

The Memory of an Imperialist War Propaganda

How the Legacy of the Second Sino-Japanese War Affects Current Sino-Japanese Relations

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1 Introduction

The present research suggests that developments related to the Second Sino-Japanese War take place today between Japan and the People's Republic of China, surging current Sino-Japanese relations. The two countries have always had a surging relationship, affected by an ample number of events throughout history. The Second Sino-Japanese War is a turning point in the history of Sino-Japanese relations. The war is a military conflict fought primarily between the Republic of China¹ and the Empire of Japan that took place from July 7, 1937, until September 2, 1945. The imperialist war propaganda of the Empire of Japan during the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45 has left its marks on the later developments of the Sino-Japanese relations, and this paper will analyze how the imperialist war propaganda of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45 is acting as a legacy in the discourse between Japan and the People's Republic of China. In the light of this question, it is plausible to state that the legacy of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45 has left a unique heritage to the relations between the two countries; the Empire of Japan's imperialist war propaganda is still a stumbling block in current Sino-Japanese relations.

1.1 Issues Acting as a War Legacy

The traces of the Second-Sino Japanese War are still evident in current Sino-Japanese relations. Issues regarding the current historical outlook on the war, such as the Rape of Nanking (1937-38), history textbook controversies, and controversies surrounding the Yasukuni Shrine still exist. However, such controversial issues as to the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45 are perceived and therefore expressed according to two different perspectives: the Japanese and Chinese ones. Japan and the People's Republic of China signed the 'Joint Communiqué of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of

¹ Republic of China (1912-1949) was a sovereign state in mainland China between 1912 and 1949, prior to the nationalist government's relocation to the island of Taiwan.

China’ on September 29, 1972, and the ‘Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the People’s Republic of China’ on August 12, 1978. However, it is incontrovertible that the stance of the Japanese and Chinese states in terms of Sino-Japanese relations is disparate and contested owing to conflicting currents of Chinese and Japanese nationalist sentiment and national interest.² In this view, the major historical turning points such as the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45 are still among the factors contributing to the tension in the relations between the two countries, the Rape of Nanking—for instance—still acting as a malleable and contested historical issue in terms of two countries relations. History textbook controversies and controversies surrounding the Yasukuni Shrine, on the other hand, are major educational and political factors that prevent both countries from having purely smooth diplomatic relations; they contribute to the disturbances taking place in current Sino-Japanese relations. In this view, this paper will focus on the historical, educational, and political developments that have impeded overcoming the past in Sino-Japanese relations. The following chapters will include elaborate analyses of the political discourse as to the Rape of Nanking. Furthermore, it will reveal how Japanese and Chinese history textbooks narrate the Rape of Nanking and the visits to the Yasukuni Shrine by Japanese Prime Ministers after the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45. Political contexts and discourses from both Japanese and Chinese perspectives will be thoroughly analyzed to draw an objective conclusion.

1.2 Enmity between Japan and the People’s Republic of China

Since the end of World War II, Sino-Japanese relations have been miring in tension, which inhibits the enhancement of current Sino-Japanese relations and risks the break-out of a conflict in Asia. The history of the imperialism of the Empire of Japan during the Sino-

² Robert Hoppens, *The China Problem in Postwar Japan: Japanese National Identity and Sino-Japanese Relations* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2015), 4.

Japanese War of 1937-45 is one of the factors contributing to the enmity between these two countries. Zachmann elucidates the impacts of imperialism adopted by the Empire of Japan on Sino-Japanese relations as follows

Sino-Japanese relations throughout history, although culturally enriching, have seldom been without their tensions. In modern times, the memory of the second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45) looms large, and the legacy of history still burdens the relations between both countries. However, if the second war was certainly the most painful, more fateful and lasting in its consequences the period that spanned the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) and the Russo Japanese War (1904-05).³

Today, the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45 is a major cause of contention and resentment between Japan and the People's Republic of China, and it prevails as a major roadblock for Sino-Japanese relations. It is plausible to state that the memory of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45 is a dominant argument in rhetorical negotiations and statements from both Japan and the People's Republic of China despite the signing of the 'Joint Communiqué of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China (1972)' and the 'Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the People's Republic of China (1978).' In this view, it is crucial to thoroughly analyze the official statements made by Chinese and Japanese states.

2 The Rape of Nanking (1937-38)

The Second Sino-Japanese War took place from July 7, 1937, to September 9, 1945. Japanese occupation of the city of Nanking—which was the capital of the People's Republic of China—resulted in massacres of more than 300,000 Chinese individuals. As is evident from its name, the Rape of Nanking witnessed the rape, looting of the population, massacre, human experimentation, starvation, and forced labor. Therefore, the Rape of Nanking is still a

³ Urs Matthias Zachmann, *China and Japan in the Late Meiji Period: China Policy and the Japanese Discourse on National Identity, 1895-1904* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 1.

