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„Constructing National Narratives: The Perception of
Atrocities from China's War with Japan (1931-1945),
and the Evolution of the Chinese National Identity”

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the evolution of China's national identity by looking at how certain major events from history are perceived, and how that perception has changed over time. The events chosen are three well-known atrocities that were committed during the Second Sino-Japanese War. These atrocities are the Nanjing Massacre, the Chinese Comfort Women System, and Unit 731. The focus herein lies in how these events have been perceived as part of Chinese historiography, as well as society at large. The analysis conducted into this topic has unveiled a dramatic change of narratives between the end of the war in 1945 and the present day, which can be categorized into three periods. These are the Mao Era (1949-1976), during which the atrocities were seen in the light of a narrative of victory; the Transition Period (1976-1989), when the narratives transitioned away from then-outdated ideology; and finally the period of the Victim Narrative (1990-Present), during which a major shift took place toward a much more somber and trauma-centric commemoration of the events. A wide array of sources, such as academic research, media reports, and elements of pop culture are presented to make the case that the modern Chinese national identity relies heavily on narratives of past victimization, and that this focus has come about by design from the political elite. The research, however, also finds that, far from these narratives of victimization being a purely elitist phenomenon, they are widely accepted among a large part of the public, and therefore also influence the decision-making of the elite. The shift in the nature of commemoration of these selected atrocities is representative of a shift in the nature of the national identity.

Diese Dissertation analysiert die Entwicklung der nationalen Identität Chinas, indem sie untersucht, wie bestimmte Ereignisse aus der Geschichte wahrgenommen werden und wie sich diese Wahrnehmung im Laufe der Zeit verändert hat. Die ausgewählten Ereignisse sind drei bekannte Gewalttaten, die während des Zweiten Chinesisch-Japanischen Krieges begangen wurden sind. Diese Ereignisse sind das Massaker von Nanjing, das Chinesische Comfort Women System und Unit 731. Der Fokus liegt darauf, wie diese Ereignisse als Teil der chinesischen Geschichtsschreibung und der Gesellschaft wahrgenommen werden. Die zu diesem Thema durchgeführte Analyse hat einen Wandel der Narrativen zwischen dem Ende des Krieges und der Gegenwart aufgezeigt, der in drei Perioden eingeordnet wurde. Dies sind die Mao-Ära (1949-1976), in der die Ereignisse als Teil einer Siegesgeschichte gesehen wurden; die Übergangszeit (1976-1989), als sich die Erzählungen von der alten Ideologie abwandten; und schließlich die Periode der Opfernarrative (1990-heute), in der eine große Verschiebung hin zu einem viel Trauergedenken an die Gewalttaten stattfand. Quellen wie wissenschaftliche Artikel, Medienberichte und Elemente der Popkultur, werden präsentiert, um zu belegen, dass die moderne chinesische nationale Identität stark auf Narrativen vergangener Viktimisierungen beruht welche von der politische Elite ausgeht. Die Forschung stellt jedoch auch fest, dass diese Narrativen der Viktimisierung kein rein elitäres Phänomen sind, sondern in der Öffentlichkeit eine breite Akzeptanz finden und daher auch die Entscheidungsfindung der Elite beeinflussen. Diese Verschiebung zu Opfernarrativen ist repräsentativ für eine gesamte Verschiebung in der Natur der nationalen Identität.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is the analysis of the modern Chinese national identity. Nationalism and national identity are ubiquitous terms that are, nonetheless, hard to define concepts at best, and evasive constructs at worst. Therefore the object of analysis is not this broad concept of Chinese nationalism, whatever that may mean, but three distinct events in Chinese history — the keyhole events of this thesis. The perception of these three keyhole events since their occurrences has been analyzed, with a variety of sources that represent different parts of Chinese society, in order to better understand their place in a modern Chinese identity.

Naturally, an identity is something individual, and hence each individual may perceive their identity differently. However, by analyzing the broad perception specific events have in society, one should be able to draw meaningful conclusions as to their place in such a shared identity. The chosen keyhole events's perception — their narrative — has changed dramatically over the years, and therefore analyzing this change can help shed light on a wider societal shift in both how the past is understood, and how the present is seen in context of the past.

1.1. Keyhole Events

Three keyhole events have been chosen for in-depth analysis in this thesis. They are the Nanjing Massacre, the Chinese Comfort Women System, and Unit 731. These topics have been selected due to their saliency in modern Chinese nationalism. They are well-known atrocities that were committed against Chinese people during the Second Sino-Japanese War (more commonly known as the *'War of Resistance Against Japan'* in China), in the period of 1931-1945, and are a major part of China's *'Century of Humiliation'*. These atrocities are taught in school and pupils visit sites related to them, similar to how many Central European students commonly visit concentration camps at least once during their school years.

The Nanjing Massacre is perhaps the most visible and commemorated of all atrocities suffered by Chinese and is therefore an obvious choice for analysis. The way its commemoration has changed is also astonishing and therefore highly

representative of how Chinese historiography has changed in the the second half of the 20th century. Then there is the issue of Chinese sex slaves under Japanese occupation, commonly referred to as '*comfort women*', with has also become a highly emotional topic in recent years. However, for several decades after the war, the comfort women were not commemorated at all. This absence of commemoration of this major tragedy is in itself evidence of the changing nature of Chinese national narratives. Lastly, Japan's vast and horrifying operation of experimentation and application of biological weapons on the Chinese population, known by the name of its Japanese military designation, '*Unit 731*', is another major atrocity that has increasingly been brought to the Chinese people's awareness as remembrance of history has changed into its current stage.¹

The entire war in which these atrocities were committed is a crucial part of the current Chinese national identity, but focusing on the war as a whole is both too broad and too abstract. Therefore, these three atrocities are a more concrete means of analyzing how perception of the war, and thus perception of China's dark past as a whole, has developed over time. One could also focus on a single event, as much material is available, in particular with regard to the Nanjing Massacre, which in itself is often displayed as a representation of the horrors of the entire war. However, by only focusing a single of these major atrocities, the argument could be made that whatever impact it has on modern Chinese society is an isolated case and thus not representative of the way the Chinese national narrative has changed over time. By considering all three events, however, one can see that how the perception of these events has changed is indeed connected and therefore representative of a wider societal shift over time.

This thesis does not only focus on how these three atrocities are perceived throughout Chinese society in present day China, but follows their perception from the time they have been committed to today. The changes in perception have indeed been dramatic, and by analyzing them comprehensively and combined, it becomes clear that it is not just these events that change society's perception of the past, but

¹ Detailed evidence and citation of these evidence is given in the main body of the thesis (chapters 2-4).

that it is the changing society itself which has altered how these events have been perceived. History is not set in stone, but is adjusted and rewritten constantly, and the way the historiography pertaining to these events has shifted in China also sheds light on this process, and some of its origins.

1.2. Thesis Structure

Following the introduction, the main part of this thesis is split into four chapters, which have further been categorized into Part I and Part II. Part I solely consists of chapter 1 and focuses on the three keyhole events which are at the center of the thesis. In it, the best-available evidence is present to tell the stories of the events as they occurred, in an objective and data-rich manner, so as that one may then compare the actual occurrences with of said events with how they have been perceived ever since. Part II then consists of chapters 2 to 4. This is the central part of the thesis and presents the ways in which the keyhole events have been perceived after they have occurred. This covers the period of 1949 until the present day. This timeframe is further split into three periods. Chapter 2 is called ‘The Victor Narrative’ and deals with the period of 1949 to 1976. Chapter 3 is ‘The Transition Period’, during the years of 1976 and 1989. And finally chapter 4, ‘The Victim Narrative’, is the period of 1990 to the present day. The conclusion then reiterates the main findings and completes the thesis. This is followed by the bibliography and finally the appendix.

The main part of the thesis (chapters 1-4) is presented in chronological order, following the events as they occurred, so as for the reader to experience how the perception of the keyhole events has developed over time. In this way, the evolution of these narratives becomes in itself a narrative. However, rather than creating a narrative into which to fit the events, this thesis lets historical events and evidence speak for themselves, to organically create the story of the evolution of the Chinese national identity.

1.3. Disciplines and Methodology

This thesis is essentially a work of historical analysis. A variety of sources have been used to shed light on historical events with the best available evidence to-date. Much research has already been done on 20th century Chinese history, culture, economics, and politics, including theories of the political machinery within the mostly-secretive apparatus of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its high-level leadership. This thesis is interested in all of these fields, as a multidisciplinary approach has been taken to analyze the changing narratives of the historiography of the Chinese nation. While the topic of nationalism and the question of its origins is fascinating in itself, to fully comprehend its impact onto societies it is crucial to also understand the impact national narratives and the resulting sentiments among a wider populace have on political decision-making, and therefore both the domestic economy and foreign policy. In turn, international affairs, the economy, and the performance of political leaders also influence the development of national identity, as no social movement can occur in isolation from events that surround it.

Therefore, this thesis utilized a variety of different sources, including from Chinese historiography, political science, international relations, economics, popular culture, and of course Sinology in order to paint a comprehensive picture and to arrive at a meaningful conclusion. The keyword herein is “*comprehensive*”, as the goal of this thesis has been to combine a variety of fields to help see the *bigger picture*. Hence, not one major event is analyzed, but three. Each of the three atrocities presented here, alongside how they have been perceived throughout recent Chinese history, have already been documented and researched from several angles, some more than others. However, research into the topics for this thesis has found that these atrocities are often discussed in isolation, although there is a red thread that runs through them, not only in that these atrocities were all committed by the Japanese military against mostly Chinese civilians, but in how they have been perceived throughout society over the years. The way one event has been perceived has been similar to the others, and as perception changed for one event, so it has for the others.

In addition to the aforementioned fields, the field of psychology and its sub-field of large-group psychology are of great relevance, given that identity, whether

personal or on a grander national level, lies at the heart of nationalism. This thesis does consider such related theories, some of which will be mentioned in the following sub-chapter, but the approach taken has been to let historical actions and events speak for themselves. While the approach taken has been a multidisciplinary one which has attempted to include many sides of the presented arguments, first and foremost this is a work of historical analysis, and as such it analyses events as they occurred, people's actions as they were taken, and relevant literature as it has been published, without dwelling much on theories. Through the presentation of historical occurrences, which have themselves been organized into narratives, the story of the Chinese national narrative is presented, as well as the role the selected atrocities play in it.

1.4. Theories of Nationalism

Terms such as 'nation' and 'nationalism' have become ubiquitous and should require little explanation as to their meaning, but perhaps a brief summary of how they are understood as part of this thesis is in order.

Term term '*nation*' has famously been defined by Benedict Anderson as an "*imagined political community*". This refers to the phenomenon that, while a nation is an intangible construct, it is very real in the minds of those who see themselves part of this community — part of the nation. The peculiar thing about feeling belonging to other people of one's nation, with whom one shares values and historical experiences, is that one will never know the majority of one's compatriots.² Anthony D. Smith agrees that the most crucial part of the construct of a nation is the feeling of attachment to one's "*homeland*". He notes that, additionally, myths of shared historical memories, common culture, and a common ancestry are also crucial elements, but what runs central is the feeling of kinship with regard to the nation — the homeland.³ '*Nationalism*' was further defined by John Breuilly as "*political*

² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 5-7.

³ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 20-21.

movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such actions with nationalist arguments,” which defines nationalism thus as a form of politics, utilized by those who hold political power.⁴

This is a definition to be kept in mind when reading the analysis of Chinese national narratives contained herein. However, one should not forget the importance of bottom-up nationalistic sentiments in people who do themselves not hold power. Hence Ernest Gellner’s additional definition of nationalism as primarily a “*political principle*”, which requires that national and political units are in harmony, meaning that those who rule must adequately represent the nation. Nationalism can thus also be a “*theory of political legitimacy*”, according to which the political boundaries must be in harmony with the defined national boundaries. The general fragility of this principle should become obvious when one considers its vagueness and how such broad definitions are open to personal interpretation. It is therefore all too common for ‘*national sentiments*’ to be aroused in people when they feel their national boundaries violated. Gellner thus defines the ‘*nationalist sentiment*’ as “*the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment*”.⁵ This emotional definition of nationalism is of particular importance for the purpose of this thesis, as nationalist sentiment is a crucial concept for the power of national narratives and the practical impact they have on society.

Given that the construct of a nation is in people’s mind, the contribution of the field of Psychology for understanding this phenomenon should also not be forgotten. In particular the concept of ‘*large-group psychology*’ is an interesting one, as it seeks to understand the shared experience of large groups of people, such as the people of a nation. Vamik D. Volkan notes that:

“A large-group identity is the end-result of myths and realities of common beginnings, historical continuities, geographical realities, and

⁴ John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 1-2.

⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1.

*other shared linguistic, societal, religious, cultural and political factors.”*⁶

This sounds a lot like a common definition for nationalism. In other words, nationalism as a large-group identity is defined by the emotions that are behind a simple statement, such as “*I am American*” or “*I am Chinese*”, whatever these emotions and myths may be for the individual who utters such a phrase.

In addition, Volkan’s contribution to the field was the emphasis on “*chosen glories*” and “*chosen traumas*”, which he notes are at the center of any national identity. In other words, the good old times and the bad old times, which cause nationalist sentiments, either relating to pride and glory, or trauma and pain. To what extent positive or negative shared memories are part of the national narrative, depends on the identity.⁷ One may think of the Holocaust as part of a Jewish identity or the Bill of Rights as part of an American identity, to name just two examples of a major trauma and a major glory, respectively. This idea of glories and traumas as major aspect of a national identity is a pertinent one for the purpose of this thesis, as one can clearly observe how the highlighting of past glories transforms into the emphasizing of traumas as the national narratives change over time.

An additional theory of great interest for the subject of this thesis is ‘*Social Identity Theory*’, which prescribes that a large-group identity, such as a national identity, is formed by identifying those who are part of one’s group, as well as those who are not. This comes about by a process of categorization, identification, and comparison.⁸ Identifying who belongs to a historical narrative and who should be involved in commemorating past traumas is a threat that runs through much of the analysis of the perception of atrocities presented here.

The theories and terms mentioned above will not be explicitly highlighted again in this thesis, but keeping them in mind may help to make sense of some of the

⁶ Vamik D. Volkan, “Large-Group-Psychology in Its Own Right: Large-Group Identity and Peace-Making,” *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* 10, no. 3 (2013): 210.

⁷ Vamik D. Volkan, “Large-Group Identity, Who Are We Now? Leader-Follower Relationships And Societal-Political Divisions,” *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 79, no. 2 (2019): 139-142.

⁸ Henri Tajfel, and John C. Turner, “The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior,” In *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. S. Worchel and L.W. Austin (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986), 7-24.

events presented in the following chapters. With that in mind, the following chapter starts off with a period of Chinese history that is now considered particularly traumatic. But as we will see, how this trauma is perceived depends very much on the times one lives in.

Part I: The Atrocities

2. Chapter 1: The Atrocities As They Unfolded

This chapter will follow the occurrences of the discussed atrocities in an objective and evidence-based manner, based on the best available to-date evidence, in order to later on recognize how these events are being remembered, including the parts that are being emphasized, as well as the areas that are being omitted. Below sub-chapter gives a brief overview over the Century of Humiliation prior to the Second Sino-Japanese War, before delving into the core of this thesis, the three atrocities that were committed during 1937-1945. It is not part of the major analysis of the atrocities, but merely sets the stage.

2.1. Prelude to War: The Century of Humiliation (1840-1931)

In Chinese historiography, the '*Century of Humiliation*' usually begins with the First Opium War (1839-1842), when China, under the Qing Dynasty, was still a major empire, which did not believe it possible to be beaten by "*Western barbarians*", only to be proven wrong by Britain.⁹ Throughout the remainder of the century, the Qing Dynasty suffered one major defeat after another, in which it succumbed to a state of semi-colonialism, as Western empires sought to carve up the ancient empire and to profit from its vast riches, including through trading in goods such as opium, whether or not the Chinese Emperor approved. After Britain successfully gained the rights to trade and several other concessions, including the island of Hong Kong, other powers, such as France and Russia, quickly joined and forcefully negotiated similar rights for themselves.¹⁰

The Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), the Second Opium War (1858-1860), the Sino-French War (1884-1885), the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), and the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901) are just some examples of major events that cost the lives of tens of millions of Chinese and further accelerated the disintegration of Qing authority over its vast empire. Persistent Western aggression, alongside Qing

⁹ Paul S. Ropp, *China in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 103-105.

¹⁰ Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 57-58.

authorities who refused to reform their empire to face its modern challenges, sealed its decline.¹¹

Japan soon joined Western empires in wanting to gain from China's demise. After Japan was itself forcefully opened in 1853, it, unlike China, underwent a major transformation in which it sought to modernize and learn from the Western powers, including the art of making empires. Following the successful Meiji Restoration, the newly-industrialized Japan was ready for its slice of China, and it had great ambitions.¹² However, its initial foremost competitor was Russia, which also had ambitions for the region of Manchuria, as well as Korea, although Russia feared little of the small nascent Empire of Japan. Then, in 1894, when Japan challenged Chinese hegemony over the Korean Peninsula through their ancient bond of the Chinese tributary system, the First Sino-Japanese War erupted, which resulted in the sound defeat of China and the humiliating Treaty of Shimonoseki, through which, among other things, Taiwan was handed over to Japan. And in 1905, Japan became the first Asian country to win a war against a European empire, after it defeated Russia in the Russo-Japanese War.¹³ After its victory over Russia, Japan expanded its South Manchuria Railway, to which it had inherited the rights from Russia, even though it did not control most of Manchuria. This railway became the heart of Japan's operations in Manchuria, helping to secure the region militarily and to extract its abundant natural riches, in support of an expanding Japanese Empire.¹⁴

The ailing Qing Empire finally came to an end with the Wuchang Uprising, in October 1911. What followed was the declaration of the Republic of China (ROC), with Sun Yat-sen's Nationalists, *Guomindang* (国民党) in Chinese (GMD), in the leadership. However, the new republic suffered from many of the old dynasty's issues, with the addition of several Qing generals refusing to give up their territories

¹¹ Ropp, *China in World History*, 106-111.

¹² David Scott, *China and the International System, 1840-1949: Power, Presence, and Perceptions in a Century of Humiliation* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 67-69.

¹³ Kissinger, *On China*, 82-85.

¹⁴ Hal Gold, *Unit 731: Testimony* (North Clarendon: Tuttle Publishing, 2004), 26.

and instead ruling as warlords.¹⁵ The GMD government expected the Western world's support in its exercise of nation building, and even sent over 100,000 Chinese workers to Europe to support Allied forces in Europe during the First World War. However, instead of being recognized as a victor and be given the German-occupied enclaves in China, the former-German city of Qingdao was handed over to Japan. News of the Versailles settlement arrived in China on 3 May 1919. This betrayal sparked wide-spread anti-Japanese and anti-Western protests the day after, which became known as the May Fourth Movement, and marked a turning point in the GMD's organization and the development of China.¹⁶

Soon thereafter, the GMD began cooperating with the Soviet Union, which offered military assistance and funding, under the condition that it worked with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), a small fringe party, newly founded in 1921. The GMD reorganized itself under authoritarian Leninist principles and opened its first military academy in the South, near Guangzhou. The academy's leader was an ambitious young military officer who had previously been trained in Russia, Chiang Kai-shek. After Sun's death in 1925, Chiang took control of the GMD and also became the National Revolutionary Army's Commander in Chief. In 1926, he set out on the '*Northern Expedition*', which managed to recapture most of China from the warlords within two years. However, Chiang despised working with the communists, and on 12 August 1927, he launched an attack on his CCP allies, killing 20,000 communist supporters. The remaining communist forces went into hiding and occasionally reemerged in guerrilla-style attacks, while the Nationalists tried to eradicate them. In the meaning, China went through a decade of relative peace and industrialization, known as the '*Nanjing Decade*'. Japan became increasingly aggressive toward China, but Chiang believed in a strategy of appeasement, knowing well that his young nation was not yet ready for war.¹⁷

As for Japan, in the late 19th century, it was known as an exemplary military force which became not only a leader in military technology, but also in ethical

¹⁵ Ropp, *China in World History*, 113-117.

¹⁶ Scott, *China and the International System*, 199-200; 205-206.

¹⁷ Scott, *China and the International System*, 120-122; 128.

warfare. During the Russo-Japanese War, Japanese medics were known for taking care of wounded Russian soldiers that strayed from their units before returning them safely to the enemy side. Not only that, Japanese military medicine was also one of the best in the world, so much so that Russian soldiers had the best chances of survival through becoming prisoners of war (POW) to Japan, as they might have easily perished in their own camps where common wartime diseases, such as cholera and dysentery, ravaged the Russian troops.¹⁸

The Japanese medical community was filled with bright researchers who made groundbreaking discoveries in the world of medicine. This is not by coincidence, as Japanese cities were commonly afflicted by many diseases that had mostly been eradicated in Western industrialized empires, due to Japan's late industrialization and the therefore lacking sanitary installations.¹⁹ These advances in medicine were then also applied to the battlefield, which resulted in Japan having some of the lowest mortality rates among combatants anywhere in the world.²⁰

One such bright and ambitious researcher was Ishii Shiro, born in the outskirts of Tokyo on 25 June 1892, to a family of aristocrats. In 1916, he entered the Medical Department of Kyoto's Imperial University, which was at the forefront of bacteriological research. Even though he was described as someone with personality issues, and someone who did not respect the Confucian order from the time, he quickly befriended the university's president and even married his daughter.²¹ He enlisted as army surgeon after his graduation in 1921, and became surgeon-first lieutenant. In 1924, he was sent to his alma mater to pursue post-graduate studies in bacteriology, serology, pathology, and preventative medicine, and obtained the rank of captain.²² What really interested Ishii was the application of microbes for warfare. In other words, biological warfare, and its enormous potential. However, Japan

¹⁸ Gold, *Unit 731*, 19-21.

¹⁹ Akihito Suzuki, "Public Health, Laboratory Experiment, and Asymptomatic Carriers in Japan, ca. 1920–1950," *East Asian Science, Technology and Society* 13, no. 1 (2019): 42.

²⁰ Gold, *Unit 731*, 18-19.

²¹ Gold, *Unit 731*, 23-24.

²² Pawlowicz and Grunden, "Teaching Atrocities," 273.

became a signatory to the Geneva Convention of 1925, which prohibited the use of either biological or chemical weapons.²³ Fortunately for Ishii, by the early 1930s an ambitious military elite had effectively taken over the country and was eager to find ways of strengthening its military capabilities, in order for Japan to become a major Empire.²⁴ He was promoted again, to major, and also became Professor of Immunology at the Department of Epidemic Prevention at Tokyo's Army Medical College.²⁵ And there he waited, for a chance fulfill his ambitions and conduct research, the kind he could not have conducted in Japan. However, he did not have to wait for long.

2.2. The War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-1945)

On 18 September 1931, soldiers of the Kwantung Army secretly blew up a stretch of the South Manchuria Railway and subsequently blamed “*Chinese bandits*” for the act of sabotage.²⁶ The incident became known as the ‘*Mukden Incident*’ and ‘*September 18 Incident*’.²⁷ The Kwantung Army, together with Japanese troops stationed in Korea, were quickly mobilized and fanned out across Manchuria.²⁸ The occupation of the region was completed by January the following year.²⁹ In March 1932, Manchukuo was declared as independent state, though it was in fact a puppet state of the Japanese Empire, with the last emperor of the Qing Dynasty, Henry Pu Yi, as its nominal emperor.³⁰ The Kwantung Army then further expanded Manchukuo's territory by encroaching into Jehol in 1933, unopposed by Chiang Kai-

²³ Gold, *Unit 731*, 24.

²⁴ Gold, *Unit 731*, 24-26.

²⁵ Rachel Pawlowicz, and Walter E. Grunden, “Teaching Atrocities: The Holocaust and Unit 731 in the Secondary School Curriculum,” *The History Teacher* 48, no. 2 (2015): 274.

²⁶ Pawlowicz and Grunden, “Teaching Atrocities,” 274.

²⁷ Gold, *Unit 731*, 28.

²⁸ Masahiro Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity* (Westpoint: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000), 39.

²⁹ Scott, *China and the International System*, 244.

³⁰ Pawlowicz and Grunden, “Teaching Atrocities,” 274.

shek's Nationalist forces. Following the Tanggu Truce of May 1933, a demilitarized zone was established along the Chinese Wall, causing Manchukuo to be entirely detached from the rest of China.³¹ All this happened because of unilateral decisions made within the Kwantung Army, without the approval of Japan's High Command in Tokyo. Nonetheless, retroactive approval for military actions in Manchuria was given by Japanese politicians and the public at large, for which Japan's military success was cheerful news in times of economic depression.³²

Following international outcry at Japan's occupation of Manchuria and the demand of returning the region to China, Japan left the League of Nations altogether in March 1933, which freed it up from its international obligations to other League members.³³ The foundation had been laid for the proper expansion of the Japanese war machine. But to fight a large-scale war, Japan needed more than just bullets and conventional modes of warfare.

2.2.1. The Togo Unit (1931-1937)

Within a month of the declaration of Manchukuo, Tokyo's Army Medical College formed the Army's Epidemic Prevention Laboratory (EPRL) as subordinate organization, to be headed by Ishii Shiro. The EPRL was the first step in Ishii's ambition to subdue diseases for Japan's war effort.³⁴ To this end, his new organization was granted land in freshly-occupied Harbin, a flourishing multicultural, Russian-built city, still inhabited by Russian descendants. Ishii, and several hundred men under his command, were meant to find ways to overcoming the Soviet Army's superior strength in numbers, which remained a great threat to Japan.³⁵

³¹ Scott, *China and the International System*, 244-245.

³² Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 39.

³³ Gold, *Unit 731*, 30.

³⁴ Kei-ichi Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure to Prosecute Unit 731 and its Significance," in *Beyond Victor's Justice? The Tokyo War Crimes Trial Revisited*, ed. Toshiyuki Tanaka, Gerry J. Simpson, and Timothy L.H. McCormack (Leiden, Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2011) 179-180.

³⁵ Gold, *Unit 731*, 32.

Research started immediately, but the site in Harbin was located in an area of too much public scrutiny and was too small, hence by August of the same year, a new site was selected in Beiyinhe, about 100km south of Harbin.³⁶ The site was aptly called the Zhongma Fortress, complete with three-meter high walls, watchtowers, twin-iron gates, and a drawbridge.³⁷ Defensive research, such as for vaccines, was continued in Harbin, but the majority of Ishii's work, namely the offensive kind which involved human experimentation for the purpose of weaponizing microbes, was carried out in Beiyinhe.³⁸ The Beiyinhe site was given the designation '*Togo Unit*', and stood under the direct protection of the Kwantung Army's Chief of General Staff. The whole site was shrouded in secrecy. All the researchers were given code names, so was Ishii, whose pseudonym Togo Hajime was the site's namesake.³⁹ The road leading to the fortress was completely off-limits to civilians, and train carriages as far away as one kilometer had to draw their shades while passing by.⁴⁰ The reason for this high level of secrecy was two-fold: For one, it was to hide the fact that human experimentation was taking place, and for another, it was to deny the project's existence in case of failure, and ultimately to prevent any blame to be laid on the infallible emperor of Japan.⁴¹ However, despite the site being officially designated a prison, locals living nearby quickly came to know that this was not a normal prison, as continuous streams of prisoners kept arriving at the facility without anyone ever re-emerging from it.⁴²

The human experiments inside the Zhongma Fortress commenced in the fall of 1933.⁴³ The subjects were provided by the feared Military Police of the Kwantung Army, the Kempeitai (also written: Kenpeitai), which has been compared to the Nazi

³⁶ Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure," 179.

³⁷ Gold, *Unit 731*, 34.

³⁸ Pawlowicz and Grunden, "Teaching Atrocities," 274.

³⁹ Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure," 179.

⁴⁰ Gold, *Unit 731*, 34.

⁴¹ Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure," 179-180.

⁴² Gold, *Unit 731*, 34-35.

⁴³ William R. LaFleur, Gernot Böhme, and Susumu Shimazono, *Dark Medicine: Rationalizing Unethical Medical Research* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 73.

Gestapo. The Keimpeitai took people from varying ethnic backgrounds living in Manchukuo, such as Manchus and Koreans, as well as Russians and other Europeans, who were then accused of being spies, communists, or harboring any kind of anti-Japanese sentiments.⁴⁴ Those prisoners were then supplied with a substantial diet, consisting of both meat and vegetables, in order to keep them healthy for the duration of their stay. The average prisoner's life expectancy was less than a month.⁴⁵ Experiments included testing the limits of the human body, including how long one could survive on only water, or how much the body could be squeezed of blood.⁴⁶ Experiments on the toxicity of poisons were also carried out, including mixing poison, such as cyanide, into beer, wine, or coffee, and documenting the poison's fatal dosage and the subject's progress of death.⁴⁷ Additionally, many experiments were carried out on varying stages of diseases, including tuberculosis, in which the disease's developmental stages were documented, and once the subjects were no longer of use, chloroform was administered to "*put them to sleep*".⁴⁸ Japan had clearly ceased to be at the forefront of ethical warfare; its commanders in the Russo-Japanese war would have been horrified.⁴⁹ Sadly, this was just the beginning of Ishii's organization of dark medicine.

The Togo Unit was basically a feasibility study in a project of much greater ambition. It was to assess whether human experimentation would indeed herald the data required to develop biological weapons, and whether such operation could be sustained in Manchukuo, given that the continuous bodycount required was immense.⁵⁰ Following three years of ongoing experimentation in Beiyinhe, the project was considered a success. In 1935, Ishii was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and was granted extra funds to find a new, much larger site to finally fulfill his grand

⁴⁴ Pawlowicz and Grunden, "Teaching Atrocities," 275.

⁴⁵ Gold, *Unit 731*, 35-36.

⁴⁶ Gold, *Unit 731*, 36.

⁴⁷ Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure," 180.

⁴⁸ LaFleur, Böhme, and Shimazono, *Dark Medicine*, 75.

⁴⁹ Gold, *Unit 731*, 36.

⁵⁰ Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure," 180.

ambitions.⁵¹ The area he settled on was Pingfang, a cluster of villages much closer to Harbin.⁵² The farmers from the area were quickly expelled and a massive new site was erected within under two years, through exploitation of Chinese laborers who toiled around the clock under supervision of the Suzuki Group.⁵³ The '*Army Epidemic Prevention and Water Supply Unit*' was founded in August 1936, with the military designation '*Unit 731*', with Lieutenant Colonel Ishii as its commander, and the Togo Unit was dissolved. Pingfang, Unit 731's main base, was to become the largest death camp of WWII in Asia.⁵⁴

2.2.2. The First Comfort Stations (1932-1937)

Under Japan's Meiji Constitution of 1889, as well as the civil code adopted later on, women had no property rights. They were expected to produce heirs to the family line, and in case of adultery there was only punishment for the woman, not the man.⁵⁵ As for men, there existed a long-held "*myth of masculinity*", which stipulated that men's sexual impulses were uncontrollable and had to be released, based on which a prostitution system was established in Japan. Women working as prostitutes in legal Japanese brothels, however, had little freedoms. They were only granted the legal right to leave their brothel in 1933, and even thereafter, they were mostly at the mercy of the men managing the brothel, without much chance to refuse service.⁵⁶ However, this was entirely different for women of the Comfort Women System, who were essentially sex slaves, and who could not expect to ever leave their profession. For the far majority of '*comfort women*', service in one of Japan's military brothels was a grueling death sentence.

⁵¹ Pawlowicz and Grunden, "Teaching Atrocities," 275.

⁵² Jeanne Guillemin, *Hidden Atrocities: Japanese Germ Warfare and American Obstruction of Justice at the Tokyo Trial* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), xii-xiii.

⁵³ Gold, *Unit 731*, 39.

⁵⁴ Pawlowicz and Grunden, "Teaching Atrocities," 275-276.

⁵⁵ Yang Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism: Debates and Challenges in the Japanese Academic Critique of the "Comfort Women" System," *Chinese Studies in History* 53, no. 1 (2020): 45.

⁵⁶ Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism," 45-46.

The first Chinese Comfort Station was established in 1932 in Shanghai, although women around that time were also kidnapped in Manchukuo and held as sex slaves to serve the military.⁵⁷ After the '*January 28 Incident*' in Shanghai in 1932, during which Japanese and Chinese forces clashed because of the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Japanese Army stationed in Shanghai, Okamura Yasuji, ordered for women from the Japanese Kansai region to be transported, at great expense, all the way to Shanghai to serve in "*comfort women groups*".⁵⁸ The first stations had been established because instances of Japanese soldiers raping Chinese civilians surged as the amount of troops stationed in the city increased.⁵⁹ Apart from the issue of troop discipline, High Command was also concerned with health risks posed by sexually transmitted diseases. While the Comfort Women System started as a series of brothels organized by the Japanese military, to service the troops in Shanghai and Manchuria, in 1937 it morphed into a massive operation of forced prostitution of Japan's conquered peoples, which subjected hundreds of thousands of women to brutal sexual slavery. What started it all was the eruption of all-out war in July 1937, and in particular the slaughter of Nanjing civilians, which became known as the '*Nanjing Massacre*', or '*The Rape of Nanjing*'.⁶⁰

2.2.3. The Rape of Nanjing (1937-1938)

On the night of 7 July 1937, a skirmish between soldiers of the ROC and Japan's Tianjin Garrison broke out at the Marco Polo Bridge in Beijing, and quickly

⁵⁷ Peipei Qiu, Lifei Chen, and Zhiliang Su, *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 22.

⁵⁸ Zhiliang Su, "New Evidence of the Wartime Sex Slave System Implemented by Japan — Reading the Archives on the "Comfort Women" of the Kwantung Army," *Chinese Studies in History* 53, no. 1 (2020): 10.

⁵⁹ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 25.

⁶⁰ Edward Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women" Beyond Korea: The Chinese Case," In *Remembering Asia's World War Two*, ed. Frost, Mark R., Daniel Schumacher, and Edward Vickers, (London: Routledge, 2019), 174.

spread across the city of Beijing.⁶¹ Street fighting in Shanghai broke out on 13 August, following a shooting incident between Japanese and Chinese soldiers that escalated quickly, as both sides sent in reinforcements.⁶² This marked the beginning of the Second World War (WWII) in Asia. Neither side was sufficiently prepared to fight this undeclared war, but Japan's High Command could once again not control its locally-stationed subordinates, causing the skirmishes to slide into all-out war. Japan's military expected its army to quickly overcome inferior Chinese opposition and to declare victory within months.⁶³ Beijing and Tianjin were indeed taken swiftly.⁶⁴ However, Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces would not back down this time. Only half a year prior to the outbreak of the war, he had made peace with his erstwhile enemy, the communists, and was determined to fight a joint war of resistance against Japanese aggression.⁶⁵

General Matsui Iwane was called on to head the Shanghai Expeditionary Force (SEF), due to his prior dealings with Chiang Kai-shek during peacetime.⁶⁶ The SEF was given two divisions and landed on Shanghai's northern shores on 23 August 1937. Additional four divisions were quickly assigned to the SEF, so that by 20 September 190,000 Japanese soldiers served in it, compared to only 80,000 men under Chiang. However, on 15 August Chiang issued an order for general mobilization and within months China's Army had grown to 700,000 men, far superior in size to the SEF, although inferior in weapons and experience.⁶⁷ Brutal fighting ensued in Shanghai, which lasted for three months, as Chiang refused to let his troops retreat. The Chinese Army fought street by street and village by village, until further Japanese reinforcements landed in early November, tilting the outcome

⁶¹ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 40.

⁶² Suping Lu, *A Dark Page in History: The Nanjing Massacre and Post-Massacre Social Conditions Recorded in British Diplomatic Dispatches, Admiralty Documents, and U.S. Naval Intelligence Reports* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2012), ix.

⁶³ Ropp, *China in World History*, 129.

⁶⁴ Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2012), 57.

⁶⁵ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 39-40.

⁶⁶ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 40-41.

