.

‘collateral damage.’ As long as states continue to abide by treaties in negotiating with victims, no historical precedent to the contrary will be set.¹⁴³

Seaton summarizes the totality of this issue superbly when he writes:

“Whether the Japanese government is acting sensitively and creating goodwill towards Japan is another issue entirely; and whether such ‘pragmatic norms’ are ‘legal’ or ‘illegal’ is an aspect of law on which highly qualified legal minds around the globe disagree, with politics probably being the main source of disagreement. The net result is that beyond international and domestic public opinion and pressure from human rights activists, there is little concentrated pressure on Japan to change policy.”¹⁴⁴

It may follow then that if the treaties are unfair and should never have been signed the way they are written, that Japan must find a way to consider those who are not covered by the treaties and act on its option to compensate individual victims out of goodwill.

These arguments, valid though they may be, are extra-legal and as such would require either a change in the legal position of the Japanese government, or would require that a state or group of states go back on their signed treaties and exert the necessary pressure for their consideration, as the ROK did in the following example.

As the sole example of a state that chose to go against signed treaties, having “waived the rights of both ‘the state and its people’” to seek further compensation in 1965, since 2005 the ROK began to press Japan publicly over its “legal responsibility.”¹⁴⁵ Much of this pressure was derived from the ‘comfort women’ issue, and it is telling that in December 2015 the governments of these two countries concluded a new deal that specifically offered reparations to those victims.¹⁴⁶ It should be noted that the deal was

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Yan, Kwon, Ogura, and Ap, “South Korea.”

not struck in consult with individuals but rather between the two governments, presenting a form of compromise: addressing a group that had been ignored in previous treaties, but doing so at a state level. While other states following in this example is unlikely for the reasons already discussed, it is proof of what *could* be done where the political will to exist on both sides.

Having thus examined the problem from an outside perspective, I will now turn to a focus on domestic viewpoints that will refute much of the orthodoxy's narrative and lay the groundwork and justification for the conclusions of Chapter VI that seek to assess the desires and directions of Prime Minister Abe.

CHAPTER V. DOMESTIC PERSPECTIVES

Moving past the orthodoxy to a clearer understanding of domestic narratives in Japan could only be accomplished through deeper research into “theories of war memory, media, and cultural studies.” This research, in contrast to the anthropological and state-centered approaches of the orthodoxy, offers a better explanation for how Japanese people remember the Fifteen-Year War. In this regard Seaton found that the way in which Japanese remember is not unique.¹⁴⁷ Having discussed war memory and memory theories in Chapter III and international perspectives on these issues in Chapter IV, I will continue by looking at media and cultural studies but will also include a look into domestic politics that will help explain the conclusions I reach in Chapter VI. This chapter opens with a look at historical consciousness and a more detailed look at the political spectrum than was offered briefly in Chapter II. Next it examines the way this issue continues to retain its dominance in domestic discourse through domestic media, international media, and regional narratives. Finally it will discuss the domestic importance of war to the family.

Historical Consciousness

The high percentage of civilian casualties in the War, especially compared with the total casualty numbers (estimated between 21 and 26 percent of all casualties in Japan), makes public remembering infinitely more complicated.^{148, 149} The effect of

¹⁴⁷ Seaton, *Contested*, 6.

¹⁴⁸ John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 297-9.

¹⁴⁹ Figures from the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare cited in Miki Y. Ishikida, *Toward Peace: War Responsibility, Postwar Compensation, and Peace Movements and Education in Japan* (New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2005), 30.

losing and having been on the losing side also serves to eliminate the type of common ‘righteous war’ narrative available to the Allies.

For the generation that lived through the war and its aftermath the personal experiences that define their historical consciousness were their own support and responsibility as it pertained to the war effort. However, “for the vast majority of people, their personal experiences came to be defined predominantly in terms of bereavement, hunger, air raids[,] and defeat.”¹⁵⁰ It is the reality of lived experience that has the greatest impact on how an event is remembered by individuals, and for most Japanese the war was something that happened *to* them, bearing extremely negative consequences, and not something over which they had any control.

The Domestic Political Spectrum

Contrary to the orthodoxy’s general assumptions that there is only one major narrative on war memory in Japan with a few fringe outliers, there are in fact several dominant national narratives. These also align somewhat closely on a ‘political spectrum’ inside Japan with a progressive position at one end and a nationalist position at the other. Seaton lays out the political spectrum and dominant historical narratives in Japan in his hypothesis on Japanese war memories, and as it is extensive and thorough it bears acknowledging here as the reality of the perceptions inside Japan. The current dispute in Japan is based in the previously discussed ‘just war’ ideas from Michael Walzer. The debate centers on the use of two key phrases in the official narrative: ‘aggressive war,’ and ‘aggressive acts.’¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Seaton, *Contested*, 34.

¹⁵¹ Seaton, *Contested*, 17-8.

Taken together these two phrases create four positions and provide a simple model for how Japanese people remember the war. The four groups are: progressives who think the war and acts were aggressive; conservatives who see the acts as aggressive, but not the war; nationalists who deny that either the war or acts were aggressive; and the final position that was described in Chapter II as ‘anomalous,’ however Seaton thinks that this is still used in Japan as a way for those who acknowledge the aggressive nature of the war, but wish to justify the personal conduct of a relative, and represents a substantial portion of the population.