contested issue between Japan and the People's Republic of China; the historical event has been a highly controversial episode in Sino-Japanese relations since the aftermath of World War II. On the one side, the Japanese government has been reminded of this historical turning point, instigating conflict in the relations between Japan and the People's Republic of China; the Chinese state has repeatedly reminded the Japanese government of the violence and unlawful massacres of the Japanese as a negotiation tool since the historical event took place in 1937. On the other side, the Japanese government has attempted to whitewash the historical atrocities that took place during the Rape of Nanking, via the denial of the massacre as well as its revisionist policies including official statements made by Japanese politicians or cabinet members. Japanese history textbooks and Japanese prime ministers' visits to the Yasukuni Shrine further instigated the tension between the neighbors. Therefore, the Rape of Nanking signifies one of the most controversial historical concerns that continue to exacerbate Sino-Japanese relations, remaining a crucial inhibit. The historical event is propaganda that the Chinese state has used as a principal point of criticizing Japan in negotiations today; it has become part of their rhetoric. Moreover, there have also been attempts by the Japanese state to deny—or whitewash—the Rape of Nanking. It is possible to analyze statements by the Japanese government officials denying the Rape of Nanking and refusing the wartime atrocities as well as the resentful statements by the Chinese government officials to propose the Rape of Nanking as an item for the agenda.

2.1 Japan's Stance

2.1.1 The Minister of Justice Nagano Shigeto: the Rape of Nanking as a "Fabrication"

One of the most controversial and relevant developments in terms of the official statements touching the Rape of Nanking was incontrovertibly when, in 1994, The Minister of Justice Nagano Shigeto of the LDP called the 1937 Rape of Nanking a "fabrication" and

denied that Japan was guilty of aggression in World War II.⁴ This statement created turmoil in the relations between the two countries even though Nagano withdrew his statement by saying, “I apologize from the bottom of my heart for the shock and rage my inappropriate remarks gave to our neighboring countries, and the disturbance and anxiety they caused to our people,”⁵ and resigned, which was accepted by the then-Prime Minister Hata Tsutomu. Nagano’s apology to the Chinese people and resignation, nevertheless, did not decrease the political tension but rather made the situation gain more of a political character. Tanaka Masaaki, the author of the famous book entitled *What Really Happened in Nanking: The Refutation of a Common Myth*, addressed LDP Diet Members regarding the forthcoming Diet Resolution. Masaaki—in the same way as Nagano had previously done—claimed that the Rape of Nanking—or Nanjing Massacre in this case—was nothing but “pure fabrication.” An advocator of revisionism, Masaaki also argued strenuously for opposing the forthcoming Diet Resolution.

Yoshida explains Tanaka’s addressing LDP Diet members on Nagano’s resignation

On May 10, 1994, before an audience of LDP Diet members of the Committee to Examine History (*Rekishi Kento Inkai*), the 83-year-old Tanaka Masaaki gave a talk titled “The Fabrication of the Nanjing Massacre.” Tanaka reiterated his long-held view that the massacre, as described by progressive commentators, never occurred. During the question-and-answer session, he expressed his profound regret that Nagano Shigeto had withdrawn his denial of the massacre. In addition, Tanaka urged his audience to oppose the forthcoming Diet Resolution, which would, in his view, permanently damage Imperial Japan in world history.⁶

In the People’s Republic of China, reaction to Nagano’s remarks was swift and virulent. The Foreign Ministry of the People’s Republic of China called in the Japanese envoy in Beijing and “demanded the Japanese government treat this matter seriously and

⁴ Adam Gamble, Takesato Watanabe, *A Public Betrayed: An Inside Look at Japanese Media Atrocities and Their Warnings to the West* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2004), 283.

⁵ Sam Jameson, “Japan Official Retracts War Denials: Asia: Minister apologizes for disavowing Tokyo’s aggression 50 years ago. Critics seek his resignation,” *LA Times*, May 7, 1994. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1994-05-07-mn-54890-story.html>

⁶ Takashi Yoshida, *The Making of the “Rape of Nanking”: History and Memory in Japan, China, and the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 144.

severely.”⁷ Furthermore, in Shanghai, Jiang Zemin—who served as General Secretary of the Communist Party of China from 1989 to 2002—expressed his displeasure to Hara Bunpei, the visiting Speaker of Japan’s upper house of Parliament. Therefore, Nagano’s statements were nothing but a crisis in Sino-Japanese relations.

2.1.2 Azuma Shirō: The Verdict of the Tokyo High Court

In the 2000s, another disputable legal and political development took place. The verdict of the Tokyo High Court in the libel action against Azuma Shirō—one of the few former soldiers of the Empire of Japan to admit to his participation in the 1937 Nanking Massacre—created turmoil and received an ample number of reactions from the Chinese government. When the Japanese Supreme Court denied Azuma’s appeal on January 21, 2000,⁸ Zhu Bangzao, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, made an official statement on January 21 saying, “The court ruling was totally unreasonable, encouraging right-wing activists in Japan to deny the massacre.”⁹ Three days later, on January 26, only five days after the Supreme Court verdict, Foreign Minister of the People’s Republic of China Tang Jiaxuan summoned Tanino Sakutarō—the Japanese Ambassador to the People’s Republic of China—and expressed the People’s Republic of China’s stand on the Azuma verdict,¹⁰ and rally in Osaka

On the eve of Japan’s right-wing forces’ anti-China rally, the Japanese Supreme Court again rejected the case of Azuma Shirō and others, who exposed actual facts of the Nanking Massacre. The Chinese government and all the Chinese people express their strong indignation at Japan’s right-wing forces’ perverse act and at the Japanese Supreme Court for judicially oppressing justice and openly supporting the rights... The intensified efforts of the Japanese rightists to whitewash the history of aggression definitely are not accidental or isolated. On the contrary, their moves have profound social and historical backgrounds... Since the Japanese government repeatedly said the

⁷ Sam Jameson, “Japan Official Retracts War Denials: Asia: Minister apologizes for disavowing Tokyo’s aggression 50 years ago. Critics seek his resignation.”

