

Alicja Bachulska

Graduate School for Social Research, Polish Academy of Sciences

Politics of memory for a New Era? Mainland Chinese historical memory, nationalism, and their impact on Chinese international behaviour

Abstract

Overall, the subject has remained relatively understudied. In this context, this paper presents a broader picture of the importance of the topic as such. It does not attempt to present a complete picture of the role of historical memory in Chinese foreign policy. Instead, it identifies the main points of reference that should be treated as the invitation for further research. It also highlights certain new developments that might suggest what to expect in the future.

However, from the perspective of international politics, scientists have been somehow reluctant to study the impact of historical memory on states' behaviour. In the academic world of IR, dominated by realism, immeasurable factors like identity or culture, have been considered largely insignificant in shaping international politics. If one defines power as one state's ability to control a given sphere either militarily or economically, intangible factors somehow "naturally" get sidelined. Nevertheless, given the worldwide resurgence of nationalism as a political force shaping international relations and the impossibility of explaining it with purely realist means, some observers have turned towards a re-examination of alternative or subsidiary explanations of factors influencing states' international behaviour.

Northeast Asia accounts for one of the most well-developed regions with the world's three largest economic powers. However, as former South Korean President Park Geun-hye described, it also constitutes a "paradox." On one hand, states are able to successfully cooperate on the economic basis. On the other hand, there are a number of obstacles, involving primarily unresolved historical

issues and security concerns, that impede further regional collaboration. The aim of the article is to analyse the process of regional integration in Northeast Asia, with particular focus on Japan – Republic of Korea relations, through the lenses of neo-functionalism. The essay seeks to determine whether this approach could lead to increasing transnational ties in the region and ultimately improve international relations on bilateral and multilateral basis. Neo-functional theory of regional integration has been mostly applied to research on the European integration process. Consequently, there have been few attempts of testing its assumptions in other regions. Nevertheless, there seems to be substantial evidence to perceive neo-functionalism as a promising theoretical approach beyond Europe. Since neo-functionalists place supranational, transnational and sub-national actors at the centre of the analysis, the article, apart from the economic dimension, will elaborate on the potential of existing international structure, namely the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat.

Keywords: *China, historical memory, nationalism*

1. Introduction – Importance of historical memory and politics of memory in the context of international relations

Historical memory has been an understudied area of research in international relations (IR). When it comes to sociology and cultural studies, the issue has been widely studied both globally and locally. However, from the perspective of international politics, scientists have been somehow reluctant to study the impact of historical memory on states' behaviour. In the academic world of IR, dominated by realism, immeasurable factors like identity or culture, have been considered largely insignificant in shaping international politics. If one defines power as one state's ability to control a given sphere either militarily or economically, intangible factors somehow "naturally" get sidelined. Nevertheless, given the worldwide resurgence of nationalism as a political force shaping international relations and the impossibility of explaining it with purely realist means, some observers have turned towards a re-examination of alternative or subsidiary explanations of factors influencing states' international behaviour. Although Francis Fukuyama's infamous "end of history" was declared a long time ago, in practice historically-rooted thinking has been on the rise among many intellectuals and policymakers throughout the world.

Nationalist movements often legitimise their claims by stressing their alleged historical roots and legacies. Nevertheless, their visions of history are often revisionist and narrow. Sometimes those narratives serve purely political goals, thus becoming instrumental *per se*, especially when it comes to top-down visions of history and social memory sanctioned by the state. Simultaneously, history re-writing has become the core of contemporary politics of memory. A resurgence of political thinking rooted in subjective re-definition of history by those in power has been on the rise throughout the world and has not been confined to any specific culture or geographic area. The question of Polish-German ties, Sino-Japanese reconciliation, former Western colonial powers' relations with countries in the global South, or Russian influence in Eastern Europe are just a few examples of contemporary international issues that cannot be analysed without understanding the respective visions of history assumed by every actor involved. While different regional versions of politics of history are rooted in their respective local realities, to a large extent they all have one thing in common: they assume some hegemonic vision of the past that is supposed to serve the needs of the present. However, political elites and intellectuals (the latter to a limited extent) are responsible for defining these very needs. This way, contemporary politics of history have come to represent fragmentary and highly subjective visions of the past that might have very little to do with the historical events and the dynamics that shaped them.