⁶⁷ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 40-42.

irrevocably into Japan's favor. Shanghai finally fell 12 November 1937, when the Chinese Army could no longer hold its position and started a chaotic retreat.⁶⁸ By the end of the battle of Shanghai, both sides had suffered heavy casualties. Over 9,000 Japanese soldiers had died and over 32,000 were wounded, which spurred resentment in the Japanese Army, as hopes of a quick and easy war were crushed by heavy Chinese resistance. However, Chinese casualties amounted to over 150,000, and the Chinese Army was in no position to mount a defense.⁶⁹ High casualties, miscommunication, and a hasty evacuation led to a chaotic retreat, chased by Matsui's troops on their way to Nanjing.⁷⁰

Japan's High Command wanted to take Nanjing come what may, just as Hitler was obsessed with Moscow, because of the mistaken belief that taking the historical capital would bring a swift end to the war.⁷¹ Of course it did not. On 19 November, Chiang ordered for the capital to be relocated to Chongqing. Nonetheless, Nanjing remained Japan's major target. On 7 November, General Matsui was appointed commander of the Central China Area Army (CCAA), with the goal to push Japan's conquest into China's interior.⁷² The CCAA swept westward through the Yangtze valley, with reports of atrocities against civilians emerging from several cities, including Changzhou, Suzhou, Zhenjiang, and Wuxi.⁷³

While approaching Nanjing, the Japanese Army left a trail of destruction, with many villages burned to the ground for the villagers' offense of "*looking suspicious*", which included the behavior of running away from Japanese troops. Diary entries of Japanese soldiers revealed much of the senseless killing, including the execution of captured Chinese soldiers, as was commonly practiced. Such as one diary entry in early December, which mentioned the capturing of 12 Chinese soldiers

⁶⁸ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, ix.

⁶⁹ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 43-44.

⁷⁰ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, ix.

⁷¹ Kai Chen, and Gerald R. Hughes, "Witnesses To a War Crime: the Nanjing Massacre - The British and US Reports," *Intelligence and National Security* 33, no. 7 (2018): 1095.

⁷² Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 43; 45.

⁷³ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, ix.

and went on to blandly comment: “*We shot them to death immediately.*”⁷⁴ Much of the killing was not a premeditated genocide, but resulted through a lack of concern of enemy lives.⁷⁵ On top of that, the Japanese Army had grown frustrated, angry, tired, and bored.⁷⁶ Another diary entry by General Iinuma Mamoru from the SEF, recorded on 6 September 1937, stated:

*“About 600 enemy soldiers entrenched in their barracks surrendered, but we killed them after we had observed some hostile acts among them.”*⁷⁷

When POWs were taken, they were frequently used to help carry equipment, and if they failed to perform were used to practice beheadings on. Looting was also a necessity of the Japanese advance, as supply lines were unable to reach the fast-advancing troops, requiring the Army to live off the land.⁷⁸

By the end of November, the six Japanese divisions marching toward Nanjing were advancing rapidly.⁷⁹ They wanted to accomplish the conquest as quickly as possible and leave no time for the Chiang’s Nationalists to properly defend the city. At the same time, they did not expect much resistance and therefore paid little attention to their surroundings, causing the marching troops to compete with one another on who could reach the city first. Japanese soldiers noted in their diaries that roads leading to Nanjing were strewn with dead Chinese men, both soldiers and civilians. Every now and then some Chinese soldiers or plain-clothed saboteurs managed to attack Japanese soldiers or supply columns that were separated from the bulk of the army.⁸⁰ Chinese guerrilla warfare succeeded in causing ongoing casualties to the Japanese troops, but it further frustrated and antagonized the Japanese Army.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 55-56.

⁷⁵ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 57.

⁷⁶ Chen, “Witness To a War Crime,” 1095.

⁷⁷ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 57.

⁷⁸ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 52-55.

⁷⁹ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 57.

⁸⁰ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 58-59; 61.

⁸¹ Chen, “Witness To a War Crime,” 1093.

Most of the Chinese troops that had been left to defend the walls of Nanjing were young and inexperienced recruits, and their morale was low.⁸² The city was filled with dying soldiers who returned from the battlefield, many of whom were left dead on the streets. By the end of November, according to US diplomats there, the population had dropped from 1 million in early July to around 300,000-400,000.⁸³ Only the poorest class remained, those who could not afford to leave. The Western powers evacuated their subjects. This including British citizens, all of whom departed by ship, with the one exception of Leslie C. Smith of Reuters, who documented the massacre. A total of 27 Westerners remained in the city, they would go on to play a major part in saving the lives of many thousands of Chinese civilians.⁸⁴

General Asaka Yasuhiko, the Emperor's uncle-in-law, was appointed the new commander of the SEF, leaving Matsui to focus on the CCAA and its aim of conquering China's West.⁸⁵ Japanese troops reached the city gates of Nanjing on 9 December 1937, and Matsui promptly delivered an ultimatum to the commander of the Nanjing garrison, General Tang Shengzhi.⁸⁶ The ultimatum remained unanswered and so on 10 December, at 2pm, the fierce shelling and bombardment started and continued for two days, until the walls in the south of the city were breached on 12 December.⁸⁷ At 11PM, General Tang ordered the retreat. The remaining soldiers now desperately tried to escape Nanjing, as the first Japanese troops streamed into the city.⁸⁸ On 13 December 1937, Nanjing was brought under Japanese control.⁸⁹ This was the beginning of the Rape of Nanjing.

⁸² Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 49.

⁸³ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 61-62.

⁸⁴ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, xxii-xxviii.

⁸⁵ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 51.

⁸⁶ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, ix.

⁸⁷ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, ix-x.

⁸⁸ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 67-68.

⁸⁹ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, ix-x.

The atrocities committed within Nanjing's city walls were on an industrial scale, as the soldiers were let loose to burn, loot, rape, and kill.⁹⁰ Soldiers looted virtually all businesses in the city, including foreign properties, such as the embassies of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and the US. Apart from destruction of property, slaughter and rape was committed for weeks, in part organized and in part committed by the soldiers that were let loose to do as they pleased.⁹¹ However, unlike large-scale massacres committed by Germany during WWII, the Nanjing Massacre had plenty of foreign observers present, including diplomats, who produced diaries and reports of what they had seen with their own eyes.⁹² Recording the atrocities was sometimes all the foreigners could do to help. The American journalist Charles Yates McDaniel wrote in his news dispatch from 16 December 1937:

*"Passed a long line of Chinese, hands tied. One broke away, ran and dropped on his knees in front of me, beseeching me to save him from death. I could do nothing. My last remembrance of Nanking: Dead Chinese, dead Chinese, dead Chinese."*⁹³

Estimates of the killings ranged between 200,000-300,000, with an estimated 20,000 women raped, which lent the massacre its notorious name, the '*Rape of Nanjing*' (or '*Rape of Nanking*', based on the city's old English name).⁹⁴ As Wilson Plumer Mills, an American Presbyterian missionary who remained in the city, reported on the mass rapes:

"Your hearts would have been wrung as were ours had you seen some of the early morning crowds of women fleeing from one place to some other where they thought they would be a little safer than they had been from

⁹⁰ Chen, "Witness To a War Crime," 1092.

⁹¹ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, x-xi.

⁹² Chen, "Witness To a War Crime," 1092.

⁹³ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, x.

⁹⁴ Q. Edward Wang, "Eightieth Anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre: Editor's Introduction," *Chinese Studies in History* 50, no. 4 (2017): 255.

*the terror that was theirs the night before. Literally thousands of cases of rape have occurred.”*⁹⁵

The International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) in Tokyo would later come to settle on its estimate of 260,000 dead.⁹⁶ This was in part based on eyewitness testimonies, and in part on the 155,000 corpses that were unearthed, most of which with hands tied.⁹⁷ Naturally, the actual number of those killed was be far higher than the recovered corpses would suggest, as that did not include those burned in the fires, or the thousands that where thrown into the river, seen floating by in towns downstream. The city was burning, with entire districts destroyed, as soldiers were left to roam the city without supervision, looting buildings and searching for women.⁹⁸ Hubert Lafayette Sone, an American missionary, noted:

*“The homes of many people have been burned, and shops and stores are still burning. Every day and night fires can be seen in the city [...] Nearly all the important businesses and shopping districts have been burned. The Chiang Tang Chieh Church and the Y.M.C.A. have been burned to the ground. So the people cannot all go home even when they might be able to. Many of the villages outside the city have been burned.”*⁹⁹

On 22 December 1937, a news report from China’s *Central News Agency* claimed that approximately 50,000 people were killed within four days of the massacre breaking out. Three other investigative reports had similar estimates.¹⁰⁰ The state of chaos, fear, and death continued for six weeks.¹⁰¹ However, as terrifying and deadly as this massacre was, it could have been even worse, was it not for the remaining foreigners who risked their lives for the people of the city.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, xi.

⁹⁶ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 57.

⁹⁷ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 27-28.

⁹⁸ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, x.

⁹⁹ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, xi.

¹⁰⁰ Xiaokui Wang, “Historical Shifts in Remembering China’s Nanjing Massacre,” *Chinese Studies in History* 50, no. 4 (2017): 325.

¹⁰¹ Chen, “Witness To a War Crime,” 1092.

¹⁰² Wang, “Eightieth Anniversary,” 255.

Several of the Westerners who decided to remain in the city as the Japanese Army approached established the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone (ICNSZ) with John D. Rabe, a German executive of Siemens Co., as its chairman, and Lewis S.C. Smythe, an American professor of the University of Nanking, as secretary.¹⁰³ Apart from saving many lives, the organizers of the safety zone also documented the circumstances and helped alert the world to what had happened in Nanjing.¹⁰⁴ Other prominent members included M.S. Bates, also from the University of Nanking, and John G. Magee, from the American Church Mission, both of whom would later become important witnesses at the IMTFE.¹⁰⁵ The zone was 3.8 square kilometers in size and including the US Embassy, Nanking University, and Ginling College.¹⁰⁶ It comprised approximately 13% of the city. Rabe was also the head of the Nazi Party in Nanjing, and so he asked Hitler directly for support in pushing the Japanese to respect the ICNSZ for humanitarian reasons. Hitler did not help.¹⁰⁷

Some of the American members also pleaded with their superiors to convince Japan of officially respecting the zone, but on 4 December, the Japanese military stated that it could not guarantee to omit bombing or attacking it, due to fear of Chinese military presence there.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, two days later the bulk of Nanjing's remaining population moved into the zone, in fear of the looming invasion, causing the zone's population to swell to perhaps as much as 200,000. In its message to Japanese diplomatic representatives on 10 December 1937, the ICNSZ urged Japan once more to respect the zone, using the phrase "*for the sake of two hundred thousand civilians*".¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 62.

¹⁰⁴ Chen, "Witness To a War Crime," 1093.

¹⁰⁵ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 62.

¹⁰⁶ Hua-ling Hu and Lian-hong Zhang, *The Undaunted Women of Nanking: The Wartime Diaries of Minnie Vautrin and Tsen Shui-fang* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), 2.

¹⁰⁷ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 63.

¹⁰⁸ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 63.

¹⁰⁹ Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*, 64-65.

The safety zone saved the lives of many thousand civilians, although soldiers still entered it at times to look for women to rape and men to slaughter.¹¹⁰ In one instance, 1,300 men were taken from their camps within the zone with the promise to Rabe that they would not be hurt, which turned out to be a lie.¹¹¹ As George Ashmore Fitch, another member of the ICNSZ, recorded in his diary:

*“We knew that there were a number of ex-soldiers among them, but Rabe had been promised by an officer that afternoon that their lives would be spared. It was now all too obvious what they were going to do. The men were lined up and roped together in groups of about 100 then by soldiers with bayonets fixed; those who had hats had them roughly torn off and thrown on the ground — and by the light of our headlights we watched them marched away to their doom.”*¹¹²

Fitch’s diary was testament to much of the terrors that occurred in the weeks following 13 December 1937. On 17 December, he wrote:

*“Robbery, murder, rape continue unabated. A rough estimate would be a thousand women raped last night and during the day. A poor woman was raped thirty-seven times. Another had her five months infant deliberately smothered by the brute to stop its crying while he raped her.”*¹¹³

On 20 December, he noted that *“violence and vandalism continue absolutely unchecked,”*¹¹⁴ and went on to describe his drive through town with Smythe, during which they observed burning streets and soldiers setting fresh fire to shops after looting them. On 22 December, he recorded: *“Firing squad at work very near us at 5am. Counted over 100 shots.”*¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Chen, “Witness To a War Crime,” 1094.

¹¹¹ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, xxvii.

¹¹² Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, xxvii.

¹¹³ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, xxvii.

¹¹⁴ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, xxvii.

¹¹⁵ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, xxvii.

There were also some stories of hope, such as that of the contribution to the zone by the two women Minnie Vautrin and Tsen Shui-fang.¹¹⁶ Vautrin, who was the acting president on Ginling College, a women's college, and Tsen Shui-fang, a trained nurse, repurposed the college as refugee camp for over 10,000 women and children, whom they managed to protect from the atrocities. In addition, the two women's diaries became crucial eyewitness reports from that time, which supported the diaries of Rabe, Fitch, and others from the safety zone. Tsen's diary is also the earliest known daily account from the Rape of Nanjing that was recorded by a Chinese eyewitness.¹¹⁷ The British also sheltered several hundred people, both on the premises of the British Embassy, and on ships.¹¹⁸

In January, some Western diplomats and staff returned to Nanjing, and their reports of the situation added to the body of evidence from the atrocities that occurred there. On 6 January 1938, the USS Oahu landed in Nanjing Harbor, with three US diplomats on board, including the ship's commanding officer, John Mitchell Sheehan, who recorded his observations and reported them frequently. Throughout January, many reports were transmitted out of Nanjing via British and US navy ships, which delivered mail and supplies. Several dispatches mentioned that Nanjing had become "*a dead city*".¹¹⁹ Throughout 1938, the Japanese military did not allow for trade to resume or for most foreigners to return to the city, although Japanese businessmen were settled there and were given permission to trade.¹²⁰ The British businessman J. Kinloch was permitted to visit Nanjing in August to September 1938, and he transmitted a report on the situation to the British Embassy, which included the remark that Nanjing...

"[...] must be a dead city as compared to its more flourishing days of the not so distant past, for one sees very little, even small everyday business

¹¹⁶ Chen, "Witness To a War Crime," 1095.

¹¹⁷ Hu and Zhang, *The Undaunted Women of Nanking*, 3.

¹¹⁸ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, xviii.

¹¹⁹ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, xvi; xxiv-xxv; xxix.

¹²⁰ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, xx.

*being done [...] except in the most squalid and out of the way streets, where Japanese soldiers are not likely to be encountered.”*¹²¹

For months there was no telephone, telegraph, or postal service available in Nanjing, nor were there electricity or water services. Sheehan, in one of his reports, concluded that Japan appeared to have no intention of actually making use of this city they had captured.¹²² The Guangzhou-based *National Salvation Daily* published a collection of existing eyewitness accounts in April 1938, under the title ‘*Acts of a Brutal Army*’, which further helped tell the sad story of the massacre.¹²³

The Rape of Nanjing changed the West’s perception of the Japanese Empire, as it revealed that Japan had become an aggressive state, similar to Nazi Germany, which could not be appeased or trusted in the long run.¹²⁴ The first official international condemnation of the massacre occurred on 2 February 1938 in Geneva, by the ROC’s first delegate, Wellington Koa, at the 6th meeting of the 100th session of the Council of the League of Nations, where he not only mentioned atrocities that occurred during the takeover of Nanjing, but also aggressive bombing campaigns in towns all over China. At the Council’s next meeting in May, Koa did not mention Nanjing again, but persisted on emphasizing brutal bombing campaigns and the use of poison gas by Japan, for which a resolution was adopted to request member states to submit information they would have on Japan’s application of poison gas.¹²⁵ Chiang’s government, which had already abandoned Nanjing, was at that time far too occupied than further bemoan those fallen or violated within the city. Whether those who perished in the massacre amounted 200,000 or 300,000, or perhaps even more, it was only a fraction of the over 20 million Chinese who died during this war.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, xx.

¹²² Lu, *A Dark Page in History*, xxvi.

¹²³ Wang, “Historical Shifts,” 325-326.

¹²⁴ Chen, “Witness To a War Crime,” 1093.

¹²⁵ Takashi Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking" : History and Memory in Japan, China, and the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 28-29.

¹²⁶ 28L 28.

Ropp, *China in World History*, 133.

In the heat of war many civilians died, whether on purpose or because of a lack of care for human life. In June 1938, Chiang's air force destroyed dikes to stop the Japanese advance toward Chongqing, killing 300,000 Chinese civilians in the process and leaving another 2 million homeless.¹²⁷ In the following seven years, many millions more would be killed in the conflict.

2.2.4. The Comfort Women System (1937-1945)

The chaos of the Nanjing Massacre spurred the rapid expansion of the Comfort Women System, as the Japanese military sought to contain the urges of the soldiers.¹²⁸ Within half a year of 13 December 1937, 17 comfort stations had been established in Nanjing alone. Citizens of Nanjing and other towns were forced to register themselves during the '*good citizen ID*' registration, which was also used to pick out thousands of young women to serve in the stations.¹²⁹ Women were also commonly abducted from the streets and brought straight to the comfort stations.¹³⁰ The Japanese military was not only aware of these stations, but also planned them, set them up, and was in charge of them, as many documents have shown.¹³¹ For example, in a report to headquarters of the CCAA, the commander of the Kempeitai, Oki Shigeru, sent statistics on comfort stations in the nine regions of Nanjing, Zhenjiang, Jintan, Jurong, Xiaguan, Changzhou, Wuyu, Danyang, and Ningguo. The report included information on procurement of women, the total amount of women in each region, their nationality, and how many men they served. The 109 comfort women in Zhenjiang served a total of 15,000 men, hence each woman had to serve an average of 137 soldiers. Many more such documents from Kempeitai archives across different regions in China and other countries still exist.¹³²

¹²⁷ Ropp, *China in World History*, 129.

¹²⁸ Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 174.

¹²⁹ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 34; 42.

¹³⁰ Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism," 44.

¹³¹ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 51.

¹³² Su, "New Evidence of the Wartime Sex Slave System," 6-7.

The establishment of a wide-ranging system predates the Nanjing Massacre, as shown in a diary entry from 11 December 1937, by the SEF's Chief of Staff, Inuma Mamoru, who wrote:

*"Documents were received from the (Central China) Front Army regarding the establishment of comfort facilities."*¹³³

Chinese women were generally conscripted where needed, although not only Chinese women were coerced into the service. Under Japan's National Mobilization Law, which was used to control the use of material and human resources for the war effort in Japan proper, which included Korea, Korean women were recruited to serve as comfort women.¹³⁴ In China, apart from picking out women during ID registration or simply abducting them off the street, another common method employed for recruitment was to leave the supply of women to local Chinese village leaders, who had to supply their village's daughters or face annihilation. There were also no POW camps for women, hence when women combatants or spies were captured, they were generally either brought to comfort stations, or raped and killed on the spot.¹³⁵

There were four different types of comfort stations in China. Firstly, those that were managed directly by the Japanese military; secondly, those managed by Japanese, Taiwanese, or Korean brothel proprietors for the direct and exclusive use of Japanese soldiers; thirdly, pre-existing entertainment facilities that had been authorized by the Japanese military to be used by its personnel; and fourthly, those that were set up by local Chinese administrators on the order of the Japanese military.¹³⁶ Records of the different kinds of stations and details on them have survived in Kempeitai archives, including that of the Kwantung Kempeitai.¹³⁷ While there were clear rules for the soldiers on how to behave with the women, adherence appears to not have been enforced much.¹³⁸

¹³³ Su, "New Evidence of the Wartime Sex Slave System," 8.

¹³⁴ Su, "New Evidence of the Wartime Sex Slave System," 9.

¹³⁵ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 43-44; 47.

¹³⁶ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 54-56.

¹³⁷ Su, "New Evidence of the Wartime Sex Slave System," 8.

¹³⁸ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 59-61.

Comfort stations sprang up across the Japanese Empire, from all parts of occupied China, down to its Southeast Asian colonies. 164 comfort stations have been confirmed by historians to have existed within Shanghai alone, although many believe this number is likely incomplete.¹³⁹ Stations were also established in front-line camps.¹⁴⁰ There existed around 400,000 comfort women during the war, with about half having been Chinese, 140,000-160,000 Korean, 20,000 Japanese, and several more thousand from Taiwan and Southeast Asian countries, as well as a few hundred European women. This is likely only a fraction of women who were raped outside the comfort women system, including during massacres such as that in Nanjing and many other places. In one instance of a mop-up operation in Yu County, Japanese soldiers raped virtually every woman in Xinghua Village, a total of over 200, and only two women escaped. The average ratio for Chinese comfort women was likely at 29:1 (soldiers per woman), and soldiers visited repeatedly, while the replacement rate for women is estimated to have been around 3.5-4.0, as women did usually not survive for long.¹⁴¹

Comfort women imported into China from Japan, Korea, or Taiwan usually only had to serve officers, while Chinese comfort women were forced to serve the soldiers, usually under much worse conditions. There was a clear hierarchy of women, based on their nationality, as is reflected in one price chart that survived in a report from 1941, which showed the three classes of women: First class were Japanese women for 1.4 yuan, second class were Taiwanese and Korean women for 0.8 yuan, and third class were the Chinese women, for 0.4 yuan.¹⁴² While payment was received for the service of the women, this does not mean that women received money. In theory they did have a salary, either paid in military savings, as done for some Korean women, or in military currency. However, the money was only to be paid out upon completion of service, but except for some very few women who survived the war, the service only ended with their death. And those who did manage

¹³⁹ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 32-33.

¹⁴⁰ Su, "New Evidence of the Wartime Sex Slave System," 7-8.

¹⁴¹ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 37-39.

¹⁴² Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 43-44; 64.

to survive received nothing, because the Japanese government refused to pay out military savings after the war, and as for those paid in military currency, it became worthless anyways.¹⁴³ Surveys from South Korea, North Korea, China, the Philippines, and the Netherlands all showed that surviving women had not received any remuneration for their service.¹⁴⁴

Women of different nationalities were also treated entirely different. When Japanese women got pregnant they were allowed to send their newborns back home, while Chinese women were killed.¹⁴⁵ This was a likely outcome for many women, because soldiers did not always use the condoms they were given, therefore outbreaks of venereal diseases were also rampant.¹⁴⁶ Chinese comfort women commonly had to service 50 men per day and were held in squalid conditions, most survived for only a few months before they succumbed to venereal disease or died as a result of their wounds.¹⁴⁷

As the war reached an impasse for Japan in 1940, it launched '*Operation Destroy All*', with its three alls of '*kill all, loot all, burn all*'.¹⁴⁸ The result was millions of civilians either sent off to do hard labor or being killed, and many thousands of women being drafted for the comfort service.¹⁴⁹ In April 1942, the Zhejiang-Jiangxi Campaign was launched which further pushed the Japanese Army south, to prevent China and the US from launching air raids on Tokyo. For this purpose, Jinhua was occupied in May 1942, where important documents have survived that detail the establishment of comfort stations there.¹⁵⁰ Reports detailing the system also exist from other foreign sources, such as the '*Investigation Report on*

¹⁴³ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 62-64.

¹⁴⁴ Su, "New Evidence of the Wartime Sex Slave System," 11.

¹⁴⁵ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 60.

¹⁴⁶ Su, "New Evidence of the Wartime Sex Slave System," 9-10.

¹⁴⁷ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 54.

¹⁴⁸ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 35.

¹⁴⁹ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 35.

¹⁵⁰ Zhiliang Su, "A Valuable Document Revealing the Japanese Army's "Comfort Stations": Reading the Jinhua Gyerim Association Articles and Register," *Chinese Studies in History* 53, no. 1 (2020): 14-16.

Japanese Abuse’ from the American military archives dated to 1 October 1944, which describes the human trafficking of Korean comfort women to Burma.¹⁵¹

Even as defeat had become a certainty in early 1945, Japanese soldiers were still allotted visits to the comfort stations. Funds were also still allocated to the maintenance of the system, as one document from the Central Bank of Manchukuo from 30 March 1945 showed, which consisted of a record of a telephone call that ordered the remittance of 252,000 yen for allocation to comfort stations.¹⁵² However, following the Potsdam Declaration of July 1945, Japan’s High Command issued a nation-wide order from the top down to destroy documents and archives. Fortunately, some documents still survived, such as some documents from the Kwantung Kempeitai which had been buried and are now held in the Jilin Provincial Archives, in China.¹⁵³ As for the comfort women, the order was extended to them as well, and so the far majority of those who survived their ordeal to this point were slaughtered at the end of the war, hence those who survived were mostly women who managed to escape or who were ransomed out.¹⁵⁴ From approximately 10,000 comfort women that served during the war in Hainan, only 42 survived. Investigations into Korean comfort women revealed that 75%-90% had perished, although casualties of Chinese women are likely far higher.¹⁵⁵ Those who survived were usually shunned by society. Most of the survivors who had been interviewed in the 1990s were unable to bear children after the war, therefore a traditional Confucian society had little use for them, not to mention that many blamed the women for having served the enemy sexually.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Li, “Reflections on Postwar Nationalism,” 44.

¹⁵² Su, “New Evidence of the Wartime Sex Slave System,” 10.

¹⁵³ Su, “New Evidence of the Wartime Sex Slave System,” 6.

¹⁵⁴ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 72-73.

¹⁵⁵ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 73-74.

¹⁵⁶ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 157-158.

2.2.5. Unit 731 (1937-1945)

Unit 731's new vast complex in Pingfang was completed in 1938.¹⁵⁷ The site was a self-contained 1,000-acres large town, with over 150 buildings, its own airstrip, and a train station, which connected it to the South Manchuria Railway.¹⁵⁸ It contained research facilities, prison blocks, administrative buildings, personnel housing blocks, sports facilities, a thousand-seater auditorium, and facilities that enabled it to be entirely self-sufficient, including livestock, farmland, and a power station.¹⁵⁹ The only constant input required were the '*marutas*', as the human victims of the experiments were called. The site also contained its own military garrison, with 3,000 soldiers stationed there.¹⁶⁰ There were also three large incinerators to dispose of the spent subjects once they succumbed to their experiments.¹⁶¹

The Kempeitai continued to supply the human subjects by the thousands — men, women, and children — delivered by the South Manchuria Railway.¹⁶² During construction, the Japanese told the locals that they were building a lumber mill, which led some researchers to quip that "*the people are the logs*".¹⁶³ The joke stuck, as all test subjects were henceforth referred to as "*marutas*" (Japanese for '*log*'), and were called "*Maruta Number X*", according to their prisoner number.¹⁶⁴ Unit 731's supply of *logs* was virtually guaranteed following the outbreak of war on 7 July 1937.¹⁶⁵ While the kinds of experiments that began in the Zhongma Fortress in Beiyinhe continued, many more varieties were added to the researchers' list, such as further testing the endurance of the human bodies at high altitudes and extreme

¹⁵⁷ Gold, *Unit 731*, 39.

¹⁵⁸ Guillemin, *Hidden Atrocities*, xiii.

¹⁵⁹ Pawlowicz and Grunden, "Teaching Atrocities," 275.
LaFleur, Böhme, and Shimazono, *Dark Medicine*, 89.

¹⁶⁰ Pawlowicz and Grunden, "Teaching Atrocities," 275-276.

¹⁶¹ Gold, *Unit 731*, 41.

¹⁶² Doug Hickey et al., "Unit 731 and Moral Repair," *Journal of Medical Ethics* 43, no. 4 (2017): 271.

¹⁶³ Gold, *Unit 731*, 40.

¹⁶⁴ Gold, *Unit 731*, 40-41.

¹⁶⁵ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 57.

depths, and treatments for frostbite.¹⁶⁶ Research was done with all kinds of diseases, including typhus, typhoid, paratyphoid fever, yellow fever, scarlet fever, anthrax, smallpox, chicken pox, hemorrhagic fever, encephalitis, whooping cough, pneumonia, cholera, diphtheria, dysentery, tuberculosis, meningitis, gonorrhea, syphilis, salmonella, and plague.¹⁶⁷

To understand the disease's impact on the human body, prisoners were infected and the progress of the disease was meticulously documented. At some point, the subjects were vivisected (i.e. cut open alive) to observe the impact of the disease on the living human body, usually without anesthesia.¹⁶⁸ The subjects were strapped down and at some point died of either blood loss or when vital organs were removed.¹⁶⁹ This included the vivisection of pregnant women to examine the progress of disease on the body of both the mother and the fetus.¹⁷⁰ In some cases women were forcefully impregnated onsite, to better study the spread of venereal disease.¹⁷¹ Focus on venereal diseases grew with the rapid spreading of infectious diseases such as gonorrhea and syphilis among the soldiers due to widespread rape of civilians in the conquered population, as well as through the comfort stations.¹⁷²

There were four areas to which more resources and time were dedicated than to any other disease. They were cholera, a particularly dangerous disease with a high mortality rate that commonly affected troops in large-scale wars; plague, which was seen as highly promising for biological warfare due to its fast-acting nature and very high mortality rate; epidemic hemorrhagic fever (EHF), which commonly affected many Japanese soldiers in Manchuria; and frostbite, a condition that was responsible for countless limbs lost by soldiers of the Japanese Army during the freezing winters

¹⁶⁶ Pawlowicz and Grunden, "Teaching Atrocities," 276.

¹⁶⁷ E. Cuerda-Galindo, X. Sierra-Valentí, E. González-López, and F. López-Muñoz, "Syphilis and Human Experimentation From the First Appearance of the Disease to World War II: A Historical Perspective and Reflections on Ethics," *Actas Dermo-Sifiliográficas (English ed.)* 105, no. 8 (2013): 765.

¹⁶⁸ Hickey et al., "Unit 731 and Moral Repair," 271.

¹⁶⁹ Gold, *Unit 731*, 44-45.

¹⁷⁰ Cuerda-Galindo et al., "Syphilis and Human Experimentation," 766.

¹⁷¹ Gold, *Unit 731*, 45.

¹⁷² Cuerda-Galindo et al., "Syphilis and Human Experimentation," 765-766.

of Manchuria. For conducting research on cholera, stray dogs were infected, which then carried the virus into villages, where around 20% of villagers then died of the grueling symptoms of the disease, such as violent diarrhea and vomiting, and painful dehydration that causes still-alive people to already appear dead and skeleton-like.¹⁷³

As terrifying as cholera was, it was not suitable for warfare, due to its incubation period of around three weeks. Hence research on cholera was mainly conducted for the sake of creating vaccines with which soldiers could be inoculated. Instead, the Ishii researchers focused on the plague bacterium for creating an effective biological weapon, as it tends to start killing within three days of infection. Ishii was fascinated with this disease and its potential from early on, and he dedicated much time, resources, and *marutas* to realizing his dream of creating plague-based biological weapons. He developed a special ceramic bomb that could deliver the bacteria unharmed through aerial attacks, for which he utilized traditional ceramic artists who created the devices. Those bombs were then dropped at Unit 731's test ground in Anda, where the victims had been placed.¹⁷⁴ They all died horrifying deaths at the vivisection table, after experiencing the painful symptoms of plague. However, the on average most painful path a prisoner could have taken might have been that of being a subject of the frostbite research, conducted by the man they called the "*scientific devil*".¹⁷⁵

Dr. Yoshimura Hisato, a physiologist from Kyoto University, joined Unit 731 in Pingfang in 1938, where he was in charge of medical examinations of prisoners, which included taking blood samples, conducting x-rays, and generally monitoring the health of prisoners.¹⁷⁶ However, the wellbeing of his patients was not his priority. People who worked with him would later describe him with terms such as "*a cold blooded animal*", "*the demon of science*", or the "*scientific devil*".¹⁷⁷ He led the

¹⁷³ Gold, *Unit 731*, 70-81.

¹⁷⁴ Gold, *Unit 731*, 74-78

¹⁷⁵ LaFleur, Böhme, and Shimazono, *Dark Medicine*, 76.

¹⁷⁶ Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure," 182.

¹⁷⁷ LaFleur, Böhme, and Shimazono, *Dark Medicine*, 76.
Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure," 182-183.

research on frostbite. For this, the subjects were tied up in the frigid cold with one of their limbs exposed, over which icy water would be poured repeatedly. Ice that formed would be chipped away regularly and the limb would be hit with a club to listen for a distinct sound akin to striking wood, which would indicate the limb having frozen through. At this point the real experiment could begin, which commonly resulted in flesh falling off brittle bones that might have already been shattered by the club. In the end, the result was invariably rotting of what remained of the limbs and gangrene. Yoshimura had his own purpose-built, two-story tall freezing facility that could induce temperatures of up to -70 degrees celsius in its research cells. He would later become famous for insights into frostbite and improved ways of treating it, including placing affected body parts into warm water of around 37 to 40 degrees celsius, instead of the previously-held custom of rubbing them with some ointment.¹⁷⁸

As the Japanese Empire expanded, additional '*Water Purification*' units were set up, so that by 1939 there were 18 satellite facilities of Unit 731.¹⁷⁹ These included Unit 1855 in Beijing, Unit 1644 in Nanjing, and Unit 9420 in Singapore, each of which specialized in certain areas.¹⁸⁰ Unit 100 in Xinjing specialized in pathogens targeting domesticated animals, while Unit 8604 in Guangzhou conducted experiments on Hong Kong refugees, and Unit 9420 in Singapore was responsible for producing large quantities of fleas infected with plague.¹⁸¹ The sum of these sites was commonly referred to as Unit 731, or simply as the Ishii Organization.¹⁸² By the beginning of the 1940s, 20,000 personnel were staffing the sites of the Ishii Organization.¹⁸³

Apart from the many civilian researchers and the military personnel, there were also many children involved, in particular from Japan's Youth Corps. The

¹⁷⁸ Gold, *Unit 731*, 81-83; 85.

¹⁷⁹ Pawlowicz and Grunden, "Teaching Atrocities," 276.

¹⁸⁰ Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure," 184.

¹⁸¹ Gold, *Unit 731*, 49-57.

¹⁸² Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure," 184.

¹⁸³ Gold, *Unit 731*, 48.

children assisted with tasks such as raising rats for the cultivation of flees, or carrying the freshly removed organs to labs.¹⁸⁴ Many experiments were also carried out off-site, such as aforementioned experiments on civilian populations in a variety of villages, as well as experiments conducted in POW camps. One such example is the Mukden Camp, which held POWs of many nations, including 1,300 Americans. Americans, Australians, Brits, and Dutch were exposed to pathogens, then the researchers left and waited until the chosen disease had swept through the camp, upon which they returned to conduct autopsies and collect organs.¹⁸⁵

The Ishii Organization relied greatly on both the military and the Japanese civilian research community to carry out its work. Ishii enjoyed powerful military protection and logistical support by influential commanders, such as General Tojo Hideki and General Umezu Yoshijiro. Before General Tojo became Japan's Minister of War, he served for three years as the head of the Kwantung Kempeitai and later as the Army Chief of Staff of the Kwantung Army, reporting to General Umezu.¹⁸⁶ Ishii's operation also greatly relied on the Japanese academia. He frequently presented Unit 731's findings at the Army Medical College in Tokyo, which he could reach via a direct flight departing from Pingfang's airstrip. Apart from data, he also carried specimens, such as limbs, organs, or even whole heads, inside jars that had been handcrafted by European-trained Japanese craftsmen. His findings helped the medical academia back in Japan to answer research questions, which then fed into new research ideas that Ishii could bring back to Manchuria, where he would again test them on human subjects, before reporting back to Tokyo with the new results.¹⁸⁷ Universities and their medical departments across Japan were directly linked to Unit 731 with their research, and they also supplied much of the key research personnel that supported the Ishii Organization in Pingfang and at the satellite facilities.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Gold, *Unit 731*, 61-62, 67.

¹⁸⁵ Pawlowicz and Grunden, "Teaching Atrocities," 276-277.

¹⁸⁶ Guillemin, *Hidden Atrocities*, xi-xii.

¹⁸⁷ Gold, *Unit 731*, 46-47.

¹⁸⁸ Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure," 183.

The Japanese medical academia published many studies during this time, such as one article from 1944, which was published in the prestigious *Japan Journal of Pathology*. In it, the researchers describe a series of experiments on monkeys which were infected with EHF through various means, such as blood transfusions or administering pulverized organs of deceased animals, to establish the means through which EHF could be transmitted. The details of the various experiments were noted down meticulously, such as the fever the monkeys experienced, which could reach 40 degrees celsius. The article never addressed what kind of monkeys were utilized for this study, but it did not have to. Monkeys cannot have a fever of 40 degrees celsius, no matter how sick they get. But this did not matter, as everyone reading this journal article already knew that no monkeys were harmed in the process of experimentation.¹⁸⁹ The Japanese medical research community of the time knew that ‘monkey’ was code for human. While medical research in Japan had largely relied on animal-based research since the early 1920s, following the founding of Unit 731, there had been no more need to experiment on animals.¹⁹⁰

Following an impasse in Japan’s conquest of China in 1940, the High Command approved General Umezu’s request to deploy biological weapons as part of the military campaign. In July 1940, Ishii received the green light to start attacking Chinese civilian populations with deadly pathogens produced by Unit 731. Umezu ordered five kilograms of plague-infected fleas, 50 kilograms of cholera bacteria, and 70 kilograms of typhoid cultures, to be shipped to Unit 1644 in Nanjing to support the war effort.¹⁹¹

Until the end of the war, countless biological and chemical attacks were carried out against the Chinese civilian population in which many thousand died.¹⁹² A total of six plague attacks are also confirmed to have been executed on major cities.¹⁹³ The first of which was carried out on 4 October 1940, on the city of

¹⁸⁹ Gold, *Unit 731*, 73-74.