⁸ Lianhong Zhang, “The Nanjing Massacre and the Traumatic Memory of Nanjing Residents,” *Chinese Studies in History* 50, no. 4 (March 2017): 259.

⁹ Raleigh Morgan, “Chinese, Japanese, and United States Views of the Nanking Massacre: The Supreme Court Trial of Shiro Azuma,” *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 9, no. 2 (October 2020): 243

¹⁰ Marc Gallicchio, *The Unpredictability of the Past: Memories of the Asia-Pacific War in U.S.–East Asian Relations* (London: Duke University Press, 2007), 179.

right-wingers' fallacy is against its stance, why has it remained indifferent and so far, refused to take measures to stop them? If such behavior of the Japanese government remains unchanged, it will adversely affect not only the ties between Japan and its neighboring countries but also the efforts to improve its own international image. Ultimately, it will inflict lasting harm on the Japanese nation... [Japan] has admitted its aggression and expressed its introspection and apology to the Chinese people. We value Japan's statements and commitments, but Japan cannot give only lip services. Promises must be kept, and action must be resolute. Japan should translate its statements and commitments into concrete actions and fulfill its international obligations to the letter.¹¹

Tang's official statement (vide supra) insinuates that the government of the People's Republic of China thinks Japan of remaining impartial towards the right-wingers' endeavors to whitewash the Rape of Nanking. In this view, Tang's statement demonstrates great parallelism with that of the Defense Ministry of the People's Republic of China on Inada Tomomi's declaration (which shall be discussed on page 9).

2.1.3 A Controversial Symposium: The Rape of Nanking as “the Biggest Lie of the 20th Century”

In a related development, soon after Azuma's verdict, Chinese anti-Japanese sentiment was, once again, stoked by incendiary actions by Japanese right-wing groups who organized the controversial symposium entitled “The Verification of the Rape of Nanking: The Biggest Lie of the 20th Century” in 2000.¹² The symposium took place at Osaka International Peace Center and was sponsored by the Osaka-based Society to Correct the Biased Display of War-Related Materials. Before the organization took place, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China urged the Japanese government earlier in the week to prevent the symposium from taking place. The Chinese Foreign Minister spokesperson Zhu Bangzao made an official statement saying, “The massacre is an atrocity

¹¹ Morgan, “Chinese, Japanese, and United States Views of the Nanking Massacre: The Supreme Court Trial of Shiro Azuma,” 243.

¹² Jeremy Luedi, “The Role of Historiography in Sino-Japanese Relations: The Nanjing Massacre.” November 3, 2016, <http://www.jeremyluedi.com/research-papers/2016/11/3/the-role-of-historiography-in-sino-japanese-relations-the-nanjing-massacre>. Luedi 2016, 4

by the Japanese militarists against the Chinese people.”¹³ In the aftermath of the symposium, both governments held press conferences and made official statements regarding the historical memory of the Rape of Nanking, and how the organization harmed Sino-Japanese relations. While the People’s Republic of China condemned Japan, blaming the Japanese state for having attempted to whitewash the Nanjing Massacre, the Japanese state nuncupated that the symposium was in no way related to the Japanese state affairs. Numata Sadaaki—Japanese Foreign Ministry Spokesman and Director-General for Press—explained the distance adopted by the Japanese government by saying, “They certainly do not represent the government of Japan’s view, nor do they represent the view of perhaps the majority of Japanese people.”¹⁴ Zhu Bangzao, nevertheless, reading a statement on national television, also stated the conference in Osaka had “harmed the feelings of the Chinese people and interfered with the normal development of China-Japan relations.”¹⁵

2.1.4 Tomomi Inada: The Denial of the Rape of Nanking

A recent event happened in 2016 when Inada Tomomi, who is currently serving as a member of the Japanese House of Representatives and previously served as the 14th Japanese Minister of Defense from August 2016 to July 2017, made denial statements about the Rape of Nanking. Inada was renowned for being a supporter of the revisionist documentary *The Truth about Nanjing*—which refused that the Nanking Massacre ever occurred—and for being a regular visitor to Tokyo’s Yasukuni Shrine, which is discerned by the People’s Republic of China as a symbol of Japan’s past militarism.¹⁶ Inada was also the leader of the

¹³ “Nanking massacre denied,” *BBC News*, January 23, 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/615457.stm>.

¹⁴ “Nanking massacre denied,” *BBC News*.

¹⁵ Morgan, “Chinese, Japanese, and United States Views of the Nanking Massacre: The Supreme Court Trial of Shiro Azuma,” 243.