2. Understanding the role of historical memory in politics and IR – Theoretical framework

When it comes to the role of politics of memory and history in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and its international relations, there have been some attempts at understanding its role in the changing political environment of both the Maoist and the post-Maoist era. Works by authors such as Wang Zheng (2012), Yinan He (2009) or Rana Mitter (2013) have dealt with the issue of historical memory in different contexts, e.g. when it comes to the issue of Sino-Japanese reconciliation, Chinese nationalism, and anti-Western sentiments ("popular nationalism"). Wang Zheng's book *Never Forget National Humiliation* (2012) is probably the most systematic attempt to analyse the issue of Chinese historical memory of trauma in the very context of IR. Overall, the subject has remained

relatively understudied. In this context, this paper presents a broader picture of the importance of the topic as such. It does not attempt to present a complete picture of the role of historical memory in Chinese foreign policy. Instead, it identifies the main points of reference that should be treated as the invitation for further research. It also highlights certain new developments that might suggest what to expect in the future.

Firstly, one has to establish the theoretical framework to analyse the role of historical memory in IR. Following this paper's theoretical approach, the author assumes that history is based on facts and their interpretations (Jin 2006, p. 32). Although some claim that facts are never purely objective (since their real choice is arbitrary and based on one's individual bias and perspective), establishing some common ground for choosing certain events as points of reference for further interpretation must nevertheless be agreed upon first. For example, some scholars (e.g. Robert Frank) have claimed that World War II (WWII) started already in 1937 (the Marco Polo Bridge Incident and the beginning of the Japanese occupation of China). This statement shows an individual perspective rooted in the regional understanding of specific historical processes and their importance. If one assumes that the main point of reference is the role of Japan in the Pacific War, Hitler's invasion on Poland in September 1939 can be sidelined. It does not exclude the viability of the "Western part" of WWII, but it highlights different dynamics that have come to represent China's historical experience and its main turning points. This way, "historical facts" may exist alongside each other, seemingly contradictory in their nature, yet simultaneously highlighting different perspectives of the same events that had formed a more extensive process of shaping global history.

Then, there is the question of interpretations as such. There are many ways of conceptualising this process of turning allegedly objective facts into subjective interpretations. For example, in his book on the Boxer Rebellion, Paul Cohen (1997) specifies three ways of understanding history, namely history as facts, experiences, and perceptions. Historians, who write about historical events, establish facts; experiences are lived by people, while perceptions tend to be used by various actors in an effective way as myths (Jin 2006, pp. 32–33). The latter approach mostly serves the present needs of a given community or state. History and myth have a dynamic relationship. Theoretically, the former looks for a nuanced account of the past, while the latter looks for an imagined "essence" of it (*ibid.*, p. 33). According to the instrumental approach to understanding historical memory, various political forces competing for distribution of

power usually create their own myths in order to legitimise their claims. These myths become powerful only if they have the capacity of persuading people. In other words, they are real because people believe them to be true. Those in power have the means of modifying the public perception of history, but if the official narratives do not have a widespread basis, their influence on the general public tends to be limited.

Finally, there is the issue of politics of memory and its formation. If history is about facts and their interpretations, politics of history are mostly about interpretations of the past by certain social groups, predominantly those in power. The way the political elites remember the past and create their narratives is highly preconditioned. Firstly, it is preconditioned by individuals' personal stories, experiences, and livelihoods. It is influenced by their cultural backgrounds, political preferences, and the impact of the social milieu in which they live. Moreover, the past is always understood in relation to the present. Frequently, contemporary historical narratives are created with the means of current socio-political and cultural categories and concepts that might have been inexistent in the very past that they are trying to engage with and describe. As Maurantonio (2014, p. 1) has pointed out, "consideration of memory requires less attention to issues 'accuracy' or 'authenticity' than it does to the values, beliefs, and norms shaping cultures at a particular historical juncture. Whether memories present a past that can be deemed objectively 'true' is beside the point." This way, attributing subjective meaning to the past lies at the heart of politics of history. Additionally, the process of production of politics of history can be conceptualised as being based on a move from an individual experience of the past (lived through or imagined) towards historical memory as a collective phenomenon. It is essential to bear in mind that memory studies, which form one of the crucial conceptual parts for the study of politics of history, are an extremely interdisciplinary area of research. They operate at the intersection of politics, international relations, sociology, anthropology, and many other disciplines. Their scope of interest ranges from individual experiences and memories of trauma, through collective identity-making processes and cultural practices, all the way to domestic and international policy-making and its relation with the past. In this context, some have argued that the very topic of politics of memory in IR serves "as a means of sharpening the bounds of the interdisciplinary enterprise of memory studies (*ibid.*, p. 2). Nevertheless, given the conceptual blurriness when it comes to the boundaries of memory studies, there is no "correct way to 'do' memory" (Confino 1997, p. 1390).