¹⁹⁰ Suzuki, "Public Health," 46-47.

¹⁹¹ Guillemin, *Hidden Atrocities*, xi-xiii.

¹⁹² Pawlowicz and Grunden, "Teaching Atrocities," 276.

¹⁹³ Gold, *Unit 731*, 75.

Quzhou, a commercial hub in the southeastern Zhejiang Province.¹⁹⁴ In this attack, as with the following ones, a plane circled the populated target area before dropping its payload, which consisted of cotton, cloth scraps, and wheat, to which the infested fleas clung.¹⁹⁵ No outbreak of plague was reported and so on 27 October, a second attack was carried out on the port city of Ningbo, in which eyewitnesses reported seeing a dark plume of smoke emerging from an airplane. The first cases of plague were diagnosed within two days and on 1 November the dying started. Fortunately, the city authorities moved quickly. Homes were disinfected, clothes burned, and quarantines imposed. The epidemic only lasted 34 days and around 100 people were confirmed to have died, although that number excluded those who had fled to the countryside. Despite the low confirmed death count, panic quickly spread among Ningbo's population, which may have aided the Japanese conquest soon thereafter.¹⁹⁶

Ningbo had experienced outbreaks of plague before, but this was an unusual one, because it came in winter, killed humans but only few rats, and the fleas carrying it were not native to the region.¹⁹⁷ On 8 November, the plague also broke out on the previous target, Quzhou, and then 26 November an additional attack was carried out in Jinhua, and a year after that, on 4 November 1941, another areal attack was launched on Changde, in Hunan Province, which was a major railway hub. The outbreak of plague caused immense panic within the city's populations.¹⁹⁸

China's National Health Administration compiled a report detailing some of the attacks on civilians and circulated it among the international community at Chongqing, including the British and US Embassies, to make them aware of the Japanese deployment of biological weapons in violation of international law. However, the report was met with disbelief by the Allied forces, who were already embroiled in a war against Nazi Germany and therefore had few resources at their

¹⁹⁴ Guillemin, *Hidden Atrocities*, xiv.

¹⁹⁵ Gold, *Unit 731*, 48.

¹⁹⁶ Guillemin, *Hidden Atrocities*, xiv-xv.

¹⁹⁷ Jonathan Watts, "Victims of Japan's Notorious Unit 731 Sue," *The Lancet* 360, no. 9333 (2002): 628.

¹⁹⁸ Guillemin, *Hidden Atrocities*, xiv-xv.

disposal to support Chiang's forces.¹⁹⁹ However, this changed when the Japanese Empire attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 and dragged the US into the Asia-Pacific War. And while Japan was at the height of its power in early 1941, following the Battle of Midway in June 1942, the tide began to turn.²⁰⁰ China had gained a powerful new ally in the US, which became much more receptive to investigating allegations of the Japanese deployment of biological weapons. In April 1942, the US Embassy submitted the '*Allegations of Japanese Bacterial Warfare in China*' to Washington, in which it summarized some of the atrocities that had been committed using said weapons.²⁰¹ All the while, Japan kept expanding the Unit 731 facility. Following its takeover of Singapore in February 1942, it established Unit 9420 in Singapore, focusing on mass-producing pathogens and fleas, headed by the Tokyo Army Hospital's Dr. Naito Ryoichi.²⁰²

The Ishii Organization also actively supported the Zhejiang-Jiangxi campaign, by sending saboteurs to the battle fields who, for example, poisoned wells with cholera and distributing tainted food, or sprayed anthrax and glanders along roads, which killed many farmers and livestock.²⁰³ In many cases, attacks were utilized to further the ongoing research, such as one confirmed attack on a village in September 1942. Once the villagers started dying, researchers arrived in protective clothing and set up their temporary laboratory in one of the houses, where infected people were vivisected. The epidemics of cholera and plague kept haunting the afflicted areas long after the war had ended, including the plague-affected area in Ningbo, which was kept sealed off well into the 1960s.²⁰⁴ The diseases killed indiscriminately, as demonstrated by one incidence in which 10,000 Japanese soldiers inadvertently entered a hazardous zone and were exposed to cholera, resulting in the death of 2,000 of them. Nonetheless, the Zhejiang-Jiangxi campaign

¹⁹⁹ Guillemin, *Hidden Atrocities*, xv-xvi.

²⁰⁰ Gold, *Unit 731*, 86.

²⁰¹ Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure," 184.

²⁰² Guillemin, *Hidden Atrocities*, xviii.

²⁰³ Guillemin, *Hidden Atrocities*, xvii-xviii.

²⁰⁴ Gold, *Unit 731*, 76-77.

was a success, killing 30,000 soldiers and 250,000 civilians on the Chinese side, among whom were many victims of Japan's indiscriminate biological weapons attacks.²⁰⁵

Even though the war was clearly tilting in the direction of the US by the end of 1944, based on the reports coming from China, Washington had grown increasingly concerned about the danger posed to its troops by the deployment of biological weapons, and with good reason.²⁰⁶ As the US was preparing to conquer the Japanese island of Saipan, around 20 men were dispatched by Unit 731 to help spread plague and other pathogens on the island. Fortunately for the US troops, the ship carrying the pathogens was sunk en route, hence the Americans were spared the horrors of biological warfare.²⁰⁷ Then in early 1945, Lieutenant General Ishii, prepared for '*Operation PX*', a secret operation that planned to send a submarine aircraft carrier all the way to the US's West Coast, where it would then launch planes that would bomb densely populated cities with deadly pathogens. There were no major technological or logistical issues with the plan, as it was doable and highly unlikely for the submarine aircraft carriers to be discovered en route, but in the end General Umezu, who had become the Chief of Staff of the Japanese Army in 1944, vetoed it. He felt that deploying biological weapons against the US would cause an American response of even greater terror, which would eventually result in an incessant battle of bacteria against humanity.²⁰⁸

On 6 and 9 August 1945, the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively, and the war ended soon thereafter.²⁰⁹ However, by then most of the evidence relating to the Ishii Organization had already disappeared. Following the Soviet Union's declaration of war against Japan in early August 1945, it became clear that within days Unit 731 would be captured and its atrocities exposed to the

²⁰⁵ Guillemin, *Hidden Atrocities*, xvii-xviii.

²⁰⁶ Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure," 185.

²⁰⁷ Gold, *Unit 731*, 86.

²⁰⁸ Gold, *Unit 731*, 87-91.
Guillemin, *Hidden Atrocities*, xviii.

²⁰⁹ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 58.

world. Ishii ordered the immediate destruction of all Unit 731-affiliated sites, documents, and human subjects.²¹⁰ There were approximately 300 prisoners left in Pingfang, all of whom were given the choice of either hanging themselves or being poisoned.²¹¹ After which they were incinerated. Then buildings were blown up, although the operation could not be fully completed.²¹² The Zhongma Fortress in Beiyinhe was so well constructed that it could not be blown up. Nanjing's Unit 1644 also survived to this day and is now a hospital.²¹³ However, some documents remained in the hands of a few of Ishii's top researchers, to guarantee their safety.²¹⁴

Ishii made the scientists of his organization swear to each other an oath of leading a "*life in the shadows*".²¹⁵ Everyone had to take their secret of working for Unit 731 to the grave and promise to not work in the public sector and to never contact each other again. Shortly before the arrival of the Red Army, the remaining researchers at Pingfang, including Ishii, took the South Manchuria Railway for one final time, out of Manchukuo and through the Korean Peninsula, where they boarded a ferry to Japan, and then took a special train north through Japan, at which point each of the researchers alighted at their stop and journeyed on home by public transport. The war was over and so was the story of Unit 731. Nobody on that train would ever have to face prosecution for what they had done. WWII officially ended on 2 September 1945, when General Umezu signed the instrument of surrender aboard the U.S.S. Missouri.²¹⁶

²¹⁰ Pawlowicz and Grunden, "Teaching Atrocities," 277.

²¹¹ LaFleur, Böhme, and Shimazono, *Dark Medicine*, 77.

²¹² Tony Brooks, "Angry States: Chinese views of Japan as seen through the Unit 731 War Museum since 1949," In *Remembering Asia's World War Two*, ed. Frost, Mark R., Daniel Schumacher, and Edward Vickers (London: Routledge, 2019), 29.

²¹³ Gold, *Unit 731*, 92-93.

²¹⁴ Cuerda-Galindo et al., "Syphilis and Human Experimentation," 766.

²¹⁵ Gold, *Unit 731*, 92-93.

²¹⁶ Gold, *Unit 731*, 92-93.

2.3. The Aftermath of WWII and the Birth of the People's Republic (1945-1949)

Following the Japanese surrender, all former territories of China were handed back to the Republic of China, under Chiang Kai-shek's GMD. This included Taiwan, which had been a Japanese colony for half a century before being returned to China in 1945.²¹⁷ Chiang understood that post-war Japan, under American occupation, had to become an ally of China, therefore he urged his countrymen not to seek retaliation. However, this call for forgiveness did not include Chinese collaborators, 30,000 of whom were arrested and 369 sentenced to death. While the highest level of perpetrators, the so-called class A war criminals, were tried at the IMTFE in Tokyo, class B and C war criminals were tried in various locations across allied countries, including China.²¹⁸ As part of the effort of bringing perpetrators to justice, the GMD government established the '*Nanjing Commission for the Investigation of Enemy Crimes*'. On 13 December 1945, the GMD's official newspaper, the *Central Daily News* published a special commemorative edition on the massacre, in which the estimate of 250,000 fallen Chinese was mentioned, and within the same month, the newspaper issued a call to Nanjing's residents to come forward with charges, which resulted in a total of 1,036 filed accusation.²¹⁹ As the investigation on the Nanjing Massacre was drawing to a close, Shanghai's *Dagong Daily* newspaper reported on 17 February 1946 that the updated estimate was at around 300,000 killed during the massacre.²²⁰ Then on 10 March 1947, Chinese judges issued their conclusion of over 300,000 Chinese having been killed as result of the massacre that took place in the days and weeks following 13 December 1937.²²¹

²¹⁷ Christopher J. Carolan, "The 'Republic of Taiwan': A Legal-Historical Justification For a Taiwanese Declarations of Independence," *New York University Law Review* 75, no. 2 (2000): 433-435.

²¹⁸ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 63-64.

²¹⁹ Wang, "Historical Shifts," 326.

²²⁰ Wang, "Historical Shifts," 326-327.

²²¹ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 64-65.

On the tenth anniversary of the Massacre, on 13 December 1947, the GMD government declared this day to be the '*Memorial Day for the Martyrs of Nanjing*'. The government also encouraged municipal governments to build memorials in memory of atrocities committed during the war. Meanwhile, some monuments had already been erected for those killed, such as the monument by the Yangtze Electric Power Company, for its employees who fell victim to the Nanjing Massacre, which featured a lengthy inscription commemorating their service.²²² However, the monument did not survive for long. The Chinese Civil War broke out in full force and interrupted most of the war crimes tribunals across China. The memorials that had been erected, including that of the Yangtze Electric Power Company, were torn down by Chinese Communist forces. The CCP's foremost enemy was no longer the Japanese, but the GMD and their American allies, and all they stood for and had accomplished.²²³

As for Unit 731, most of its postwar story was played out in Japan. Ishii and his researchers had returned to Japan, together with an array of documents they wished to pass on to the US in exchange for immunity, with which they succeeded. Naito Ryoichi, one of Ishii's top scientists, secretly met with Lieutenant Colonel Murray Sanders, a microbiologist and former lecturer at Columbia University, who now worked at the US's center for biological and chemical weapons research, Camp Detrick (later Fort Detrick), and was in charge of researching Japan's biological and chemical weapons program.²²⁴ The US feared the looming Cold War with the Soviet Union and therefore was keen to learn from Japanese research and application of these terrifying weapons. The Supreme Commander for Allied Powers General Douglas MacArthur himself approved the exchange of Naito's valuable documents and intel through interviews for immunity from prosecution.²²⁵ Sanders conducted many interviews and received large amounts of documents he submitted to the US.

²²² Wang, "Historical Shifts," 327.

²²³ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 65-66.

²²⁴ Gold, *Unit 731*, 94-95.

²²⁵ Gold, *Unit 731*, 96-97.

Ishii himself was interviewed by Sanders's successor, Lieutenant Colonel Arvo T. Thompson.²²⁶

However, not all Unit 731 researchers escaped. Some lower-ranking scientists were captured by the Soviet's Red Army in Manchuria. Therefore Moscow also knew about the shocking research done in Pingfang and demanded to interview some of Ishii's men as well. The Unit 731 researchers in Japan, however, knew that their best bet for survival was with the US and therefore told the Soviets nothing of value.²²⁷ This, it turned out, was a wise choice. In March 1948, all perpetrators of the Ishii Organization were granted immunity from prosecution.²²⁸ Unit 731 was never mentioned at the Tokyo Trials. It became a US state secret and neither the American nor the Japanese public were to hear anything of it for decades to come.²²⁹ General Umezu was found guilty of war crimes at the IMTFE in Tokyo and died in Sugamo Prison in 1949, without having revealed anything about Unit 731.²³⁰ The Soviet Union did continue its research into Unit 731 and conducted the Khabarovsk Trials in 1949.²³¹ In it, twelve low-level perpetrators who had been captured in Manchuria were convicted. Some of the horrors of the Ishii Organization were revealed during the trial and made public, but in the West these findings were dismissed as false and nightmarish propaganda by Communist Moscow. In later estimates, Japanese and Chinese scholars would agree on a death toll of between 270,000 and 300,000 caused directly by Unit 731.²³²

Apart from those twelve convicted researchers, none of Ishii's scientists was ever charged. Many went on to lead successful careers and lived to old age. Naito Ryoichi became the co-founder and head of the Green Cross Corporation, which was Japan's first blood bank following the war and soon expanded to the US. It became

²²⁶ Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure," 194.

²²⁷ Gold, *Unit 731*, 103-106.

²²⁸ Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure," 205.

²²⁹ Watts, "Victim's of Japan's Notorious Unit 731 Sue," 628.

²³⁰ Pawlowicz and Grunden, "Teaching Atrocities," 277.

²³¹ Brooks, "Angry States," 29.

²³² Watts, "Victim's of Japan's Notorious Unit 731 Sue," 628.

later involved in the tainted blood scandal of 1988, in which 18 Japanese patients were infected with HIV through tainted blood transfusions supplied by Green Cross. Suspicions persist that this was done on purpose to create pressure in Japan for the development of an AIDS vaccine, from which Green Cross stood to gain immensely.²³³ Dr. Yoshimura, the “*scientific devil*”, went on to become a famous professor for his groundbreaking research in frostbite, and even became the president of the Prefectural University of Medicine of Kyoto. Only following a revealing newspaper article in 1982 did the background of his research become public, which led to student protests and him having to rescind his presidency. He never showed any remorse for what he had done.²³⁴ In an interview he responded to the question of his culpability in the horrifying experiments he conducted with:

*“[...] it was war. The orders came from the country. All the responsibility lies with the country. The individual is not responsible”*²³⁵

The second person in charge of medical examinations in Pingfang, next to Yoshimura, was Miyagawa Tadashi, who went on to become professor at Tokyo University’s Medical Department, where he gained fame for his pioneering use of radiation for medical applications. At Unit 731, he had been responsible for x-raying countless subjects.²³⁶ The list goes on. Dozens of Unit 731 researchers could be named who had a fulfilled career in the decades after the war. Here a few examples: Tanaka Hideo, previously employed at the team handling plague-carrying fleas, became Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Osaka University. Amitago Shogo, from the Laboratory for Communicable Diseases at Tokyo University, remained at the facility and received the Asahi Prize, honoring his “*outstanding scientific performance*”.²³⁷ Okamoto Kozo, the head of Unit 731’s pathology research division, became the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Kyoto University. Sonoguchi Tadao, from Unit 731’s biological weapons development division, later became the vice-

²³³ Gold, *Unit 731*, 140-141.

²³⁴ Gold, *Unit 731*, 82-85.

²³⁵ Gold, *Unit 731*, 85.

²³⁶ LaFleur, Böhme, and Shimazono, *Dark Medicine*, 76.

²³⁷ Gold, *Unit 731*, 142.

principal for the School of Hygiene of Japan's Self-Defense Force, the rebranded Japanese military. Futagi Hideo, vivisection team leader, co-founded The Green Cross Corporation.²³⁸ Et cetera.

As for Ishii Shiro, he never managed to find a meaningful career for himself again, possibly because of his lacking people skills, and died in 1959, aged 69, of throat cancer.²³⁹ Nonetheless, Ishii died a wealthy and well-respected doctor.²⁴⁰ Because of the US's eagerness to obtain insights into biological and chemical warfare from Japan, none of the architects of Asia's largest and most horrifying death factory ever had to face justice. By the time Unit 731's horrors would come to public attention, the perpetrators had died of natural deaths in freedom, most of whom following highly successful careers. The same can be said for Murray Sanders, the first American to make contact with the scientists of Unit 731. He maintained close connections with some of them and also became associated with the Green Cross. As for Arvo Thompson, the man who had personally interviewed Ishii, in 1948, the year the Unit 731 perpetrators were granted impunity, he returned to Japan, where he committed suicide.²⁴¹

²³⁸ Gold, *Unit 731*, 142-143.

²³⁹ Gold, *Unit 731*, 139-140.

²⁴⁰ Watts, "Victim's of Japan's Notorious Unit 731 Sue," 628.

²⁴¹ Tsuneishi, "Reasons for the Failure," 197.

Part II: The History of Remembrance

3. Chapter 2: The Victor Narrative (1949-1976)

On 1 October 1949, facing Tiananmen Square, Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China (PRC). Leaving wars and colonialism behind, Mao declared that "*China has stood up*". Following the establishment of the PRC, the country had to also "*stand up*" in economic terms. The CCP reorganized the country along socialized lines and focused on rebuilding the nation's war-torn economy.²⁴² However, peace was not lasting, and within a year of winning the Chinese Civil War on the Mainland, the PRC entered the Korean War. As a result, the US became China's new number one enemy.²⁴³ The PRC's massive casualties during this war, as well as the US's new commitment to defend the ROC on Taiwan from any future communist invasion, meant that Mao had to give up on his plans of conquering Taiwan and thereby winning the Chinese Civil War entirely and reuniting all of China.²⁴⁴ And this was all blamed on the US. Alongside anti-US sentiment came a new ideology of Marxist class struggle and the narrative of the CCP having prevailed over evil capitalist forces. The future, despite all previous challenges and wars, was bright, as China was realizing the communist dream.²⁴⁵

The PRC's first Constitution was enacted in 1954, which envisioned a socialist China under CCP rule.²⁴⁶ In the mid-1950s, the CCP focused on industrializing the country while at the same time reorganizing all of China's rural peasants into People's Communes, which affected over 120 million rural households, to realize the communist dream. To this end, Mao launched the '*Great Leap Forward*' in 1958, during which the communes were expected to double as steel producers. However, the output was mostly useless and the result was the Great Famine from 1959-1961, in which between 30 to 50 million people died of

²⁴² Alison Adcock Kaufman, "The 'Century of Humiliation,' Then and Now: Chinese Perceptions of The International Order," *Pacific Focus* 25, no. 1 (2010): 11-12.

²⁴³ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 67.

²⁴⁴ Carolan, "The 'Republic of Taiwan'," 436-437.

²⁴⁵ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 132.

²⁴⁶ Neil J. Diamant, Xiaocai, Feng, "Textual Anxiety: Reading (and Misreading) the Draft Constitution in China, 1954," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 20, no. 3 (2018): 154-155.

starvation, well in excess of those who died during the Second Sino-Japanese War.²⁴⁷ Mao's dream was realizing a communist paradise in which there was plenty of material goods and food for everyone, but sadly the result was the opposite.²⁴⁸ The failures of the regime increased the importance of propaganda and state-controlled information, to inform the public of who China's real enemies were and that the communist utopia was just around the corner. Japan and WWII had no place in the narrative the CCP pursued at that time, nor did the notion of China being a weak and victimized state. The only thing that could be remembered was the grandiose victories of Mao's communist forces.²⁴⁹

3.1. Mao Era Remembrance of the War

China's former wartime allies, the US and Britain, were retrospectively painted as the country's arch-enemies.²⁵⁰ This was reflected in news articles and history books from the 1950s. In one *Xinhua* article from March 1951, the US's role during the Nanjing Massacre was depicted as merely wanting to protect its own property and letting the killing of civilians unfold without bothering to intervene. It described the city's safety zone as actually having been a "killing zone".²⁵¹ While Japan had invaded China, this was supposedly due to some bad Japanese elements in the military, while the US was seen as most evil of all, including the dropping of the atomic bomb, at that time commonly depicted as the worst of all massacres committed.²⁵² One history book from 1954, titled *'From Yanan to Peking: The Chinese People's War of Liberation'*, gave no credit at all to Anglo-American forces

²⁴⁷ Stein Tønnesson, "Will Nationalism Drive Conflict in Asia?" *Nations and Nationalism* 22, no. 2 (2016): 232-242.

²⁴⁸ Zheng Wang and Sujian Guo, "The Chinese Dream: Concept and Context," *Chinese Journal of Political Science* 19, no. 1 (2013): 6.

²⁴⁹ Parks M. Coble, "China's 'New Remembering' of the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, 1937–1945," *The China Quarterly* 190 (2017): 394.

²⁵⁰ Coble, "China's 'New Remembering'," 396.

²⁵¹ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 68.

²⁵² Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*,.

in defeating Japan, instead it was the Soviet Army which was supposedly the main factor in ending the war. The book fails to mention that the Soviet Union entered the war on 8 August 1945, two days after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.²⁵³ The contributions to the war by Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces were also erased from history. In another publication credited to Mao, also from 1954, titled *'The Policies, Measures, and Perspectives of Combating Japanese Invasion'*, the Nationalist forces are mentioned as having entered the war, but Chiang is said to have done so only *"under nationwide pressure of the people"*, while having continued to attempt to make peace with Japan and all the while actually fighting the Communists.²⁵⁴

The story of the aforementioned monument in Nanjing by the Yangzi Electric Company represents the change in wartime commemoration. The monument had been torn down by communist forces during the civil war, but was then rebuilt after the CCP takeover, albeit with an entirely different inscription. Instead of describing the heroic resistance of Nationalist forces and the brutal slaughter of Chinese civilians by the Japanese, the monument now described the horrors inflicted on the people by *"Chiang's bandit gang"*, as well as bombings supposedly carried out by the Nationalist and US forces on the people of Nanjing.²⁵⁵ Those who had fought to defend the city and those who had risked their lives to save those of tens of thousands of civilians were now remembered as the perpetrators. Part of the inscription read:

*"[...] our forty-five worker brothers who died under persecution by Chiang's bandit gang and the Japanese invaders, as well as two heroic comrades who fell in the line of duty under bombings by the airplanes of Chiang and the Americans."*²⁵⁶

The message of this memorial was nothing out of the ordinary for that time. However, the memorial itself was, because there had hardly been any memorials whatsoever in the country commemorating the war. Finding a WWII commemorative

²⁵³ Coble, "China's 'New Remembering'," 396.

²⁵⁴ Coble, "China's 'New Remembering'," 395-396.

²⁵⁵ Wang, "Historical Shifts," 328-329.

²⁵⁶ Wang, "Historical Shifts," 329.

plaque, let alone a statue or memorial of fallen soldiers, was nearly impossible in Mao Era China. Not even the capital, Beijing, where the all-out war had erupted in 1937, had any evidence in the form of monuments, neither to remember those who were victorious, nor those who had fallen.²⁵⁷ This was perhaps understandable if Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists were to be seen as the enemy of the state, given that the War of Resistance could not be discussed in detail without mentioning the contributions of the major resisting force at that time. Eradicating the humiliation of the war also meant eradicating its victories, such as China's first great victory against Japan, during the battle of Taierzhuang in April 1938, which foreshadowed more victories to come and had been a great source of pride for China before the communist takeover. However, unlike similar watershed battles, such as Midway, Stalingrad, or Dunkirk, Taierzhuang was consigned to historical oblivion.²⁵⁸

The focus of Mao's new state ideology was not much interested in commemorating the past, therefore monuments and history lessons on the Century of Humiliation were of little interest. All regimes that had come before were considered ultimately bad, whether it was the capitalist imperialists, Chiang's bandits, or Chinese imperial dynasties. The only historical events worth memorializing were the achievements of the CCP.²⁵⁹ According to the CCP's propaganda, reflected in the news media, history textbooks, and any other official discourse, the Party had achieved one great victory after another thanks to Mao's great leadership. The CCP's legitimacy did not stem from China's humiliating past and the potential of falling into chaos again, or the Party being China's only hope at regaining the nation's greatness, as it would be toward the end of the 20th century, but instead it was based on the Chinese revolution and the victory over evil capitalist-imperialist forces.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ Coble, "China's "New Remembering"," 395.

²⁵⁸ Coble, "China's "New Remembering"," 395.

²⁵⁹ Coble, "China's "New Remembering"," 394.

²⁶⁰ Wang and Guo, "The Chinese Dream," 5.

The CCP's great victories and glorious path into the future was its legitimacy for leading the country.²⁶¹ This narrative was not merely the dominant one, it was the only one during the Mao Era of 1949-1976.²⁶² The central struggle of this narrative was the fundamental struggle between Communism and Capitalism, between the righteous proletariat and the evil landlords and imperialists.²⁶³ Traditional nationalism was rejected, therefore the victimization of the Chinese people at the hands of the Japanese invaders had little currency, and the atrocities committed against the Chinese people, many of which had been committed against Chiang's capitalists, were not worth commemorating.²⁶⁴

While the Nanjing Massacre remained a topic of great interest to the residents of Nanjing, who either experienced it firsthand or had seen its consequences upon returning to the city, the government actively suppressed any public discussions of it.²⁶⁵ There were some scant records that referred to the massacre, such as a high school textbook published in 1957, which did mention the Nanjing Massacre and a death toll of 300,000. And there was some local research and investigations into the event, including a survey that collected evidence from victims and eyewitnesses in Nanjing in 1960, carried out by Nanjing University's Department of History and published in a report two years later, titled *'The Massacre in Nanjing by the Japanese Invaders'*, and reported on by the *People's Daily* newspaper. This became the earliest monograph on the massacre produced by the PRC. On the 25th anniversary of the massacre, in 1962, the Jiangsu People's Publishing House had planned a restricted publication of this report, but this never happened.²⁶⁶ In general, publications on this matter, or any other Japanese atrocities, were banned, and most school textbooks did not even mention any atrocities committed by the Japanese at all. Many survivors

²⁶¹ Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 73.

²⁶² Coble, "China's "New Remembering"," 396.

²⁶³ Yinan He, "History, Chinese Nationalism and the Emerging Sino-Japanese Conflict," *The Journal of Contemporary China* 16, no. 50 (2007): 5.

²⁶⁴ Wang and Guo, "The Chinese Dream," 5.

²⁶⁵ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 70.

²⁶⁶ Wang, "Historical Shifts," 330.

kept cursing the “*Japanese devils*” in private, but the younger generation grew up thinking that it was the capitalists, chiefly the Americans, who were responsible for previous hardship.²⁶⁷

What applied to the Nanjing Massacre also applied to other wartime atrocities committed by Japan, such as Unit 731. One of the earliest documents released by PRC authorities on Unit 731 was a pamphlet published by the Hygiene Bureau of the Harbin People’s Government in early 1950, which was perhaps only natural, because for many years after the war, many towns across Manchuria had to battle with the aftereffects of biological and chemical warfare conducted in the region. This included repeated plague outbreaks, caused by rats and flees set free during the war.²⁶⁸ The pamphlet discussed the use of biological weapons by Japanese militarists, but reserved most criticism for the US, for covering up these war crimes. It was published just two weeks after the US Secretary of State Dean Acheson made his famous press club speech, in which he announced the US’s policy for containing Communism in East Asia.²⁶⁹ However, actual research and public discussion of the topic was as off-limits.

In 1953, documents by the Kwantung Army on Unit 731 were unearthed at the site of its former headquarters in Changchun, which proved the vivisection of Chinese communists and criminals, as well as foreign spies, had taken place. Instead of releasing these documents, however, they were transferred to the Manchurian Puppet Archive, which was under the Public Security Bureau, where they sat for another decade before they were quietly catalogued. A major reason for burying these documents soon after they had been unearthed in 1953 was likely the overall improving relations between Japan and the PRC during this period. While relations had not yet officially resumed, there were many visits of semi-official Japanese delegations to China, and approximately 29,000 Japanese expatriates who had been in China since the war were repatriated in the same year.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷ He, “History, Chinese Nationalism,” 6.

²⁶⁸ Brooks, “Angry States,” 29.

²⁶⁹ Brooks, “Angry States,” 29-30.

²⁷⁰ Brooks, “Angry States,” 30-31.

During the second half of the 1950s, the CCP Committee of Heilongjiang also repeatedly requested to redevelop the main site of Unit 731 in Pingfang, but this was stopped through an intervention by Premier Zhou Enlai himself, who wanted to preserve the site as evidence for the Japanese war crimes. Rather than preserve the area for Chinese research into Japanese war crimes, Zhou intervened on behalf of the Soviet Union, in case they would require further evidence in their inquiries into the war.²⁷¹ However, Chinese consideration for the Soviet Union quickly faded, following the Sino-Soviet split in 1960, but the site remained anyways.²⁷² There was one more consideration Zhou made for leaving the site be. In a document from the State Council in 1957, he noted that the site also should be “*preserved in case the state of Sino-Japanese relations requires it*”.²⁷³ This would turn out to be a foreshadowing consideration, almost three decades ahead of its time. Nonetheless, the residents of Pingfang were left to cart off hundreds of tons of bricks and steel from Unit 731 buildings for their own building purposes, and to aid the steel production drive during the Great Leap Forward. The site remained but was left to rot in desolation.²⁷⁴

There is not much to say about the remembrance of Chinese Comfort Women during this period in Chinese history. The topic was taboo, its complete and utter absence in Chinese academia and media speaks for itself. Those few women who survived their ordeal were shunned by all parts of society, and research into the subject was out of the question. Even though the women survived hell, life continued to be rough. China would not be interested in them until the 1990s, and even then there would be no government support for them, nor were there any reparations.²⁷⁵ The IMTFE completely omitted their existence, and so there was no international

²⁷¹ Brooks, “Angry States,” 32-33.

²⁷² Coble, “China’s “New Remembering,”” 396.

²⁷³ Brooks, “Angry States,” 36.

²⁷⁴ Brooks, “Angry States,” 32-33.

²⁷⁵ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 157-158.

pressure on Japan to compensate the survivors.²⁷⁶ By the time the topic became mainstream in China and the government was interested in fighting for justice on their behalf, virtually every last survivor had died.²⁷⁷

3.2. Japanese Post-War Remembrance

Despite tens of millions having died as a result of Japanese aggressions across Asia, an awareness of war guilt and readiness to apologize, as emerged in post-war Germany, never developed in post-war Japan. In the early post-war years, the US ensured that Japanese school textbooks discussed the war and showed it as a massive mistake. A form of remembrance of the war quickly developed, but one that portrayed the Japanese people as the victims. The Potsdam Declaration supported the notion that it was a military clique that dragged the country into war, thereby absolving the public of any guilt. Not to mention that some of the greatest atrocities committed, such as the Comfort Women System and Unit 731, were not addressed at the IMTFE in Tokyo.²⁷⁸ The Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo had its state sponsorship withdrawn, but it remained a popular visiting spot that commemorated the martyred Japanese soldiers. Prime Minister Shigeru visited the shrine in October 1951, shortly after the American occupation had ended.²⁷⁹

The US had also reversed course with regard to bringing those responsible for the war to justice and instead pardoned many of the class A war criminals to help run the country, in fear of a looming communist threat. One of those freed class A criminals was Kishi Nobosuke, who had overseen operations in Manchukuo, including the procuring of slave labor for the Japanese Empire.²⁸⁰ The US wanted a strong anti-Soviet ally, and therefore focused on rapidly rebuilding the Japanese

²⁷⁶ Jennifer M. Lind, *Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 31.

²⁷⁷ Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 178-180.

²⁷⁸ Lind, *Sorry States*, 29-31.

²⁷⁹ Hiro Saito and Yoko Wang, "Competing Logics of Commemoration Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism in East Asia's History Problem," *Sociological Perspectives* 52, no. 2 (2014): 171.

²⁸⁰ Lind, *Sorry States*, 31.

economy. Reparations and the question of war guilt were no longer priorities. The San Francisco Declaration of 1951, which re-established Japan as independent and peaceful state, excluded the PRC and the Republic of Korea, arguably two of the most affected countries of the war, and also stipulated that Japan should not have to pay reparations to an extent of which it would hinder Japan's own economic development.²⁸¹

In 1955, two major conservative parties merged to create the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). In a climate of fear of communism and anything left-wing, the LDP became the major dominating party.²⁸² Among its new members were several former class A criminals, including Kishi, who became Prime Minister in 1957. Under his leadership, as well as subsequent LDP cabinets, Tokyo's war guilt was increasingly downplayed, as was the entire war itself and the notion that Japan had been an aggressor.²⁸³ While in power, Kishi repeatedly denied forced labor ever having existed under Japanese rule, despite him having been at the center of forced labor operations in Manchuria. At the same time, he successfully lobbied the Eisenhower administration to free many other war criminals that had been convicted at the IMTFE, and then paid their salaries retroactively back for the time they had served in prison and also reinstated their pensions.²⁸⁴

In the early 1960s, Japan's Ministry of Education regained full control over teaching material and quickly started rejecting any textbooks seen as "*too gloomy*" or "*excessively critical*" of Japanese actions during the war.²⁸⁵ The notion that all conquered territories, including the colony of Korea, were acquired legally was frequently touted, and atrocities, such as the mass rape of women and the comfort women system, were removed entirely. From 1963 onwards, Japan started commemorating its fallen soldiers in the war, but this commemoration excluded any

²⁸¹ Lind, *Sorry States*, 31-32.

²⁸² Saito and Wang, "Competing Logics," 171.

²⁸³ Lind, *Sorry States*, 31-34.

²⁸⁴ Lind, *Sorry States*, 34-35.

²⁸⁵ Lind, *Sorry States*, 35.

foreign casualties.²⁸⁶ Japanese remembrance of its own suffering was highlighted, with the dropping of the atomic bombs being the central atrocity committed against Japanese civilians. The World Conference Against Nuclear Weapons, held in 1955 in Hiroshima, is one example of the Japanese political elite trying to highlight Japan's plight caused by said weapons.²⁸⁷ The fact that the two bombed cities were actually strategic military targets was commonly omitted. Hiroshima was a major producer of weapons, including poison gas, and Nagasaki was an important military port.²⁸⁸ Another fact commonly omitted was that tens of thousands of Korean forced laborers were helping produce weapons in Hiroshima when the first bomb dropped.²⁸⁹ Korean casualties of the atomic bombs are estimated at 10% of total victims.²⁹⁰ Nonetheless, commemoration of Japanese victims of the bombs failed to include those non-Japanese victims.²⁹¹ An additional usually excluded story is that Japan was planning to build its own atomic bomb; a plan that ultimately failed following the sinking of the German submarine that had carried the uranium needed for the project.²⁹² The LDP had built up its own narrative of the war, one in which all the focus was to be on Japan having been a victim of the horrors of war, and of the atomic bomb.

Relations with the Republic of Korea were only reinstated in 1964, and with the PRC in 1972. A major reason for the delay was the LDP's refusal to admit to having done anything wrong, not to mention pay reparations. Negotiations between Japan and the Korea on normalization of relations started already in 1953, but when Korean negotiators brought up the question of reparations, the chief Japanese negotiator quipped that it was Korea that ought to pay Japan compensation for the 36

²⁸⁶ Lind, *Sorry States*, 35-37.

²⁸⁷ Saito and Wang, "Competing Logics," 171-172.

²⁸⁸ Paul Ham, "The Bureaucrats Who Singled Out Hiroshima for Destruction," *The Atlantic*, 6 August 2015. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/08/hiroshima-nagasaki-atomic-bomb-anniversary/400448/>

²⁸⁹ Saito and Wang, "Competing Logics," 172.

²⁹⁰ Eunjeong Oh, "Nationalism and Reflexive Cosmopolitanism in Korean A-bomb Victims' War Memory and Transnational Solidarity," *Development and Society* 46, no. 2 (2017): 302-316. 307.

²⁹¹ Saito and Wang, "Competing Logics," 172-173.