¹⁶ Peng Er Lam, *Japan’s Relations with Southeast Asia: The Fukuda Doctrine and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 16.

sixteen attorneys working in the counseling team for the 100-Man Killing Contest Lawsuits (2003-2006), the trial against the false tale of killing 100 people contest, and the fiction of “Nanking Massacre.”¹⁷ On August 4, 2016, Inada declined to say if Japanese troops massacred civilians in Nanjing, saying she “doubted any killing contest had taken place.”¹⁸ Having denied that the 1937 Nanjing Massacre in China occurred, Inada also disavowed Japan’s role in the comfort women issue and even questioned the legitimacy of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. The following day, the Defense Ministry of the People’s Republic of China denounced Japan’s Minister of Defense Inada for refusing to acknowledge the massacre of 300,000 people in Nanjing during World War II and for attempting to deny any “killing contest” in Nanjing during the World War II. Expressing its indignation in an official statement, the Defense Ministry of the People’s Republic of China condemned what Inada had said the day before

Japanese Defense Minister’s public denial of the fact was aimed at whitewashing Japan’s atrocities and disturbing the post-war order. Inada’s remarks are outrageous. Her open denial of the [...] facts is simply an attempt to cover up Japan’s history of aggression and challenge the international order by reviving militarism. We must point out that facing up to history is the basis for resolving historical problems. If history is denied, China-Japan relations have no future.¹⁹

As is evident in the examples above, the denial statements from the Japanese government officials instigated conflict in Sino-Japanese relations in the 1990s and 2000s, worsening current relations between two neighbors. The People’s Republic of China has condemned the statements by Nagano Shigeto and Tanaka Masaaki—although he was a historian but not a government official, the fact that he addressed LDP Diet members makes his statement acquire more of a political character—and Inada Tomomi as well as the verdict

¹⁷ Suping Lu, *The 1937 – 1938 Nanjing Atrocities* (Lincoln: Springer, 2019), 545.

¹⁸ “China slams Japan’s defence minister Tomomi Inada for ducking Nanjing massacre questions.” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 6, 2016. <https://www.smh.com.au/world/china-slams-japans-defence-minister-tomomi-inada-for-ducking-nanjing-massacre-questions-20160806-gqmgj9.html>.

¹⁹ Walter Sim, “Tomomi Inada: A fierce nationalist takes charge of Japan’s defence,” *The Straits Times*, August 8, 2016. <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/a-fierce-nationalist-takes-charge-of-japans-defence>.

of the Tokyo High Court in the libel action against Azuma Shirō. Such developments resulted in tension in terms of Sino-Japanese relations, which reaches the present day, still creating disturbances in the relations between two neighbors.

2.2 China's Stance

2.2.1 Hua Chunying's Press Conference

The People's Republic of China, on the other hand, has consulted the Rape of Nanking as a negotiation tool in Sino-Japanese relations for the massacre has left its manifestations on the two countries' international relations as the main roadblock. On February 24, 2014, Hua Chunying, the Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, held a press conference. The first question posed by one of the members of the press was on the invitations by the Chinese government to foreign journalists to further examine the Nanjing Massacre. The question was, "China has recently extended invitations to foreign journalists for a reporting trip to Nanjing on the history of Japanese militarism's aggression against China. Please give us more details. What is China's purpose in hosting this activity?"²⁰ Hua replied as follows

The International Press Center of the Chinese Foreign Ministry and the Foreign Affairs Office of Jiangsu Province jointly organized foreign journalists in China to visit Nanjing for interviews. They visited the Memorial Hall for Compatriots killed in the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Forces of Aggression, Nanjing Municipal Archives, the John Rabe and International Safety Zone Memorial Hall and the Memorial Hall for Chinese Pilots killed in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. Journalists saw with their own eyes historical materials which record the atrocities and obliteration by Japanese forces of aggression and the original copies of relevant archives. They also interviewed survivors of the Nanjing Massacre. I believe that you have read their reports.

Japanese right-wing forces have been engaged in wild talk on historical issues, with an attempt to negate the history of aggression by Japanese militarism and the Nanjing Massacre. Facts speak louder than words. Japanese right-wing forces' preposterous remarks collapse when confronted with plenty of solid evidence. As many foreign media reports put it, if the Japanese side still attempts to deny and refuses to repent in front of so many convincing historical facts, it will go

²⁰ "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on February 24, 2014," Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, February 24, 2014, <http://bs.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/fyrth/t1131653.htm> <https://www.google.com/policies/privacy/>.

beyond the understanding of the world and incur the international community's concern about where Japan is headed.

History must not be forgotten. Only by facing up to history and taking history as the mirror, can one look forward into the future. The Japanese side should think seriously about what course to follow. Japan's Asian neighbors and the international community are watching closely.²¹

2.2.2 UNESCO's "Memory of the World" Program

Four months after Hua held a press conference, in June 2014, the People's Republic of China applied to the United Nations for the inclusion of the 1937 Nanjing massacre in the "Memory of the World" program of United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO). Beijing's application resulted in a flare-up of tensions in Sino-Japanese relations. The Japanese government protested Beijing and made official statements while the Chinese government began to characterize the relations as 'cold politics, hot economics'²² and alleged Japan for having not properly atoned for wartime aggression. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide told a regular news conference that Beijing was trying to maintain strategically counterproductive attempts by stating, "It is extremely regrettable that China is trying to play up a negative legacy from a certain period in Sino-Japanese history by using UNESCO for a political purpose when effort needs to be made to improve ties between Japan and China. Today, we made a protest, and asked the People's Republic of China for a withdrawal."²³ When UNESCO decided to include documents, including paperwork from the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, relating to the 1937 Nanjing Massacre in the latest listing for its "Memory of the World" program in 2015, the Japanese government held a press conference. Suga informed the press members that "The authenticity of the documents has yet to undergo verification by experts. Our country would like to strongly call for fairness

²¹ "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on February 24, 2014," Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

²² Michael Yahuda, *Sino-Japanese Relations After the Cold War: Two Tigers Sharing a Mountain* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 73.