Seaton finds, however, that this model is too simplistic for a number of reasons. First, he finds a distinction where many Japanese people see Japanese colonialism and actions against their Asian neighbors as aggressive, but are not willing to say the same regarding Japan’s war against Western colonial powers. Another critique of the previous model is that “‘victim mentality,’ *higaisha ishiki*, is a key issue in Japanese war memories,” whether as a victim of the Japanese militarist government, or of actions directly related to war. The previous model only looks at *Japanese* actions, so to be truly representative of the way Japanese people judge the war and remember it Seaton produced a more complex model that he argues is more accurate.¹⁵²

Although discussed briefly earlier, the more complex model that Seaton refers to as a “spectrum of moral reasoning” (see Table 2.1) merits further exposition as the major grounds for domestic perspectives. The five primary groups “whose characteristics represent the five most important conceptual frames that Japanese people use” to educate their narratives are: progressives; progressive-leaning; the “don’t know/don’t care” or

¹⁵² Seaton, *Contested*, 18-21.

don't pay attention group; conservatives; and nationalists. Those of us familiar with this issue only through the exposure we've had via Western media may be surprised that the first four groups each represent 20-30 percent of the population, while the fifth represents only between three and five percent.¹⁵³

Progressives

Progressives use the “absolutist reasoning that no cause could have justified Japanese atrocities.” They are critical of the official government narrative, official apologies, and compensation that they see as not going far enough. They are also critical of the Allies and their war crimes, but they place Japan lower on the ‘victim hierarchy’ I described earlier, seeing the country as “more of an aggressor than a victim.” Because of this they see claims of Japanese victimhood as hypocritical if they do not go hand-in-hand with admission of Japanese aggression.¹⁵⁴

Progressive-Leaning

Seaton's “progressive-leaning group” he describes as having an understanding of the war as aggressive, simultaneously however seeing the war as more in line with the geopolitics of colonialism of the time. They support apologies and compensation for the war, but they also draw comparisons between the actions in Nanking and those in Hiroshima or Nagasaki. They sympathize more than progressives with the idea of Japan as a victim, while recognizing that the blame for this lies not just with the Allies, but also with “the recklessness and cruelty of their own military.” Seaton thinks that this is the

¹⁵³ Ibid., 19.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

largest group because the ‘Japan as a perpetrator and victim’ narrative can be seen as a compromise between the various positions.¹⁵⁵

‘Don’t Know / Don’t Care’

Though everyone is born in the third group, the level of discussion on this topic in Japanese media means that few will remain in the ‘don’t know’ category for very long. Because of this, ultimately belonging to this group means that one has decided they ‘don’t care.’ These are typically younger people and, as mentioned earlier, are of the mindset that the war is a thing of the past and do not see much sense or relevance in dwelling on it or making it a major part of ‘modern’ life.

Seaton differentiates between those who ‘passively’ and ‘actively’ avoid the topic, saying that *passive* avoiders are those who simply do not find much interest or knowledge of historical events, especially those having to do with the war. *Active* avoiders have different motivations because they may be quite familiar with the topic or have personal experience with the war, but seek to avoid it for a specific reason, such as to protect their own reputation, to protect personal relationships with individuals whose opinions differ greatly from their own, or possibly as a form of denial.¹⁵⁶

The reason this differentiation is important is it helps us understand the depth of familial and personal relationship bonds that will be discussed later. These bonds can be so powerful that they lead an individual to avoid a topic altogether in an effort to prevent damaging them.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 20.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 27.

Conservatives

The LDP can be seen as falling into this conceptual frame of historical acceptance, and as such it aligns closely to the ‘official narrative.’ More than an actual defense of the war as ‘just’ by the fourth group, Seaton uses Carol Gluck’s twist to define the conservative “just war/unjust conduct” narrative, that “if not a just, then perhaps a justifiable war.”¹⁵⁷ Conservatives focus less on “actively justifying” the war and more on “defending the Japanese cause.” However, the real focus for conservatives is on the “bravery and sacrifice of the military,” often in what is portrayed as a hopeless losing cause. Conservatives follow similar arguments to those that we see in the U.S., laying acts of barbarism or aggression in Vietnam or Iraq at the feet of individuals or individual units, and not assigning blame to government or military policies as a whole. This works well with the conservative view of the military as a professional and determined force that ought to be respected and revered for their bravery in fighting overwhelming odds.

Conservatives see the compensation issue as resolved, either through the original treaties, or through the additional aid packages and other forms of reparations. They would also accept the need for the apologies Japan *has* made, however they would see no need to apologize *further*. As with each of the previous groups, victimhood is a dominant narrative, but to conservatives Japanese victimhood is more because of Allied actions, a simple fact of defeat, or Allied post-war behavior than having anything to do with Japanese military excesses.

A crucial point in understanding not just how conservatives think, but the complexity of this issue domestically is how contemporary national pride is implicit in the conservative stance. Each of the five groups have a particular vein of national pride in

¹⁵⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 21.

how they view war history,¹⁵⁸ and for conservatives pride is based on the “patriotism and ‘precious sacrifice’ (*totoi gisei*) of the war generation” who represent to conservatives what it means to be ‘Japanese’ in a similar way that ‘the greatest generation’ represent what it means to be ‘American’ to many in the U.S. For this reason, they could never accept the premise of the entire war being ‘aggressive’ because to do so would “delegitimize the nobility of the war generation and render their deaths meaningless (in Japanese, ‘a dog’s death,’ *inuji*, is the term used).”¹⁵⁹

Most people would take issue with delegitimizing their own ancestors even if they were able to see fault in the group as a whole. An example of this is how most white Americans can agree that our white ‘ancestors’ perpetrated inhumane actions against the ancestors of many black Americans. However, most fail to connect these actions directly to their own ancestors. This tendency is certainly true for Japanese people as well. In Japan, several generations frequently share the same roof, elders in the household are shown the highest level of respect, and deceased ancestors are practically worshiped.