²⁹² Michael Booth, *Three Tigers, One Mountain: A Journey through the Bitter History and Current Conflicts of China, Korea and Japan* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2020), 86-87.

years it had invested into Korea's development, while it was Japan's colony. The Korean negotiators walked out of the meeting.²⁹³ In 1965, Korean President Park Chung-hee decided to normalize relations with Japan, even though his entire cabinet resigned in protest of the decision, after Japan agreed to pay \$300 million in grants and \$500 million in loans, which the Japanese government refused to call reparations. Korea had to rescind any future claims for compensation for this deal, but the country was deeply impoverished at the time and was in dire need for Japan's aid.²⁹⁴ Similar economic considerations were made in Beijing when relations were normalized in 1972, although in that case there was less animosity against Japan's denial of past atrocities, since commemoration of China's victims had been suppressed for decades already.²⁹⁵

3.3. The Cultural Revolution

In 1965, Lin Xiao, who became known as one of the architects of the Cultural Revolution, wrote that the major reason for China's victory in WWII was the leadership of the CCP and Chairman Mao. Nothing had changed in the straightforward narrative of the war, if anything, the CCP's chief role was about to become even more propagandized.²⁹⁶ In 1966, Mao launched the '*Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*', in which everything and everyone associated with the past became a target, including Party members themselves. All academic work ceased immediately. The Chinese historical journal '*Historical Research*' ceased publication for the tumultuous years to come.²⁹⁷ Not just certain narratives of the war, but the entire subject of history itself became taboo. Cultural relics were smashed as mass student mobilization was ordered by Mao under the banner of destroying the past to bring

²⁹³ Lind, *Sorry States*, 33.

²⁹⁴ Lind, *Sorry States*, 40-48.

²⁹⁵ Wang, "Historical Shifts," 330.

²⁹⁶ Coble, "China's "New Remembering"," 396.

²⁹⁷ Coble, "China's "New Remembering"," 397.

about a righteous communist future. Much of the remaining structures from the Unit 731 compound in Pingfang was leveled by raging middle school students.²⁹⁸

The 1960s could have been the right time for survivors of the war to write their memoirs about their wartime experiences, just as happened in many other countries, but anyone found in possession of documents or diaries relating to the war became a target for “*struggle sessions*”, which the accused often did not survive. Hence, much of the evidence pertaining to the war that remained to this point was destroyed, and those who had second thoughts on telling their side of history were once and for all shut up.²⁹⁹ This included victims of the war, such as former comfort women, many of whom were brutally persecuted for having “*slept with the enemy*”.³⁰⁰ Everything that came from the past was seen as bad and hindering the revolutionary cause, this included China’s own history. Nationalism itself was a “*bourgeois identity*” that contradicted Mao’s spirit of “*internationalism*”.³⁰¹ The writings that did appear from those years were mostly self-criticism that had been written by veterans under duress.³⁰²

However, far from bringing about a new age of prosperity, the Cultural Revolution destroyed much of the Chinese economy and interrupted almost every part of society. Therefore in the beginning of the 1970s, an aging Mao allowed the leadership of the CCP to steer a new course, albeit very slowly, as they Cultural Revolution officially continued. In 1972, Premier Zhou Enlai proposed the ‘*Four Modernizations*’, which referred to a new national focus on developing the four areas of agriculture, industry, science and technology, and military.³⁰³

The ongoing proletariat revolutions since 1949 and the insistence on self-reliance kept China backwards. A new leadership emerged in the early 1970s, guided by Zhou Enlai, that paid mere lip service to the still-powerful Mao, but that steadily

²⁹⁸ Brooks, “Angry States,” 33.

²⁹⁹ Coble, “China’s “New Remembering,”” 406-407.

³⁰⁰ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 157-158.

³⁰¹ Wang and Guo, “The Chinese Dream,” 5.

³⁰² Coble, “China’s “New Remembering,”” 407.

³⁰³ Wang and Guo, “The Chinese Dream,” 6.

started to steer China toward opening up. In September 1972, Sino-Japanese relations were normalized and Tokyo agreed to recognize the PRC as the sole legitimate China.³⁰⁴ The Chinese media celebrated the move under the banner of “*Sino-Japanese friendship*” and no references were made to wartime controversies.³⁰⁵ During Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei’s visit to Beijing for the signing of the bilateral treaty, Premier Zhou Enlai gave a toast to his guest, in which he expressed his wish that the friendship between the two states would be passed on from generation to generation. Zhou also mentioned to the Japanese delegates that it was no problem for China that Japan would continue to have unofficial ties with Taiwan, just as the territorial dispute regarding the Diaoyu Islands (known as Senkaku Islands in Japan) was nothing to worry about.³⁰⁶ Prime Minister Tanaka also expressed his “*deep reflection*” regarding the “*unfortunate period*” in the two countries relations, by which he implied the war.³⁰⁷ While this “*reflection*” neither defined what the Prime Minister exactly reflected on, nor gave any indication toward whose fault it was that the mentioned period was so unfortunate, this was as good of an apology as China would ever receive from an LDP Prime Minister.

Following the resumption of relations, the two sides entered a honeymoon period that lasted for the rest of the decade, during which any mentioning of past Japanese aggression toward China was strictly suppressed.³⁰⁸ Continuous Japanese historical amnesia still did not cause any controversy in China, even when in 1973, just one year after resumption of relations, a Japanese Diet resolution on the question of Japanese aggression against China concluded that one had to wait for future evaluation to conclude whether Japan had indeed acted aggressively. The CCP continued to help endorse the Japanese “*myth of the military clique*” which supposedly led the otherwise peaceful Japanese people astray, so long as investment

³⁰⁴ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 102.

³⁰⁵ Wang, “Historical Shifts,” 330.

³⁰⁶ He, “History, Chinese Nationalism,” 4.

³⁰⁷ He, “History, Chinese Nationalism,” 5.

³⁰⁸ Wang, “Eightieth Anniversary,” 255.

and aid for building up the Chinese economy was forthcoming.³⁰⁹ In 1976, Mao died and the Cultural Revolution officially came to an end.³¹⁰ China was ready to reform and open up.

³⁰⁹ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 5.

³¹⁰ Stein Tønnesson, "Explaining East Asia's Developmental Peace," *Global Asia* (East Asia Foundation) 10, no. 4 (2015): 5.

4. Chapter 3: The Transition Period (1976-1989)

After a brief period of inner struggle among the CCP leadership, Deng Xiaoping became the new *de facto* leader of the Party. He maintained Zhou Enlai's 'Four Modernizations', but recognized that China was far behind and therefore needed a special focus on learning from others and catching up with the rest of the world. Accordingly, he coined the slogan "*invigorating China*", which emphasized the reanimation of China's economy, with the goal of improving the Chinese people's standard of living and, for the first time since the founding of the PRC, the individual's personal wealth.³¹¹ This focus on catching up with the world led to Deng's 'Reform and Opening' policy, essentially a policy of opening up, step by step, the Chinese economy to the world, as well as leaving the old communist ideology behind. This drew strong opposition from the old guard of the CCP, which was strictly anti-capitalist and wanted to maintain the communist order. However, the Cultural Revolution had brought the economy to its knees and plunged the country into poverty, hence the old ideology had lost much of its value to the general population.³¹² Because of this, Deng was able to blame China's issues on the 'Gang of Four', the four Party officials who were largely responsible for running the country during the Cultural Revolution, among whom was Jiang Qing, Mao's wife.³¹³

The CCP resolution '*Concerning some historical questions since the founding of the PRC*' was published on 27 June 1981 and was unusually candid about the mistakes that had been made under the CCP's rule, such as the Cultural Revolution or the Great Famine, thereby admitting to mistakes and being able to move forward.³¹⁴ In this new national narrative, certain elements of the Party, in particular the Gang of Four, became the enemies of the country and the embodiment of everything that was wrong with it, therefore legitimizing a change in course.³¹⁵ This change came through slowly but steadily, leaving communism behind and starting to

³¹¹ Wang and Guo, "The Chinese Dream," 6.

³¹² He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 6.

³¹³ Brooks, "Angry States," 33.

³¹⁴ Brooks, "Angry States," 34.

³¹⁵ Wang and Guo, "The Chinese Dream," 7.

reintroduce private property and competitive markets. Of course there were also losers in society, since for the first time in decades unemployment became a worry to some. Decreased control over the population also caused an increase in crime and turned into an incentive for corruption.³¹⁶

Naturally, this admission of the Party having failed its people, alongside the long record of disasters the Chinese people had to live through as a direct result of Party policies, and now the dropping of communist ideology, which had legitimized the CCP's iron rule over its people for three decades, was eventually going to beg the question: What was the Communist Party's justification for continuing its rule over China? The answer to this question had not yet been found at the dawn of the 1980s, when Deng Xiaoping was chiefly occupied with redeveloping the country and lifting the Chinese people out of poverty, but it would soon come naturally, originating with China's erstwhile enemy and now newly-found friend, Japan.³¹⁷

4.1. Rehabilitating the Historians

In Japan, an awareness of Japan's aggressive role in the war had been growing among civil society, with various movements for cosmopolitan commemoration that sought to include foreign victims in the Japanese remembrance of the war having gained momentum. However, the LDP, which continued to rule the country, was anything but conciliatory. Every single Japanese Prime Minister from the 1960s to the 1980s visited the Yasukuni Shrine, and between 1969 and 1974 the LDP proposed five times to reinstate government sponsorship for the shrine. But due to strong opposition, none of these proposed bills passed the Diet.³¹⁸ Then, in 1978, officials from the Yasukuni Shrine quietly enshrined 14 Japanese Class A war criminals, including Umezumi Yoshijiro and Tojo Hideki, as martyrs for the country.³¹⁹ The lack of Chinese response to the Japanese government's show of disregard for

³¹⁶ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 6.

³¹⁷ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 5-6.

³¹⁸ Saito and Wang, "Competing Logics," 172-173.

³¹⁹ Lind, *Sorry States*, 51.

any and all atrocities committed by not only the Japanese military but also some of the LDP's own founding members, is testament to China's preoccupation with more existential issues during the 1970s.

The Chinese Journal *Research on Modern Chinese History* (*jindai shi yanjiu*, 近代史研究) was launched in 1979 and was meant to focus on recent Chinese history, but as one article published by Zhang Bofeng in the journal's first year showed, there had been little interest in real research yet. The article '*The many compromising and capitulationist activities of the Chiang Kai-shek reactionary clique during the anti-Japanese war*' repeated the same old line of the CCP having saved the Chinese people from the evil capitalists and landlords under Chiang Kai-shek.³²⁰ However, this narrative started to gradually change under Deng's leadership. On 8 April 1980, Hu Qiaomu, Mao's former secretary and following the old chairman's death still the mastermind behind much of the CCP's propaganda machine, gave a speech at the second National Chinese History Conference, during which he rehabilitated China's discredited historians and gave them permission to research the past more earnestly, in particular wartime atrocities.³²¹ With this step, the national narrative could start to move away from class struggle and toward a nationalist struggle against foreign invasion.³²² However, there was no indication yet of this rediscovering of the past being intended to be used with ulterior motives.

As previously mentioned, there were no earnest memoirs of the war until the end of the Cultural Revolution, during which any reference of the past, not to mention the GMD's role in defending the country, would have been disastrous for a war veteran. However, following the leadership transition at the end of the 1970s and Hu Qiaomu's endorsement for research into the past, a few still-alive eyewitnesses came forward to tell their stories. One of the very first memoir publications was that of Yang Guofu, an Eighth Army war veteran, who wrote down his personal account shortly before his death in 1982.³²³ He did, however, not dare to write entirely

³²⁰ Coble, "China's "New Remembering", " 399.

³²¹ Brooks, "Angry States," 33-34; 51.

³²² He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 2.

³²³ Coble, "China's "New Remembering", " 408.

truthful. The master narrative of his account still followed the old CCP narrative of the victorious Party and is therefore cryptic at times. In his story, the CCP single-handedly defended China while the Nationalists were actually fighting the Communists and not the Japanese, and the end of the war begins with the entry of the Soviet Army on 8 August 1945. While this was the only way possible to write history until Yang's death in 1982, by the time his book was published, in 1985, it was already outdated. Within a year of the army veteran's death, everything about how the war was supposed to be remembered would change. And this change was about to come from Japan.

Following the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations in 1972, the two countries maintained friendly relations, in which Beijing saw Tokyo as a positive force to help modernize the country, with bilateral trade rising nine-fold between 1972 and 1981. Japanese support for reforming the Chinese economy started in earnest soon after Deng came to power, with Japanese low-interest loans flowing into China from 1979, delivering necessary capital and technologies to the underdeveloped Chinese economy.³²⁴ From Beijing's perspective, there was no need to damage Sino-Japanese relations over their bitter history, as now Japan was helping China to recover some of its lost strength. The PRC also issued regular celebratory messages on the birthdays of Emperor Hirohito, who had presided over the Japanese Empire during the war.³²⁵ As long as the Japanese government would leave the past alone, the CCP did not have to reopen old wounds. Nonetheless, the LDP was about to do the opposite of what a lasting Sino-Japanese relationship needed.³²⁶

4.2. 1982: The Year Wartime Remembrance Changed

In 1980, the LDP won the Japanese general elections by a considerable majority, which empowered its leadership to further push its own narrative of the

³²⁴ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 4.

³²⁵ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 103.

³²⁶ Wang, "Historical Shifts," 330.

war.³²⁷ In fact, the electoral share of votes cast for the LDP had been steadily declining since the 1950s, but a splintering opposition still allowed Japan's conservatives to rule the country de facto unopposed.³²⁸ Following the 1980 electoral success, Diet members of the LDP pressured Japan's Ministry of Education (MoE) to tighten its screening standards to greatly reduce any discussion about wartime atrocities committed by Japan. Several instances are known in which screeners commented on new textbooks to order the removal of references to atrocities, such as Unit 731 and the Nanjing Massacre.³²⁹ In addition, the MoE planned the release of several new history textbooks which changed the narrative of the Japanese invasion entirely, by whitewashing and justifying the war. The changes also included key semantic alterations, such as renaming the "*invasion*" of Manchuria into an "*advance*".³³⁰ When the new textbooks and the adjusted textbook inspection criteria of the MoE became public, the international backlash from both NGOs and other Asian governments, including China and South Korea, was swift and fierce.³³¹ The incidence became later known as the "*first textbook crisis*", which started in July 1982.³³²

Within weeks, the retired Prime Minister Kishi Nobosuke proposed a memorial in Shizuoka Prefecture to commemorate the "*Manchurian Colony*", which, in his own words, had been Japan's attempt at founding "*an ideal country*" with the help of honorable Japanese settlers, who wanted to create a "*Manchurian paradise*".³³³ Given that Kishi, the former class A war criminal, had himself overseen some of Japan's atrocities committed in Manchuria, his statements in 1982 were bound to enrage China, not only for the obvious historical inaccuracies, but also

³²⁷ Lind, *Sorry States*, 50.

³²⁸ Ellis S. Krauss and Robert J. Pekkanen, "The Rise and Fall of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 1 (2010): 7.

³²⁹ Lind, *Sorry States*, 50.

³³⁰ Brooks, "Angry States," 35.

³³¹ Saito and Wang, "Competing Logics," 173.

³³² Brooks, "Angry States," 35.

³³³ Brooks, "Angry States," 35.

because during his tenure as Prime Minister in 1957-1960, he was staunchly anti-communist and refused to accept the PRC as legitimate China. Furthermore, he continued to maintain close ties to Taiwan's GMD. In 1974, two years after Japan had agreed to recognize the PRC instead of the ROC, he visited Chiang Kai-shek on his 88th birthday, and in 1986 he celebrated the late Chiang's 100th birthday.³³⁴

Kishi's blatant denial and activism in whitewashing the atrocities he himself helped to commit, not to mention his public flouting of the Chinese government, led Deng Xiaoping in August 1982 to respond:

*"If Kishi Nobusuke wants to build a memorial to the founding of Manchuria, then we have to build our own monuments to the invading Japanese militarists. In this way we can educate our people, our youth, and our descendants about this very important truth."*³³⁵

This statement was the beginning of China's rediscovery of Unit 731. In September, the head of the CCP Propaganda Department, Deng Liqun, commissioned a report into Unit 731 and the war crimes related to it. Within a month, an initial paper was produced which led Deng Liqun to conclude that the site in Pingfang needed urgent preservation efforts to keep the evidence alive. Zhou's foreshadowing of the site one day becoming important to China based on issues related to Sino-Japanese relations became reality, and so his decision of 1957 to leave the site alone finally paid off. Deng Liqun also noted that other atrocities, and in particular the Nanjing Massacre, also needed attention and cultural heritage protection.³³⁶ In October 1982, Deng Liqun forwarded the paper on Unit 731 to Hu Qiaomu, who agreed with Deng's assessment that historical sites, such as Pingfang, had to be preserved for future generations, and that it was necessary to counter historical revisionism. Around the same time, China's Ministry of Culture issued its *"Instructions on the work required to properly protect criminal evidence of the Japanese invasion of China"*, under 'Order [82] 1289', which stipulated for historical sites of significance pertaining to

³³⁴ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 218.

³³⁵ Brooks, "Angry States," 35.

³³⁶ Brooks, "Angry States," 36.

the war, including sites linked to Unit 731, to be preserved and studied.³³⁷ In addition to China's rediscovered interest for this atrocity, a groundbreaking chance discovery of original documents from Unit 731 scientists was made in a bookstore in Tokyo, which also further aided Japanese researchers in uncovering the secrets of Unit 731.³³⁸

Kishi was far from the only high-profile LDP member to antagonize China during this textbook controversy. Japan's Interior Minister Matsuno Takayasu insisted that the term "*invasion*" was not used by the Japanese military during the war and therefore should not be used in textbooks now. He also noted that, with regard to Nanjing, 8,000 Japanese soldiers and 12,000 Chinese soldiers died in battle, and that "*there was no massacre at all*".³³⁹ And the Minister of Education, Fujio Masayuki, wrote an essay about Japan's role in Korea in which he noted that Korea also bore responsibility for its colonization by Japan, because "*Japan's annexation of Korea rested on mutual agreement*".³⁴⁰

However, it became quickly evident that this incident turned into a major international dispute that had hugely negative implications for Japan's foreign policy and economy. In November 1982, Japan's MoE gave in and announced overhauled textbook-inspection criteria which would also promote narratives of the suffering of other Asian nations, not just that of Japan, thereby effectively ending the textbook crisis.³⁴¹ However, the damage had been done. On 1 December 1982, the Unit 731 sites became officially protected cultural heritage sites. The site in Pingfang was to be turned into a museum containing criminal evidence on the atrocity, and hence became one of the very first bases for patriotic education on China's War of Resistance. Additionally, all documentary evidence on Unit 731, which had been rotting in police archives, was transferred to provincial archives for classification and

³³⁷ Brooks, "Angry States," 36-37; 39.

³³⁸ Pawlowicz and Grunden, "Teaching Atrocities," 278.

³³⁹ Lind, *Sorry States*, 48.

³⁴⁰ Lind, *Sorry States*, 48.

³⁴¹ Saito and Wang, "Competing Logics," 173.

analysis.³⁴² Ironically for the LDP and other Japanese right-wing war crime deniers, their activism to bury the past led to its excavation and rehabilitation in China.

In June 1983, Hu Qiaomu made the case for Unit 731 to be included in the Chinese education curriculum, alongside other atrocities of the war. He justified this by stating that, first, it was the older generation's responsibility to pass on such important memories and, second, it was necessary to prevent the Japanese MoE from freely doctoring with history. Therefore building memorials and museums, as well as having pupils visit the physical sites of such atrocities, was needed to counter this "memory deficit".³⁴³ Hu also appeared to have realized the potential power of patriotism, and how the sites of almost-forgotten wartime atrocities could be harnessed. He stated:

*"Setting up war museums will provide a patriotic education for the masses and our young people, in order to let [them] know what sort of country we are, what sort of development and struggle we have gone through, and the foundations laid for development in [our] varied undertakings."*³⁴⁴

During this time, the CCP leadership appears to have realized that the Japanese government had presented them with a powerful new option for legitimizing their continuous rule over China, namely with the help of nationalism. This realization was made explicit on 2 July 1983, when the CCP Central Committee's Research Office of the Secretariat and the CCP Central Committee's Propaganda Department issued a joint statement, in which they called for strengthening Chinese patriotic education. The spokesperson making the announcement mentioned the Chinese youth, which appeared to have lost faith in the leadership of the Party, following errors such as the Cultural Revolution and other events. Such patriotic education could draw not only on the CCP's role in the Second Sino-Japanese War, but on the great history of China itself.³⁴⁵ Going forward, under

³⁴² Brooks, "Angry States," 39.

³⁴³ Brooks, "Angry States," 36-37.

³⁴⁴ Brooks, "Angry States," 37-38.

³⁴⁵ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 105-106.

the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, patriotic education, which would involve elements of Chinese victimization, were introduced in China's education curriculum. The narrative of the CCP's impeccable victory over capitalism and the wholesale demonization of the past was coming to an end.

This change of heart was also quickly reflected in the increasing liberalization of the academia. One of the first articles to be published with the new understanding of history in mind was He Li's '*Relationship between the Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Party during the period of the anti-Japanese war of resistance*' in a 1983 issue of the Chinese journal *Research on Modern Chinese History*. In it, Li refers directly to the joint achievements of the United Front of the CCP and GMD.³⁴⁶ This was the beginning of the rehabilitation of the GMD's wartime contributions under the banner of Chinese nationalism.

During 12-13 October 1983, Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang, as well as other Standing Committee members of the PRC's Political Bureau, presided over the Second Plenary Session of the CCP's 12th Central Committee, at which they announced to confront "*spiritual pollution*", aimed at non-conforming members of the Party and outdated ideology.³⁴⁷ This was followed by further commitments to build museums and monuments commemorating the war. Then in early December, while publicly visiting the Marco Polo Bridge, Hu Qiaomu gave the orders for the construction of what would become the two most important museums on the War of Resistance, the 'Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall', and the 'Memorial Museum for the War of Resistance Against Japan'.

Shortly thereafter, on 13 December 1983, the 46th anniversary of the massacre, the foundation-laying ceremony was held for the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall.³⁴⁸ The museum opened its doors on 15 August 1985, the 40th anniversary of the Japanese surrender.³⁴⁹ Importantly, while the museum displayed many harrowing accounts of the Japanese atrocities committed at the massacre, it no

³⁴⁶ Coble, "China's "New Remembering"," 402-403.

³⁴⁷ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 106.

³⁴⁸ Wang, "Historical Shifts," 330.

³⁴⁹ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 107.

longer featured the narrative of the US or Chiang Kai-shek having been co-perpetrators.³⁵⁰ 13 additional nearby monuments to the massacre were also unveiled concurrently.³⁵¹ On top of that, 11 sites linked to Unit 731 opened their doors to the public, including an exhibition in Harbin that displayed around 100 artifacts.³⁵² Soon after that, two important books on the subject of the Nanjing Massacre were published by the Jiangsu Ancient Books Publishing House, titled '*Draft History of the Massacre of Nanjing by the Japanese Army in its Invasion of China*' and '*Historical Materials on the Massacre of Nanjing by the Japanese Army in its Invasion of China*'.³⁵³ Chinese newspapers, such as the *People's Daily*, also started to print articles based on eyewitness accounts of the time of the war.³⁵⁴

The 40th anniversary of Japan's surrender featured many more events, such as the assembly of approximately 10,000 children in Tiananmen Square to commemorate the soldiers fallen during the war, a number of special exhibitions on the subject, and the publication of countless radio broadcasts, films, television programs, and even commemorative stamps. Then on 7 July 1987, the 50th anniversary of the July 7th Incident (at the Marco Polo Bridge), the Memorial Museum for the War of Resistance against Japan finally opened its doors.³⁵⁵ If one were to observe the array of museums, monuments, and commemorative events in the mid-1980s, one could be forgiven for thinking that China, just like any European country, had a well-established tradition of memorializing the tragedy of WWII, when in fact such commemoration was an absolute taboo only a few years prior. All of this was arguably set in motion by Japanese right-wing politicians who tried to push the memory of the war into oblivion, in 1982.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁰ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 102.

³⁵¹ Wang, "Historical Shifts," 330.

³⁵² Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 107.

³⁵³ Wang, "Historical Shifts," 330-331.

³⁵⁴ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 102.

³⁵⁵ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 107.

³⁵⁶ Wang, "Historical Shifts," 331.

4.3. Reemergence of Remembrance

Despite the hurt they caused to Japan's foreign relations, Japanese conservatives were not, however, about to strike a more conciliatory tone. The mid-1980s saw some political leaders in Japan attempt some sort of public contrition, such as Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro telling the Korean President Chun Doo-hwan in 1984 that Japan had caused Korea great suffering "*during a certain period this century*", as well as his apology in front of the United Nations in 1985, where he deferred to Japanese militarists who supposedly caused all the suffering, while also mentioning the Japanese suffering caused by the atomic bomb. Nonetheless, these half-baked apologies were commonly followed by intense outrages.³⁵⁷ When Nakasone visited the Yasukuni Shrine, he not only became the first prime minister to visit the shrine in his official role, rather than as private individual as had been custom, but he also gifted the shrine with an expressive tree branch offering, purchased entirely with public funds.³⁵⁸ This naturally caused outrage internationally. Reconsidering his actions, Nakasone later cancelled his plans to visit the shrine again in 1986, out of fear for hurting the CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang's situation. Hu Yaobang was a powerful CCP member who represented the Party's liberal faction and who continued to push for positive relations with Japan, despite all the disputes. The LDP's ongoing provocation may well have contributed to Hu's demise in 1987, when he lost the ideological struggle within the Party.³⁵⁹ But regardless of directly hurting the faction within the Chinese government that wanted positive relations with the LDP and Japan, the LDP was not about to back down and start showing true contrition.

In 1986, a mere four years after the first textbook dispute, came the second. A group of Japanese conservatives, who were angered by the government's conciliatory gestures following Chinese and Korean outrage in 1982, organized the 'National Congress for the Defense of Japan', in which they decided to write a new patriotic

³⁵⁷ Lind, *Sorry States*, 47-48.

³⁵⁸ Lind, *Sorry States*, 52.

³⁵⁹ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 12-13.

textbook, untainted by the “*leftist scholars*”. They succeeded not only in writing their book, which referred to the Nanjing Massacre as a mere “*incident*”, called the Korean colony a “*protectorate*”, and celebrated the “*national morality*” of emperor worshipping, but also in getting it approved by the Japanese MoE, thereby once again greatly infuriating Beijing and Seoul.³⁶⁰

In 1988, the Japanese Justice Minister Okuno Seisuke noted that an exhibition on the Nanjing Massacre, which was due to be held in Japan, should not be permitted, as the facts pertaining to the event were still unclear. He also defended Japanese wartime actions by stating that Japan was actually trying to bring about “*Asian liberation*” from European colonialism.³⁶¹ He noted:

*“If anybody was the aggressor, it was the Caucasians. It is nonsense to call Japan the aggressor or militaristic.”*³⁶²

If the Chinese leadership was seriously considering to harness the power of anti-foreign sentiments for their political gains, then the Japanese government played its part perfectly. It supplied ample reason to continue strengthening Chinese remembrance as counterbalance to historical revisionism. In 1985, China’s MoE implemented the ‘*Five-Love Education*’ (referring to love of the motherland, work, people, science, and public properties), a doctrine that dates back to the 1950s, where it was shortly introduced, but quickly abolished by Mao’s order to instead fully focus on communist ideology. But rather than focusing on communism, this time the education campaign was to focus on the history of China resisting foreign aggression.³⁶³ The 40th anniversary of the end of the war marked the perfect occasion to rediscover the war’s history.³⁶⁴ However, unlike during the previous decades, now the focus was clearly on Japan, and no longer the evil capitalists represented by the GMD and the US. The new ‘*1986 Teaching Guideline*’ stipulated

³⁶⁰ Lind, *Sorry States*, 50-51.

³⁶¹ Lind, *Sorry States*, 48-49.

³⁶² Lind, *Sorry States*, 49.

³⁶³ He, “History, Chinese Nationalism,” 7.

³⁶⁴ Yoshida, *The making of the “Rape of Nanking”*, 106.

the use of textbooks that included detailed accounts of GMD-led military campaigns, as well as descriptions of war crimes committed by Japan.³⁶⁵

An increasing number of publications related to the war were released, both academic and popular in nature, including journal articles, books, films, TV-dramas, and cartoons.³⁶⁶ The Nanjing Massacre stood out as atrocity of particular interest. Noteworthy releases include the documentary '*Nanjing Massacre*' (*Nanjing Datusha*, 南京大屠杀) in 1982 and the feature film '*Bloody Testimony of Massacre in A Captured City*' (*Tucheng Xuezheng*, 屠城血证) in 1987.³⁶⁷ Both films displayed the atrocity in its gruesome details, rather than focusing on a narrative of the ever-victorious CCP. By 1987, the Massacre had become a mainstream part of China's national memory, and a symbol for the many horrific atrocities committed by Japan against China.³⁶⁸

History was literally rewritten in various updated books. One of the first updated history books was published in 1985, by the Sichuan People's Press, in Chengdu, with the title '*An Introduction to the Major Battles of the War of Resistance Period on the Kuomintang Main Battle Fronts*', which emphasized the joint Chinese struggle against the foreign invaders, rather than indulging in the Maoist dialectic of the CCP against everyone else, as had been required previously.³⁶⁹ The United Front was still depicted as being led by the CCP, but the GMD clearly contributed as positive force in expelling Japan. Many more books followed which further described the GMD's contributions to the war effort, including depictions of Nationalist-fought battles and their generals.³⁷⁰

Historical research changed, too. One clear signal of this change was the article '*The position and effect of China's anti-Japanese war of resistance in the Second World War*' by the historian Qi Shirong from Beijing Normal University. In

³⁶⁵ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 7.

³⁶⁶ Coble, "China's 'New Remembering'," 397-398.

³⁶⁷ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 7.

³⁶⁸ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 113.

³⁶⁹ Coble, "China's 'New Remembering'," 400.

³⁷⁰ Coble, "China's 'New Remembering'," 400-401.

it, he described the anti-Japanese struggle as a fight against global fascism, a narrative that would be well-recognized by a Western historical scholar, but that had been completely absent in Chinese historiography hitherto. Qi did praise Mao and the Red Army for their successes in the war, but not without also dishing out praise for Chiang's forces. Then in 1986, the vice-director of the History Research Office of the CCP, Li Xin, published '*On the anti-Japanese war of resistance*'. In this highly-authoritative article, Li reiterated the centrality of the global anti-fascist struggle of WWII, in which China fought as an Ally against the forces of fascism, mainly comprising of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan.³⁷¹

In 1987, the political dissident Fang Lizhi published an article in an overseas Chinese journal on the failings of the CCP, in particular Zhou Enlai, with regard to having agreed to waive Japan's obligation to pay reparations for the war in return for normalization relations. While such direct attack on the CCP leadership would not have been permitted to be published in a Mainland Chinese journal, Fang's discontent with the Party's handling of the past became increasingly prevalent in China, as people woke up to the terrible plight of the Chinese people during the war.³⁷²

In 1988, a collection of new historical articles was published by the Central Party History Commission, which opened with the aforementioned article from Li Xin. If there was any remaining doubt with regard to where history remembrance was heading in China, this collection cleared that out. One of the other articles in the collection, written by Wang Pei and titled '*The two battlefields in the early part of the anti-Japanese war of resistance*', discussed how the CCP and the GMD fought on two mutually-dependent battlefronts against Japan. It had become official, the GMD was a force for good in the anti-Japanese war and could now be remembered as such.³⁷³ This new narrative, so the CCP leadership hoped, would also be an avenue to

³⁷¹ Coble, "China's "New Remembering"," 398.

³⁷² He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 9.

³⁷³ Coble, "China's "New Remembering"," 398-399.

lure Taiwan back into a unified China over time, as it exonerated the leadership of ROC in Taiwan and focused on a nationalist Chinese narrative.³⁷⁴

Sino-Japanese relations also continued to deteriorate due to trade frictions. Trade between the two countries had increased dramatically in the 1980s, but it was mainly Japanese goods that streamed into China, causing China to amass a major trade deficit with Japan, while Japan only slowly lifted its barriers to Chinese imports. Japanese technology transfer also stagnated, leaving many Chinese wondering whether opening up to trade with Japan was such a good idea in the first place. Student protests and boycotts of Japanese goods increased in frequency as some compared the flooding of the Chinese market with Japanese goods to Japan's previous invasion of China.³⁷⁵ The reemergence of wartime remembrance facilitated much of these suspicions of Japan, as only a few years earlier most youth would not have heard of most of the Japanese atrocities committed against their ancestors, and now they had ample ammunition to confront Japan with when comparing current events to historical occurrences. The Chinese government during that time also showed increasingly teeth when defending what it saw as its historical rights, including territorial claims. One example is the deadly naval skirmish that occurred between China and Vietnam at the Johnson Reef in 1988.³⁷⁶ However, despite appearing resolute in such situations, it was a time of great fragility for the CCP.

Remembrance of the war had reemerged rapidly in China, facilitated by a rediscovery of the past that was much more earnest and liberal in scope than the carefully curated image the CCP had promoted during the Mao era. This rediscovery of the past was a powerful tool in developing a Chinese nationalism based on a Chinese nation that transcended the existence of the Party. However, merely rediscovering the past did little to solve the issue of the '*Three Belief Crises*' that plagued the CCP throughout the 1980s. These three crises referred to the crisis of

³⁷⁴ Coble, "China's "New Remembering"," 402.

³⁷⁵ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 10-11.

³⁷⁶ Symeon Giannakos, "Chinese Nationalism: Myths, Reality, and Security Implications," *Nationalities Papers* 47, no. 1 (2019): 150.

belief in Marxism, faith in Socialism, and trust in then CCP.³⁷⁷ Marxism had been consigned to the dustbin of history, Socialism was gradually being dismantled in service of economic growth, and then there was the Party. A Chinese nationalism that emphasized China's long history no longer had one particular political party at its center, nor did remembrance of a war in which the CCP and GMD were both victors. Anti-Japanese sentiments and feelings of Chinese cohesion were growing rapidly in the 1980s, but the CCP was still in crisis, as it had lost credibility and the power of mass mobilization. Intellectuals and even some elements of the Party started to demand a Western-style democratization.³⁷⁸ Infighting on how the country was to be developed continued within the CCP behind closed doors. Hu Yaobang, at the front of the CCP faction that wanted greater liberalization, lost his battle and was ousted in January 1987, but this did not mean the end for liberal demands among many Chinese people. The political situation in the late 1980s was tense, with prodemocracy movements quietly gaining in numbers. All it took for the situation to explode was a spark. Then, on 15 April 1989, Hu Yaobang died.³⁷⁹

Hu's public memorial service was held on 22 April 1989 at Tiananmen Square in Beijing. The memorial turned into large-scale student protests demanding an end to one-party rule and pushing for further liberalizations. Protests broke out across the country. The *People's Daily* denounced the "*upheavals*" as being the work of an "*extremely small number of people*" who sought to "*plunge the whole country into chaos*".³⁸⁰ While this appeared to be China's chance at democratization, the hardliners won the internal power struggle. In his speech from 19 May 1989, Premier Li Peng called for resolute measures to curb the riots. The next day, he authorized martial law in parts of Beijing. Protesters nonetheless continued to turn out in ever greater numbers. In the end, the Army was called in which brutally broke up the protests on 3 to 4 June 1989, in what became known as the *Tiananmen Square*

³⁷⁷ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 92.

³⁷⁸ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 92-93.

³⁷⁹ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 154-155.

³⁸⁰ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 155.

Massacre'.³⁸¹ The CCP suspended China's ongoing liberalization efforts and shut the country's doors again. China needed economic liberalization and opening up to the world in order to modernize and pull its people out of poverty, but it could not sacrifice the CCP in the process.³⁸² A new form of legitimization was needed for the Party to stay relevant and maintain its leadership role of the country, despite China's economy having to open up further. The solution to this conundrum had already presented itself. Nationalism was going to be the new form of legitimization.

³⁸¹ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 155.

³⁸² Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 93.

5. Chapter 4: The Victim Narrative (1990-Present)

The CCP had struggled to find a new narrative that kept it relevant as it had focused its efforts on developing the country. However, following 4 June 1989, it could no longer neglect the question of regime legitimacy. The CCP leadership started to move swiftly thereafter. Economic growth could wait a few more years, while a new national narrative was created, with the help of past atrocities committed against China.