²³ "Japan blasts Chinese bid for U.N. recognition of Nanjing massacre." *Reuters*, June 11, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-china-idUSKBN0EM0MH20140611>.

and transparency in the [screening] system of this program so that it is not used for political purposes.”²⁴ Suga’s comment reveals that the Rape of Nanking is still a malleable and contested subject in Sino-Japanese relations.

Although both Japan and the People’s Republic of China acknowledged the occurrence of wartime atrocities, it is possible to state that disputes over the historical portrayal of the Rape of Nanking continue to cause tensions between Japan on one side and the People’s Republic of China on the other side. Having two different perspectives from both Japan and the People’s Republic of China, the historical event has been—and still is—a primary obstacle in the enhancement of current Sino-Japanese relations.

3 History Textbook Controversies

Japanese and Chinese history textbooks are another memory of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45. The course materials act as a war legacy concerning current Sino-Japanese relations. For instance, the Japanese history textbooks adopted in the secondary education—junior high schools and high schools—are stated to reveal the Japanese nationalist efforts to whitewash the actions of the Empire of Japan throughout the Sino-Japanese War and World War II. It is plausible to state that the Chinese government has so far accused the Japanese government of historical revisionism by allowing the approval of a few school textbooks omitting or glossing over Japan’s militant past, although the most recent controversial book, the New History Textbook was used by only 0.039% of junior high schools in Japan.²⁵ Moreover, despite the efforts of the Japanese nationalist textbook reformers, by the late 1990s, the most common Japanese schoolbooks contained references to the Nanjing Massacre, which is a historical issue that has faced challenges from ultranationalists in the

²⁴ Julian Ryall, “Japan furious at UNESCO listing Nanjing Massacre documents,” *DW News*, October 10, 2016, <https://www.dw.com/en/japan-furious-at-unesco-listing-nanjing-massacre-documents/a-18790477>.

²⁵ Sven Saaler, *Politics, Memory and Public Opinion: The History Textbook Controversy and Japanese Society*, (Munich: Iudicium Verlag, 2005), 94.

past.²⁶ Being among the countries which were victims of Imperial Japan during the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45, the People's Republic of China has contested Japan since the aftermath of World War II.

3.1 Description of the Nanjing Massacre: Japanese and Chinese History Textbooks

3.1.1 Japan²⁷

Kasahara states that the Japanese government, currently, uses eight history textbooks in junior high schools in Japan, and all the books use the words “Nanjing Incident,” “Nanjing Massacre,” or “Nanjing Massacre Incident”²⁸ to describe the wartime atrocities that took place during the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45. In the Japanese history book entitled *Japan in Modern History: High School, Volume I*, the word occupation (占領) is used to refer to the seizure of Nanjing by the Japanese Imperial Army. Furthermore, a more significant point to note is that when the history book mentions the Rape of Nanking (1937-38), it refers to the historical event as the Nanjing Massacre (南京大虐殺). Therefore, it is essential to note that in Chapter 10 entitled ‘Modern Japan and Asia,’ *Japan in Modern History: High School, Volume I* refers to the Rape of Nanking as a massacre (虐殺)—meaning slaughter, massacre—but not an incident (事件)—meaning event, incident.²⁹ Moreover, analyzing the sub-chapter on the ‘Japan-China War,’ it is possible to see that the history textbook uses words looting (略奪), arson (放火), and rape (暴行). An important point to note is that the

²⁶ “Japan - Unit 731,” *ABC Foreign Correspondent*, April 22, 2003,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20160803172812/http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/stories/s841387.htm>.

²⁷ All the words written in kanji and in-between brackets are the Japanese equivalents of the English words given.

²⁸ Tokushi Kasahara, “Reconciling Narratives of the Nanjing Massacre in Japanese and Chinese Textbooks,” Tsuru City, March 5, 2010, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/kasahara.pdf>.

²⁹ *Japan in Modern History: High School, Volume I*, (Tokyo: International Society for Educational Information, Inc., 1995), 392-393.

textbook prefers the Japanese word 暴行—meaning assault, outrage, an act of violence over 強姦—meaning rape, sexual assault.³⁰ However, analyzing the sub-chapter on the Japan-China War, it is possible to infer that *Japan in Modern History: High School, Volume I* narrates wartime atrocities that took place during the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45 in an objective manner given the words that the textbook includes.