What follows is a brief introduction of the main themes when it comes to the topic of historical memory and politics of memory in the context of contemporary China.

3. Historical memory and politics of memory in the context of contemporary China

Contemporary China could be described as a modern nation-state, yet throughout much of its history, it used to be perceived and perceive itself in very different categories. The civilisation of “everything under the heavens” or the “known world” in the geopolitics of Chinese empire (*tianxia*), the Central Kingdom, or the founder of the tribute system are just a few examples of the main conceptualisations of the historically Chinese sphere of influence and control (French 2017, p. 4). The system, however one labels it, was primarily based on China’s distant and indirect rule over its neighbours under the condition of accepting the emperor’s superiority and legitimacy. In return for the acceptance of the status quo, China would then develop trade ties with its neighbours and also develop a network of “universal standards” broadly based on Confucianism (*ibid.*, p. 5). Contemporary Chinese political thought is still deeply rooted in its historically grounded way of thinking about how to interact with the outside world. As French (2017, p. 7) has noted, “it is scarcely appreciated in the West today that the ‘international system’ we so readily take for granted is actually a recent creation.” For a long time, the international system created by the Chinese civilisation functioned unchallenged by any sizeable outside forces. The situation changed dramatically in the mid-19th century when China was forced to confront the outside world that had been developing the system of international relations based on new relations of power and different theoretical concepts, such as sovereignty. China’s clash with the West started the so-called “century of humiliation” (*bainian guochi*), which started after the First Opium War in the mid-19th century and became one of the defining features of contemporary Chinese national identity. The memories of foreign occupation, imperialism, and imposition of unequal treaties have formed a myth that has been re-imagined throughout China’s contemporary history. This way, Chinese collective historical memory has been developing against the backdrop of numerous traumatic events, such as the Opium Wars, the destruction of the Yuanming Palace by the foreign forces in Beijing, the colonisation of

Manchuria by the Japanese or the Nanjing Massacre during the Second Sino-Japanese War. In this way, traumatising has been one of the key features of contemporary Chinese identity. It has been rooted in individual and collective memories of the nation's past. In this context, the role of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in enabling this kind of collective memories to be created should not be underestimated.

When it comes to the post-1949 Chinese politics of memory, CCP has been largely seen as the main architect of the dominant historical narratives. Given the authoritarian nature of the Party-state system and its apparatus, the hegemonic power of the official narrative has made it difficult for most counter-narratives to emerge. Some would claim that the Chinese type of collective memory exemplifies the so-called "Orwellian type," where the political elites have absolute power over how the past is portrayed and disseminated. This does not mean that there are no alternative accounts of the past in China, but given the scale of the country's propaganda and censorship apparatus, most mainstream accounts of the past are to a certain extent sanctioned by the CCP. There is hardly any space for memory pluralism to emerge and most of the time, painful memories are being suppressed on both individual and collective levels. Although some traumatic events have been acknowledged, like the fact the Mao's decision-making was partially wrong during the Cultural Revolution, the public discussion has never reached the level where the actual guilt of the people involved could be brought up in public. Given the nature of the Chinese political system, an open debate about the past would open up a "Pandora's box," especially in the context of China's most recent past. The Chinese leadership has been aware that events like the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre or the ongoing prosecution of members of different societal groups (e.g. Falun Gong members and minority groups) could serve as a catalyst of potential unrest. This way, pushing forward some selective visions of the past while being aware of their potential disruptive power (if out of control) has proved to be a difficult task for the Party-state (as the author presents in the following part).

What is more, the CCP has mainly been preoccupied with the creation of new archenemies. They would be different over time, given the changing needs of the Party. In the Mao era, history was perceived as a process composed of stages that were conceptualised through a Marxist lens and then adopted to the Chinese realities. From this perspective, nationalism was not bolstered since it did not belong to the Maoist doctrine as such. Instead, it was seen as one of the representations of global

imperialism. When it comes to domestic history re-definition, the focus was on designating internal enemies who represented the old feudal system. The emphasis on class enemies as the “Others” within the society was aimed at domestically consolidating the power of the CCP, which at the time was one of the primary goals of the Party. The historiography was Mao-centred (e.g. the Yan’an base area as the core of the wartime narrative), while the Kuomintang (KMT) members, the Americans and the Japanese were portrayed as the evil forces of global imperialism. The narrative was reflecting the broader reality of the early Cold War era as well as the domestic needs of the Party (Mitter 2003, p. 118). Discursive creation of real or imagined enemies was part of a broader phenomenon where the past was being re-imagined.