5.1. The 1990s: Introducing Patriotism

Just one month after Tiananmen, in July 1989, during construction work on the new Research Center of the Ministry of Health and Welfare in Shinjuku, Tokyo, which was to be located on the exact spot the Army Medical College was during 1929-1945, the bones of a great many bodies were uncovered.³⁸³ This was where Ishii used to lecture and present the specimens he brought back from Unit 731 in Pingfang.³⁸⁴ Within a week, the police announced that there was no evidence regarding the victims' death and that they had been dead for at least fifteen years, hence the statute of limitations had expired, and so they were to be cremated without further investigation.³⁸⁵ Fortunately, a citizens activist group got involved and managed to pressure the police into allowing further investigations. Several science institutions, including the National Science Museum, were asked to help with the bones' identification. However, all refused, likely due to government pressure.³⁸⁶

Meanwhile in Beijing, the CCP sought to re-establish its legitimacy using education to teach its side of history, in order to show the Party's centrality to the existence of the Chinese nation, for which Japan's past atrocities and its current leadership's revisionism could be utilized.³⁸⁷ However, while many Western

³⁸³ LaFleur, Böhme, and Shimazono, *Dark Medicine*, 77.

³⁸⁴ Gold, *Unit 731*, 127.

³⁸⁵ LaFleur, Böhme, and Shimazono, *Dark Medicine*, 77.

³⁸⁶ Gold, *Unit 731*, 127.

³⁸⁷ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*,.

countries introduced sanctions against China following the crackdown of the pro-democracy movement which culminated in the massacre of Tiananmen, Japan chose not to, which made the leadership in Beijing anxious not to antagonize Tokyo. Japan was also a large donor of both investment and aid. Therefore in the early 1990s, the CCP actively discouraged research into Japanese atrocities.³⁸⁸ This attitude of denying the past in favor of good relations with Japan soon changed, as the world around China changed. The Soviet Union started its process of disintegration soon after Tiananmen, and within two years the world's second superpower had entirely disappeared and Eastern European communist regimes were toppled one after another, leaving China as the sole communist state of any strategic significance whatsoever.³⁸⁹ Because of this, China's significance to the US in counterbalancing the Soviet Union had also disappeared.

Roger Sullivan, in his 1992 article *'Discarding the China Card'*, published in *Foreign Policy*, noted how the US no longer needed China, and therefore Beijing could no longer expect a cozy relationship with Washington.³⁹⁰ He noted: *"It was not so much that China had changed, but that the world had changed."*³⁹¹ The US now increasingly pressured China on issues such as human rights, trade, arms control, and the Taiwan question, in what the Clinton administration termed *"comprehensive engagement"*, which was seen by many in China as a euphemism for *"comprehensive containment"*.³⁹² US Congress passed a resolution against Beijing's 1993 bid for the Olympic Games, and negotiations for China's admission to the WTO dragged on, as an increasingly high price for its admission was demanded.³⁹³ The CCP urgently needed to end the period of ideological transition which had persisted since Mao's death and left a void in the Party's legitimacy of ruling the

³⁸⁸ Vickers, "Commemorating 'Comfort Women'," 184; 188.

³⁸⁹ Wang and Guo, "The Chinese Dream," 5.

³⁹⁰ Roger W. Sullivan, "Discarding the China Card", *Foreign Policy* 86 (1992): 3-4.

³⁹¹ Sullivan, "Discarding the China Card", 3.

³⁹² Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 93-94.

³⁹³ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 94.

country.³⁹⁴ Research concurrently conducted by Japanese, Chinese, and Korean academia would provide the means.

5.1.1. Rediscovering the Past: Evidence of Biological Warfare and Sex Slaves

Owing to the discovery of the bones in 1989, Japanese academic interest was spurred in the following years to uncover the secrets of Unit 731.³⁹⁵ On 22 April 1992, Dr. Sakura Hajime, a retired anthropologist from the National Science Museum, who now worked at the Sapporo Gakuin University, had studied the bones and announced his findings.³⁹⁶ He stated they were from over 100 bodies of a variety of Asian ethnic groups, although not Japanese, and he concluded that their age must have been from right around the time of the war. Furthermore, Sakura noted in his report the strange injuries on the bones, including marks on heads which were akin to brain surgeries, only that such surgeries did not exist in the 1940s.³⁹⁷ In the same month, NHK aired a two-part documentary on Ishii, which drew on freshly discovered records from the KGB pertaining to the Khabarovsk Trials, and files from the US's biological weapons testing grounds in Dugway, Utah. And in the same year, the *Asahi Shinbun* reported on the first ever Sino-Japanese symposium on Japanese wartime experimentation.³⁹⁸

In 1993 more documents on Unit 731 were unearthed. In January, the prominent Japanese researcher Tsuneishi Keiichi discovered in the Japanese National Archives for the first time military records of the preparations for the use of biological weapons on the battlefield by the Japanese military. Then in August, researchers from the Center for Japanese War Responsibility discovered in the National Defense Agency Library the journal of the Army General Staff, which documented the use of biological weapons across China during the war. This discovery made the headlines just in time for the 48th anniversary of the Japanese

³⁹⁴ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 132-133.

³⁹⁵ LaFleur, Böhme, and Shimazono, *Dark Medicine*, 87-88.

³⁹⁶ Gold, *Unit 731*, 127-128.

³⁹⁷ LaFleur, Böhme, and Shimazono, *Dark Medicine*, 77-78.

³⁹⁸ LaFleur, Böhme, and Shimazono, *Dark Medicine*, 88.

surrender.³⁹⁹ Following the evidence of the journal, corroborating testimonies were collected from people still alive in Manchuria on Japan's use of plague-infected flees and cholera, which then led to a major publication on the collected evidence in 1995.⁴⁰⁰

In December 1994, the Japanese government petitioned the US Postal Service to cancel its plans on issuing a commemorative stamp on the atomic bomb, to which it complied by instead issuing a commemorative stamp on President Harry Truman.⁴⁰¹ The *China Daily* published an outraged editorial in which it noted that Japan still has not faced up to its war guilt, and that one should keep in mind that the two bombs killed roughly the same amount of people as did the Japanese during the Rape of Nanjing alone, but with the caveat that:

*"the atomic bomb was the result of Japanese militarism, while the Rape of Nanjing was the result of Japan's invading China."*⁴⁰²

The newspaper also went on to mention the Tokyo authorities' attempt to burn the bones that were unearthed in 1989.⁴⁰³ Another important piece of evidence, the *'Diary of John Rabe'*, was published in 1997, adding to the list of primary sources available through which to study the Nanjing Massacre.⁴⁰⁴ The diary helped researchers greatly in corroborating the testimonies of survivors, including that of Li Xiuying, who was 19 during the massacre and who survived being stabbed almost 40 times by Japanese soldiers. She was mentioned in the diary, which included a photo of her. Li testified in February 1997, in a lawsuit seeking government compensation.⁴⁰⁵

Until the 1990s, the comfort women were not a subject of interest to Chinese academia and the populace at large, and if the topic ever came up, it was but a foot

³⁹⁹ LaFleur, Böhme, and Shimazono, *Dark Medicine*, 88.

⁴⁰⁰ LaFleur, Böhme, and Shimazono, *Dark Medicine*, 88-89.

⁴⁰¹ Gold, *Unit 731*, 137-138.

⁴⁰² Gold, *Unit 731*, 138.

⁴⁰³ Gold, *Unit 731*, 138.

⁴⁰⁴ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 139.

⁴⁰⁵ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 139.

note of the war that referred to them as sex workers of the battlefield. This all changed in 1991, with the lawsuit by Kim Hak-sun, the first ever comfort woman to sue the Japanese government. While the backlash from the right-wing political sphere was immediate and displayed complete denial, which has fundamentally not changed to this day, the lawsuit attracted great media attention and kicked off waves of earnest research by scholars of Japanese history.⁴⁰⁶ An active search for evidence had already been ongoing by some Japanese researchers since the 1980s, but the real breakthrough and public attention came in the 1990s, with new discoveries of documents and witnesses, as well as the changing international circumstances, such as the democratization of South Korea, which finally gave Korean researchers the opportunity to have an honest look at their past and allowed victims to come forward publicly.⁴⁰⁷

One pioneer in research regarding the comfort women system was the Japanese professor of history, Yoshimi Yoshiaki, who lectured at Chuo University during the time of the lawsuit, and who compiled a detailed empirical study of the system, which he published in 1992, under the title *'Military Comfort Women Source Collection'*. It provided evidence on the Japanese military's direct involvement with the organization of the comfort stations. In 1995, he published his seminal monograph *'Military Comfort Women'*, which became immensely influential and was reprinted many times, including its 2000 translation into English.⁴⁰⁸ Following the release of Yoshimi's study in 1992, which included documents he had discovered that proved the government's involvement, Kato Koichi, the Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary at that time, admitted that the documents revealed Tokyo's involvement in setting up the comfort women system.⁴⁰⁹ Then in January 1993, Kono Yohei, the new Chief Cabinet Secretary, apologized publicly in what became known as the *'Kono Statement'*, for the role the Japanese military had played in creating the comfort women system during the war. Japan's then-Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi also

⁴⁰⁶ Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism," 41-42.

⁴⁰⁷ Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 175.

⁴⁰⁸ Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism," 43.

⁴⁰⁹ Lind, *Sorry States*, 64-65.

apologized while visiting Korea during a bilateral summit.⁴¹⁰ In the same year, Yoshimi and some of his colleagues established the War Responsibility Source Center, which continued to uncover much more evidence on past Japanese atrocities.⁴¹¹ But a strong right-wing backlash followed once it became clear that there were legal responsibilities with these political statements.⁴¹² Kono backtracked and clarified that his statement was not actually an official statement, and that, in any case, no blame could be laid on the government, as it was a military matter.⁴¹³

In China, Su Zhiliang became the pioneer, and until now the leading researcher, in the topic of Chinese comfort women.⁴¹⁴ During the time of the Kim Hak-sun lawsuit, he was a visiting scholar at Tokyo University, where he was introduced to the ongoing Japanese research. When he returned to China, together with his wife, Chen Lifei, the two of them started their search for survivors to document their stories, and to raise public awareness of this tragic part of Chinese history. The Chinese government was at that point still not interested in this part of its past and Su was repeatedly discouraged. In an interview from 2015, he remembered how, back then, he was repeatedly urged to leave such sensitive matters alone and instead was encouraged to research other topics, such as development aid. The Japanese researcher Ikeda Eriko recalls attending a news conference in Beijing back then, during which a comfort woman survivor was speaking, when suddenly the lights went off.⁴¹⁵ And on then eve of China's National Day in 1992, the government circulated a note which urged Party cadres to not encourage anyone to raise individual claims for compensation against the Japanese government.⁴¹⁶ This clearly

⁴¹⁰ Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism," 43.

⁴¹¹ Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism," 43.

⁴¹² Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 175.

⁴¹³ Hickey et al., "Unit 731 and Moral Repair," 272.

⁴¹⁴ Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 188.

⁴¹⁵ Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 183-184.

⁴¹⁶ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 10.

targeted comfort women survivors. It took another 20 years before the research Su and his colleagues pioneered would gather widespread support and prominence.⁴¹⁷

Sino-Japanese relations were still on a high when Emperor Akihito visited China in 1992.⁴¹⁸ Akihito had only succeeded Hirohito three years prior, as he apologized publicly during his visit.⁴¹⁹ The future for bilateral relations seemed even brighter when in 1993 the reign of the LDP ended, after half a century of unchallenged rule, and Hosokawa Morihiro became Prime Minister of a multi-party coalition government. He was the first high-level Japanese politician, not to mention Prime Minister, to not only offer an apology, but to also characterize the war fought by Japan as “*aggressive war*” and to show clear and unambiguous remorse for Japan’s direct actions.⁴²⁰ Anyone familiar with official statements from the Japanese government pertaining to its role during the war will notice that his statement regarding Japanese war guilt in Korea was very unusually candid and remorseful:

*“During Japan’s colonial rule over the Korean Peninsula, the Korean people were forced to suffer unbearable pain and sorrow in various ways. They were deprived of the opportunity to learn their mother tongue at school, they were forced to adopt Japanese names, forced to provide sex as ‘comfort women’ for Japanese troops, forced to provide labor. I hereby express genuine contrition and offer my deepest apologies for my country, the aggressor’s, acts.”*⁴²¹

None of the points he apologized for were much contested among Japanese academia researching the war, such as Yoshimi and his colleagues, but it was a highly controversial topic within Japanese right-wing political spheres, which foremost includes the LDP. Hosokawa’s landmark apology of 1993 marked the peak of Japanese remorsefulness from its political leadership.⁴²²

⁴¹⁷ Vickers, “Commemorating “Comfort Women,”” 188.

⁴¹⁸ Brooks, “Angry States,” 40.

⁴¹⁹ Lind, *Sorry States*, 61.

⁴²⁰ Lind, *Sorry States*, 61-62.

⁴²¹ Lind, *Sorry States*, 61-62.

⁴²² Brooks, “Angry States,” 40.

Hosokawa was soon replaced by Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi of the Japanese Socialist Party, who also wanted to continue a policy of benevolent remorsefulness, but eventually failed.⁴²³ To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, Murayama introduced the 1995 Diet Resolution titled '*Resolution to Renew the Determination for Peace on the Basis of Lessons Learned from History*'. However, while the resolution was meant to be a milestone admission of Japan's wartime guilt, debate in the Diet was so fierce that it ended up being watered down to the point of admitting nothing, as if Tokyo was a mere bystander who extended "condolences" for anyone who "*fell in action*".⁴²⁴

This failure, and the unwillingness of many politicians in the Diet to take responsibility for their country's atrocities it revealed, sparked fierce criticism from many in China. This included angry front page articles from the *People's Daily*, Beijing's mouthpiece of choice, which targeted Japan's intention to whitewash history and the potential resurfacing of militarism, some of which were published during the G7 meeting in Canada, likely designed to embarrass Japan on the world stage.⁴²⁵ Within weeks thereof, the widow of a victim of Unit 731 launched a lawsuit for a civil compensation claim in Tokyo.⁴²⁶ This was only one of many claims to be brought before Japanese courts in the 1990s. In March 1995, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen gave a statement in which he clarified that it was the right of every Chinese individual affected by Japanese atrocities during the war to raise claims for compensation. This was the official green light for the Chinese redress movement to get started, and within the same year, a multitude of lawsuits was brought before Japanese courts.⁴²⁷

At the same time, a rise in postwar Japanese nationalism could be observed among right-wing scholars in Japan. In the mid-1990s, Fujioka Nobukatsu, a former professor at the University of Tokyo, came up with the "*liberal view of history*",

⁴²³ Brooks, "Angry States," 40.

⁴²⁴ Lind, *Sorry States*, 62.

⁴²⁵ Brooks, "Angry States," 40.

⁴²⁶ Brooks, "Angry States," 40-41.

⁴²⁷ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 10-11.

which maintained that Japan's postwar history textbooks were self-abusing and, through teaching the ills of Japan's aggression, were a negative influence on patriotism of the Japanese youth, despite Japanese textbooks having already been very restrained in assigning guilt to Japan. Together with Nishio Kanji, a literary critic who also followed that "*liberal*" view, they created the New Textbook Editing Society, which published updated textbooks that whitewashed the war and defended Japan's aggressions.⁴²⁸ Among others, they described the comfort women system as a commercially organized activity in which prostitutes served, and who were not only there of their own free will, but also treated exceptionally well. Despite there having been plenty of verified evidence of the system being based very much on coercion, from witness accounts to official documents of the Japanese military, the denial of coercion having taken place with regard to the comfort women is a common tactic employed by right-wing scholars to this day.⁴²⁹ However, it is a red herring, because even if one were to assume that a majority, or even all, of the women in the system joined it willingly, it hardly diminishes what it actually was. In his groundbreaking 1995 publication, Yoshimi defined comfort women as:

*"Women who provided sexual services to soldiers under the management of the Japanese military, with limited freedom under conditions depriving them of human rights."*⁴³⁰

The history professor Onozawa Akane further pointed out that the comfort women were either indirectly or directly recruited, using methods such as trafficking, deception, or abduction, and were stripped of personal liberty and imprisoned in the comfort stations where sexual violence against them was committed.⁴³¹ The question of the women's free will upon entering this system of prostitution was never the burning question. Yoshimi also noted that even Japan's licensed system of prostitution in the first half of the 20th century was essentially a "*sex slave system*", even though one can presume that many Japanese prostitutes back then chose to enter

⁴²⁸ Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism," 42-43.

⁴²⁹ Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism," 43.

⁴³⁰ Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism," 44.

⁴³¹ Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism," 45.

it, for whatever personal reasons.⁴³² However, such ongoing denials of Japanese atrocities by the right-wing academia and politicians in Japan greatly helped the CCP's newly-found drive for patriotism.⁴³³

5.1.2. The New Patriotic Education

The CCP leadership, including Deng Xiaoping, felt that one major reason for the Tiananmen pro-democracy movement was a lack of patriotism in young people, which should be directed at both the country and its rightful leadership, the CCP.⁴³⁴ The solution to this would be an overhauled education system, that would teach Chinese youths the right kind of patriotism. Jiang Zemin was handpicked by Deng only 20 days after the crackdown in Tiananmen, to become China's new leader, and to oversee the new patriotic education campaign.⁴³⁵ The introduction of this campaign was to come in steps, starting in 1990, around the 150th anniversary of the First Opium War and the beginning of the Century of Humiliation.⁴³⁶ In Jiang's 1990 speech, titled *'Patriotism and the Mission of the Chinese intellectuals'*, he stated that the Party would use patriotism as tool for mobilization going forward, and he addressed the young Chinese intellectuals to *"unite under the banner of patriotism"*.⁴³⁷

In March 1990, the State Education Commission declared the introduction of a thorough patriotic education from elementary schools all the way to universities. The commission's vice minister, Teng Teng, noted that the goal was to teach the history of the foreign invasions, how these invaders were repulsed by a united China under the CCP, and the great achievements of the New China, with particular

⁴³² Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism," 45-46.

⁴³³ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 157.

⁴³⁴ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 97.

⁴³⁵ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 121.

⁴³⁶ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 156.

⁴³⁷ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 120.

emphasis on how only the CCP was able to save and develop the nation.⁴³⁸ To this end, 'The Association for the Study of the Anti-Japanese War' was established in January 1991, with around 150 historians from across China being present at its founding ceremony in Beijing.⁴³⁹ Thereafter, the *'Journal of Studies of China's Resistance War Against Japan'* appeared quarterly, which featured articles that bluntly dealt with occurrences of the war which had previously been off limits to researchers.⁴⁴⁰

The patriotic education campaign was officially launched in August 1991 with the publishing of two documents, the *'Notice about Conducting Education of Patriotism and Revolutionary Tradition by Exploiting Extensively Cultural Relics'* and the *'General Outline on Strengthening Education on Chinese Modern and Contemporary History and National Conditions'*.⁴⁴¹ These documents were inspired by a letter from Jiang Zemin to the Education Minister, which was also published on 9 March 1991 by the *People's Daily*. In it, Jiang outlines the main points the education reform had to focus on, such as the master narrative of China always having been humiliated and bullied by foreign powers and that only through the sacrifices and leadership of the CCP the Chinese nation was able to reunite and develop. He also made clear that this narrative had to be taught persistently to pupils of all ages from kindergarten onward.⁴⁴² The above mentioned *'General Outline'* from August 1991 demanded that all schools fully implement the new requirements within three years, and it also noted that the reforms are the fundamental strategy to help China *"defend against the 'peaceful evolution' plot of international hostile powers"*, which implicitly referred to the pro-democracy movement.⁴⁴³

During this time, the CCP started using the phrase "rejuvenating China", which was about reemerging from the Century of Humiliation. However, while Deng

⁴³⁸ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 156.

⁴³⁹ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 156.

⁴⁴⁰ Coble, "China's "New Remembering"," 402.

⁴⁴¹ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 96-97.

⁴⁴² Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 97-98.

⁴⁴³ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 99.

Xiaoping had already started the conversation about the war and China having fallen behind, during Deng's tenure the focus was on internal forces that kept China down, including the '*Gang of Four*', while Jiang Zemin started to unambiguously point to foreign forces having been the culprits through the Century of Humiliation.⁴⁴⁴ Jiang was also very direct in stating how China could regain its former glory. As he noted in his speech during celebrations for the 80th anniversary of the CCP's founding in 1991: "*Only the CCP can rejuvenate China*".⁴⁴⁵

In 1992, new history textbooks were promptly published for middle and high schools. Until then, there actually was no Chinese history discussed in high school history courses, as that level of education was reserved for studying world history, but from then on world history also included the history of Chinese oppression.⁴⁴⁶ The previously-taught narrative of a victorious Chinese nation was replaced with a the reoccurring emphasis of China's victimization, to create a deeply rooted victim mentality.⁴⁴⁷

On 28-29 April 1993, the Central Committee's Propaganda Department held a forum dedicated to patriotic education, in which delegates from various Party organizations attended to come up with effective means for distributing patriotic education. Measures decided on there included the establishment of memorial halls and museums, the popularization of patriotic literature and art, the creation of a systematic patriotic education curriculum for all levels of schooling including kindergarten, and the utilization of the mass media, such as newspapers, radio, television, and film.⁴⁴⁸ In August 1994, the Central Committee published the '*Outline on Implementing Patriotic Education*', which explicitly laid out the final measures to

⁴⁴⁴ Wang and Guo, "The Chinese Dream," 7-8.

⁴⁴⁵ Wang and Guo, "The Chinese Dream," 7.

⁴⁴⁶ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 101.

⁴⁴⁷ Abanti Bhattacharya, "Chinese Nationalism Under Xi Jinping Revisited," *India Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (2019): 247.

⁴⁴⁸ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 156.

be taken to fully implement the reforms, as well as the objectives in doing so.⁴⁴⁹ As written in the outline:

*"The objectives of conducting the patriotic education campaign are to boost the nation's spirit, enhance cohesion, foster national self-esteem and pride, consolidate and develop a patriotic united front to the broadest extent possible, and direct and rally the masses' patriotic passions to the great cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics."*⁴⁵⁰

In May 1995, new estimates of Chinese victims of Japanese aggression were introduced, to include all estimated victims in the years of 1931-1945, instead of the previous timeframe of 1937-1945, and to also include Taiwan. When Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi visited the 'Memorial Hall of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression' in Beijing on 3 May 1995, it already featured the revised figures of 35 million victims of war, instead of the previous 21.685 million.⁴⁵¹ The new focus on patriotism was aimed at shifting the focus from domestic issues to those caused by foreigners, including the ills of the Century of Humiliations, out of which China still had to fully reemerge.⁴⁵² Legitimacy for the CCP's leadership now came from being China's savior and protector, at the core of a new nationalism.⁴⁵³ Marxist class struggle was replaced by the struggle for Chinese emancipation and patriotism. Therefore history now also included the struggle of those who came before the CCP, including those who fought for the GMD, and previously for the Qing Dynasty, as long as they fought defending China.⁴⁵⁴ More museums and movies to spread the new politically correct version of Chinese history were already on the way.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁴⁹ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 99-100.

⁴⁵⁰ Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism," 44.

⁴⁵¹ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 156.

⁴⁵² Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 100.

⁴⁵³ B31 245-246.

⁴⁵⁴ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 101-102.

⁴⁵⁵ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 158-159.

The September 18th Memorial Historical Museum was built in 1991, commemorating the '*September 18th Incident*' or '*Mukden Incident*', when Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and started its encroachment into China and began what is considered the darkest fourteen years of the Century of Humiliation. The museum is located at the exact spot of where the incident occurred. Placed in front of the museum is a huge sculpture in the shape of a calendar which depicts the date "*13 September 1931*", and situated on the other side of the main building is a massive bronze bell on which "*Never Forget National Humiliation*" (勿忘国耻) is engraved.⁴⁵⁶ In 1995, only ten years after its initial opening, the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall was renovated and enlarged, and schools started to regularly send their pupils there on school trips.⁴⁵⁷ In June of the same year, a mobile exhibition was launched in Jiangsu Province, which displayed 280 photographs and two video documentaries and toured 11 cities within Jiangsu.⁴⁵⁸

1995 also saw the release of the movie '*Don't Cry, Nanjing*', timed for the commemoration of China's victory over Japanese aggression 50 years prior.⁴⁵⁹ The film depicts Chinese soldiers fighting bravely against the brutal and inhumane Japanese devils, until the massacre occurs, at which point they obediently walk into their demise without resistance. The movie refrains from showing any atrocities committed by the Chinese side, such as when the Chinese 36th Division opened fire on other Chinese troops to safeguard the retreat of general Tang before the Japanese invasion, or the plight of young Chinese men who were conscripted against their will from the countryside and forced to fight to the death without training or proper military equipment. Nor is the movie subtle in its message of Japanese aggression. At the beginning, a subtitle notes that over 300,000 Chinese were killed by Japanese soldiers in "*cold blood*", and that the massacre was as horrendous as Hiroshima or

⁴⁵⁶ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 56-57.

⁴⁵⁷ Wang, "Eightieth Anniversary," 255.

⁴⁵⁸ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 159.

⁴⁵⁹ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 158.

Auschwitz.⁴⁶⁰ It was a huge success, with 30 million Chinese having gone to see it.⁴⁶¹ There were also many other films and TV-dramas released during that time that dealt with the struggle against Japan.⁴⁶² Another popular publication that did much to spread the story of Nanjing internationally was the book *'The Rape of Nanking'*, by the Chinese-American writer Iris Chang, in 1997. The book's subtitle was "*The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*".⁴⁶³ While the book has been repeatedly challenged for some inaccuracies, it nonetheless helped spread the story of this atrocity around the world.⁴⁶⁴

The second half of the 1990s also saw the publications of other patriotic books, including the the all-time best seller on foreign affairs in China, *'China Can Say No'*, which has commonly been referred to as a Chinese manifesto on "*anti-Americanism*". Written by Song Qiang, Zhang Zangzang, and Qiao Bian and published in 1996, the ultra patriotic book created a nationwide phenomenon with its emotional advocating for China having to take a tougher stance on foreign policy issues.⁴⁶⁵ It also sparked the publication of many similar books, filled with highly emotional anti-foreign sentiments and xenophobic conspiracies of Western attempts at destroying China. There was the book *'China's Road in the Shadow of Globalization'*, which maintained that China had to close its economy as globalization was a trap by the US to destroy China and exterminate the Chinese race, as well as the book *'The Covert War that Threatens China'*, which similarly claimed globalization to be an American strategy to imprison the Chinese nation.⁴⁶⁶

While then government-induced message of the Century of Humiliation was clearly anti-foreign, Beijing still tried to separate such historical anti-foreign sentiments from current relations, in order to maintain positive relations with Japan

⁴⁶⁰ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 158-159.

⁴⁶¹ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 159.

⁴⁶² Coble, "China's "New Remembering"," 397-98.

⁴⁶³ Wang, "Eightieth Anniversary," 255.

⁴⁶⁴ Hu and Zhang, *The Undaunted Women of Nanking*, 1-2.

⁴⁶⁵ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 134.

⁴⁶⁶ Peter Hays Gries, "China's "New Thinking" on Japan," *The China Quarterly* 184 (2005): 837.

and to safeguard economic growth. However, with decreasing success, as much of the public started to increasingly dislike Japan.⁴⁶⁷

5.1.3. The Changing Foreign Politics of Patriotism

How China conducted its foreign policy also changed significantly in the early 1990s, to what Professor Kenneth Lieberthal refers to as “*moralism*”.⁴⁶⁸ Chinese diplomats would frequently play the moral card with Western countries, referring to past ills of Western powers and wanting recognition for what had been done to China and that the Western country on the other end of the table basically owed China a lot, before moving on with business.⁴⁶⁹ Apart from an overall change in diplomatic attitude, there were several major events that shaped the rediscovered patriotic psyche of China.

There were three major political events of international significance that are worth mentioning from the second half of the 1990s to 2001. The Third Taiwan Strait Crisis (1995-1996), the US bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade (1999), and the collision of warplanes off the Chinese coast near Hainan (2001).⁴⁷⁰ These are examples of unexpected emergencies which Beijing might have wanted to manage quietly and through diplomatic channels, but which had to be dealt with in the open due to the sudden public attention they aroused.

During the early 1990s, the two Chinas across the Taiwan Strait appeared to be getting friendlier with one another, both economically and politically, but this conciliatory phase ended abruptly with the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1995-1996.⁴⁷¹ There was plenty of potential for friction to begin with. The new narrative of humiliation and having to regain China’s former greatness naturally included the

⁴⁶⁷ He, “History, Chinese Nationalism,” 8.

⁴⁶⁸ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 133.

⁴⁶⁹ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 133-134.

⁴⁷⁰ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 165.

⁴⁷¹ Dalei Jie, “Sovereignty–Security Nexus, Domestic Constraints, and the Taiwan Independence Policy (1988–2010),” *Asian Security* 8, no. 2 (2012): 190.

eventual reunification of Taiwan with the Mainland. Therefore in 1993, the Chinese government published its first White Paper on the topic of the Taiwan Question, titled *'The Taiwan Question and Reunification of China'*.⁴⁷² In it, Beijing stated clearly its intention of one day regaining its lost territory, using a justification rooted in historical injustice and humiliation. The White Paper's foreword includes the following:

*"The modern history of China was a record of subjection to aggression, dismemberment and humiliation by foreign powers. [...] The origin and evolution of the Taiwan question are closely linked with that period of history. [...] Unless and until this state of affairs is brought to an end, the trauma on the Chinese nation will not be healed and the Chinese people's struggle for national reunification and territorial integrity will continue."*⁴⁷³

The White Paper also clarified that, while peaceful reunification was preferable, Beijing reserved the right to militarily intervene if necessary or if Taiwan ever formally declared independence.⁴⁷⁴

When in May 1995 the Clinton administration decided to grant the ROC's independence-leaning President Lee Teng-Hui a visa to attend his school reunion at Cornell University, it reversed over two decades of non-interference diplomacy with regard to the One-China Policy, which directly challenged Beijing. This, in tandem with the recent sale of 150 F-16 fighter jets, was a sign to the Chinese government that soon Lee might be encouraged to declare independence.⁴⁷⁵ What followed was a display of force by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), involving military drills in the Taiwan Strait, the firing of missiles, and the amassing of ground troops in nearby Fujian Province, to show its readiness for war. The crisis culminated in a confrontation of US and Chinese forces in the Strait in early 1996, with the US

⁴⁷² "The Taiwan Question and Reunification of China," *Taiwan Affairs Office & Information Office, State Council, The People's Republic of China*, August 1993.

⁴⁷³ "The Taiwan Question," Foreword.

⁴⁷⁴ "The Taiwan Question," IV.

⁴⁷⁵ Robert S. Ross, "The 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Confrontation: Coercion, Credibility, and the Use of Force," *International Security* 25, no. 2 (2000): 87; 92.

deploying two carrier groups. Fortunately, the situation dissipated again after March as Washington decided not to escalate its military signaling any further.⁴⁷⁶ Beijing succeeded in demonstrating that there were interests it would not back down from.

Sino-American relations returned to a state of relative calm for the following two years, until 8 May 1999, when during a NATO bombing raid on Belgrade, an American B-2 bomber dropped a satellite-guided bomb on the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, killing three Chinese citizens and leaving a further 23 injured.⁴⁷⁷ The US Secretary of Defense and the Director of the CIA issued a joint statement the same day, noting that the bombing was an error, committed through outdated maps which did not have the Chinese Embassy located in its new location.⁴⁷⁸ While the bombing was an error, Chinese nationalists became nonetheless convinced that it was deliberate.⁴⁷⁹ Tens of thousands took to the streets in China.⁴⁸⁰ At first the government tolerated the mass protests, which included many young patriotic students who threw stones at US embassy and consulate buildings across China. Vice-President Hu Jintao even appeared on TV, assuring the students the support of the government. However, the situation quickly got out of control, leading to several Western countries issuing travel warnings for China, while some demonstrators started criticizing the government for not acting tougher against the US. This might have been one of the first clear lessons for the CCP that, when it comes to foreign policy, nationalism can be a “*double-edged sword*”, which can legitimize the government, but also give the people a means to judge it by.⁴⁸¹ In the end, President Clinton apologized and agreed to a compensation package.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁶ Ross, “The 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Confrontation,” 105-108; 110-112.

⁴⁷⁷ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 167.

⁴⁷⁸ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 167.

⁴⁷⁹ Suisheng Zhao, “Foreign Policy Implications of Chinese Nationalism Revisited: the strident turn,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 22, no. 82 (2013): 539.

⁴⁸⁰ Yinxian Zhang, Jiajun Liu, and Ji-Rong Wen, “Nationalism on Weibo: Towards a Multifaceted Understanding of Chinese Nationalism,” *The China Quarterly* 235 (2018): 761.

⁴⁸¹ Zhao, “Foreign Policy Implications,” 541-542.

⁴⁸² Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 177.

The Chinese government appears to have learned its lesson in showing patriotic strength when, on 1 April 2001, a Chinese jet fighter and an American EP-3 plane collided in mid-air in the South China Sea off the Chinese coast in Hainan.⁴⁸³ The US crew survived the crash and was taken into custody, but Beijing refused to release them until it received a formal apology by Washington. However, President George W. Bush refused to apologize because, as it turned out, the US plane was operating outside Chinese territorial waters and therefore should not have been approached by the Chinese plane, not to mention that the US plane issued a mayday call in accordance with international aviation procedures.⁴⁸⁴ This left Beijing with a conundrum, because it could absolutely not release the US crew without having its demand of an apology fulfilled. The solution was a sleight of hand. When the US Secretary of State Colin Powell agreed to convey his “*regrets*” for the incidence and the missing Chinese pilot, state media translated his statement into Chinese with some words slightly altered so as to turn the statement into a full apology, including Powell supposedly saying “*very sorry*” and giving his “*apology*”. It worked and both sides saved face in front of their people.⁴⁸⁵

During the same period, there were also other confrontations between China and the US that had the potential to cause public outrage and result in a deterioration of Sino-American relations, but that did not. These included the public searching by US forces of the Chinese vessel ‘Yinhe’ in search for chemical weapons in 1993; China’s signing of several nonproliferation, test ban, and arms control treaties between 1991 and 1996; and the lengthy thirteen-year negotiations of China joining the WTO, which some compared to the unequal treaties of the 19th century. However, in these instances Beijing managed public opinion and tightly controlled the media reporting, something that was impossible with the three aforementioned major emergencies.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸³ Gries, *China’s New Nationalism*, 1-2.

⁴⁸⁴ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 177-178.

⁴⁸⁵ Zhao, “Foreign Policy Implications,” 542.

⁴⁸⁶ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 193-194.

By the late 1990s, Sino-Japanese relations had visibly deteriorated, as Japanese revisionism fought revelations brought to light by researchers, and Chinese nationalism increasingly scrutinized the historical injustices committed against it by foreign powers, in particular Japan. By now, the Chinese government no longer restrained its remarks when it came to the question of Japanese war guilt. When President Jiang visited Tokyo in 1998, far from being an event of reconciliation, he publicly shamed his hosts for not giving a clear and honest apology on the atrocities committed by their forefathers.⁴⁸⁷ However, while such public admonition of the Japanese hosts was not an example of good diplomacy, it may well have helped with audiences at home, showing that the Party was indeed China's greatest patriot, defending its people from historical injustices. As observed by prominent Sinologists, such as Geremie Barmé and Thomas Christensen, nationalism not only became the state ideology, but the glue that kept the PRC together and the justification for the CCP to remain its guardian.⁴⁸⁸ If the Chinese leadership of the 1990s was searching for a foreign power to admonish, the Japanese political leadership made itself an easy and obvious target.

LDP ministers, including successive prime ministers, kept visiting the Yasukuni Shrine throughout the second half of the 1990s and beyond. At the same time, museums displayed Japan's amnesia of the war. The Yushukan museum adjacent to the Yasukuni shrine glorified, then and now, the war as Japan's contribution to freeing Asian nations from European colonialists, while omitting any atrocities committed against those "*freed*" peoples. The invasion of China was blamed on "*Chinese terrorists*" and Pearl Harbor on the Americans.⁴⁸⁹ There is no mentioning of Chinese comfort women or Unit 731, or indeed any other atrocity. Nanjing is mentioned, as the '*Nanjing Incident*', but only in that it was a battle Japan had soundly won. As described in the museum:

⁴⁸⁷ Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 184.

⁴⁸⁸ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 119-120.

⁴⁸⁹ Lind, *Sorry States*, 67-68.