The controversial nature of Japanese history textbooks can also be understood by reading Oi's article on Japanese history textbooks. Oi, in her article entitled What Japanese history lessons leave out, elucidates a comprehensive analysis of the Japanese history textbook of the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform adopted by the International School of the Sacred Heart located in Tokyo, Japan

[...] it turned out only 19 of the book's 357 pages dealt with events between 1931 and 1945. There was one page on what is known as the Mukden incident when Japanese soldiers blew up a railway in Manchuria in China in 1931. There was one page on other events leading up to the Sino-Japanese war in 1937 - including one line, in a footnote, about the massacre that took place when Japanese forces invaded Nanjing - the Nanjing Massacre, or Rape of Nanjing [*emphasis added*]. There was another sentence on the Koreans and the Chinese who were brought to Japan as miners during the war, and one line, again in a footnote, on "comfort women" - a prostitution corps created by the Imperial Army of Japan. There was also just one sentence on the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.³¹

It is apparent from Oi's description of the textbook that the Japanese state implemented a strategy of 'leaving out' particular historical events that took place during World War II, and more specifically Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45. The revisions, in consequence, incited conflict in Sino-Japanese relations since the Chinese government reacted to inclusions, exclusions, or alterations in the Japanese textbooks, regarding them as ways of implementing a 'revisionist' policy.

³⁰ *Japan in Modern History: High School, Volume I*, 392-393.

³¹ Mariko Oi, "What Japanese history lessons leave out," *BBC News*, March 14, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21226068>.

3.1.2 People's Republic of China

Kasahara states that in “In 2001, the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China issued the History Curriculum for Mandatory Education in Full-Time Schools,”³² which brought some standards along with itself for the publishing of the Chinese history textbooks. The mandatory history textbook in China was *New Century: Standard History Textbook in Mandatory Education*.

The history textbook described the Nanjing Massacre as follows

The Nanjing Massacre: In December 1937, the Japanese military captured Nanjing. The Japanese military committed bloody atrocities against the residents of Nanjing and prisoners of war, killing them in extremely cruel methods including mass execution, burning, burying alive, beheading, and biting by dogs. The Nanjing Massacre was the most horrible [event] in the world [history]. [...] the Japanese Army compelled with one another in an abnormal “killing contest.” Two Japanese lieutenants—Mukai Toshiaki and Noda Tsuyoshi—decided to see who could be the first to cut down one hundred Chinese by the time of the fall of Nanjing. By the time that these two murderers conducted an interview [with a Japanese newspaper correspondent] at the foot of Zijin Mountain with their blood-thirsty swords hand, Noda had killed 105 people, while Mukai had killed 106. [No one knew] which one cut down one hundred people first, so the contest continued. They decided to judge the winner by cutting down one hundred and fifty. In December 1937, Japan’s Tokyo Nichi Nichi³³ described the killing contest from the victor’s viewpoint. The Japanese military considered this [killing contest] as something that would “enhance national glory” and called it an “honorable accomplishment.” According to statistics, the estimate of the deaths caused by Japanese atrocities against unarmed Nanjing residents and Chinese soldiers amounted to more than 300,000 just during the six weeks of the occupation by the Japanese military. The Nanjing Massacre is one of the greatest acts of violence perpetrated by the Japanese aggressors on the Chinese people.³⁴³⁵

Kasahara’s translation of the description of the Rape of Nanking in the government-approved standard Chinese history textbook reveals how the Chinese government regard and narrate the wartime atrocities that took place during the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45. The expressions employed in the textbook such as ‘bloody atrocities,’ ‘killing them in extremely cruel methods,’ ‘mass execution,’ ‘burning,’ ‘burying alive,’ ‘beheading,’ and ‘biting by

³² Tokushi Kasahara, “Reconciling Narratives of the Nanjing Massacre in Japanese and Chinese Textbooks,” 2.
³³ *The Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shimbun* (lit. Tokyo Daily News) was a newspaper printed in Tokyo, Japan from 1872 to 1943.

³⁴ Tokushi Kasahara, “Reconciling Narratives of the Nanjing Massacre in Japanese and Chinese Textbooks,” 2-3.

³⁵ The description and narration of the Rape of Nanking in the government-approved Chinese history book entitled *New Century: Standard History Textbook in Mandatory Education* is Kasahara’s own translation from Chinese into English. The narration is also in English in his article.

dogs' are notable examples of the prevailing stance of the Chinese state towards the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45. The Chinese textbook even claims that "The Nanjing Massacre was the most horrible [event] in the world [history]."³⁶ The textbook, furthermore, includes the "killing contest" that took place between two Japanese lieutenants, Mukai Toshiaki, and Noda Tsuyoshi and states that the Japanese media projected the events as they "enhance national glory" and called it an "honorable accomplishment." The 'negative' Chinese stance towards the Japanese war atrocities has been reflected in the history textbooks, allowing the Chinese students to learn their history from the Chinese perspective.

Comparing the two history textbooks—*Japan in Modern History: High School, Volume I* and *New Century: Standard History Textbook in Mandatory Education*—it is inferable that *Japan in Modern History: High School, Volume I* is more objective and can distance itself from the Japanese stance. *New Century: Standard History Textbook in Mandatory Education*, on the other hand, shows more inclination towards the Chinese mindset, enabling it to 'be less-objective.' It is also possible to conclude that the history textbooks have been a source of conflict in current Sino-Japanese relations as well.

3.2 A Recent Controversy

A recent controversy surrounded Sino-Japanese relations in 2015 when the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology approved some textbooks on history, civics and geography to be adopted by high schools next year. The move immediately drew indignation from the People's Republic of China as the Chinese state claimed revisions to contain falsities about the country's wartime atrocities as well as its territorial disputes with its neighbors. *China Daily*³⁷ stated that

³⁶ Tokushi Kasahara, "Reconciling Narratives of the Nanjing Massacre in Japanese and Chinese Textbooks," 2.