The death of Mao and the change of the political climate brought about a new era of Chinese historical memory. For a brief period in the early 1980s, Beijing deemphasised the divisive interpretations of the country’s history. It was mostly related to Deng Xiaoping’s efforts related to attracting much-needed foreign investment, especially from Japan (French 2017, p. 10). Nevertheless, another round of Chinese history re-writing took place in the late 1980s, when the post-Mao economic and political reforms were accelerating. The ideological void created by the loss of legitimacy of the CCP with its symbolic peak during the nation-wide protests of spring 1989 resulted in the Party’s search for a new source of legitimacy. In this context, Chinese elites turned towards historical narratives of past glory and humiliation. The history of national modernisation started to be conceptualised as the story of the end of humiliation, with the CCP at its core. This way, the Party was pictured as the only guarantor of development, peace, and stability. This very image was enhanced by the unsettling vision of a chaotic international reality, where old aggressors were still trying to undermine China’s rise.

Although some have claimed that China’s recent economic successes have provided some sort of healing for its historical wounds, in reality, many of the political developments throughout the past three decades suggest that historical memory, based on both experienced and imagined traumas, is on the rise (Wang 2012a, p. 32). Probably the most evident example is the state of Sino-Japanese relations, which contradicts the liberal assumptions on the correlation between growing international trade and the improvement of bilateral ties. As far as Beijing and Tokyo are concerned, both parties have their own interests in politically leveraging their shared history. Especially for Beijing, the Sino-Japanese

war and its interpretations have served different needs, like the desire to reunify Taiwan, the need to reduce the US and Japanese power in the region, or the quest to bind the people of China together (Mitter 2003, p. 121). As French (2017, p. 10) has noted, for China, humiliation by Western powers was not the ultimate blow. Instead, the defeat by the Japanese was far more important for the Chinese collective psyche. For many centuries, the Chinese rulers have looked at Japan as “an intrinsically inferior nation whose very origins lay in immense cultural debt to China in everything from writing systems and literature to religion and governance” (ibid.). This way, the history of conflicts between China and Japan (i.e. the First and the Second Sino-Japanese War) has probably been essential in shaping Chinese contemporary historical memory. What is more, the topic has been influencing Beijing’s relations with Tokyo countless times throughout the past decades (e.g. in relation to the Yasukuni shrine, textbook controversies, the Nanjing massacre). Another important element was China’s general perception of the Western powers trying to humiliate the country on the international arena (e.g. the infamous bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by the Americans in May 1999).

Among others, the events listed above have sparked numerous controversies in the Chinese public debate, both among the CCP politicians as well as the general public. The latter’s reactions became increasingly intense. Starting from the late 1990s and early 2000s, discontent was being expressed not only verbally and symbolically (e.g. through the internet, where nationalism and pro-Chinese reading of history remain relatively uncensored) but it also took the form of street protests. The CCP did not crack down on these manifestations since it saw them as a security valve enabling the dissatisfied Chinese to channel their discontent towards an outside enemy, namely Japan or the US. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that such a strong emotional reaction to real or perceived humiliation by the outside forces became possible because of the previous policies spurring popular nationalism. As already mentioned, in the presence of an ideological void of the post-Mao era, the CCP had to reinvent itself as the only legitimate leader of the nation. This way, it embarked on a grand mission of the so-called “patriotic education campaign.” The new school curriculum, which started in the early 1990s, was aimed at nurturing the patriotic feelings of the young generations. Simultaneously, new museums and memorial places were established in order to put forward the importance of the CCP in the Chinese 20th-century history. A new

generation of Chinese citizens was raised and nurtured by the myth of the past humiliation and the CCP-led fight against it.