Understanding that there is a group that would take such a hard line due to familial attachments and could never conceivably do otherwise is critical to truly grasping the depth of this issue domestically, and to fail to comprehend these types of nuances will prevent a person from ever having a true understanding of the problem, or the complexity inherent in any possible solution.

Nationalists

Nationalists utilize the complete utilitarian logic that Japan’s cause justified its actions. In their opinion, the war and its conduct were just and are only called into

¹⁵⁸ For a detailed discussion on the different veins of pride in each group see *ibid.*, 21-2.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

question because Japan lost. This means that not only should Japan stop apologizing but apologies and reparations were never necessary. ‘Victim mentality’ does not receive much support by nationalists as it works against their focus on the “bravery, patriotism and sacrifice of those who fought foreign aggression” mantra. They are also strong proponents of the narrative that Japan is responsible for ending Western colonialism in East Asia.¹⁶⁰

Claims such as this last one are a good example of why, despite accounting for such a small percentage of the population, nationalists tend to receive the most attention internationally. Much of the nationalist rhetoric plays well in attention-grabbing headlines. Sensationalism being what it is, the introduction of a nationalist textbook that is supported by less than a fifth of the population will receive significantly more international media coverage than the progressive backlash and outcry domestically that ensures the textbook is widely rejected by schools nationwide.¹⁶¹

This look at the different aspects of ‘moral reasoning’ in Japan provides us with better insight at the way Japanese people look at historical issues: not monolithically as the orthodoxy might lead us to believe, but rather from a variety of viewpoints. In addition to this, the public discourse on these topics in Japan is highly active, and the debates on these issues are alive and well.

National Narratives & Consuming Debate

There are a few ways in which narratives are presented, consumed, and debated in Japan, these are through media, countering of international positions, and the propagation of regional narratives. Each of these will be discussed in this section.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 21.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 65.

Historical Consciousness in the Media

A great way to represent the public discourse on the historical consciousness issue in Japan is by looking at how the issue is covered by national newspapers and TV. Seaton performed detailed research into Japanese media as a way of truly understanding how this topic is digested locally, and to demonstrate that, contrary to how Japan is frequently portrayed by the orthodoxy, the Japanese media does not tow a single party line. He concluded that Japanese media coverage of war issues contradicts the dominant portrayal in English-language media. This research does a great deal to dispel the common illusion of a Japanese press that is “subservient to the ruling elite” or a “well-tuned, single voice choir,” since criticisms of apologies and compensation policies and airing of political ‘dirty laundry’ come from all across the political spectrum. In general however, he is able to show that the major media outlets have clear stances on the war that mirror the different groupings in the broader public. The war story stays pertinent and relevant in Japan because there are contested war memories. Because of the continued debate, confrontation, scandal or controversy, the story is on the front pages and is proof of how very hotly contested Japan’s war memories are.¹⁶²

As can be expected, part of the discussion includes a fringe group that clings to extremist views the way small groups in the U.S. cling to racism or homophobic agendas. The trouble with this arises when outlying groups are able to put forward arguments that hold merit in the national conversation. When nationalists on the extreme right of their own group ask the question “why was Nanking a crime but not Hiroshima,”¹⁶³ it may create a widespread domestic conversation, but it will also have the effect of legitimizing

¹⁶² Ibid., 93-4.

¹⁶³ Yoshinori Kobayashi *Sensoron*, (Tokyo: Gentosha, 1998), cited in Seaton, *Contested*, 63.

nationalist positions because of the validity of the question to the population.

Progressives must then struggle with arguing why Japan should apologize for its war crimes, when the Allies are not being asked, with any serious international pressure, to apologize for what is seen by Japanese people as a war crime.¹⁶⁴

While the root causes for some of the major issues such as textbook content is a conservative-progressive fight “to control a critical battleground in for the country’s collective memory: the education system,”¹⁶⁵ the true benefactors in this struggle are undoubtedly nationalists whose ideals are sensationalized by the media domestically and internationally, leading to increased sale of controversial works and the continued proliferation of and audience for their narrowly-observed viewpoint. It is this small group at the edge of the “spectrum of moral reasoning” and their persistence on the national and international stage that I will discuss next.

Nationalists & the Orthodoxy

Nationalists play on media sensationalism and international narratives to gain attention, if only through the perception that they represent a majority in Japan. This perception and nationalist diatribes regarding Nanking and other regional issues lend themselves to statements such as the following from *The Guardian* in response to a 2007 film by Satoru Mizushima that promoted an ‘alternate’ Nanking narrative:

“Figures released today suggest that many Japanese share Mizushima’s patriotic fervour. According to the poll, by the Asahi Shimbun newspaper, almost 80% described themselves as staunchly or mildly patriotic, although 85% agreed that Japan should ‘reflect’ on its wartime conduct.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Seaton, *Contested*, 63.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁶⁶ McCurry, “China Angered.”

One ought immediately to take issue with this typically orthodox method of using a poll of ‘patriotism’ and connecting it with ‘nationalism’ to paint Japan in broad strokes and associate all ‘patriotic’ Japanese people with Mizushima’s extremist right-wing opinions and his narrative of the Nanking massacre. This association is unfortunate at best, overt distortion and deception at worst, and at the very least, journalistic disingenuity.