³⁷ English-language daily newspaper owned by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China and published in the People's Republic of China.

[...] in the new textbooks, [...] the Nanjing Massacre is ambiguously worded as “captives and civilians were involved” and “casualties were exposed”, compared with the previous wording that the Japanese Imperial Army “killed many captives and civilians”. As to the Nanjing Massacre, there is irrefutable proof that it happened. Only the Japanese have trouble recognizing it. The textbook whitewashing of the past marks another step in Japan’s pathetic retrogression in recent years, and shows the country is determined to try and gloss over its wartime past and brainwash its youths.

One day after the textbook revisions were revealed, Japan issued its annual “blue book” on foreign policies, alleging that it remains committed to its path as a peace-loving nation, as it has been over the past 70 years since the end of World War II based on “deep remorse.”

Considering its deliberate and habitual distortion of historical facts, which has once again been displayed in its textbooks, how can Japan possibly convince others, the countries it victimized during WWII in particular, that it feels deep remorse for its war crimes?³⁸

As is evident from China Daily’s article, it is possible to analyze the stance of the People’s Republic of China towards the revisionist policies that the Japanese government implements on its history textbooks. Moreover, considering that China Daily is a newspaper owned by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China and shares the ideology of the Communist Party of China,³⁹ it is inconvertible that the People’s Republic of China still has an aggressive and unforgiving stance towards Japan and its history textbooks. The more Japan tries to whitewash the atrocities committed during the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45, the more aggravated Sino-Japanese relations get due to the bitter history that two neighbors shared during World War II.

4 Controversies Surrounding the Yasukuni Shrine

Yasukuni Shrine is a Japanese Shinto memorial to war dead who served the Emperor of Japan during wars that took place from 1896 until 1951. The initial purpose behind the construction of the shrine was to worship the souls of those who died for the imperial cause during the Boshin War, sometimes known as the Japanese Revolution, which was a civil war in Japan, fought from 1868 to 1869. According to Jansen, the memorial enshrined those—

³⁸ “Japan’s new textbooks deceitful and harmful,” *China Daily*, April 9, 2015. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-04/09/content_20033880.htm.

³⁹ Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 13.

who gave their lives in the Restoration (Boshin) War. The place soon became the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, where the millions sacrificed in Japan's modern wars joined to their spirits.⁴⁰ Today, Yasukuni enshrines the souls of those who have died fighting for Japan from the Meiji Restoration in the 1860s through World War II. Visiting the shrine, government officials worship and offer prayers to the martyred souls of those who sacrificed themselves during the wars. Therefore, it is possible to observe the right-wing collective memory of the Empire of Japan during the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45 for the shrine serves as one of the most significant memories of the legacy of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45. The shrine also operates a war museum of the history of Japan (the Yūshūkan). Blatt states that some observers have criticized the Yūshūkan as presenting a revisionist interpretation for it houses the private belongings and some of the memory library of those who died during imperial wars.⁴¹

Yasukuni Shrine has always been a thorny issue in terms of current Sino-Japanese relations due to the enshrinement of 1,068 war criminals—14 of whom are A-Class⁴²—which has led to many controversies surrounding the shrine. Kolmas discusses that the People's Republic of China has defined the Yasukuni Shrine as “a microcosm of a revisionist and unapologetic approach to Japanese crimes of World War II.”⁴³ Cheung, on the other hand, elucidates Yasukuni Shrine's impacts on current Sino-Japanese relations as follows, revealing the controversial nature of the shrine

The “history problem” occupies a prominent position in the relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Japan. As one of the crucial issues pertaining to history, Japanese prime minister's visits to the Yasukuni Shrine – a place honoring nearly 2.5 million Japanese war

⁴⁰ Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2000), 329.

⁴¹ Mitchell Blatt, “Yushukan museum whitewashes wartime atrocities,” *Shanghai Daily*, January 16, 2014, <https://archive.shine.cn/Opinion/foreign-perspectives/Yushukan-museum-whitewashes-wartime-atrocities/shdaily.shtml>.

⁴² “Class A” (crimes against peace) war criminals are convicted by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East of having been involved in the planning, preparation, initiation, or waging of the war.

⁴³ Michal Kolmas, *National Identity and Japanese Revisionism: Abe Shinzo's Vision of a Beautiful Japan and Its Limits* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 215.

dead including 14 Class-A war criminals – have been overshadowing relations between the two most important powers in East Asia over the past three decades.⁴⁴

4.1 An Overview

Japanese prime minister's visits to the Yasukuni Shrine have generated intensive protests from the People's Republic of China—which shall be discussed throughout this chapter. This chapter analyzes the chronology of the Japanese prime ministers' visit to the Yasukuni Shrine. However, it is worth taking note of two Japanese prime ministerial friction drifts in the Yasukuni chronology that are of ultimate significance in terms of current Sino-Japanese relations: Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō's 2005 visit and Abe Shinzo's 2013 visit. There are also contested views in terms of prime ministers' visits to the Yasukuni Shrine between 1955 and 1975. Two distinct tables exist on prime ministers' visits to the shrine. While one table also covers visits from 1955 to 1975, the other one does not. This paper includes both tables to present the reader with both perspectives.