*“The Chinese troops were soundly defeated, suffering heavy casualties. Inside the city, residents were once again able to live their lives in peace.”*⁴⁹⁰

Other museums, such as the National Memorial Museum for Peace in Tokyo, tend to highlight the suffering of Japanese civilians and soldiers. The Showakan Museum, which opened its doors in 1999, was supposed to display the other side of the war, including honest exhibits from the Nanjing Massacre, but these plans were discarded, causing Japanese historians on a government advisory committee to resign in protest as they accused the government of wanting to use the museum to justify the war.⁴⁹¹ In January 2000, rightists organized a conference in Osaka on the Nanjing Massacre, in which it was dubbed the *“biggest myth of the 20th century”*.⁴⁹²

Nonetheless, the Nanjing Massacre had become a global symbol for the horrors of war, and for the role Japan played in committing them, regardless of rightist attempts to deny them.⁴⁹³ The massacre had become a common go-to by Chinese diplomats as well. However, it had become such a sanctified event that any criticism of its official narrative whatsoever was quickly referred to as outright denialism. Such as when in 1998 Saito Kunihiro, the Japanese Ambassador to the US, accused Iris Chang of inaccuracies and being one-sided in her book, *The Rape of Nanking*, after which the spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in the US, Yu Shunting, issued a statement denouncing denialism and reiterating the Massacre being a historical fact, not fiction, which entirely missed the point, given that Saito only criticized Chang’s lack of accuracy, not the event’s occurrence.⁴⁹⁴ This institutionalization of the event also started to negatively impact historical research. Whereas research into the subject was taboo during the Mao era, now scrutinizing certain questions had once again become taboo, but for the opposite reason. The Rape of Nanjing had become the symbol of Chinese humiliation, *“China’s*

⁴⁹⁰ Lind, *Sorry States*, 68.

⁴⁹¹ Lind, *Sorry States*, 69.

⁴⁹² Vickers, “Commemorating “Comfort Women,”” 184.

⁴⁹³ Yoshida, *The making of the “Rape of Nanking”*, 182.

⁴⁹⁴ Yoshida, *The making of the “Rape of Nanking”*, 161.

Holocaust” in Iris Chang’s words.⁴⁹⁵ Scrutinizing any aspect of the event’s official narrative was akin to denying the Holocaust itself. The idea that there were also some good Japanese soldiers among the “*devils*”, or that some Chinese forces committed atrocities against their own people, did not fit the image of a strait-forward holocaust. This institutionalization of the Massacre never occurred in Taiwan, where anti-communist sentiments and pro-Japanese leanings made it a lesser priority, even though it was still acknowledged as the major atrocity it was.⁴⁹⁶

Chinese academic research into the war flourished, but often it was packaged into a frame of nationalism and humiliation. One example is the 1999 publication of a multi-volume of accounts of the war, including news coverage, by Fudan University, titled ‘*A True Record of the War of Resistance*’.⁴⁹⁷ While focusing on the war, the volumes are set within the new nationalist framework, with the sub-heading “*The history that must not be forgotten*”, and with chapters organized by themes emphasizing the patriotic struggle against Japan.⁴⁹⁸

Research into the Chinese comfort women also progressed rapidly. In 1999, Su Zhiliang established the Chinese Comfort Women Research Center, within the Shanghai Normal University (SNU), and in March 2000, an international symposium on the topic was held in Shanghai, which attracted much media attention.⁴⁹⁹ And as for Unit 731, several lawsuits by families of victims had been launched throughout the 1990s, such as the aforementioned widow of one victim. There was another civil lawsuit filed in 1997, by 108 Chinese survivors and their families against the Japanese government, demanding both an apology and roughly \$84,000 each for compensation.⁵⁰⁰ In August 1999, only weeks before the Tokyo District Court passed judgement on several compensation cases, the Chinese government released documents relating to Japanese war crimes involving chemical and biological

⁴⁹⁵ Wang, “Eightieth Anniversary,” 255.

⁴⁹⁶ Yoshida, *The making of the "Rape of Nanking"*, 111-113.

⁴⁹⁷ Coble, “China’s “New Remembering”,” 404.

⁴⁹⁸ Coble, “China’s “New Remembering”,” 404.

⁴⁹⁹ Vickers, “Commemorating “Comfort Women”,” 184.

⁵⁰⁰ Watts, “Victim’s of Japan’s Notorious Unit 731 Sue,” 628.

weapons, which was followed by intense media coverage in China.⁵⁰¹ Nonetheless, none of the lawsuits achieved their demands. But while the lawsuits filed had little chance of winning in Japanese courts to begin with, the real objective was generally to get the courts to admit to the atrocities having occurred, even if the case was thrown out at the same time, for reasons such as lack of jurisdiction or the statute of limitations.⁵⁰² This legal fight for recognition would continue into the new millennium.

By the closing of the 20th century, the CCP managed a complete makeover of its image, objective, and legitimization. In summary, where it once saw itself as the party of the proletariat and the working class, it became the greatest of all patriots; where its absolute and perpetual rule was once legitimized by its victory of the Chinese revolution, its ongoing struggle for the proletariat, and the leadership of Chairman Mao, it became the one-and-only savior of the ever-humiliated Chinese nation, and the only leadership that could safeguard ongoing development and the reemerging of a nation destined for greatness; and where its greatest objectives were once the overthrowing of the exploiting bourgeoisie, the triumphing of socialism over capitalism, and the realization of a communist utopia, its new objectives were rejuvenating China and making its people prosper, as well as reclaiming all that rightfully belongs to China, including Taiwan, to finally leave all historical humiliation behind.⁵⁰³ This became the new goal of the CCP, and therefore its new legitimization for leading the country into the future.⁵⁰⁴

5.2. The 2000s: The Chinese Nation Rises

In December 2000, NGOs from several countries including Japan organized the ‘Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal’ in Tokyo, in which prominent international lawyers were involved to pass judgement on war crimes committed by

⁵⁰¹ Brooks, “Angry States,” 41.

⁵⁰² Watts, “Victim’s of Japan’s Notorious Unit 731 Sue,” 628.

⁵⁰³ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 133.

⁵⁰⁴ Coble, “China’s “New Remembering,”” 403.

Japan against women, in particular regarding the issue of sex slaves.⁵⁰⁵ While the tribunal was an informal event that had no binding status under international law, it was nonetheless a powerful event, as the reputable lawyers present took International law into consideration in order to pass judgement as if it was an officially organized tribunal, and it was attended by Chinese and other representatives. The Chinese delegation that attended was headed by Su Zhiliang. It consisted of 35 members, including six survivors and eight prosecutors.⁵⁰⁶ In total, 75 survivors were called up to testify in front of the assembled judges and prosecutors, many of which had previously served in international tribunals in Africa and Europe.⁵⁰⁷ These included many prominent legal specialists, such as the previous president of the International War Crimes Tribunal on the Former Yugoslavia, Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, the president of the International Women's Association of Judges, Christine Chinkin, and the legal adviser for gender-related crimes at the Office of the Prosecutor for the Rwanda Tribunal and the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Patricia Viseur Sellers.⁵⁰⁸ The tribunal was held during 8-12 December 2000, and on 12 December, a preliminary judgement was issued based on the testimonies and evidence presented, which found both the Emperor Hirohito and the State of Japan guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The tribunal issued its Final Judgement one year later, on 4 December 2001, in the Hague, with a 200-page judgement that detailed findings, cited applicable laws, and its justification for finding the defendants guilty.⁵⁰⁹ It was a powerful verdict and a victory for those fighting for justice for the comfort women, even if it was mostly a symbolic victory.

At the beginning of the new century, awareness continued to increase on Japanese atrocities during the war, both within China and Japan, but at the same time the relationship between the two neighbors became increasingly complicated. While economic dependence continued to increase between the two trade partners, Sino-

⁵⁰⁵ Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 175.

⁵⁰⁶ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 182.

⁵⁰⁷ Lind, *Sorry States*, 72.

⁵⁰⁸ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 182.

⁵⁰⁹ Qiu, Chen, and Su, *Chinese Comfort Women*, 182-183.

Japanese relations in terms of politics and security deteriorated with ever more sensitive issues coming up that reminded an increasingly nationalistic Chinese populace of the terrible wrongs that had been committed against their nation.⁵¹⁰ It did not even require major international incidents, such as the Belgrade bombing, to set off increasingly jumpy nationalists. In September 2001, the Chinese magazine *'Fashion'* (时装, *Shizhuang*) featured a photo of the famous Chinese actress and model Zhao Wei, wearing an American-made dress with the Imperial Japanese flag printed on it, which she wore at a photo shoot in New York. Following a Hunan newspaper exposé on 3 December, it went viral online and in the media, with the *Chengdu Daily* writing “an open letter from Nanjing Massacre survivors to Zhao Wei”, demanding a public apology from her, which she soon thereafter was forced to give.⁵¹¹

In late 2002, the progressive Chinese journalist and writer Ma Licheng released his famous article *'New Thinking on Sino-Japanese Relations'* in the journal *Strategy and Management*, in which he argued that China should abandon its narrative of victimization in history in favor of a healthier psychology as a confident and forgiving big state. The anti-Japanese sentiment and the constant insistence for Japan to apologize and repent for the war crimes of the past was, as Ma argued, hindering not only the two countries' bilateral relations, but also China's own future development.⁵¹² Ma, a prominent writer for the *People's Daily* at the time, became famous with his book *'Crossing Swords'*, co-authored with Ling Zhijun and published in 1998, which was an account of the 1990s rearguard battle between those trying to modernize and reform the country and the “old leftists” who tried to impede reforms.⁵¹³ The book sold 2 million copies in 1998 alone, and in 1999 Ma and Ling published their second book *'Outcry'*, which looked at the “new leftists”, who tried

⁵¹⁰ Gries, “China's “New Thinking” on Japan,” 831.

⁵¹¹ Gries, “China's “New Thinking” on Japan,” 832-833.

⁵¹² Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 217-218.

⁵¹³ Gries, “China's “New Thinking” on Japan,” 836.

to propagate the new populist nationalism, including such aforementioned books as *'China Can Say No'*.⁵¹⁴

In his 2002 article, Ma discusses the worrying development of the new populist nationalism centered around victimization and anti-foreign sentiments. He writes about examples such as the Zhao Wei affair, the xenophobic books of the late 1990s, and the issue of increasingly anti-Japanese sentiments, displayed in commonly-used slurs such as “devils” (鬼子, *guizi*) and “little Japs” (小日本, *xiao Riben*), and in events such as a Shenzhen bar displaying the sign “*Japanese not welcome*”, which he finds eerily reminiscent of the “*Chinese and dogs not welcome*” signage that used to be at a park inside Shanghai’s foreign legation.⁵¹⁵ Did Chinese nationalists now turn into that which they despised the most? His solution to this troubling and complex problem with China’s new nationalism is simple:

*“We need the generosity of a great and victorious nation, and do not need to be excessively harsh with Japan.”*⁵¹⁶

Ma’s article sparked a flurry of responses in both the public sphere and academia, on both sides of the argument, although responses critical of his opinion were far more numerous.⁵¹⁷ One exception to the many critics was the prominent international relations expert, Shi Yinhong, with his essay *'Japan-China Rapprochement and Diplomatic Revolution'*, in which he warns of the vicious cycle of antagonistic sentiments on both sides and notes that history should be put aside and that China should even support Japan in its bid for becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council.⁵¹⁸ To Shi, this was less about China being generous, and more about realpolitik, as China would stand to gain greatly from improved relations with Japan.⁵¹⁹ However, the critics won much of the argument, which was amplified in Chinese chatrooms, where Ma was repeatedly called a

⁵¹⁴ Gries, “China’s “New Thinking” on Japan,” 836.

⁵¹⁵ Gries, “China’s “New Thinking” on Japan,” 837.

⁵¹⁶ Gries, “China’s “New Thinking” on Japan,” 837.

⁵¹⁷ He, “History, Chinese Nationalism,” 22.

⁵¹⁸ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 218.

⁵¹⁹ Gries, “China’s “New Thinking” on Japan,” 831.

“traitor”, received numerous death threats, and both his phone number and address where posted online, alongside a call for burning down his house. Half a year later, Ma was granted early retirement from his position at the *People’s Daily* and he subsequently relocated to Hong Kong, where he started working for *Phoenix TV*.⁵²⁰ For suggesting China should be a proud and forgiving nation, Ma was called a traitor and chased out of the country. China’s new nationalists were clearly not ready to forgive Japan, and the bitterness of historical remembrance built upon humiliation and pain was only going to grow in the following years.⁵²¹

Apart from rapid economic development, for which Jiang Zemin is commonly credited during his 1994-2002 tenure, the development of the a new Chinese nationalism that renewed the CCP’s legitimacy by transforming the once-revolutionary party into a nationalist party, might be an equally powerful legacy of his.⁵²² But it came at the cost of trust and respect for the foreign powers which had humiliated the nation. Jiang Wen directed the movie ‘*Devils on the Doorstep*’ (鬼子来了, *guizi laile*), which won the 2000 Cannes Grand Prize.⁵²³ The movie depicts the friendship which develops between Chinese villagers and a Japanese prisoner during the war and shows the complexities of war. It was never shown publicly in China. The Censorship Committee of China’s Bureau of Film and Television complained that the Chinese civilians did not show enough hatred for the Japanese prisoner and instead became close brothers with him.⁵²⁴ Japanese soldiers having a human core did not interest the censors very much.

In September 2001, for the 70th anniversary of the September 18th Incident, the director of the the Jilin Provincial Archive released more documents pertaining to biological weapons experimentations on humans in Unit 731, which further proved that high-ranking Japanese military officers were directly involved in such

⁵²⁰ Gries, “China’s “New Thinking” on Japan,” 838-839.

⁵²¹ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 22.

⁵²² Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 121.

⁵²³ Gries, “China’s “New Thinking” on Japan,” 835

⁵²⁴ Gries, “China’s “New Thinking” on Japan,” 835-836

activities.⁵²⁵ While the anniversary was given as sole reason for this release, it came just two weeks after Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro's first visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, which, unlike most of his predecessors, was visited very publicly, with Koizumi stating "*I visit the Yasukuni Shrine regardless of what happens*".⁵²⁶

Japan had a good chance at improving its relation with its neighbors with the 2002 World Cup, which it co-hosted with its former colony, South Korea. However, soon thereafter Japan's Ministry of Education approved new textbooks that further whitewashed the war, and Prime Minister Koizumi continued to visit the Yasukuni Shrine.⁵²⁷ Such moves were perhaps unwise from a Japanese administration that was trying to become the sixth Permanent Member of the UN Security Council. However, while the Chinese government was considering to support Japan, and even ordered a ban on media coverage on the matter so as to contain public anti-Japanese sentiments, China's nationalistic netizens would have none of it. In early 2005, an online petition to block Tokyo's bid for the permanent seat at the Security Council gathered over 40 million signatures, leaving Beijing little choice but to block the bid.⁵²⁸ The government still allowed for some of the protests to go ahead, until it discovered plans by protesters to mark the upcoming anniversary of the May Fourth Movement of 1919 with huge organized protests across the country, at which point Beijing had to crack down, through means such as detaining organizers and sending out waves of text messages to citizens everywhere to dissuade them from participating in any illegal protests.⁵²⁹ In this instance, nationalism had clearly gone too far for the government's liking.

During the early 2000s, the public perception of Japan increasingly deteriorated, and any missteps by Japan were quickly compared to the historical humiliation China suffered at the hands of its neighbor to the East. In 2003, when it

⁵²⁵ Brooks, "Angry States," 43-44.

⁵²⁶ Brooks, "Angry States," 43.

⁵²⁷ Lind, *Sorry States*, 26.

⁵²⁸ Ning Liao, "Presentist or Cultural Memory: Chinese Nationalism as Constraint on Beijing's Foreign Policy Making," *Asian Politics & Policy* 5, no. 4 (2013): 558.

⁵²⁹ Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications," 541.

became public that the Japanese Shinkansen would win a Chinese contract worth \$15 billion to construct China's infant high-speed train network (other contenders were French and German companies), public protests broke out. The information on the awarding was tightly controlled, but leaked through Hong Kong news outlets and was picked up by Chinese netizens who organized online petitions against it, forcing the Chinese government to ultimately turn down the Japanese government's offer.⁵³⁰ And in August 2004, the defeat of the Chinese football team by Japan in the Asian Cup Tournament in Chongqing caused riots by a Chinese mob which attacked the Japanese team bus.⁵³¹ This caused Prime Minister Koizumi to publicly lecture Chinese football fans, which caused further outrage in China.⁵³²

The Chinese public was further infuriated when in February 2005, during the annual summit of the US-Japan Security Alliance, the two countries issued a joint statement on the Taiwan question, in which they urged China to pursue a peaceful resolution. This was the first time Japan took a standpoint on Taiwan since relations with China had been normalized. Given that a major reason for Taiwan's separation was that the island had been a Japanese colony for half a century prior to it being returned to the China in 1945, Tokyo's interference was not appreciated.⁵³³ But while Koizumi was not one to show remorse for Japan's past actions or display any understanding Chinese historical sentiments whatsoever, his successor would not do any better in that arena. The man who succeeded Koizumi in 2006 was the grandson of Kishi Nobosuke, the ex-Class A war criminal, former anti-PRC Prime Minister of Japan, and hardline denier of Japanese atrocities until the end. Kishi's grandson, Abe Shinzo, would become the longest-serving Prime Minister of Japan.⁵³⁴ Abe continued the revisionist tradition of the LDP, further denying Japanese atrocities and repeatedly trying to change Japan's postwar pacifist constitution, albeit

⁵³⁰ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 19-20.

⁵³¹ Coble, "China's "New Remembering"," 394.

⁵³² Gries, "China's "New Thinking" on Japan," 846.

⁵³³ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 13-14.

⁵³⁴ Lind, *Sorry States*, 31.

unsuccessful on that end.⁵³⁵ Clearly, Abe was not going to be the one to improve the Chinese perception of an unrepenting Japan.

All the while, the CCP leadership kept pushing its anti-foreign rhetoric. If Jiang Zemin started the discourse of modern anti-foreign nationalism, his successor, Hu Jintao, was continuing along the same path.⁵³⁶ In a 2004 speech on the importance of a strong PLA, he stated:

*“Western hostile forces have not given up the wild ambition of trying to subjugate us, intensifying the political strategy of Westernizing and dividing up China.”*⁵³⁷

In the same year, the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall Museum was also considerably expanded, in particular sections highlighting China’s victimization during the war, as well as parts focusing on denialism by right wing conservatives in Japan, for which current-day Japan provided ample fuel.⁵³⁸

In October 2007, during the 17th CCP Congress, Hu Jintao presented his *“General Guidelines for the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation”*, part of which was the narrative of the *“harmonious society”*, which stressed a peaceful and harmonious rise.⁵³⁹ Despite his emphasis on harmony, major unrests broke out in Xinjiang and Tibet during his tenure, but these provinces were quickly re-harmonized under tightened restrictions and massive crackdowns of dissenters. Another noteworthy goal he introduced was that of the *“well-off society”* by 2021, the Party’s centennial. The goal was to achieve a per capita GDP on par with moderately developed countries by then, and would be picked up and continued years later by Hu’s successor.⁵⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the focus on a narrative of a reemerging and greatly humiliated China continued.

⁵³⁵ John Nilsson-Wright, “Shinzo Abe: Revisionist nationalist or pragmatic realist?” *BBC*, 28 August 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53950704>

⁵³⁶ Wang and Guo, “The Chinese Dream,” 6.

⁵³⁷ Liao, “Presentist or Cultural Memory,” 553.

⁵³⁸ Wang, “Historical Shifts,” 332.

⁵³⁹ Wang and Guo, “The Chinese Dream,” 7.

⁵⁴⁰ Wang and Guo, “The Chinese Dream,” 7-8.

A small victory in admission of guilt for the crimes committed by Unit 731 was achieved in 2005. Tokyo's High Court rejected the demands of 180 victims of Unit 731 that sued Japan for compensation and an apology, however, it let stand the lower court's admission to the existence of Unit 731, as well as the statement that Unit 731 "*used bacteriological weapons under the order of the imperial Japanese Army's headquarters*".⁵⁴¹ But this admission of guilt by a lower court was followed by more denial on 5 April 2005, when Japan's Ministry of Education approved a new textbook for junior high schools, which further glorified Japan's involvement in the war by reducing its culpability, sparking outrage and protests in several Asian countries, including China. Among other things, the new textbook justified the annexation of Korea by stating that it was necessary for Japan's security, and that it was "*unopposed*".⁵⁴² Tens of thousands of demonstrators marched to the Japanese Embassy in Beijing and threw rocks, and the anti-foreign demonstrations that broke out across the country were the largest seen since the anti-US protests following the Belgrade Bombings of 1999. Major demonstrations also broke out in South Korea, another country with deep grievances against Japan and which ought to find much common cause with China. And yet, Sino-Korean relations are quite complicated.⁵⁴³

5.2.1. Korea: China's Ungrateful Little Brother

While Japan and the US are obvious targets for anti-foreign nationalism in China, another major trade partner that has had an increasingly complicated relationship with Beijing is the Republic of Korea (hereon: South Korea, or simply Korea). Based on their economic interdependence, one should think the two nations would be the best of friends. Since diplomatic relations were normalized between the two states in 1992, their economies have quickly grown closer. In 2001, China replaced Japan as Korea's second-largest trade partner, and in 2004 it even overtook the US as the new number one. China's share of Korea's trade would continue to rise

⁵⁴¹ Hickey et al., "Unit 731 and Moral Repair," 273.

⁵⁴² Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 204-205.

⁵⁴³ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 205.

until it exceeded that of the US, EU, and Japan combined.⁵⁴⁴ In turn, Korea became the fourth-largest investor into China and its third-largest trade partner.⁵⁴⁵ Tens of thousands of Chinese and Korean students study concurrently in each other's universities.⁵⁴⁶ The two economies' rapid development was also similarly impressive, with Korea's economy having quadrupled between 1990 and 2010 (to a total to \$1.1 trillion) and China's economy having grown and astounding 17-fold in the same period.⁵⁴⁷ However, the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, which slowed down Korean growth considerably, had little effect on China's economy.⁵⁴⁸ Chinese audiences had also become avid consumers of Korean music, TV-dramas, and movies, collectively known as the '*Korean Wave*' (韩流, *hanliu*), since the late 1990s.⁵⁴⁹ At the same time, Beijing continued to distance itself from its ally, North Korea. In 2006, Chinese representatives for the first time supported a UN Security Council Resolution to denounce nuclear missile tests by its rogue neighbor.⁵⁵⁰ Nonetheless, nationalist sentiments on both sides have increasingly gotten in the way of closer economic and diplomatic ties.

Cultural disputes erupted between the two countries that were dubbed the '*Garlic War*' and the '*Kimchi War*' in 2000 and 2005, respectively, which referred to disputes of the true origins and historical significance of said condiments.⁵⁵¹ Then 2003 saw the '*Goguryeo Kingdom controversy*', which was caused by a few Chinese scholars asserting that the ancient Korean kingdom of Goguryeo was actually part of China's history, which China then followed up with applying for the title of cultural

⁵⁴⁴ Min Ye, "Understanding the Economics–Politics Nexus in South Korea–China Relations," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 51, no. 1 (2015): 100-101.

⁵⁴⁵ Ye, "Understanding the Economics–Politics Nexus," 97.

⁵⁴⁶ Zhiqun Zhu, "Comrades in Broken Arms: Shifting Chinese Policies Toward North Korea," *Asian Politics & Policy* 8, no. 4 (2016): 580.

⁵⁴⁷ "GDP (current USD) - China; Republic of Korea," *World Bank*, accessed on 3 May 2021. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=CN-KR>

⁵⁴⁸ Michael Fuhr, *Globalization and Popular Music in South Korea: Sounding Out K-Pop* (Florence: Routledge, 2015), 55.

⁵⁴⁹ Fuhr, *Globalization and Popular Music in South Korea*, 7.

⁵⁵⁰ Ye, "Understanding the Economics–Politics Nexus," 103.

⁵⁵¹ Ye, "Understanding the Economics–Politics Nexus," 102.

world heritage from the UNESCO with regard to tombs and capital cities of the Goguryeo Kingdom. Then in 2005, Korea obtained its title for UNESCO world heritage for Korea's '*Gangneung Dano Festival*', which in turn caused outrage by China's netizens who felt Korea was appropriating China's similar '*Dragon Boat Festival*'.⁵⁵² Additionally, Chinese media coverage of the Japan-Korea 2002 FIFA World Cup was exceedingly negative, and in return the Korean media had its revenge by obtaining and releasing footage of China's rehearsals for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, which were supposed to be state secret.⁵⁵³ Such episodes of spats and disputes would continue and even intensify in the following decade.

One reason for such cultural uneasiness between the two close trade partners may be found in China's education curriculum. As previously shown, China's history education, from kindergarten to university, focuses on the terrible things that had historically been done to its people and the importance of never being humiliated again. However, at the same time Chinese textbooks also omit what China had historically done to its neighbors. In Chinese history classes, pupils learn of China's historical benevolence and the friendly relations its dynasties had with its neighbors. Excluded are details of Chinese attempts at regional hegemony throughout history, such as Imperial China's tributary system with its neighbors, the several attempts of invading Japan by the Yuan Dynasty, or the bitter war fought between China's Tang Dynasty and Shilla, the first pan-Korean kingdom which unified the Korean Peninsula.⁵⁵⁴ Therefore it should not come as a surprise that in many historical Korean TV-dramas, which have been very popular in China during the late 1990s and the early 2000s, China is repeatedly depicted as threat to whatever Korean dynasty the show centers on. Examples include TV-dramas such as '*Yeon Gaesomum*', which depicts the Tang Emperor as set on invading Korea; '*Dae Jo Yeong*' which centers around the Goguryeo's heroic resistance against the Chinese invaders; or '*Jewel in the Palace*', in which the king of the Korean Joseon Dynasty is constantly concerned

⁵⁵² Lu Chen, *Chinese Fans of Japanese and Korean Pop Culture: Nationalistic Narratives and International Fandom* (Milton: Routledge, 2018), 106.

⁵⁵³ Ye, "Understanding the Economics–Politics Nexus," 104.

⁵⁵⁴ Chen, *Chinese Fans*, 104-105.

over Ming China plotting to invade.⁵⁵⁵ These depictions, while only natural to Koreans, are highly confusing to many Chinese.

Then there is the Chinese history of the Japanese invasions of Korea in 1592 and 1598, known as the '*Imjin Wars*' in Korea. Chinese pupils learn of these brutal wars in which Ming China helped its friend Korea to repel the Japanese Armies of Toyotomi Hideyoshi. What is commonly omitted in history lessons is that, far from having been a selfless intervention, Hideyoshi always meant to invade China via the Korean Peninsula. Another peculiar example in Chinese historiography is the Korean War, which tends to omit South Korea altogether. The war is known as the '*War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea*' (抗美援朝战争, *kangmeiyuanchao zhanzheng*), and follows the narrative of the US invading (North) Korea and China coming to its defense and repelling the American aggressors.⁵⁵⁶ The fact that Chinese citizens who solely take their history lessons from approved textbooks do not know that North Korea invaded South Korea first and that the US came to its defense, might explain why Chinese nationalists, particularly in cyberspace, become outraged and demand a boycott at all things South Korean whenever a Korean celebrity pays homage to their countrymen as well as fellow American soldiers who were killed during the war.⁵⁵⁷

Beijing's attempts at controlling media coverage to depict Korea as friendly neighbor in order to foster stronger diplomatic relations fell repeatedly victim to the increasingly closer Sino-Korean economic relations. During the early 2000s, Chinese media commonly depicted South Korea to be in support of China's patriotic anti-Japanese protests, such as during Japan's bid for the UN Security Council in 2004 and following the release of new Japanese textbooks in 2005. But when Chinese tourists visited Korea, they quickly realized that many Koreans were actually anti-Chinese and pro-American, and held much less of a grudge against Japan than did China.⁵⁵⁸ If what one can read in Chinese school textbooks and the media is to be

⁵⁵⁵ Chen, *Chinese Fans*, 108.

⁵⁵⁶ Chen, *Chinese Fans*, 114-115.

⁵⁵⁷ KoreanCelebrityControversy

⁵⁵⁸ Liao, "Presentist or Cultural Memory," 72.

believed, namely that China has historically been a benevolent friend to Korea, always there to help when Korea needed it the most, then it would make sense to see anti-Chinese sentiments in Korea as Koreans being ungrateful and undeserving of Chinese friendship.

5.2.2. 2008: From Peaceful Rise to Assertive Superpower

2008 was an eventful year that helped strengthen nationalistic fervor across much of the Chinese population. Beijing took years to ready itself for hosting the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics which were supposed to be the central attention, but early in the year the country was struck by tragedy. On 12 May 2008, an earthquake with strength 8.0 on the Richter scale erupted in Sichuan Province, affecting an area of roughly 100,000 square kilometers with a population of 15 million, and resulting in 90,000 casualties and 5 million people losing their homes. While many initially criticized the government for shoddily constructed buildings that buried people underneath them, the fast response, which involved mobilizing over 100,000 soldiers within 72 hours, was praised widely and seen in stark contrast to the US's slow response to the Hurricane Katrina disaster of 2005.⁵⁵⁹

This was a particular test of government strength, given that China has had a long and terrifying history of natural disasters, which were responsible for the downfall of several of China's ancient dynasties. Historical records show that about a third of continental earthquakes and 55% of earthquake-related casualties have occurred in China. Of the ten deadliest natural disasters on record for the past two centuries, five of them happened in China.⁵⁶⁰ This does not just include earthquakes. Between 1980 and 2006 all of the most damaging floods took place in China, which includes the Yangtze River flooding of 1998 that affect around 200 million people in China, and the Yellow River flooding of 1931, which killed between 2-4 million people and hence was the most deadly natural disaster ever to be recorded.⁵⁶¹ In the

⁵⁵⁹ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 157-158.

⁵⁶⁰ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 156-157.

⁵⁶¹ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 157.

case of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, it appears that the CCP has passed the test of resilient regimes in the times of disaster.

While the leadership in Beijing wanted to resolve the issue in Sichuan as soon as possible for both domestic and international spotlight to return to the Olympic Games, these were plagued with negative headlines, too, as much of the Western media put increasing attention on human rights issues and in particular the issue of the suppression of Tibet. During the international torch relay in April 2008, protests broke out in several Western countries, and in particular in France, in support for human rights and the plight of Tibet. In Paris, a Tibetan protestor tried to steal the torch and a large pro-human rights banner was hung from the city hall. And to top things off, on 21 April 2008 the Dalai Lama was granted honorary citizenship by the City Council of Paris.⁵⁶² Protests then erupted across China against the anti-Chinese bias in Western media.⁵⁶³ Nationalists called for a boycott of all French goods. Citroen and Peugeot cars, Louis Vuitton handbags, and the large supermarket chain Carrefour all took significant hits in their revenue in China as a result.⁵⁶⁴

Consumer-driven boycotts have actually become quite common in China, whenever another country is seen as disrespecting the nation, and has hit many other international brands, most of them American ones, such as McDonald's, Starbucks, or Nike.⁵⁶⁵ President George W. Bush also formally criticized China's human rights records, which stoked a backlash not only from Chinese media, but also from much of the Chinese public, which saw this kind of criticism as hypocritical, given the West's historical intrusions into China.⁵⁶⁶ However, despite all the Western criticism and even some calls to boycott the Beijing Olympics, the games went ahead as planned, and were celebrated as great success in China.

⁵⁶² Nyiri Pal, "From Starbucks to Carrefour: Consumer boycotts, nationalism and taste in contemporary China," *UTS ePRESS* 6, no. 2 (2009): 1.

⁵⁶³ Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications," 540.

⁵⁶⁴ Pal, "From Starbucks to Carrefour," 2.

⁵⁶⁵ Pal, "From Starbucks to Carrefour," 10; 15.

⁵⁶⁶ Liao, "Presentist or Cultural Memory," 550.

The positive domestic news coverage of the Beijing Olympics was, nonetheless, hampered by the ongoing Global Financial Crisis, which may have given the CCP leadership more reasons to worry. Censorship control on anti-foreign nationalistic content was further loosened, so that publications could focus their attention on the foreign devils. The result was the publication of a string of new ultra patriotic books, including *'China is Not Happy'*, a follow-up book to *'China Can Say No'*, also co-written by Song Qiang, which focused on the claim that the West would continue to do whatever it took to keep China down.⁵⁶⁷ The book became an instant bestseller and appeared to reflect the disgruntlement many of China's new nationalists felt with regard to the West's apparent ongoing efforts to hinder Chinese economic growth through trying to get involved with China's domestic politics.⁵⁶⁸

Media liberalization has started in the 1980s, as most media outlets had to start to make money to survive. While certain topics have remained taboo, others have gradually seen restrictions loosened. One area that has been a continuous favorite for the Chinese media is that of popular nationalism, in particular with regard to negative reporting on foreign powers. Anti-foreign articles, which might be focusing on the most recent Japanese denialism or the American plot to keep China down, have attracted increasing interest from the public as nationalist fervor has strengthened. Additionally, popular nationalism is the one area where the government can do the least to restrain reporting, as it would undermine the narrative of the CCP being the foremost patriot. One can see that this area of news reporting has gone well beyond what the government has intended, as government mouthpieces tend to be more retrained and less critical of other countries than more independent outlets.⁵⁶⁹ Through independent reporting, the public has also become increasingly well informed of diplomatic dealings which the government would like to keep a secret, such as actions by Japanese politicians relating to the Yasukuni Shrine or Diaoyu, which are bound to stifle further economic cooperation. There are also other domestic examples of where reporting has outmaneuvered the government, such as

⁵⁶⁷ Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications," 543.

⁵⁶⁸ Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications," 543-544.

⁵⁶⁹ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 17-18.

the controversial construction of the Nu River dam, which caused environmental protests and was covered widely by the media, leading to the CCP leadership to giving in and abandoning the project.⁵⁷⁰ Such instances make clear that, while the Party may be setting the limits within which the media can report, it cannot fully control what is being reported on, or to what extent, and once a patriotic story has come to public attention, all it can do is to jump on the bandwagon.

In a *Forbes* article from 2008, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew recited a Chinese poem credited to an anonymous source, which many felt reflected the frustration which numerous Chinese felt with the West's historical and current treatment of China:

*"When we were the Sick Man of Asia, We were called the Yellow Peril. When we are billed to the next superpower, We are called The Threat. When we closed our doors, You smuggled drugs to open markets. When we embrace free trade, You blame us for taking away your jobs. When we were falling apart, You marched in your troops and wanted your fair share. When we tried to put the broken pieces back together again, Free Tibet, you screamed; it was an Invasion! When we tried Communism, You hated us for being Communist. When we embrace Capitalism, You hate us for being Capitalist. When we had a billion people, You said we were destroying the planet. When we tried limiting our numbers, You said we abused human rights. When we were poor, You thought we were dogs. When we loan you cash, You blame us for your national debts. When we build our industries, You call us polluters. When we sell you goods, You blame us for global warming. When we buy oil, You call it exploitation and genocide... What do you really want from us? Think hard, then answer."*⁵⁷¹

However, despite all the negative sentiments amongst nationalists and the terrible headlines China continued to receive by much of the Western media, it emerged relatively unscathed from the 2008 Financial Crisis and also managed to

⁵⁷⁰ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 17.

⁵⁷¹ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 221-222.

recover faster than did the West.⁵⁷² On top of that, the 60th anniversary of the PRC in 2009, commemorated with a massive military parade, came just at the right time to celebrate China's breathtaking rise 30 years after the Reform and Opening had started, and therefore further bolstered nationalist fervor.⁵⁷³ And in 2010, the PRC overtook Japan to become the world's second largest economy, which was celebrated greatly, alongside predictions that China would overtake the US next, perhaps as soon as 2030.⁵⁷⁴

Around the same time, the topic of Chinese Comfort Women also started to gain traction in the public eye. While research was ongoing since the 1990s, the Chinese government did not encourage this until the closing of the first decade of the new millennium, and most of the research was hitherto financed by civil societies. Unlike the Korean government in Seoul, Beijing did not provide any state assistance to survivors, as it maintained that it should be up to Japan to compensate the victims of war.⁵⁷⁵ Most public displays of the war did not even touch on the subject. The Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall Museum only included a section on the comfort women after its renovation in 2007, for the massacre's 70th anniversary, for which Su Zhiliang was consulted. And in the same year, Su also managed to establish a dedicated comfort women archive within his university, SNU, which could henceforth serve as a center for evidence-based research on the topic.⁵⁷⁶ Then in June 2009, a panel exhibition on Chinese Comfort Women opened in Tokyo's Women's Active Museum on War and Peace. Then exhibition then moved on to tour several museums across China between November 2009 and September 2015, before finally settling in the Taiyuan War of Resistance Memorial Museum.⁵⁷⁷ The moving exhibition included the Museum of the War of Resistance Against Japanese

⁵⁷² Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications," 545.