However, this behavior plays into nationalist agendas, who jump at the chance to argue that their narrative is patriotic in an effort to prove that all others are anti-Japanese or ‘masochistic,’ a term they employ frequently. In that way, this typical orthodox accusation plays into their hands. Ueno Chizuko, Japan’s leading academic feminist, criticized using ‘patriotic’ arguments from the domestic side because in the ‘game’ of ‘who is more patriotic,’ those who are willing to accept that the country has made mistakes in the past are easily cast as ‘unpatriotic.’¹⁶⁷ There are many in the U.S. who are patriots but do not subscribe to the politics or policies of the government, and there should be a line drawn between accusations that associate every ‘patriot’ with the actions of a government, and the equally unreasonable one that anyone who challenges any aspect of the government is a ‘traitor.’ The attempt at proving one side is ‘patriotic’ can become an end that justifies the darkest means.

The orthodoxy’s state-centered criticism likely does more to assist the nationalist and conservative side of the war memory debate in Japan for a few different reasons. First, by frequently repeating that the nationalist and conservative stance most accurately represents domestic opinion, the orthodoxy effectively endorses the nationalist’s

¹⁶⁷ Ueno Chizuko, *Nashonarizumu to Jenda (Engendering nationalism)* (Tokyo: Seidosha, 1998), 147-51. Translated notes taken from Seaton, *Contested*, 128.

argument that progressives and progressive-leaning stances are ‘anti-’ or at least ‘un-Japanese.’ Second, as was presented earlier in the ‘battle for eyeballs’ discussion, the orthodoxy gives the attention and headlines to one side over the other, lending validity through exposure. Misguided focus coupled with ‘war responsibility fatigue,’ where the population wonders how much longer it must continue to be ‘punished’ for past deeds, combine to create conflicts around which progressives are forced to tiptoe. Finally, because orthodoxy literature is frequently flawed and notably biased, it is reduced to fodder in nationalist fires as portions of a work are easily discredited domestically, effectively discrediting the entire work, no matter the validity or importance of the conclusion.¹⁶⁸

Regional Narratives

Another relevant aspect of how the war is ‘processed’ in Japan is the regional variances in experience and how these create local narratives that may differ widely from the official one. These can vary greatly, such as fire bombing in major cities; small villages whose local men, while serving in the same unit, all perished in the same battle; towns that were emptied because of poverty; children shipping off to the country en masse; or starvation and hardship after the war, that, while generally felt by the entire population, also had regional variance.¹⁶⁹

People from Okinawa, Hiroshima, or Nagasaki, areas that experienced extreme devastation, will have a very different memory or inherited memories of what happened during the war then, for instance, a town where the military-aged males participated in the Nanking fighting. The latter may find itself concerned with the atrocities those men

¹⁶⁸ Seaton, *Contested*, 65, 126.

¹⁶⁹ Seaton, *Contested*, 153.

may have been party to. Then again, if few of them returned, concern could focus of loss and what it means to be without sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers.

A telling poll whose data were collected from 1993-5, demonstrated the unique way Okinawan people see war history and their complete rejection of not just nationalist narratives, but also the official one. Only six to seven percent saw the Battle for Okinawa as “an unavoidable battle necessary for the defense of the fatherland.” Conversely 87.5 percent of those polled saw it as “a reckless battle which sacrificed countless Okinawan lives.”¹⁷⁰

War & the Family

Understanding now that there are any number of ways in which the war is remembered, we can look at the most critical factor in influencing the way an individual will remember the way they do: the family. As discussed earlier, in Japan the family is a primary locus for the development of a person’s historical consciousness. Whereas national memories and identities that are based in an historical narrative frequently originate in the national government or media, or “macro to micro,” for Japanese people, “historical consciousnesses typically evolve from the micro to macro.”¹⁷¹ What this means is that a person’s take on these historical issues in Japan is going to be most deeply influenced by their family, then relatives and teachers, then local or regional narratives, and finally the official state narrative and international perspectives. While this may not be particularly different from other cultures worldwide, it is, importantly, the opposite of

¹⁷⁰ Masaie Ishihara, “Memories of War and Okinawa,” trans. Douglas Dreistadt, in *Perilous Memories: the Asia Pacific War(s)*, ed. T. Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White, and Lisa Yoneyama, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 88.

¹⁷¹ Seaton, *Contested*, 168.

the way we, as outsiders, would most likely approach the problem. Clearly this leads to misunderstandings and misperceptions, as this paper has pointed out already.

A key part of a Japanese person's 'cultural memory' is that it "vindicates and affirms [...] *the memories or experiences of family members*," (emphasis added) and in the absence of memories or experiences, then it must confirm the point of view of the family.¹⁷² In public this is shown through testimony of personal experiences and the ways in which personal memories are used as platforms for public discussion. Contrary to the view from outside, "the large volume of published testimony is a conspicuous feature of war discourses in Japan."¹⁷³ This is interesting because, while serving to directly counter the orthodoxy's 'amnesia' argument, it also shows that, in Japan, it is the controversy itself that keeps this problem in public view and keeps the discussion relevant. It instills in survivors and perpetrators alike the desire to tell their version of 'how it happened,' almost as a rebuttal to the arguments from the other side.

Gerald Figal found this explicitly:

"among some authors of *jibunshi* ['self-histories'] there is a sense of leaving one's take on the Showa period [1926-89] to future generations *because of inadequacies* in standard histories, whether written from the right, left, or center"¹⁷⁴ (emphasis added).

He sees these as the authors' way of satisfying their personal obligation to 'tell it how it happened' *because* 'I was there.'