What is more, growing commercialisation and economic liberalisation should be seen as another important factor shaping the post-Mao historical memory of the Chinese people, especially the youth. Commercial nationalism has become an essential element in the increasingly consumption-oriented Chinese society. In the 1990s, patriotic books and films started to be produced on a large scale, simultaneously fuelling commodification of nationalism and suffering. The so-called “angry youth” (*fenqing*), or hyper-nationalistic Chinese youngsters, became more visible in the public discourse, especially on the internet. Meanwhile, the Party-state propaganda apparatus focused on producing even more historically rooted narratives, based on a selective choice of themes. As French (2017, p. 21) has noted, “to turn on the television in China is to be inundated with war-themed movies, which overwhelmingly focus on Japanese crimes. More than two hundred anti-Japanese films were produced in 2012 alone, with one scholar estimating that 70% of Chinese TV dramas involve Japan-related war plots.” Even in places such as the Nanjing massacre memorial hall, one can find films and merchandise that profit from the commodification of slaughter, torture, and abuse. As Denton (2014, p. 12) has remarked, the market economy turned the memory of past suffering into a product to be consumed in the Nanjing tourist scape.

However, this very nationalism and its commercialised representations could be seen as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, nationalistic sentiments can be used to mobilise and unite the nation against the outside world, thus channelling domestic grievances towards foreign enemies. Moreover, this kind of situation is favourable for the CCP when it comes to easing social anger, which lurks behind the image of social stability and harmony. On the other hand, if out of control, nationalism could easily turn against the CCP itself. That is precisely the scenario that the Chinese leadership is afraid of most. In a globalised environment, where international crises can break out at any moment, a decision deemed by the Chinese nationalists as not assertive enough could make the whole nation “lose its face.”

The context described above leads one to the conclusion that the historical memory of trauma and humiliation has been on the rise in China throughout the last decades. But how is it being externalised under the current Chinese leadership of Xi Jinping? The next part is the author’s take on the implications of China’s historical memory and politics of history on the current foreign policy-making processes in Beijing.

4. Implications for Chinese foreign policy “for a new era”

Together with Xi Jinping’s ongoing consolidation of power and a general course towards strongman politics, Chinese foreign policy has also become much more assertive. As Mitter (2003, p. 120) pointed out, “the idea of China as a victim state, persecuted by the global community, began to emerge at the same time as a rhetoric of China as a great power, ready to take its rightful place on the world stage.” The “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” is one of the leading slogans of Xi Jinping and his “new era” heralded during the 19th Party Congress in October 2017. “Rejuvenation” implies a return to the glorious past that had been lost due to the inability of the previous Chinese elites to maintain stability in the face of foreign influence. In the increasingly multipolar world, characterised by both political and economic uncertainty, “the parallels with the past are very explicit, expressing fears of imperialism and invasion, economic if not territorial, and also reviving the social Darwinist atmosphere of a century ago” (Mitter 2003, p. 118).

In this context, it is important to point out that the biggest ever celebration of the War of Resistance Against Japan (the Second Sino-Japanese War) took place quickly after Xi Jinping took power. As French (2017, p. 20) has noted, “under Xi, a spate of other propaganda initiatives have been regularly orchestrated with the aim of reviving and channelling popular ire toward Japan.” For example, two new national holidays were introduced: the War Against Japanese Aggression Victory Day and the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Day. Although China has theoretically entered a “new era” of prosperity and strength, the old ghosts of humiliation and historical trauma have not left the political and social landscape of the country. As a matter of fact, given China’s growing international influence and interests abroad, historical memory and politics of history might prove to be even more important in shaping the country’s future policy-making processes.

One should also note that the tension created by the difference between the official discourse of the CCP, which portrays itself as the only saviour of the Chinese nation, and the popular nationalist narrative suggesting that this very humiliation is still taking place. Any major international crisis between China and another power could fit into this narrative (e.g. the trade war between China and the US under Donald Trump or alleged mistreatment of Chinese tourists abroad, continued misrepresentation of Chinese history in Japanese textbooks and media, just to name a few

possible examples). As Seo (2008, p. 389) notes, the only solution that seems applicable according to this narrative would be to completely reverse the power relations between China and the West/Japan. This conclusion is quite disturbing, especially given the previously mentioned double-edged nature of nationalism and its potential power to stir social unrest. Another vital factor to bear in mind is the fact that analysts usually assume that policymakers are rational actors who are not influenced by their personal preferences. Although instrumentalist explanations of top-down historical narratives of the CCP are to a large extent useful in explaining the dynamics of contemporary Chinese politics of history and memory, they also neglect one important thing: the fact that the decision-makers might actually believe their own narratives. They might not act as cold-blooded masters of puppets who create emotionally loaded interpretations of history. Instead, they might partially or largely believe in the dominant interpretations of the past. As some scholars have claimed, “a number of the most sober analysts of foreign policy and international affairs in Beijing say they fear the government is steadily becoming a prisoner of its own rhetoric” (French 2017, p. 23). In this way, one should not underestimate the emotional power and unpredictability of politics of memory, which are never purely rational and objective, as any history narratives never are.