⁵⁷³ Nien-Chung Chang Liao, "The Sources of China's Assertiveness: The System, Domestic Politics or Leadership Preferences?" *International Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2016): 826.

⁵⁷⁴ Jeff Kingston, *Nationalism in Asia: A History since 1945* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 80.

⁵⁷⁵ Vickers, "Commemorating 'Comfort Women'," 188.

⁵⁷⁶ Vickers, "Commemorating 'Comfort Women'," 188-189.

⁵⁷⁷ Vickers, "Commemorating 'Comfort Women'," 185-186.

Aggression during August to November 2011, where the section on the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal of 2000 was removed, perhaps to emphasize the point that Japan was in denial and to omit the actual openness to honestly discussing Japanese atrocities by Japanese civil societies.⁵⁷⁸ Progress on researching and raising awareness on the matter of Chinese Comfort Women was still slow and bogged down by ideological considerations, but the issue moved steadily into the Chinese cultural awareness.

As the new decade opened, the narrative of a victimized China that deserves to reemerge from the humiliation brought about by foreign powers, was well established. Nonetheless, this form of a victim-centric patriotic populism was only going to further intensify as a new generation of CCP leaders emerged. Because, while the leadership was transitioning, the narrative that had been started in the early 1990s would continue relentlessly.

5.3. The 2010s: Xi Jinping and the China Dream

In 2011, the National History Museum of China reopened its doors after major renovation works. Back in its old days, during the 1960s, the museum had focused on the victorious narrative of the Maoist era, which was entirely different to the narrative of humiliation and rejuvenation, that was the center of the museum's focus following its reopening. On 29 November 2012, In the same month he assumed the chairmanship of the CCP, Xi Jinping gave a speech at the museum's permanent '*Road to Rejuvenation*' exhibition.⁵⁷⁹ Everyone of the Politburo's Standing Committee was in attendance.⁵⁸⁰ It was here that Xi introduced the world to the slogan of the '*China Dream*', which became central to the rhetoric of Xi's ideology.⁵⁸¹ This China Dream was about realizing China's rejuvenation on the world stage. He then further expanded on the concept during the First Session of the 12th

⁵⁷⁸ Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 187.

⁵⁷⁹ Bhattacharya, "Chinese Nationalism 248.

⁵⁸⁰ Wang and Guo, "The Chinese Dream," 2.

⁵⁸¹ Bhattacharya, "Chinese Nationalism 248.

National People's Congress, at which he was formally elected President of the PRC. There, he emphasized the Party's ambition to bring about the nation's revival, which was to be measured with the "*Two Centenary Goals*" of turning China into a "*well-off society in an all-round way*", with a GDP per capita of \$3,000 by the CCP's 100th anniversary in 2021, and by finally completing the revival through turning China into a fully developed country by the PRC's 100th birthday in 2049.⁵⁸² This *Dream*, in the words of the head of the Party's Publicity Department, Liu Qibao, was Xi's "*mission statement*" and the CCP's "*political manifesto*" going forward.⁵⁸³

In his 2015 interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, Xi further clarified the concept by noting it was focusing on bettering the lives of the Chinese people, through realizing the dream of turning China into a great power again, as it had once been before the time of humiliation.⁵⁸⁴ Xi's China Dream was a grand nationalist dream of regaining China's just place at the top of a global hierarchy, and while it was still focused on economic growth, it moved away from the promise of fast-paced growth, as the economy had already shown clear signs of a slow-down, and instead focused on a long-term goal of national power and shared wealth. However, this Dream was nothing entirely new. Xi continued the narrative of a great rejuvenation that had started in 1989 and was incrementally developed by Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, the latter of whom, as previously noted, came up with one of the two centenary goals Xi employed.⁵⁸⁵ At the center of it all was the Century of Humiliation China had been forced to endure, and which had robbed the nation of its rightful place at the top of nations. Thanks to the leadership of the CCP, China will eventually reclaim that rightful place.

Of course, the China Dream was not just rhetoric of the rise of the Chinese nation, it also involved continued focus on the economy. In 2013, soon after Xi came to power, he inaugurated the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a massive infrastructure

⁵⁸² Jiayu Wang, "Representing Chinese Nationalism/Patriotism Through President Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream" Discourse," *Journal of Language and Politics* 16, no. 6 (2017): 830-831.

⁵⁸³ Wang and Guo, "The Chinese Dream," 1.

⁵⁸⁴ Bhattacharya, "Chinese Nationalism 249.

⁵⁸⁵ Wang and Guo, "The Chinese Dream," 6.

project that sought to expand China's reach and trade access to countries around the world, in particular poorer developing countries that lacked modern infrastructure necessary for efficient large-scale International trade. The project initially covered 60 emerging economies with a combined population of above 4 billion, and continued to further expand its reach. Apart from supplying those countries with infrastructure and investment, and giving China new outlets for trade, it also promised to reinvigorate China's steel industry, which produced around half of the world's steel, and which therefore could expect to churn out vast masses of new building material despite China's declining domestic growth.⁵⁸⁶ In addition to giving the Chinese economy a new outlet to grow for years to come, the BRI also increased China's standing with many developing countries, who could now look to China to develop their infrastructure and get loans where other sources were less forthcoming. Importantly for some less-than-democratic countries, China does not attach any ideological strings to doing business with them, unlike the IMF and World Bank, although there are certain implicit preconditions, of which not recognizing Taiwan is one.⁵⁸⁷

5.3.1. International Relations in Times of Great Power Patriotism

One place where one can find a continuous stream of disputes and confrontations between China and its neighbors is the ocean. China has around 18,000km of coastline, which borders the Bohai Sea, the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea (SCS), which all combined cover approximately 5 million square kilometers and stretch from the temperate North down to the tropical South, bordering the PRC, Taiwan, Japan, North and South Korea, The Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Vietnam.⁵⁸⁸ The focus point of international contention has been for years on the SCS, which provides around 12% of global catch and also holds an estimated 11 billion barrels of oil, mostly unexploited due to ongoing

⁵⁸⁶ Bhattacharya, "Chinese Nationalism 250.

⁵⁸⁷ Shaun Breslin, "The 'China Model' and The Global Crisis: From Friedrich List to a Chinese Mode of Governance?" *International Affairs* 87, no. 6 (2011): 1338.

⁵⁸⁸ J.Y. Liu, "Status of Marine Biodiversity of the China Seas," *PLoS ONE* 8, no. 1 (2013): 1.

disputes between the littoral countries.⁵⁸⁹ On top of that, over \$5 trillion worth of trade passes through it annually, which includes a third of the world's crude oil and half of global liquified gas. China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan all rely on the energy provided via the SCS.⁵⁹⁰ But apart from the SCS's economic and strategic importance, it holds a central place in modern Chinese ideology, as one of the '*Core Principles*' (or '*Core Interests*'), which refers to the basic principles on which China may not ever budge. These include Tibet, Xinjiang, Taiwan, and the SCS.⁵⁹¹ These Core Principles are an essential part of the national narrative of rejuvenation, as full and unchallenged control over them is at the core of regaining China's great power status and making the nation whole again. The government is also constrained in how it addresses disputes regarding these four points, because anything other than a hardline stance would make the CCP look weak and insufficiently nationalistic.⁵⁹²

This constrain in having to maintain a hardline nationalistic stance on China's Core Principles is reflected in the usual hostile yet ambivalent rhetoric employed by the Chinese government. With regard to the SCS, Beijing's rhetoric has been hardline and resolute, yet entirely vague. For example, China is a signatory state to United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and has maintained to be adhering to UNCLOS law, which stipulates the rules of the sea, including the size of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to which every maritime state has a right. However, China is both insisting to adhere to UNCLOS law while at the same time refusing to grant other countries that border the SCS their EEZ, saying that it has historical rights over the waters, without ever having provided actual historical proof.⁵⁹³ When the Philippines finally took China to court, and the special tribunal of UNCLOS ruled that China's vast claims were invalid under both UNCLOS law and

⁵⁸⁹ Hui Zhong and Michael White, "South China Sea: Its Importance for Shipping, Trade, Energy and Fisheries," *Asia-Pacific Journal of Ocean Law and Policy* 2, no. 1 (2017): 19-21.

⁵⁹⁰ Zhong and White, "South China Sea," 12; 17; 21.

⁵⁹¹ Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications," 546-547.

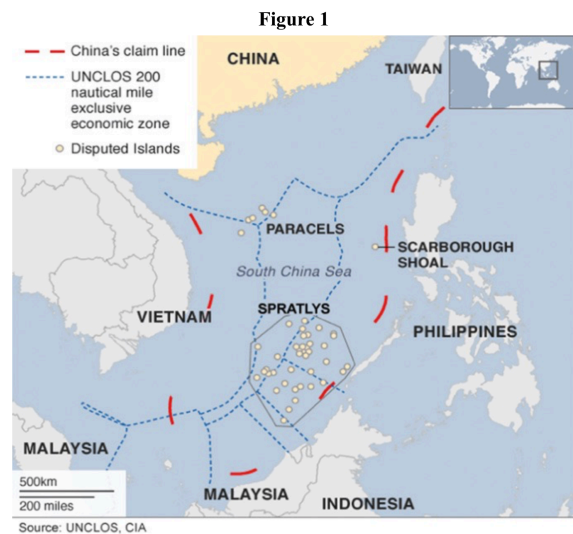
⁵⁹² Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications," 544-545.

⁵⁹³ Kate E. Wiegand, and Erick Beuck, "Strategic Selection: Philippine Arbitration in the South China Sea Dispute," *Asian Security* (2018): 3-5.

international law, and that Manila had the right to exercise jurisdiction over its EEZ, Beijing simply declared the ruling as “*null and void*”.⁵⁹⁴

Far from simply being the agenda of a hardline government, much of the Chinese populace agrees that the South China Sea is an intrinsic part of China and must be defended at all cost. And the media also participates in this frenzy, with one very popular newspaper usually going a few steps further than the rest. In an editorial from 2011, the ultra nationalistic *Global Times* warned countries that they had to “*be prepared for the sound of cannons*” if they were to continue to make claims over the SCS.⁵⁹⁵ Chinese military officials also at times also become hawkish in their statements and go well beyond what the government advocates for, such as General Luo Yuan, who threatened the Philippines with “*war at all costs*” if it continued to make claims over its share of the SCS.⁵⁹⁶ It is difficult to control the rhetoric of such a hawk, as the general received much praise by Chinese netizens, therefore leaving the government little choice but to toughen its own rhetoric.⁵⁹⁷

The Chinese government also maintains that “*China has indisputable sovereignty*” over the waters and islands it claims, although territorial waters of the SCS are disputed with every single country that borders it.⁵⁹⁸ It is difficult to even argue with Beijing over the extend of its claimed sovereignty, because while it has continuously maintained its sovereign rights and even passed a law that stipulates that maps printed in China



⁵⁹⁴ Mincai Yu, “The South China Sea dispute and the Philippines Arbitration Tribunal: China's Policy Options,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 70, no. 3 (2016): 226.

⁵⁹⁵ Zhao, “Foreign Policy Implications,” 550.

⁵⁹⁶ Zhao, “Foreign Policy Implications,” 549-550.

⁵⁹⁷ Liao, “Presentist or Cultural Memory,” 559.

⁵⁹⁸ Danny Roy, “Chapter Twelve. The South China Sea Dispute,” In *Return of the Dragon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 224.

have to include the notorious nine-dash line on it (see Figure 1), which roughly demarcates what part of the SCS belongs to it, it has so far refused to specify where this line actually lies.⁵⁹⁹ In other words, China claims most of the SCS and other countries must respect this, but they may not ask where the border lies. Because of this, ongoing confrontations are virtually certain. There have been repeated confrontations with the Philippines, such as China's seizure of the Mischief Reef off the Philippines coast and the subsequent construction of military structures on it during the 1990s, and then the seizure of the Philippines-controlled Scarborough Shoal in 2012, which ultimately led to the UNCLOS lawsuit.⁶⁰⁰ There has also been a bitter history with Vietnam over control over areas of the SCS that are close to the Vietnamese coast. In 1974, the PLA sunk three Vietnamese ships and forcefully took over the Paracel Islands, and in 1988 it seized Johnson Reef.⁶⁰¹ China's control over the entirety of SCS within the nine-dash line, wherever it may lie, is non-negotiable.

Maritime disputes involving China are not contained within the SCS. The East China Sea is host to one particularly difficult dispute that is far from being resolved, namely the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Dispute between China and Japan. This is a dispute that is particularly hard to downplay, as it brings back collective memory of Japan's humiliations over China, leaving no room for compromise with Japan.⁶⁰² In the 1990s, Beijing actually tried to downplay the issue and forego its claims in favor of joint maritime development, but because of protests in 1996 that criticized the government for inadequate patriotism, it had no choice but to take a tough stance on the matter.⁶⁰³ Then in June 2003, without the Chinese government's approval, 13 Chinese nationalists from the 'Action Committee for Defending the Diaoyu Islands' took a boat to the Diaoyu Islands, with the intention to land on them. Japanese coast guard ships circled them and prevented the activists from landing,

⁵⁹⁹ Roy, "Chapter Twelve," 224-225.

⁶⁰⁰ Wiegand and Beuck, "Strategic Selection," 4.

⁶⁰¹ Renato Cruz De Castro, "The Risk of Applying Realpolitik in Resolving the South China Sea Dispute: Implications on Regional Security," *Pacific Focus* 27, no. 2 (2012): 262-263.

⁶⁰² He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 14.

⁶⁰³ Liao, "Presentist or Cultural Memory," 555-557.

they left without completing their mission, but not before having made a show of burning a Japanese flag. The activists became national heroes, and only one month after the stunt, other young nationalists launched an online petition against the government's plan to award a contract for the construction of the Beijing-Shanghai high speed rail link to a Japanese company, which gathered 90,000 signatures in its first week and ultimately forced the government to snub the company.⁶⁰⁴ Anti-Japanese sentiments were further spurred in August of the same year, with the Qiqihar Incident, when construction workers uncovered and accidentally ruptured mustard gas containers left over from the Japanese occupation, causing one man to die and dozens to be injured. A new grassroots petition for Japan to clean up the chemical weapons it had left behind in China gathered over one million signatures and was delivered to the Japanese Embassy in Beijing.⁶⁰⁵

The issue of the Diaoyu Islands appeared to be cooling down again when, in 2012, the Japanese government announced it was purchasing the islands from their private Japanese owners. This caused public outrage online and even resulted in China's ultra nationalistic newspaper, the *Global Times*, to criticize the Chinese leadership's weak response.⁶⁰⁶ What followed was wide-spread anti-Japanese protests across China that resulted in the looting of Japanese businesses and consumers boycotting Japanese brands. There was no room left to consider economic relations with Japan. The Chinese government showed its open support for the protesters and sent patrol ships to the islands to make its claims forcibly clear to Japan.⁶⁰⁷ After assuming office, President Xi vowed to refuse making any concessions whatsoever on the matter going forward.⁶⁰⁸ Given that the Chinese Navy has replaced the US as the world's largest in 2020, Japan should reconsider such bold moves in the future.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁴ Gries, "China's "New Thinking" on Japan," 844.

⁶⁰⁵ Gries, "China's "New Thinking" on Japan," 844-845.

⁶⁰⁶ Liao, "Presentist or Cultural Memory," 557.

⁶⁰⁷ Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications," 552.

⁶⁰⁸ Liao, "Presentist or Cultural Memory," 557.

⁶⁰⁹ "China now has the world's largest fleet, alarming its Pacific rival," *The Economist*, 26 September 2020. <https://www.economist.com/united-states/2020/09/26/china-now-has-the-worlds-largest-fleet-alarming-its-pacific-rival>

While the modern Chinese national narrative may have originated with the CCP leadership and the new patriotic education curriculum of the early 1990s, far from calling the shots in anti-foreign protests, the Chinese government often walks a fine line between appeasing the foreign trade partners and its own nationalists. As some previous examples have shown, consumer nationalism, through voluntary individual boycotts of foreign goods, is a common popular response, so are online petitions. Another example of consumer nationalism is the popular boycott of Korean goods following the joint US-Korean decision to deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in Korea, to help defend the country from potential future attacks by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). However, this also caused a huge backlash in China, both from the leadership and the wider population.⁶¹⁰ What followed were anti-Korean protests and consumer boycotts, which targeted most of all the popular Korean supermarket chain Lotte Mart, reminiscent of the previous anti-French boycott of Carrefour.⁶¹¹

The narrative of Chinese rejuvenation and the hardline stance China is taking over territorial disputes may appear increasingly highly aggressive and hostile to outsiders, however, it should be kept in mind that to Chinese nationalists, such actions are considered defensive. China is reclaiming its just place in the world and trying to put the pieces back together of the mess foreign powers left behind. To them, China is merely exercising its rights and defending what belongs to the nation. To achieve this just and overdue rejuvenation, there is one crucial piece still missing that must be reunited with the motherland: Taiwan.

5.3.2. Taiwan: The Central Core Principle

In 1885, following the First Sin-Japanese War and Qing China's defeat to the Japanese Empire, Taiwan became a Japanese colony.⁶¹² Taiwan became an integrated

⁶¹⁰ Zhu, "Comrades in Broken Arms," 577.

⁶¹¹ Ji-Hyun Ahn and Tien-wen Lin, "The Politics of Apology: The 'Tzuyu Scandal' and Transnational Dynamics of K-pop," *The International Communication Gazette* 81, no. 2 (2019): 168

⁶¹² Yang Zhong, "Explaining National Identity Shift in Taiwan," *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, no. 99 (2016): 339.

part of Japan and prior to the Second Sino-Japanese war, neither the GMD nor the CCP made demands for it to be returned. But this changed with the Cairo Declaration of 1943, in which the Allies, together with Chiang Kai-shek, decided that it was to be returned to China upon the Japanese defeat. In 1945, without consulting the Taiwanese people, the island became part of the Republic of China. The GMD embarked on a mission to re-Sinicize the Taiwanese population, which spoke mostly Japanese and Taiwanese, but not Mandarin Chinese. When this resulted in a popular uprising, the GMD brutally cracked down on 28 February 1947, which is to this day commemorated in Taiwan as the '228 Incident', in which perhaps as many as 30,000 Taiwanese were killed. What followed was the 'White Terror', in which tens of thousands more were rounded up and either disappeared into prison camps or were shot on the spot under martial law. When, in 1949, the GMD lost the Chinese Civil War, Chiang, together with two million Mainland Chinese refugees, most of whom either soldiers or intelligentsia, retreated to Taiwan, which had been brought under control with a martial law that would be maintained for 40 years.⁶¹³ Taiwan remained the ROC's last stronghold.

Chiang declared that Taiwan had been an ancient part of China and vowed to one day retake the Mainland. The new generation of Taiwanese became quickly versed in Chinese language and culture, as the parents were under threat of disappearing in case they as much as spoke some words in Japanese.⁶¹⁴ The school curriculum was created to focus on the Chinese history and the mission of retaking the land from the evil Communists.⁶¹⁵ Mao equally meant to recapture Taiwan and soon after taking over the Mainland made plans for an invasion. But this ultimately failed, due to Mao's decision to intervene in the Korean War, which cost the PRC massive casualties and the US became henceforth Taiwan's declared protector. While the PRC and the ROC were the most bitter of enemies, Beijing and Taipei agreed on

⁶¹³ Carolan, "The "Republic of Taiwan," 433-435.

⁶¹⁴ Chia-hung Tsai, "Regional Divide & National Identity in Taiwan: Evidences From the 2012 Presidential Election," *Issues and Studies* 52, no. 2 (2016): 8-9.

⁶¹⁵ J. Megan Greene, "The Historical Narrative and Taiwan Identity: The State Sponsored Historical Enterprise in Taiwan in the 1950s and 1960s," *The Chinese Historical Review* 13, no. 1 (2006): 79-82.

one point, namely that there can only be one China. No country may ever officially recognize both Chinas.⁶¹⁶

However, eventually Taipei lost the battle of who was to be considered the real China. Not only was the size of Mainland China a massive economic factor, but due to the brutal rule of Chiang and his successors over the people of Taiwan, the world woke up to the fact that there was no reason to continue supporting the GMD regime only because it was capitalist rather than communist. And so in 1971, the ROC was replaced by the PRC in the United Nations as 'China'.⁶¹⁷ While still under an authoritarian rule, Taiwan's economy developed rapidly and demands for democracy followed. Martial law was finally lifted in 1987, and in 1988, Lee Teng-hui, Taiwan's first native-born president, came to power and turned the country into a liberal democracy.⁶¹⁸ The ROC's people have become extremely proud of living in one of Asia's most liberal countries and have embraced their Taiwanese identity, rather than considering themselves Chinese. In a 2016 poll, 85% of 20-29 year-old respondents identified as Taiwanese, with almost the entire remainder identifying as both Taiwanese and Chinese, and people of older generations are not far behind.⁶¹⁹ The current President, Tsai Ing-wen, from the pro-independence Democratic People's Party (DPP) has been in power since 2016, and has kept the GMD in opposition.⁶²⁰

Nonetheless, the PRC still insists on the one-China policy and has threatened war at any sign of a formal declaration of independence, thereby leaving Taiwan in a state of *de facto* independence, but without the prospect to ever formally declaring *de jure* independence. Beijing hosted war games just before Tsai's inauguration to make its point clear. But while the PRC's repeated show of force has prevented any Taiwanese attempts at formal independence, it has played right into the hands of the anti-China DPP, which sees its support soar whenever Taiwan is confronted with an

⁶¹⁶ Carolan, "Republic of Taiwan," 436-437.

⁶¹⁷ Zhong, "Explaining National Identity Shift," 343-345.

⁶¹⁸ Rou-Lan Chen, "Taiwan's Identity in Formation: In Reaction to a Democratizing Taiwan and a Rising China," *Asian Ethnicity* 14, no. 2 (2013): 232-233.

⁶¹⁹ Michael Hsin-Huan Hsiao, "2016 Taiwan Elections: Significance and Implications," *Orbis* 60, no. 4 (2016): 510-512.

⁶²⁰ Hsiao, "2016 Taiwan Elections," 505.

aggressive China.⁶²¹ Apart from saber rattling, the PRC has passed various white papers and laws to emphasize its absolute opposition to a declaration of independence by Taiwan. This includes the aforementioned White Paper of 1993 and the 2005 anti-Secession Law.⁶²²

The pressure is not just coming from the Chinese government, but increasingly from grassroots nationalists, especially online. Netizens are quick to point out whenever a foreign company dares to list Taiwan under anything other than ‘China’, at which point online calls for a boycott are issued and comparisons are drawn to historical humiliation. In recent years, the government tends to step in as well and shut down disobedient sites, such as when it shut down the Marriott website for one week for listing Taiwan and Hong Kong as separate countries in a survey it sent out.⁶²³

One example of Chinese nationalist influence on pop culture is the Tzuyu Scandal of 2016. On 22 November 2015, Chou Tzuyu, the Taiwanese member of the Korean girl-band TWICE appeared on the Korean TV-show ‘*My Little Television*’, in which she waved the ROC flag, not out of patriotism, but simply as a representation of her birth place. The episode aired without any controversy in Korea, but was discovered online in China in early 2016, at which point it went swiftly viral and caused a huge backlash, with many in China calling for a complete boycott of all stars by JYP (the Korean label of TWICE). What was even more unforgivable to Chinese netizens was when it surfaced that, during a previous appearance at the Korean TV-show ‘*A Look at Myself*’, Chou claimed to be ‘Taiwanese’. On 15 January 2016, Chou apologized to the people of China in a somber video issued by JYP, where she bowed deeply and asked for China’s forgiveness, while reaffirming that there was only one China and Taiwan was part of it. At the same time, JYP changed Tzuyu’s official website to no longer show her birthplace as ‘*Nationality:*

⁶²¹ Benjamin Schreer, “The Double-Edged Sword of Coercion: Cross-Strait Relations After the 2016 Taiwan Elections,” *Asian Politics & Policy* 9, no. 1 (2017): 51.

⁶²² Caroline Gluck, “Anti-secession law rattles Taiwan,” BBC, 3 March 2005. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4314993.stm>

⁶²³ “China shuts Marriott’s website over Tibet and Taiwan error,” BBC, 12 January 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-42658070>

Taiwan’, but instead *‘Birth Place: Chinese Taipei’*.⁶²⁴ While this eventually cleared JYP’s name in China and brought this scandal to an end, the backlash by Taiwanese nationalists was equally enormous. The outcome of Taiwan’s presidential elections, held on 16 January 2016, the day after the apology video was published, may well have aided Tsai’s landslide victory.⁶²⁵

In 2020, Tsai Ing-wen won a second term, with the greatest majority the DPP had ever held. In her campaign, she focused on Taiwan’s de facto independence from China, and her party’s dedication to liberal democratic values, including LGBT rights and the development of clean energy.⁶²⁶ There is no reason to believe that people in Taiwan will re-discover their affinity for China anytime soon, therefore Beijing must expect largely hostile sentiments toward its ongoing ambitions of reunification. However, President Xi has vowed not only to prevent an independent Taiwan, but also to finally reunite it with the Mainland. When this is supposed to happen has not been declared, but China is rapidly expanding its Navy, while Taiwan’s military forces are greatly inadequate to deal with an all-out offensive of the PRC. ⁶²⁷The burning question may be whether the US will continue to shelter Taiwan under its security umbrella, and if so, until when. One thing is certain, Taiwan is at the center of China’s core principles and will remain as such. To complete China’s rejuvenation, Taiwan has to return to its motherland.

5.3.3. Recent Remembrance of the Atrocities

Outside of China, survivors of the comfort women system are commonly referred to as “*grandmother*” (“*Halmoni*” in Korea and “*Ama*” in Taiwan), possibly because their plight has only come to wider public attention by the time the remaining victims were already of old age. This endearing way to refer to them

⁶²⁴ Ahn and Lin, “The Politics of Apology,” 159-163; 167.

⁶²⁵ Ahn and Lin, “The Politics of Apology,” 160; 171.

⁶²⁶ Salvatore Babones, “Taiwan Deserves to Be a Normal Country.” *Foreign Policy*, 15 January 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/15/taiwan-deserves-normal-country-tsai-election/>.

⁶²⁷ “China’s growing military confidence puts Taiwan at risk,” *The Economist*, 1 May 2021. <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2021/05/01/chinas-growing-military-confidence-puts-taiwan-at-risk>

further emphasizes the innocence of the women, which also supports China's victim narrative of the war.⁶²⁸ Nonetheless, the Chinese government has continued to show an ambivalence toward the subject, at times supporting research into the field, while at other times actively trying to discourage those who want to speak up on behalf of the victims. All the while, the issue remained salient in Korea and Japan, where the struggle continued between those who wanted honest research and those who did not want to hear a word of it.

In December 2015, the governments of Japan and Korea, surprised many by announcing an agreement on the issue of Korean comfort women, which for the first time offered financial compensation directly from the Japanese government. On the surface, this agreement between Seoul and Tokyo was a milestone in their bilateral relations and a progress on the Japanese admission of responsibility for wartime atrocities, but to many observers the agreement was bound to fail. The negotiations for the agreement completely excluded the victims themselves, the nature of Japan's responsibility was left vague, and the final agreement encouraged Korea to remove an iconic statue of a young Korean comfort woman in Seoul, situated in front of the Japanese Embassy.⁶²⁹ It was an explicit promise by the Abe government to have this statue removed during his term. Instead of fostering closure and strengthened bilateral ties, the agreements, which was signed by Korean President Park Geun-hye under pressure by the Obama administration, was deeply unpopular in Korea and fostered anti-Japanese sentiments among many in the population. President Park herself was toppled in early 2017 due to a corruption scandal, and this agreement was just one of many reasons a majority of the Korean electorate came to despise her for. The agreement also positively encouraged solidarity between activists from Korea and China on the matter, which manifested itself in the April 2017 Conference of Comfort Women Museums, held in Tokyo.⁶³⁰

As of mid-2015, there were only five museums that were dedicated to the topic of Comfort Women, three of which in Korea, one in Japan, and one in Yunnan,

⁶²⁸ Vickers, "Commemorating 'Comfort Women'," 182.

⁶²⁹ Hickey et al., "Unit 731 and Moral Repair," 273.

⁶³⁰ Vickers, "Commemorating 'Comfort Women'," 176-178.

China.⁶³¹ However, several more museums were established since. Su Zhiliang, together with other Chinese and Korean activists, petitioned the Chinese government to turn the former comfort station in Liji Alley, Nanjing, into a museum since the early 2000s, but only in June 2014 was the status of municipal heritage preservation granted to the site, shortly after the Chinese application to UNESCO for remembering the comfort women. The groundbreaking ceremony was held in May 2015, and before the end of the year, the Liji Alley Museum officially opened to the public as Asia's largest memorial commemorating the comfort women system.⁶³² However, the special guidelines of the museum may still reflect an ambivalence to the subject. Tour groups are banned, ostensibly because not enough space exists to accommodate them, at the world's largest museum on the subject, and visitors must be 18 years and older, despite the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Museum displaying an array of highly graphic images of the atrocities while accommodating floods of school classes throughout the year.⁶³³ For some reason, women who are raped to death at the Nanjing Massacre are a basic knowledge all school pupils must be aware of, while then large-scale forced prostitution of young women, which claimed perhaps twice as many lives as Nanjing, is for restricted audiences only. Whether this reflects a lingering impact of traditional Confucian hierarchy, and its inherent patriarchal structure, is up for debate.

Other dedicated museums have also opened their doors, such as the small museum curated by Su Zhiliang at the SNU campus in Shanghai, and the Ama House Museum in Tapei, which opened in 2016. But despite the growing international awareness of this large-scale atrocity, the Japanese government does not appear to be ready to show remorse, and the CCP continues to be ambivalent about whether to fully exploit the topic or favor good relations with the LDP for economic sake. When in 2016, Su's SNU museum erected two statues of Chinese comfort women, the Japanese Consulate in Shanghai protested, despite the statues being on-site of the university campus, and the Chinese government even supported Japan's demand and

⁶³¹ Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 178-179.

⁶³² Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 190.

⁶³³ Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 190-191.

ordered Su to take them down. However, Su travelled personally to Beijing and managed to convince the central authorities to back down and leave the statues be.⁶³⁴

Chinese exhibitions on the topic also generally only cover the comfort women system under Japan, and do not touch the issue of modern sex slavery, as other museums, such as the Ama House in Taiwan, do. This is a curious omission, given that according to some estimates, between 10,000 to 20,000 women are trafficked in China annually, with Shanghai, once the center of the Chinese comfort women system, once again at the center.⁶³⁵ Interestingly, unlike in Japan, in Taiwan there is more support for the topic of Comfort Women from the right-wing GMD than from the left-wing, anti-Chinese DPP, which displays more positive nostalgia for Japan, as could be seen in the 2016 opening of the Ama House Museum, at which the former GMD President Ma Ying-jeow was in attendance.⁶³⁶

As for Japan, there is no public interest from the right wing in discussing or even acknowledging Japanese atrocities against women during the war. Left-wing politicians and researchers have been responsible for much of the groundbreaking research that has been done, including feminist research. The prominent feminist Ueno Chizuoko has been particularly helpful in exploring the brutality of the comfort women system from the eyes of the women, rather than focusing on research of the military system, as did Yoshimi Yoshiaki and others. Ueno also drew additional attention to circumstances of the time, which predated the war and also affected Japanese women in general, who were worth little in an ultra-patriarchal society that expected women to take care of the house, produce heirs, and pleasure men's sexual needs.⁶³⁷ Tokyo's Women's Action Museum for War and Peace, the second oldest museum dedicated to the topic of comfort women, established in 2005, is itself openly feminist.⁶³⁸

⁶³⁴ Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 195.

⁶³⁵ Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 194.

⁶³⁶ Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 179.

⁶³⁷ Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism," 47-48.

⁶³⁸ Vickers, "Commemorating "Comfort Women"," 179.

Ueno and Yoshimi are in broad agreement of each other's research, but in 2015 they stood on opposing sides of a contentious issue. Park Yu-Ha's book *'Comfort Women of the Empire'* stirred up massive controversy in Korea for her claims that comfort women were not all patriots and innocent girls. Defamation lawsuits are a common and often powerful means in Korea to show one's disagreement, and so the lawsuit against Park in November 2015 was of little surprise. In the same month, 54 American and Japanese scholars, among whom Ueno, signed a letter against trying to silence Park's book.⁶³⁹ On the other side of the argument stood scholars led by Yoshimi. It is important to note, however, that, while Ueno advocated for Park's right to speak about more sensitive parts of this topic, neither Ueno nor Yoshimi fully agreed with Park's book, which also presented views based on unbalanced evidence, such as taking the words of some Japanese perpetrators at face value while completely dismissing other evidence in support of victims.⁶⁴⁰ The issue at hand was, however, not Park's accuracy, but the censoring of freedom of speech. Just as has happened with the Nanjing Massacre in China, researchers of the Comfort Women System are not welcome to dig into nuances of this atrocity, neither in China nor Korea.

While the Chinese government may still be showing ambivalence toward the topic of the Comfort Women System, there is no doubt that it has become a mainstream subject in China, deeply embedded in the narrative of national humiliation, just like the Nanjing Massacre and Unit 731. The Nanjing Massacre has remained an ever-present symbol of the horrors of the war. Major fictionalized accounts of the Massacre continue to be hugely popular, with more recent examples of blockbuster movies including *'City of Life and Death'* in 2009, and *'The Flowers of War'*, starring Christian Bale, in 2011.⁶⁴¹ The Nanjing Massacre Memorial Museum was also further expanded in 2017, with an additional wing focusing on the

⁶³⁹ Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism," 50-51.

⁶⁴⁰ Li, "Reflections on Postwar Nationalism," 51.

⁶⁴¹ María Vives Aguirruza, "The Cultural Impact of the Nanking Massacre in Cinematography: On *City of Life and Death* (2009) and *The Flowers of War* (2011)," *Cultura 13*, no. 2 (2016): 53-55.

patriotic message of China's rejuvenation and the task of overcoming the humiliation of the past.⁶⁴²

As for the Unit 731 Museum, it is quite difficult to reach, located at the former Pingfang site. Visitors are mostly school children, for whom a visit to this museum is usually compulsory. The museum itself appears de-commercialized and has an aura of victimization and despair, not unlike death camps of the holocaust, although much less accessible to the public at large.⁶⁴³ Unit 731 has become a firmly established part of the narrative of Chinese victimization, but it has a much smaller advocacy community than Nanjing or even the Comfort Women, perhaps because there is no victim community. First-hand accounts of this large-scale atrocity usually come from perpetrators or others who were working on-site. The victims of experiments invariably perished and those who were still alive when the war ended were also killed and incinerated.⁶⁴⁴

However, in the near-future, victims of either Unit 731, the Nanjing Massacre, or the Comfort Women System do not need to worry about these atrocities being forgotten. Despite attempts of Japanese LDP politicians and Mao-era CCP cadres to erase this part of history, it has returned to the spotlight, and is unlikely to vanish again anytime soon. The victim narrative has become deeply ingrained in modern Chinese nationalism, as has the story of Chinese rejuvenation through the leadership of the CCP. It is this narrative which legitimizes the Party's unopposed rule in China. After all, its mission is incomplete until China has re-emerged and retaken its place in the world.

5.3.4. Modern Chinese Nationalism: What Next?

However one measures nationalism among a country's population, it has become quite evident that China is one of the most nationalistic countries in the world, with one of the most patriotic populations, as independent research has

⁶⁴² Brooks, "Angry States," 48.

⁶⁴³ Brooks, "Angry States," 44-45.

⁶⁴⁴ Hickey et al., "Unit 731 and Moral Repair," 273.

confirmed.⁶⁴⁵ One simple way to measure patriotism is by asking people whether they are personally willing to fight for their country. A 2015 WIN/Gallup poll asked just that, to citizens of 64 countries. China's affirmation rate of 71% outpaced virtually all from the developed West, with the sole exception of Finland (at 74%). The US, South Korea, UK, and Japan had responses of 44%, 42%, 27%, and 11%, respectively.⁶⁴⁶ Other studies have been conducted that measured the declared love for one's country, the preference of one's citizenship over that of others, or simply the opinion that one's country is better than the rest, and generally the finding has been that China receives top scores for such statements.⁶⁴⁷ There is good reason to believe that such high levels of nationalism are in fact related to China's self-declared role as a victim in history. In one survey conducted by Sinologist Bruce J. Dickson, a majority of respondents felt that China is being kept down on purpose by the West. 76% even agreed with the statement that "*The 'century of humiliation' not only describes China's past history, it also describes foreigners' actions toward China today*".⁶⁴⁸ With such endorsement for the victim narrative, it is hard not to see the CCP's narrative of humiliation as success.