Strong connections to family "make it extremely painful for Japanese people to make critical judgments of their relatives," especially in light of personal experience

¹⁷² Ibid., 169.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Gerald Figal, "How to *Jibunshi*: making and marketing self-histories of Showa among the masses in postwar Japan," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 4 (1996): 930, cited in Seaton, *Contested*, 171.

narratives that support many different historical consciousness narratives. This is important to the history issue because, as Seaton so capably puts it,

“Herein lies the reason for the strong political pressure placed on the government by the War Bereaved Association [a nationalist / right wing group] to resist categorization of the entire war as ‘aggressive’: it criminalizes all Japan’s war dead and injects the painful issue of individual guilt into the commemorative process.”¹⁷⁵

As rational humans we can empathize with another person’s difficulty, in the absence of hard evidence, in assuming their own caring grandfather could be guilty of atrocities. It is not ‘westernist’ to realize that, for a Japanese person, “evaluating the individual responsibility of loved ones is extremely painful,” leading to avoiding the topic or reassigning blame to superiors or subordinates – we know that this would be difficult for anyone.¹⁷⁶

Comprehending the tendency of respect for ancestors that is present in many of us and which is particularly important in Japan can help us to understand individual issues such as support for prime ministerial worship at Yasukuni Shrine. Polls from 2001 to 2006 showed support for progressive or progressive-leaning ideals on particular issues that generally ranged between 50 and 80 percent depending on the issue, while conservative or nationalist ideas generally polled below 30 percent combined. However, support for Yasukuni worship is quite more evenly split with between 40 and 50 percent supporting or opposing, usually fluctuating based on geopolitics and regional politics at the time of the poll.^{177, 178}

¹⁷⁵ Seaton, *Contested*, 176.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*,

¹⁷⁷ “June 2005 Nikkei Regular Telephone Opinion Poll,” The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation, June 20, 2005, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://mansfieldfdn.org/program/research-education-and-communication/asian-opinion-poll-database/june-2005-nikkei-regular-telephone-opinion-poll/>.

While this is usually perceived outside Japan as tacit or overt support for nationalism and nationalists' views, this is not the case. Japan is no different from most states in that many of its war dead are remembered and memorialized by their families as patriots or even heroes. It should therefore come as no surprise that family members would support official recognition of war casualties, or that this support is different from support for the war itself or its conduct. An example of this would be an individual American family's support of the President visiting the Vietnam War Memorial where their relative is memorialized, but having no conflict between that and their personal opposition to the Vietnam War itself. There is no requirement for mutual support or rejection of either if one supports the other. To many in Japan, "the prime minister is seen to be commemorating the individual sacrifice of family members rather than affirming an aggressive war," the Shrine being Japan's Arlington National Cemetery 'equivalent,' where many family's war deceased relatives (2.4 million in all) are buried.¹⁷⁹

Prime Minister Abe has declined to visit the Shrine since his last visit in 2011, after which he wrote, what I take as, a heartfelt letter concerning the Shrine and Japan's historical consciousness issue. This leads to the topic of focus in Chapter VI: the LDP, Abe's leadership, and the direction he will take Japan.

The issues discussed here, specifically Yasukuni Shrine worship, textbooks and what is taught in Japan, are important to this topic because actions associated with these form the basis of arguments of Japanese 'amnesia.' However, what this discussion demonstrates is that what is happening in Japan is less about 'forgetting' and more about

¹⁷⁸ Seaton, *Contested*, 177.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

what is chosen as a focal point in an active discussion of history by a majority of the Japanese population.

CHAPTER VI. CREATING A COMMON NARRATIVE

“Japan’s contested war memories exist because there is no single obvious way to reconcile Japanese war actions with the strongest of human emotions: love for family and home, senses of moral right and wrong, and visions for the world in which Japanese people want their children to grow up.”¹⁸⁰

At the time of the above writing, the thesis statement of this paper may have been unthinkable to Seaton: that Prime Minister Abe would attempt to resolve the ‘historical issue’ by creating a single domestic narrative in order to move away from contested war memories and the division this causes inside Japan. His surprise would not come from the idea of a politician attempting to create a national narrative, as discussed in Chapter III, this is a relatively common occurrence. Rather, he would have found it difficult to believe Abe would undertake such an endeavor, especially in the way I will argue that compromises his personal politics.

The discussion on how the issue is framed, the politics of how we remember and form history, and international and domestic perspectives in previous chapters will help me justify the thesis claim here. To do this I will first discuss current political leadership in Japan and its effects on the way these issues are viewed in order to explain Prime Minister Abe’s political structure. Next I will discuss politics and the family in Japan in order to explain his political position and expected viewpoint. Following these, I will use several examples to make a case for the thesis statement.

The LDP as the Official Japanese Narrative

The political leadership in a state are lent an element of legitimacy through their ability to harness the commemoration that surrounds events of national memory.¹⁸¹ In

¹⁸⁰ Seaton, *Contested*, 182.

¹⁸¹ Winter, “Sites,” in Radstone and Schwarz, *Memory*, 315.

U.S. politics it is common to hear one side cry “foul” when a political figure from the ‘other side’ uses an occasion or event to promote an idea or agenda. While this use of a ‘bully pulpit’ is common throughout the political spectrum in our country, in other states where exist a dominant political party or voice, the pomp and circumstance of the commemorative event can be used as a means of drowning out or crushing dissenting voices. In states where a multi-party system does exist, but where one party has the organization and resources to maintain the preponderance of power for extended periods of time, the element of legitimacy can lead their opinions or narratives, even if a popular minority, to be viewed as the official approach, to the extent that they will be associated with that country. This is indeed the case in Japan where the LDP has held power for the majority of the period since the end of WWII.