Most recently, the issue of the growing Chinese influence and geo-economic interests abroad has been a trending topic among both academics and journalists. The role of the Chinese diaspora in various countries and its relation to the motherland has been another topic of research among many China hands, also in the context of Chinese nationalism and its growing international footprint. One case, which has been largely overlooked, is the example of one of the first large-scale Chinese riots in France that took place in Paris in March 2017. The overseas Chinese community, which historically has been perceived as a relatively peaceful and well-assimilated one, took to the French streets in order to protest what seemed to be an act of police brutality. The story, as reported in the media, concerned a French policeman killing a Chinese man. He was shot at his home. The neighbours who had complained about a family dispute next door called the police. When the officers arrived and knocked on the door, they encountered a man holding a knife. The man’s family claimed that he had been preparing dinner and that the tool had not been used against the officers. What followed after the incident were large-scale riots that turned violent. One can ask what was different in those protests? While analysing the pictures from the demonstrations, one could notice, that

many of the slogans used by the participants referred to their identity as Chinese citizens abroad, not as Chinese-French or French. Many of them were also holding Chinese flags. The author does not attempt at broad generalisations, yet she also thinks that this kind of assertive expression of discontent among Chinese overseas communities is somehow new. Although some claim that the Paris riots were primarily related to racism and domestic relations of power between different ethnic groups living in France, the fact that there was no evidence that the protests had been encouraged by the CCP (like the protests prior to China hosting the 2008 Olympic Games) suggests that Chinese nationalism abroad might develop its own dynamics in the future. These dynamics might pose new challenges for the Chinese leadership. The topic remains largely understudied and offers many opportunities for future research.

5. Conclusions

If “memory is a dynamic entity, crafted and recrafted in dialogue with the political, social, and cultural imperatives of the present” (Maurantonio 2014, p.1), then politics of history are the application of specific versions of memory by those in power in order to fulfil the needs of the present and to shape the future goals of a given state and its elites. In the context of China, politics of history have fuelled nationalism, which in turn started to be seen as one of the engines legitimising Chinese expansionism on the international arena. The narratives surrounding the century of humiliation have been regularly recreated in Chinese political discourse at the time of crisis. It has been used by the CCP as a historical argument for a stable government coupled with an assertive foreign policy. This combination has served the Party-state as one of its sources of legitimacy in the eyes of the Chinese people. However, under unfavourable international conditions, this source of legitimacy might turn against the CCP itself. Building a legitimising discourse on the imperative of wiping out traumatic memories against all odds is indeed risky. If the country wants to achieve the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” new glories might in the future reflect China’s core interests, values, and its own vision of the world order. Nevertheless, before this newfound glory can be achieved, the nation has to deal with its past. Bearing in mind all the details described in this paper, the perspective of China coming to terms with its historical memory and politics of history might be a long process.

Works cited

- Cohen, P.A. 1997, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Confino, A. 1997, "Collective memory and cultural history: problems of method", *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102(5), pp. 1386–1403.
- Denton, K.A. 2014, "Exhibiting the past: China's Nanjing Massacre Memorial Museum", *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 12, Issue 20, No. 2, pp. 1–15.
- French, H.W. 2017, *Everything Under the Heavens. How the Past Helps Shape China's Push for Global Power*, Scribe Publications, London.
- He, Y. 2009, *The Search for Reconciliation. Sino-Japanese and Polish-German Relations since World War II*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Jin, Q. 2006, "The politics of history and historical memory in China-Japan relations", *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 25–48.
- Maurantonio, N. 2014, "The politics of memory" in: Kenski, K. & Hall Jamieson, K. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Mitter, R. 2003, "Old ghosts, new memories: China's changing war history in the era of post-Mao politics", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 117–131.
- Mitter, R. 2013, *Forgotten Ally. China's World War II 1937–1945*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, New York.
- Seo, J. 2008, "Politics of memory in Korea and China: remembering the comfort women and the Nanjing Massacre", *New Political Science*, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp. 369–392.
- Wang, Z. 2012, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Wang, Z. 2012a, "Never forget national humiliation", Newsletter of *The Focus: Postcolonial dialogues*, No. 59, pp. 32–33, viewed 16 January 2018, https://iias.asia/sites/default/files/IIAS_NL59_3233.pdf