There has been much literature dedicated to the question of why it is that nationalist sentiments run so high, and why, in a nation that prides itself so much on its rich history and the progressing reemergence as the world's greatest economy, there is so much emphasis on China as a victim. Is it due to state nationalism (i.e. top-down) or popular nationalism (i.e. bottom-up)?⁶⁴⁹ As has been demonstrated in previous chapters, the answer may be, both. As is the case with successful social movements in general, nationalism requires both leaders and followers, and

⁶⁴⁵ Bruce J. Dickson, "The Survival Strategy of the Chinese Communist Party," *The Washington Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (2016): 28; 35-36.

⁶⁴⁶ "WIN/Gallup International's Global Survey Shows Three in Five Willing to Fight for Their Country," *Gallup International*, 15 May 2015. <https://www.gallup-international.bg/en/33483/win-gallup-internationals-global-survey-shows-three-in-five-willing-to-fight-for-their-country/>

⁶⁴⁷ Wenfang Tang and Benjamin Darr, "Chinese Nationalism and its Political and Social Origins," *Journal of Contemporary China* 21, no. 77 (2012): 816.

⁶⁴⁸ Dickson, "The Survival Strategy," 36.

⁶⁴⁹ Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications," 537.

sometimes the line between the two may blur.⁶⁵⁰ Clearly, the narrative emerged at least partially by design through the CCP, and with some inadvertent help from the LDP, but because it is such an emotional narrative, it comes back from the bottom up, and sometimes feeds directly into foreign policy actions of the Chinese government.⁶⁵¹ The CCP has on many occasions tried to contain nationalistic emotions, but failed to do so when an event went viral online and forced the Party to be that foremost patriot it keeps touting itself to be. Hence, if the CCP wants to remain the savior of China, it cannot but take a hardline stance on any matter that touches on the narrative of national humiliation. Fortunately for it, it is currently very much trusted by the public.

The CCP enjoys an extremely high approval rating by its population.⁶⁵² The Edelman Global Trust Barometer of 2020 has suggested an approval rate of 90%, the highest among all countries it measures. In comparison, the German government received an approval rate of 45%, the UK 39%, and the US a mere 36%.⁶⁵³ Another long-term study by Harvard even revealed an approval rate of 95% for the central government. This study found that local governments receive much lower approval, but when it comes to Beijing and the top-leadership, a far majority of the population support what their government is doing, and trust it to do the right thing going forward.⁶⁵⁴

Previous chapters have discussed many reasons for how the CCP legitimizes itself through the nationalist narrative, but there are also pragmatic reasons to trust in the Chinese government. China's economy has performed fabulously well over the past three decades, growing 40 times between 1990 and 2020.⁶⁵⁵ And this growth has

⁶⁵⁰ Gries, *China's New Nationalism*, 119.

⁶⁵¹ Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications," 544.

⁶⁵² Dickson, "The Survival Strategy," 28.

⁶⁵³ "2020 Edelman Trust Barometer." *Edelman*, 19 January 2020. <https://www.edelman.com/trust/2020-trust-barometer>

⁶⁵⁴ Dan Harsha, "Taking China's Pulse." *The Harvard Gazette*, 9 July 2020. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/07/long-term-survey-reveals-chinese-government-satisfaction/>

⁶⁵⁵ During the period of 1990-2010, China's GDP grew from 361 billion to 14.3 trillion (x40), with global GDP growing from 22.6 to 87.8 (hence the Chinese share increased from 1.6% to 16.3%). "GDP China," *World Bank*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=CN>

translated into real improvements in quality of life for virtually everyone in China, while real wages have stagnated for decades in Western countries.⁶⁵⁶ In a 2015 Pew Research Poll, 96% of respondents affirmed that they were better off than their parents had previously been, with 77% even stating that their current standards of living have increased over the past five years.⁶⁵⁷ This translates into real optimism for the future. In another opinion poll, 85% believed that their children would have an even better life in the future. In comparison, 65% of respondents from advanced economies stated that they believe their children to be worse off in the future.⁶⁵⁸ Yet another Pew Poll, which covered 44 different countries, revealed that 89% of Chinese respondents were satisfied with the trajectory of their economy, which compares to a meager median of 34% of satisfaction in the developed world.⁶⁵⁹

However, while a large part of the Chinese population may be optimistic about their country's future, this optimism does not extend to China's relations with major foreign governments, which are seen as the cause of much of the nation's historical suffering. This suspicion commonly translates into a variety of unfounded theories about the hidden schemes of other governments to keep China down. In other words, conspiracy theories. The US has been the target of conspiracy theories since inception of the PRC, a phenomenon some researchers call the "*American Conspiracy Mentality*" of China.⁶⁶⁰ During the Mao era, the US was blamed for just about everything, including the Nanjing Massacre, but even after the opening up, America maintained its top place in the conspiratorial minds of many nationalists. The threat of the US wanting to subvert China politically and prevent its re-emergence runs deep and has been the subject of many books, some of which

⁶⁵⁶ Wang and Guo, "The Chinese Dream," 10.

⁶⁵⁷ Richard Wike and Bridget Parker, "Corruption, Pollution, Inequality Are Top Concerns in China," *Pew Research Center*, 2015. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2015/09/24/corruption-pollution-inequality-are-top-concerns-in-china/>

⁶⁵⁸ "Emerging and Developing Economies Much More Optimistic than Rich Countries about the Future," *Pew Research Center*, 9 October 2014. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2014/10/09/emerging-and-developing-economies-much-more-optimistic-than-rich-countries-about-the-future/>

⁶⁵⁹ "Global Public Downbeat about Economy," *Pew Research Center*, 9 September 2014. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2014/09/09/global-public-downbeat-about-economy/>

⁶⁶⁰ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 169.

aforementioned. Following the Belgrade Bombings of 1999, a survey of over 1,200 Chinese students revealed that only 3.8% believed the bombings to be the technical error Washington claimed them to be. Even events such as the 2003 SARS outbreak were blamed on the US.⁶⁶¹ And then there is COVID-19. Theories of the virus having actually originated in an American lab are mainstream in China and are even occasionally repeated by government spokespersons whenever the US brings up the theory of a leak from the Chinese lab in Wuhan.⁶⁶²

Much of China's nationalist fervor and scrutiny of the actions of foreign nations, companies, and celebrities originates online. China's nationalist netizens are not only influenced by historical narratives of humiliation, but they themselves also have much power in influencing the government's actions, as happened with multiple aforementioned events.⁶⁶³ And once a major event goes viral online, China's commercially-oriented media outlets quickly pick up the story, given that topics related to patriotism are both popular among Chinese consumers of news, and are tolerated by the government to a wide extent.⁶⁶⁴ Chinese online nationalism is neither limited to direct threats against the nation, nor does it stop at the Chinese border. There are many examples that appear perplexing in their extend and targets, such as the huge backlash a Chinese major of psychology and theater from the University of Maryland had to endure. All she did was praise America's free speech during her commencement presentation, for which she was publicly shamed online. Mentioning a positive elements of another country's society in which she obtained her degree was enough to trigger online nationalists.⁶⁶⁵ Of course, the crucial fact was that this country was the US, which is somehow still China's ideological enemy in the minds of many nationalists, despite being one of China's greatest trade partners and contributors to its growth. Nonetheless, China is a country that has embraced

⁶⁶¹ Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 170-175.

⁶⁶² Katerina Ang, and Adam Taylor, "As U.S. calls for focus on covid origins, China repeats speculation about U.S. military base," *The Washington Post*, 27 May 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/05/27/virus-china-fort-detrick/>

⁶⁶³ Gries, "China's "New Thinking" on Japan," 844-846.

⁶⁶⁴ Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications," 544-545.

⁶⁶⁵ Giannakos, "Chinese Nationalism," 149-150.

internationalism, as it poised to overtake the US as the world's largest economy, according to some estimates perhaps as early as 2028, thanks in large part to trade.⁶⁶⁶

On the international stage, China advocates for a “*multipolar world*”, which implies the removal of the US from the top of a global hierarchy. Beijing has also made it clear that it is not interested in promoting the same values as the US. What is of prime importance to the Chinese government is not universal human rights, at least not in the Western sense, but sovereignty above all else. In other words, non-intervention in other countries' regimes. China supports rights, but these rights are focused on economic rights, as countries who are prevented from developing are essentially prevented from their right to a better life. Hence Beijing supports the “*right to development*” rather than any democratic rights.⁶⁶⁷ This has been the Chinese approach with international projects, such as the BRI.⁶⁶⁸ It is also China's approach to Africa. China became the African continent's second-largest trade partner already back in 2008. And before that, in 2006, when then-Premier Wen Jiabao toured Africa, he highlighted the importance of African countries and China holding together, due to their shared experience of victimization under colonialism.⁶⁶⁹ However, as China's influence is growing in the world, it should be prepared to itself become the villain of nationalist narratives. Economic integration is no guarantee for a success in soft power.

Japan has been China's top donor of aid, among the largest investors into the country's economy, and its number one trade partner, and yet, this high level of economic integration has not translated into a lasting friendship.⁶⁷⁰ Part of the reason for animosities may be the insistence of Japan's government that its past atrocities committed against China did not matter, and that the tens of millions of killed Chinese all perished in a war of non-aggression in which Japan merely wanted to free

⁶⁶⁶ “Chinese economy to overtake US 'by 2028' due to Covid,” *BBC*, 26 December 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-55454146>

⁶⁶⁷ Yih-Jye Hwang, and Lindsay Black, “Victimized State and Visionary Leader? Questioning China's Approach to Human Security in Africa,” *East Asia* 37 (2020): 5-6.

⁶⁶⁸ Breslin, “The ‘China Model’,” 1338.

⁶⁶⁹ Hwang and Black, “Victimized State,” 10-12.

⁶⁷⁰ He, “History, Chinese Nationalism,” 19.

Asia from Western colonialism. Another major part may be China's story of perpetual humiliation by foreigners. Either way, China's narrative is one of it against the rest of the world. A joint narrative may be needed which unites Chinese recent history with that of other nations, just as WWII is jointly commemorated in much of Europe, since everyone, including Germany, agrees on one over-arching narrative, in which Germany was the aggressor. This is certainly not the case with the Chinese narrative, nor is it the case with the narrative perpetuated by the Japanese right-wing political elite, which may not even represent most of Japan, but is what Chinese nationalists commonly get to see of Japan.⁶⁷¹ Clearly, trade is not everything.

China should itself be under no illusion that, only because it has increasingly close trade relations with Africa, it would be seen as force for good in the future. Just as Japan is loathed in China whenever history or nationalism is considered, so China may not always be seen as force for good. There is already plenty of negative backlash in African countries, such as Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe, where Chinese companies have set up shop to boost the local economy, but caused controversy through issues such as bringing in their own workers rather than hiring locally.⁶⁷² Chinese trade in Africa is an interesting subject in the years to come, as is the question of how this increasing trade will influence China's standing in Africa. As for China and its major trade partners, integration did not translate into positive sentiments toward those partners. If all that can be said positively about relations between China and its top trade partners — the US, Japan, and South Korea — is that they are well integrated economically, then this is little reassurance for the future. After all, if one seeks to learn from history one has to only look back to the First World War to realize that economic integration does not guarantee peace.⁶⁷³

Nationalism will likely continue to define much of China's foreign policy. Therefore, China's actions in the world will be difficult to predict, as nationalism is a powerful but volatile force — a double-edged sword.⁶⁷⁴ It is a tool used by the CCP

⁶⁷¹ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 23-24.

⁶⁷² Hwang and Black, "Victimized State," 13-15.

⁶⁷³ He, "History, Chinese Nationalism," 19.

⁶⁷⁴ Giannakos, "Chinese Nationalism," 160.

to legitimate its rule, but also a means by which the Chinese people can judge its actions. Whether the Chinese government can control this force remains to be seen. Nationalism's volatility may be best demonstrated in a tweet, which went viral on Weibo, as a response to the Chinese government's handling of the Diaoyu dispute. It showed the photo of a demonstrator wearing a shirt, which read:

*"I am willing to feed the corrupted officials and become a housing slave,
but I will never give up on the Diaoyu Islands."*⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷⁵ Liao, "Presentist or Cultural Memory," 560.

6. Conclusion

The narratives of the Nanjing Massacre, Unit 731, and the Comfort Women System have changed dramatically over the years since they have been committed. The Nanjing Massacre has become “*the holocaust of China*”, a horrifying event that is representative for the darkest part in Chinese history. In it, Chinese civilians were the unquestionable victims of atrocious soldiers who killed, plundered, and raped. The fact that this atrocity is commemorated as the sad and painful event it was is of little surprise. However, as has been presented in the analysis of the development of its commemoration in China, it was not memorialized at all for a prolonged period. During the Mao Era of 1949-1976, a national narrative of victory was at the forefront of China’s new national identity, propagated by the CCP. An event as terrifying as the Massacre of Nanjing, in which Chinese people had little chance to resist their aggressors, did not fit into the image of a perpetually victorious CCP which easily overcomes all adversities. When the massacre was mentioned, without dwelling too much on the number of casualties, it was America’s fault, as was almost everything at that time.

The decades that followed the war took themselves a brutal toll on many in China, as tens of millions perished in events such as the Great Famine and later the Cultural Revolution, leaving little room for average people to challenge inaccuracies within the narrative of victory. Therefore it is difficult to fully assess the public’s opinion from that time. However, based on official sources, it was all about victory. There was no need for memorials to commemorate the war, these things were in the past, and the past had no place in a bright future, brought about by the great leadership of the CCP.

Unit 731 was also not to be spoken of, which was perhaps much easier to achieve than Nanjing, because there were virtually no survivors. Only perpetrators, who had sworn an oath of silence and went on to live out their lives into ripe old age. The structures of Unit 731 remained, so did many documents and other evidence the Japanese Army could not take care of before the Red Army had arrived, but the Chinese government saw to it that they were kept in storage, away from the curious eyes of academics, who were not allowed to research the past, anyways.

As for the Comfort Women System, from the 200,000 Chinese sex slaves, only very few women survived their ordeal, perhaps a few thousand, perhaps only hundreds. But those who survived were shunned by all parts of society. They had dirtied themselves by sleeping with the enemy, and in most cases could not expect to ever bear children. A male-dominated society with a strong confucian hierarchy had no place for them. And even though the CCP sought to destroy the old confucian order and even emancipate women to work and take part in the communist struggle, they had no place for weak women who had been victimized by an enemy that was supposedly crushed by brave communist fighters. The best these survivors could do was keep quiet, because if they as much as mentioned the war, they might have found their end as part of one of the Cultural Revolution's struggle sessions.

This wholesale apathy for the past began to vanish, however, following Chairman Mao's death and the slow but steady opening up of the Chinese economy to the outside. Even though historians were rehabilitated and a more honest approach was taken to the past, in part to acknowledge some of the CCP's failings and move forward with the Chinese people's trust, it is far from certain that this should have resulted in a victim narrative and the creation of a national trauma. Following the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations, the Chinese government sought to foster a close friendship with their neighbor, and previous subjugator, to help develop the Chinese economy. Even ongoing attempts by Japan's LDP to downplay and whitewash the war, with the help of some of the very people who perpetrated the terrible atrocities, did not cause a stir in China. However, in 1982, the LDP leadership pushed too far. Apparently thinking that the time had come to once and for all declare that Japan had been a force for good in China, and that, essentially, no civilians were harmed in the process, they went too far. This time China joined the international outrage, with Deng Xiaoping even publicly stating that a change in direction was needed to counter toxic Japanese revisionism.

The CCP showed once again what it was capable of when it set its mind to it. While the commemoration of China's victims of war was still taboo in early 1982, by 1985 the country had started to commemorate all the big anniversaries of major events and atrocities of the war, and had built several major museums and many

monuments that commemorated the horrors of the war and the atrocities committed by Japan. Academics were pushed to search through the existing evidence and produce volumes of journal articles and updated history books that set the records straight. The official narrative of the war had changed from one of victory over all adversities, in particular against capitalist forces, to one of suffering and defeat at the hands of fascists. This kind of commemoration would have appeared entirely adequate for a contemporary European, but it was a complete u-turn for China, at least in terms of its historiography.

The Nanjing Massacre was the first of the great atrocities as an obvious choice for research and publication. It had always been the elephant in the room with regard to the old narrative of victory. The terrifying massacre that destroyed China's ancient capital and killed hundreds of thousands of its residents, yet it apparently was not worth mentioning, and if it was, then only briefly and to demonize the capitalists. There was plenty of evidence and surviving eyewitnesses to bring the trauma of Nanjing back, and within a couple years, the entire country had heard of it and was asked to commemorate its victims. Unit 731 was also reemerging. The lack of eyewitnesses made it more difficult to empathize with the victims, but the CCP leadership saw to it that the sites were preserved and that researchers could rediscover its dark secrets. The comfort women, sadly, did not have their chance to speak up yet.

That this complete change in Chinese commemoration would have serious effects on the psyche of many young Chinese should have perhaps been expected by the leadership, and maybe it was. But either way, the change appeared to have come too fast for the Party to maintain its grip on the narrative. With an already ailing state ideology of class struggle and the lack of national sentiments to which the CCP could cling as the father of a nation, unrest was perhaps a likely outcome. Unrest and the demand for democracy did break out in spring of 1989. The CCP cracked down and won the struggle to remain in power, but it needed a reason for people to support it to remain China's leader in the long run.

The means through which to continue the CCP's legitimacy came naturally, given that wide-ranging societal interest in China's dark past has opened up, and also

thanks to continuous denialism from the Japanese political elite, which created a natural enemy against which to rally. The US, despite having been the major force in bringing China back into the international community, has also regained its place as ideological adversary. Films, books, and newspapers were quick to pick up topics related to historical humiliation and draw conclusions to current events. A liberalizing media landscape ensured a steady stream of such material, which attracted China's young consumers. Even though the CCP appears to have attempted to use the new narrative of humiliation to strengthen its legitimacy and foster a stronger national identity, such could not be done without spilling over to its foreign policy. A variety of high profile incidents, such as the Belgrade bombings by the US or the Diaoyu Islands dispute with Japan, made it impossible to ignore popular sentiments, which threatened to turn against the government if it refused to take a hardline stance. The CCP had become the nation's foremost patriot, now it had to live up to its role, even if that meant hurting relations with its crucial trade partners.

In terms of Social Identity Theory, the people of China were in the in-group, which had experienced great suffering and had to hold together to help their nation reemerge, while Western colonial powers and Japan, both then and now, were the out-group, against whom China had to assert itself. Shared '*memories*' of trauma and pain against one's '*imagined community*' created a powerful bond for those who saw themselves as part of this history. National sentiments grew increasingly emotional as past traumas came to the forefront. The past was no longer a glorious narrative of the successful communist struggle, but instead a deeply traumatic place of remembrance for the Chinese nation. The glory was moved into the future, to a time when China would have fully reemerged and recovered its rightful place in the world, and when it had thrown off its past humiliation. To achieve this '*China Dream*', the whole nation had to hold together and prevent past humiliations from reoccurring. There was no time for petty political infighting. The CCP became the only way forward; China's foremost patriot and defender of the nation. Criticism against the Party was criticism against the nation, and China could no longer permit being humiliated by an envious West. In this narrative of guiding the nation back to former glories, and preventing

traumatic humiliation from reoccurring, the CCP had found its new mode of legitimation.

The power of this narrative of trauma and humiliation does, of course, not merely stem from the CCP's insistence on it, but from the fact that these horrifying events had indeed taken place. Tens of millions of Chinese were killed as part of an aggressive war, not to mention the countless millions more who were injured, displaced, or otherwise traumatized. Therefore, it is not that astonishing for these narratives of suffering having taken hold in the modern Chinese identity, but rather that they were suppressed in the decades following the war. Out of the tragedy of war came a narrative of victory over all odds, that attempted to banish suffering to historical oblivion. However, eventually these narratives and their powerful sentiments reemerged and captured the minds and hearts of nationalists throughout the Chinese nation.

As for the three atrocities, they are examples not only of tools for this updated narrative, but also a reflection of the changing national narrative itself. The Nanjing Massacre has remained a hot topic to this day and is frequently mentioned and commemorated. It is a symbol for the brutal victimization Chinese people experienced throughout the war and the indiscriminate killing and raping the Chinese people had suffered under. Unit 731 has entered the education curriculum and has added to the sad story of victimization, as being China's death camps during the war. The Comfort Women System has also finally become a part of mainstream commemoration, and the women have at last been rehabilitated, with their role in the national suffering acknowledged, although sadly much too late for most of them to experience for themselves. The brutal slaughter of civilians in fallen cities, the organized killings in factories of death, and the mass rape of innocent women; that is the sad story of the War of Resistance, as represented by these three horrifying atrocities. The power of such narratives is obvious.

Finding examples of the victim narrative as part of modern Chinese nationalism has become increasingly effortless. From public statements by officials, to the media, to Chinese cyberspace. Parallels to a traumatic past are quickly drawn whenever the feelings of the nation are hurt. Not even foreign TV-dramas or pop

music directed at non-Chinese audiences are safe from the ire of nationalists. Not to mention foreign corporations who intend on making money in China. Now that China is regaining its strength, they all must be careful not to attempt to humiliate the nation again, for it will not tolerate it any longer.

China has resurfaced as one of the world's most powerful countries, poised to become the largest economy, with likely the largest military force. It is a nation full of historical pride, but within this pride sits deep trauma, of having been humiliated and robbed of its place in the world. One should not draw conclusion of what the future will hold of this nation, which is still in the process of rejuvenation, but it is hard not to imagine some more friction down the road. While China's rise has largely depended on trade and economic interdependence with other countries, virtually all of its major trading partners are seen as adversaries in this national narrative of trauma. How China can overcome the paradox of economic interdependence and nationalist antagonism toward other nations is a major conundrum. It is far from certain that a pragmatist government will be able to temper heated nationalism, because when nationalist sentiments are concerned, hot emotions tend to win over cold calculus. The national narrative of Chinese victimization has one clear message: China must never be humiliated again.

7. Bibliography

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8. Appendix

8.1. Chronology

Below gives a broad overview of relevant Chinese historical events from the period of the Century of Humiliation to the present. The table is split chronologically into four parts: The Century of Humiliation, the Victor Narrative, the Transition Period, and the Victim Narrative.

| The Century of Humiliation | |
|--|--|
| 1839-1842 | |
| First Opium War: Lord Palmerston sends British Navy fleet to China | |
| 1842 | |
| 29 August | Treaty of Nanking: Beginning of 'Unequal Treaties', trade is forcibly opened, reparations paid to Britain, and Hong Kong Island ceded to Britain |
| 1850-64 | |
| Taiping Rebellion: Uprising captures much of China and establishes a Christian kingdom, before being crushed by Western-trained Chinese troops; 20 million dead | |
| 1855-1868 | |
| Punti-Hakka Wars: Ethnic War in Guangdong, caused by the Red Turban Rebellion (1854-56); 1 million dead | |
| 1856-1860 | |
| Second Opium War: Fought between the Qing Empire and Anglo-French forces, leading to the burning down of the Summer Palace and Kowloon being ceded to Britain | |
| 1858 | |
| June | Treaty of Tientsin: Opium trade legalized, foreign delegations permitted in Qing Empire, Christian missionary activity permitted, and more trade ports opened |
| 1860 | |
| November | Convention of Peking: Manchuria split between Russia and Qing |
| 1871 | |
| September | Sino-Japanese Friendship and Trade Treaty: Qing Empire was forced to recognize Japan and to open to trade, after Japan's first attempt at taking over Taiwan |
| 1876-1879 | |

Northern Chinese Famine: Large famine kills one in ten in the affected five provinces (8-13 million casualties).

1884-1885

Sino-French War: Followed by Treaty of Tientsin (1885), France takes control of North Vietnam, end of Qing suzerainty over Vietnam

1894-1895

First Sino-Japanese War: Following the Donhak Uprising in Korea, Japan and Qing took opposing sides, erupting in the war and Chinese naval defeat

1895

17 April **Treaty of Shimonoseki:** Chinese tributary dominance over Korea ended, Japan takes over Taiwan, large indemnities owed to Japan, and trade is further opened to Japan

1897

November The city of Qingdao and parts of Shandong are taken over by the German Empire

1898

11 June - 22 September **Hundred Days Reform:** Attempt at reforming the country by the Guangxu Emperor, failed after he was imprisoned by Empress Dowager Cixi.

1905

Confucian examination system abolished

1908

November Empress Dowager Cixi dies and a constitutional monarchy is to be established

1910

22 August Korea is annexed by Japan

1911

10 October **Xinhai Revolution:** The revolution which originates in Wuhan leads to the abolition of the Qing Empire and the establishment of the Republic of China

1913

13 January **First National Assembly Elections:** Guomindang (GMD) is elected

1914

November Japan declares war on German Empire, takes over German Qingdao

1915

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| 18 January | Japan's 21 Demands to China: An ultimatum given to China to grant Japan a series of rights and and special concessions, president Yuan Shikai is forced to sign the demands |
| 1915-1916 | |
| 12 December - 22 March | The Empire of China: Yuan Shikai re-establishes the monarchy with himself as emperor, the empire lasted only for four months, following universal opposition |
| 1916 | |
| China sends hundreds of thousands of workers to support Great Britain, France, and Russia in the war and receives observer status | |
| 1917 | |
| 14 August | China ends its neutrality and declares war on the German Empire |
| 1919 | |
| 4 May | May Fourth Movement: Following the Treaty of Versailles, the allied powers reneged on their promise to return Qingdao, large-scale student-led protests break out in Beijing, morphing into an anti-feudal protest movement |
| 1921 | |
| 23 July | The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is established at its first national congress |
| 1924 | |
| Beginning of the First United Front between the Guomindang and the CCP to end warlordism in China | |
| 1926-1928 | |
| 9 July | The Northern Expedition: Military campaign under Chiang Kai-shek which finally defeated the warlords and united China under the banner of the Republic |
| 1927 | |
| 12 April | The CCP is purged in the Shanghai Massacre by the GMD, end of the United Front |
| 1931 | |
| 18 September | Japanese Invasion of Manchuria: Japan takes over Manchuria following the 'Mukden Incident' and establishes Manchukuo with ex-Chinese emperor Puyi as puppet-head of state |
| 1932 | |
| The Epidemic Prevention Research Laboratory is set up as part of the Army Hospital in Tokyo, which will become Unit 731's ultimate headquarters | |

Chinese Comfort Women: In Shanghai the first ‘Comfort Station’ is established and by 1945 200,000 Chinese women will have become sex slaves to the Japanese army, only a few thousand survive

1933

The Togo Unit (predecessor to Unit 731) starts operations in Manchukuo, in Harbin and Beiyinhe (Zhongma).

1934-1935

October - **The Long March:** The remaining CCP forces retreat from the GMD, Mao Zedong manages to become the CCP’s leader by the end of it

1936

August **Unit 731** is officially launched and replaces the ‘Togo Unit’

1937

7 July **Marco Polo Bridge Incident:** The beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War (WW2 in Asia / The Asia-Pacific War)

13 August - **Battle of Shanghai:** After fierce fighting the Japanese army captures
26 Nov. Shanghai

13 **Nanjing Massacre:** also known as the Rape of Nanking, the Japanese army
December captures the Chinese capital, systematic rape, pillaging, and the killing of
civilians ensue, with a death toll of above 200,000

1938

Chongqing becomes new capital of the Republic of China and withstands ongoing air raids and attacks

Unit 731’s new main site in Pingfang opens

1940

Operation Destroy All: Japan implements the policy of the ‘three alls’ (kill all, burn all, loot all)

1941

7 December **Attack on Pearl Harbor:** The U.S. enters the Asia-Pacific War

1943

22 Nov - **Cairo Conference:** China becomes equal ally in the war against Japan,
Nov unequal treaties are abolished, Japan’s conquests are to be returned

1945

4 February - **Yalta Conference:** Russia agrees to enter the Asia-Pacific War, Taiwan is to
11 February be given to China

15 August **Japanese Surrender:** Announced by Emperor Hirohito on 15 August,
formally signed on 2 September

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| 1946 | |
| 20 July | Chinese Civil War: The civil war resumes as U.S.-led mediation fails |
| 1947 | |
| 28 February | 228 Incident: After the outcome of the civil war becomes clear the GMD starts to retreat to Taiwan, where pro-independence protests are crushed during the 228 incident, start of the White Terror, in which 100,000 Taiwanese are killed |
| 1948 | |
| March | Immunity for perpetrators of Unit 731 is granted in exchange for information |
| 1949 | |
| 1 October | Founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) |
| The Victor Narrative (Mao Era) | |
| 1950 | |
| 19 October | The PRC's People's Volunteer Army (PVA) enters the Korean War |
| 1954 | |
| 20 September | First Constitution of the PRC enacted at the First National People's Congress |
| 1956 | |
| Hundred Flowers Campaign: Lasted until 1957 and failed eventually, leading to a CCP-led crackdown until 1957 on people and organization hostile to the Party | |
| 1958-62 | |
| Great Leap Forward: Economic campaign aimed at rapidly developing the country, failed and led to mass starvations | |
| 1959-60 | |
| The Great Famine: as a result of failed policies in the Great Leap Forward, up to 40 million Chinese starved to death | |
| 1962 | |
| 20 October - 21 November | Sino-Indian War: Fought over disputed territories across the Himalayan border |
| 1966-76 | |
| Cultural Revolution: In its extreme phase over the first year, in which educational institutions and historical sites are demolished and the economy grinds to a halt | |
| 1971 | |

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| October | The PRC replaces the ROC as 'China' in the U.N. |
| 1972 | |
| 29 September | Normalization of Sino-Japanese Relations |
| 1975 | |
| Second Constitution: Cultural Revolution Constitution, Mao becomes sole power of the PRC | |
| 1976 | |
| 9 September | Mao Zedong dies: The Cultural Revolution comes to an end |
| The Transition Period | |
| 1978 | |
| 5 March | Third Constitution: Largely reinstated first constitution |
| 18 December | Start of 'Reform and Opening' |
| 1979 | |
| 17 February - 16 March | Sino-Vietnamese War |
| 1982 | |
| July | First Textbook Crisis: The Japanese Ministry of Education announced new history textbooks that would change the " <i>invasion</i> " of northern China into an " <i>advance</i> " and whitewashed much of Japan's actions during WW2, stirring huge controversy across China and Korea |
| 24 August | Manchukuo Monument: Ex-Japanese PM Kishii Nobosuke announces a monument for Manchukuo to be built in Shizuoka Prefecture, to commemorate Japan's effort to build a benevolent colony as " <i>Manchurian paradise</i> ". This led to the CCP deciding to preserve monuments of Japanese atrocities, to counter Japanese attempts at whitewashing history, such as the site of Unit 731. |
| 13 September | Deng Xiaoping becomes China's new leader |
| November | End of First Textbook Crisis: Japan's Ministry of Education retracts its new textbook guidelines. |
| 4 December | Fourth Constitution: Current constitution, focuses on economic growth and the opening up of China, last major amendments in 2018 |
| 1986 | |
| Second Textbook Crisis | |

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| 1989 | |
| 4 June | Tiananmen Square Incident: Following months of protests for liberal reforms, the military cracks down hard on protesters; the progressive faction in the government is purged; economic reforms grind to a halt |
| The Victim Narrative | |
| 1991 | |
| 25 July | New Patriotic Education Program is introduced with the ‘Draft to Strengthen the Education of Chinese Modern and Contemporary History and National Conditions in Primary and Middle Schools,’ in effect changing China’s national narrative to focus on historical victimization and present economic growth. The Central Committee |
| 28 August | The Central Propaganda Department, Ministry of Education release their “Announcement on Using Historical Relics to Conduct Education for Patriotism and Revolutionary Traditions” |
| 1992 | |
| 18 January - 21 February | Deng Xiaoping’s Southern Tour: Chinese economic reform continued and further opening to capital markets |
| 1993 | |
| 13 February | The State Council and Central Committee release the ‘Draft of Education Reforms and Development in China’, in which the education agenda was decided to include patriotism, Party principles, collectivism and socialism, modern and contemporary history, and national conditions. |
| 13 September | The State Education Commission, the Central Propaganda Department, the Ministry of Radio, Film and Television, and the Ministry of Culture jointly issue the ‘Announcement to Conduct Patriotic Education in Primary and Middle Schools by Film and Television Dramas’ |
| 1994 | |
| 24 April | The internet arrives in China |
| 22 August | The nationwide campaign for patriotic education starts in earnest: The Central Committee release the ‘Outline for Patriotic Education’, which emphasizes the importance of providing contemporary Chinese history lessons, the Party’s great achievements and the use of historical museum and relics to commemorate modern history. |
| 1995-1996 | |
| 21 July - 23 March | Third Taiwan Strait Crisis: PRC missile tests as response to Taiwan moving away from the One-China Policy leads to largest display of U.S. military might since the Vietnam War |
| 1996 | |

‘China Can Say No’ becomes the first popular non-fiction book advocating for more aggressive Chinese patriotism, which becomes a huge success; more ultra-patriotic books follow

1997

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| 1 July | Sovereignty over Hong Kong is transferred to China |
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1999

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| 7 May | U.S. Bombing of Chinese Embassy in Belgrade: Large-scale anti-American protests erupt across China, at first supported by the government, until it loses control |
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2001

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| 1 April | Hainan Island Incident: Chinese and U.S. military planes collide midair, resulting in anti-American protests and the Chinese government holding the American personnel hostage until a sufficient U.S. apology is received |
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| 11 December | China accedes to the WTO |
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2004

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| 21 November | Confucius Institute Project: The CIP is established as major Chinese soft power tool |
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2005

Large-scale anti Japanese demonstrations erupt across China in spring of 2005 against Japan’s bid to become a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council; a private online petition gathers 40 million signatures for the Chinese government to block the bid

2008

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| April | Anti-French Protests: Chinese consumers boycotted Carrefour following French protests for Tibetan Independence and the Paris City Council awarding an honorary citizenship to the Dalai Lama on 21 April |
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| 8 August - 24 August | Beijing Olympic Games: Anti-Western sentiments grow across China as many countries protest Chinese human rights abuses and the torch relay is disrupted in several countries |
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2010

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| February | China overtakes Japan as world’s second-largest economy |
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2012

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| 5 September | Japan buys Diaoyu/Senkaku islands: Anti-Japanese protests and riots break out across China intermittently for several years following the takeover of the disputed islands by the Japanese government |
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| 15 November | Xi Jinping ascends to power (becomes president on 14 March 2013) |
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| 29 November | The China Dream: Xi Jinping introduces the ‘China Dream’, China’s roadmap going forward and its resurfacing as the great superpower |
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| 2013 | |
| September | Belt and Road Initiative is unveiled |
| 2016 | |
| January | Tzuyu Scandal: Taiwanese K-Pop band member infuriates Chinese netizens by stating on Television that she was Taiwanese |
| 16 January | Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) opens |
| 7 July | THAAD deployment: U.S.-South Korea announcement of deployment leads to protests and consumer boycott of Korean cultural goods and especially the supermarket chain Lotte Mart, which was made land available for THAAD; protests and boycotts continue into 2017 |
| 12 July | The special arbitral tribunal under UNCLOS rules in favor of the Philippines in the South China Sea territorial dispute and rejects China's claim over historic rights within the 'nine-dash line' |
| 2018 | |
| 11 March | Constitutional Amendment: In the latest amendment presidential term limits are removed and the CCP becomes the explicit leadership of the nation |
| 2020 | |
| September | China overtakes the U.S. with the world's largest navy |
| September - November | Multiple K-Pop band scandals "hurt" Chinese national pride: several scandals caused controversies online and in media after Korean stars either made remarks for commemorating the fallen in the Korean War, handled baby pandas inappropriately, or made otherwise "hurtful" comments |
| 2021 | |
| 1 July | 100th anniversary of the founding of the CCP |

Vita

Prior to studying the Master of Advanced International Studies (M.A.I.S) at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, for which purpose this thesis has been written, David Pehamberger had gained nine years of professional experience, four of which as Business Analyst and the final two years as Supply-Demand Planner in the field of Supply Chain Management, both while living and working in Singapore. David previously also lived in Ireland, where he worked as an Account Manager. After all this, he returned to his native Austria to obtain a Bachelor of Arts in Sinology (Chinese Studies) at the University of Vienna, and finally the aforementioned graduate degree. This thesis is meant to combine several personal interests and skill-sets, which includes a passion for history, a fascination with national identity, a desire to understand political decision-making processes, a keen interest in economics, personal experience and knowledge of East Asian Nations, and of course a joy for writing. These interests are of a varied and interdisciplinary nature, as is the thesis itself. However, always with a focus on telling a good story.

Pledge of Honesty

On my honour as a student of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Pehamberger', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Pehamberger