Japanese opinions are usually viewed through the lens of official statements from the government because of the existing language barrier, thus anyone whose access is hampered by an inability to speak the language will not have insight into domestic debates and will be limited to a state-centered approach. The orthodoxy privileges the official narrative over public opinion polls and evidence of domestic contradiction partly because it can be expected that the most likely ‘action’ taken will be one that is aligned with the ruling party’s narrative, but also because it is the one to which outside states have the clearest access, such as translated official statements. It matters little to the rest of the world, for example, that President Trump has low approval ratings in U.S. polls or his loss in the popular vote. The fact is that he is the President, although it would be interesting to explore what this tells us about the value of popular opinion in a given population versus the value of international perception.

The orthodoxy's focus on the LDP's official narrative as the only practical 'valid' narrative leaves Japan as a state stuck in a cycle where official apologies are contradicted by LDP leadership's overtures to their conservative base. This leads to legitimate questions internationally on the sincerity of apologies, and the ongoing perception that Japan refuses to adequately address the past.¹⁸² During one of the two short spells where the LDP was not leading the government, Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama (1994-6) offered what is regarded as the 'most sincere' apology to date. When Murayama's governing coalition collapsed, the LDP again regained power. The effect of this was first that the LDP's narrative would again become the one associated with Japan and second, any changes Murayama's more progressive government had attempted to make did not have time to take hold. This has meant that for progressive narratives to successfully permeate Japanese international policies, a government that does not share the conservative narrative of the LDP would need to find a way of remaining in power, something that simply has not happened.¹⁸³

I am not alone in arguing that polling data on the history issue does not marry up to the opinions of the leaders who are ultimately elected, and in that case the democratic process has failed. However, elections are not typically won or lost on a single issue, and clearly the 'history issue' is not the most important one on the ballot, as those elected do not seem to be representing Japan to its neighbors or the international community the way a majority of the population would prefer. In Japan, as elsewhere, the war must compete

¹⁸² Seaton, *Contested*, 58.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 50.

for attention and can be quickly relegated below ‘issues of the present,’¹⁸⁴ such as the fact that Japan’s economy has been in recession for decades. This, unfortunately, ties back to the longevity and stability of the LDP in contrast with its rival parties who have not presented appealing economic policies, have not maintained the strong coalition governments required to remain in power, and have demonstrated a propensity for quickly coming apart. Amid a flurry of issues and worldwide uncertainty, a governing party that is expected to quickly crumble is one that is practically unelectable.¹⁸⁵

Politics & the Family

The importance of family in historical consciousness in Japan has already been covered, and this importance carries through to political families as well. On the subject of family and politics, it is notable that in Japan, “politics is a hereditary business.”¹⁸⁶ This is specifically true of Prime Minister Abe whose grandfather, Kishi Nobusuke, was also prime minister in 1957.¹⁸⁷ Like Abe now, his grandfather was seen as a ‘hawk,’ and given the discussion in this chapter on the importance of the family in one’s position in the historical consciousness debate, it is reasonable to conclude that, for Abe, “being progressive would mean denouncing the famil[y] that made [his] career possible.”¹⁸⁸

However, as unimaginable as it may be given all that we have discussed so far, there are reasons to believe that Prime Minister Abe is attempting to resolve the ‘historical issue’ once and for all by softening his conservative stance. If he intends to do

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 115.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 58.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 182.

¹⁸⁷ Kishi Nobusuke had been imprisoned as a class-A war crimes suspect but was released in 1948 and became prime minister in 1957.

¹⁸⁸ Seaton, *Contested*, 182.

this, it is likely because it will help Japan economically to be on better terms internationally, if not immediately, than in the long term. To accomplish this economic goal, Abe sees the need to create a single domestic narrative to move away from contested war memories and the division they cause. His desire to do this will be demonstrated through four of his recent actions: through his statement after his last worship at Yasukuni Shrine; his hiring of a handpicked committee to investigate the ‘history problem;’ his statement of apology on August 14, 2015, the 70th anniversary of the Japanese surrender in WWII; and the deal that was reached to conclusively address the ‘comfort women’ issue with the ROK in December, 2015.

Creating a Dominant Narrative

Thus far, there has been no way to create a singular narrative in Japan based on the political situation domestically and widely differing narratives. To do so would entail ‘demanding fealty’ to a particular narrative, as is currently the case in Germany toward Nazism. This would be an overt acceptance of a single narrative in exclusion of all others, including the personal and lived experiences of citizens.¹⁸⁹ In addition to this exclusion, it is also not a realistic solution in a democratic nation that allows for freedom of speech, something that the nation-wide discussion on historical memory and this very issue demonstrates. Further, whenever a narrative on the progressive or nationalist end of the spectrum begins to gain prominence, there is often a backlash of public opinion in the opposite direction.

There is no doubt that Prime Minister Abe would like the nation to move on from its ‘history issues’ due to the personal, familial connections he has to them, the divisions they cause domestically, the problems that domestic outbursts create internationally for

¹⁸⁹ Greenblatt, “Rewriting,” 318.

Japan's image, and the potential for damage these cause Japan's economy. He must also be aware that there is nearly no chance that the international community will move on from this issue because to do so "would sacrifice a significant source of political leverage vis-à-vis Japan," an opinion shared by academics and diplomats alike.¹⁹⁰ In light of this, Abe likely sees his best course of action as creating a united domestic narrative that will decrease the heated rhetoric surrounding this topic for most parties domestically. Creating a dominant domestic narrative that is no longer the source of contentious debate could in time provide the Japanese government the ability to carefully pivot toward statements and actions that are found more acceptable by the international community without suffering the now-typical domestic backlash. Based on the following examples, I would assess that Abe reached this conclusion sometime in 2013, around the time of his last visit to Yasukuni Shrine.

Yasukuni Shrine

This thesis has made clear the deep-rooted issue of the Yasukuni Shrine domestically for good reason: the Shrine is a sticking point across the narrative spectrum. Despite his conservative stance, Prime Minister Abe has declined to visit the Shrine, even as a private citizen, since 2013. It was the official statement he made after this last visit that first made me wonder if he hadn't shifted his position to one that is slightly more moderate, though the change was barely perceptible. He wrote concerning the Shrine and Japan's historical consciousness issue:

"Regrettably, it is a reality that the visit to Yasukuni Shrine has become a political and diplomatic issue. Some people criticize the visit to Yasukuni as paying homage to war criminals, but the purpose of my visit today [...] is to report before the souls of the war dead how my administration has worked for one year and to renew the pledge that Japan must never wage a war again.

¹⁹⁰ Seaton, *Contested*, 5.

It is not my intension at all to hurt the feelings of the Chinese and Korean people. It is my wish to respect each other's character, protect freedom and democracy, and build friendship with China and Korea with respect. I would like to ask for the kind understanding of all of you.”¹⁹¹

The statement seems forthright in seeking understanding from those outside the problem that do not understand what this issue means to people in Japan. It is telling that since this statement he has not visited the Shrine, considering his overtly pro Shrine worship stance in 2006, choosing instead to send an aide to the various worship festivals of the year. For this he has been severely criticized in international media; however, rather than take these personal offerings to the Shrine as a nod to his inner right-wing extremist or nationalist bias and those with like tendencies, could we not see it these as the actions of a prime minister who must walk a fine line between affirming what is seen as a memorial to an aggressive war internationally, and remembering the sacrifices of families domestically? We should not envy Abe's options, as controversy surrounding his actions is inevitable.

The Kitaoka Commission

The next real clue that something might be changing in Abe's approach came when his ‘Advisory Panel on the History of the 20th Century,’ also known as the ‘Kitaoka Commission,’ produced the results of its findings in advance of the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII. The creation of the commission was not particularly surprising and could have been seen as a political ploy. However, because Abe handpicked all the committee members and the committee was chaired by Shinichi

¹⁹¹ “Statement by Prime Minister Abe – Pledge for everlasting peace –,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, December 26, 2013, accessed October 16, 2015, http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page24e_000021.html.

Kitaoka, President of the International University of Japan and a longtime Abe advisor and supporter, their findings certainly were.

The Kitaoka Commission produced a finalized report on August 6, 2015, just a week before the prime minister was due to make a speech that commemorated the end of WWII hostilities 70 years prior. Laura Hein reminds us that, “when governments create commissions to look into things, they’re often quite politicized – there’s an agenda.”¹⁹² However, Abe’s handpicked commission concluded emphatically in ways that are contrary to his very well known and public stance on the historical consciousness issue: “the report unambiguously refers to Japan’s behavior before and during World War II – especially in Asia – as ‘aggression.’”¹⁹³

This can lead us to conclude either that Abe was expecting very different results due to how the committee was selected and was so shocked and surprised by their findings that, despite his decades of opinion to the contrary, he was ‘forced’ to at least go along with their conclusions and adopt a more moderate than expected tone in his apology a week later; or, as Hein would suggest, Abe had a specific agenda, and had every intention of using the commission’s findings to justify the tone in his apology the following week, and even perhaps to adopt some terminology that is used by progressives, using this panel of expert opinions as justification to the Japanese public and, more importantly for him, to his conservative and nationalist supporters.

¹⁹² Greenblatt, “Rewriting,” 318.

¹⁹³ Yuki Tatsumi, “Japan History Commission Acknowledges ‘Aggression,’ Lessons Learned from WW2,” *The Diplomat*, August 08, 2015, accessed August 20, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/08/japan-history-commission-acknowledges-aggression-lessons-learned-from-ww2/>. “The report argues that Japan went against the key trends in the post-World War I international order—self-determination, democratization, delegitimization of war, and economic development—and inflicted grave damage in Asia. Furthermore, the Commission’s report urges that Japan should continue its dialogue with China and South Korea toward reconciliation, and it should always work with Southeast Asian countries with humility.”

70th Anniversary Apology

Understanding the likelihood that the findings of a handpicked committee would be a foregone conclusion due to his conservative leanings, when that committee ‘shocked’ everyone with findings that lean toward progressive narratives, it presented Prime Minister Abe with the golden opportunity to walk a very fine line in his apology, where he attempted to present the most acceptable, or the least unacceptable, compromise: being an overtly conservative leader taking a moderate or ‘progressive-leaning’ tone. He did this by referring in his speech to “incident, aggression, war,”¹⁹⁴ in relation to Japan’s actions in the war, as things to which Japan must never again resort. Nationalists and conservatives could conceivably be seen to admit, “If Abe can do this, we can go along.” By accepting some of the progressive agenda and rhetoric of aggression, but tempering that with a desire to move on and not continue apologizing interminably, he sought to find the narrative that the largest percentage of the population could abide, and perhaps someday adopt fully.

If we dare to take him at his word, Prime Minister Abe supported my assessment conclusively in his own words when, “asked what his message to the Japanese people was, Abe answered that he sought to make a statement of Japan’s past and future that would be shared broadly among the people of Japan,”¹⁹⁵ and in this I think he was at least as successful as one can hope to be given domestic politics.

¹⁹⁴ “Statements by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe,” August 14, 2015, accessed October 16, 2015, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201508/0814statement.html.

¹⁹⁵ Mina Pollman, “What Abe’s WW2 Anniversary Statement Says About Japanese Identity,” *The Diplomat*, August 20, 2015, accessed August 27, 2015. <http://thediplomat.com/2015/08/what-abes-ww2-anniversary-statement-says-about-japanese-identity/>.

Resolution with South Korea

There are a few things of which we can be certain regarding Japan and the ROK's December 2015 agreement on 'comfort women.' The first is that this deal was a very long time in coming; the second, it was not expected to be reached after all this time under a conservative LDP government; and the third is that this deal would not have been reached without the blessing, approval, and involvement of Prime Minister Abe. Taken on its own this could be seen as a nice gesture; a compromise on a popular progressive issue; a positive step in the right direction. However, if we look at the timing of this deal, coming as it did on the heels of the commission's findings and Abe's 70th Anniversary statement, it is not unreasonable to see something more here: that the prime minister is actively seeking to repair the fissures these 'historical issues' have caused in Japan and between Japan and its neighbors.

Summary

The assessment of this paper works well with Thomson's argument that "an official or dominant legend works not by excluding contradictory versions of experience, but by representing them in ways that fit the legend and flatten out the contradictions, but which are still resonant for a wide variety of people."¹⁹⁶ Abe cannot ever expect to have the 'good war' "dominant legend" available to the Allies and the English-speaking West. However, he could yet find a way to resonate with "a wide variety of people," if only domestically – that would be a start. Understanding this, he has decided to walk the tightest line of common ground, finding the most acceptable commonalities of domestic

¹⁹⁶ Alistair Thomson, *ANZAC Memories: Living with the Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 12.

narratives, coupled with a few strains from right and left of center that will appeal to the broadest audience.

Ultimately Prime Minister Abe's success depends on the frame through which we chose to view these issues. If we chose to view prayers at the Yasukuni Shrine as the representation of both appreciation for those who have died in the service of their nation – hence lending meaning to what can be chaotic and meaningless – and Abe's "determination before the souls of the war dead to firmly uphold the pledge never to wage a war again,"¹⁹⁷ then we can allow ourselves to see positive associations with this gesture. That nationalists have chosen the Shrine as a 'site of memory' whereby to promote their arguments makes the Shrine controversial, however Winter confirms what we already suspect regarding war memorials as sites of memory: that different groups come to these for their own reasons, "some for the celebration and others for the denigration of military values." Progressives (and apparently Prime Minister Abe) will use these to proclaim determinedly "never again!" while nationalists use "the aura of these sites to glorify the profession of arms and demonstrate the duty of citizens, if necessary, to give their lives for the country in a future war."¹⁹⁸

These contradictions will likely never be solved, but we do well to realize that families and loved ones employ either of these narratives, or some combination that is their own, in their private efforts to endure the unendurable and to continue on with a productive life in the face of devastating and meaningless loss – meaningless because, in

¹⁹⁷ MOFA, "Statement by Prime Minister Abe."

¹⁹⁸ Winter, "Sites," in Radstone and Schwarz, *Memory*, 322.

dying for a losing cause, there is no positive gain. To a degree, the losing cause meant nothing, and therefore their deaths mean nothing.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 321.

CHAPTER VII. CONCLUSION

Japan is currently lacking a dominant national ‘narrative’ regarding its ‘history issue’ and this is what Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is attempting to create in order to achieve the ultimate goal of Japanese ‘normalization.’ To understand the challenges facing a ‘national narrative,’ we need to understand “trans- and sub-national identities,”²⁰⁰ identities that are shared internationally and domestically, or are exclusively domestic. If these are not understood then appreciating the existence of contested memories that block a national narrative of historical consciousness is impossible. Reaching an understanding of these identities, how they are formed, and how they have effected and continue to affect the region is the goal of the first five chapters of this thesis. This will help us comprehend why these contested memories stubbornly persist.

The first five chapters also help explain the difficult position of Prime Minister Abe, and why some of the decisions this paper argues he is making are taken with such care, and with an eye toward certain conservative, if not nationalist, domestic narratives. The decisions alluded to are the ones that are proposed in Chapter VI that are meant to push toward Abe’s intended path for Japan: unification of the domestic population under a dominant narrative, eventually allowing for more acceptable approaches toward the international community.

As was evidenced by the media storm that followed Abe’s statement at the 70th Anniversary of the end of WWII and by continued criticism of his actions, many if not most of those outside of the country do not understand the depths of these issues, or choose to believe that Abe’s intentions are less-than noble. This position is to be

²⁰⁰ Seaton, *Contested*, 186.

expected, and if my assessments are correct, Abe realizes as much. However I assess that he also realizes the domestic narrative *must* be united and slowly modified for changes in international perspectives to occur. As such, he has chosen to proceed in this manner. The earlier discussion on the longevity and stability of his political platform, the Liberal Democratic Party, affords him the opportunity to make incremental changes over a longer period of time without having to be too deeply concerned with change in the domestic political construct.

Whether these are Abe's true intentions may never be apparent if domestic politics make taking an overtly 'progressive-leaning' tack politically inexpedient, or may be evident eventually depending on regional stability. If these are his intentions, whether or not his efforts prove successful is also a matter for history. If he succeeds in creating a national narrative leading to improved relations in the region, at least in regards to the 'history issues,' that will indeed be an historic achievement. If however, he fails, a likely reason will be the tension between a flawed orthodoxy and domestic realities of how history is remembered.

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