Following the first visit by Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida—which took place on October 18, 1951—the Japanese government prohibited prime ministers and other ministers of state from visiting the controversial shrine. Joseph elucidates the first visits and the prohibition by the Japanese government as follows

In the post-World War II era, the first visit by a prime minister took place on October 18, 1951, when Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida, along with his cabinet colleagues, visited the shrine. However, since 1955, when the government prohibited prime ministers and other ministers of state from visiting the shrine in their official capacity, controversy has surrounded such visits [*emphasis added*]. In 1975, Prime Minister Miki Takeo visited the shrine as a private individual on August 15, the day Japan commemorates the end of World War II.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Mong Cheung, "Political Survival and Yasukuni in Japan's Relations with China," *The Pacific Review* 23, no. 4 (September 2010): 527–548.

⁴⁵ T. N. Anantha Krishna, "Yasukuni Shrine," *The SAGE Encyclopedia of War: Social Science Perspectives*, (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2016), 236.

In other words, regarding the period between the years 1955 and 1975, it is clear that the visits to the controversial shrine did not come to a halt even though the Japanese government prohibited prime ministers and other ministers of state from visiting Yasukuni in their official capacity. Therefore, it is of tremendous significance to note that the visits to the shrine did not stop from 1955 until 1975. On the contrary, prime ministers Kishi Nobusuke (1957-60), visiting twice: once in the spring of 1957 and again in the fall of 1958, Ikeda Hayato (1960-64), visiting five times, each time Beijing looking the other way, Satō Eisaku (1964-72), visiting eleven times over eight years, amounting for the most number of visits by any prime minister to Yasukuni to date and Tanaka Kakuei (1972-74), visiting five times during the spring and autumn festivals, did not abstain themselves from paying visits to the Yasukuni Shrine despite the prohibition by the Japanese government.⁴⁶ Table 2 covers these visits between 1955-75 as well (see page 22).

4.1.1 The Chronology of the Japanese Prime Ministers' Visits

There is, nevertheless, a difference in two different tables, one by the Japan Times and the other by Lewentowicz.⁴⁷ There is, nevertheless, a difference in two different tables, one by the Japan Times and the other by Lewentowicz.[1] Regarding the years between 1955 and 1975, it is possible to see a twenty-years gap in some sources due to the prohibition by the Japanese government on the government officials to visit the Yasukuni Shrine. The Japan Times, Japan's largest and oldest English-language daily newspaper, for instance, does not include the visits by the Japanese prime ministers between the years 1955 and 1975, which can be seen in Table 1 (see page 21). In the table, it is possible to see the gap in terms of

⁴⁶ Steven E. Lewentowicz, "In Response to Yasukuni: The Curious Approach the Chinese and South Korean Governments Take Toward an Unresolved Link to the Past," (June 2013), 48-54, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/36727313.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Steven E. Lewentowicz, "In Response to Yasukuni: The Curious Approach the Chinese and South Korean Governments Take Toward an Unresolved Link to the Past," 21.

prime ministers' Yasukuni visits between the years 1955 and 1975. In the Table 1, it is possible to see the gap in terms of prime ministers' Yasukuni visits between the years 1955 and 1975. The table starts with Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru's visit on October 18, 1951, and continues with Miki Takeo's visit on August 15, 1975. In this view, it is inferable that the newspaper the Japan Times did not include the visits by the Japanese prime ministers that took place between 1955 and 1975. It is plausible to define this twenty years-long gap in Joseph's words. As Joseph elucidates, the prohibition by the Japanese government did not allow the newspaper Japan Times to include the visits that took place in their official capacity during that period (1955-75).⁴⁸

⁴⁸ T. N. Anantha Krishna, "Yasukuni Shrine," *The SAGE Encyclopedia of War: Social Science Perspectives*, 236.

October 18, 1951	Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida visits Yasukuni.
August 15, 1975	Takeo Miki becomes the first serving prime minister to visit Yasukuni on the surrender-day anniversary.
August 15, 1978	Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda visits Yasukuni.
October 17, 1978	Yasukuni begins honoring wartime Prime Minister Gen. Hideki Tojo and 13 other Class-A war criminals.
August 15, 1980	Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki visits Yasukuni. He also visits the shrine on the anniversary in 1981 and 1982.
August 15, 1983	Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone visits Yasukuni, signs the guest book as “Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone.” He also visits on the 1984 anniversary.
August 9, 1985	A private advisory panel to Chief Cabinet Secretary Takao Fujinami submits a report saying a prime minister’s visit to Yasukuni is constitutional unless it is made under a religious rite.
August 15, 1985	Nakasone makes an official visit to Yasukuni, becoming the first prime minister to do so in this capacity since the war.
August 14, 1986	Chief Cabinet Secretary Masaharu Gotoda announces Nakasone will not visit Yasukuni the next day.
July 29, 1996	Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto visits Yasukuni, the first prime minister to make the visit in 11 years.
April 18, 2001	Junichiro Koizumi, running for the presidency of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, pledges he will visit Yasukuni on August 15 as prime minister.
August 13, 2001	Prime Minister Koizumi visits Yasukuni, becoming the first to visit in five years.
April 21, 2002	Koizumi pays a second visit to Yasukuni.
December 24, 2002	Private advisory panel to Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda submits a report advocating the need to establish a state-run, secular permanent facility to pray for the war dead and peace.
January 14, 2003	Koizumi pays his third visit to Yasukuni.
January 1, 2004	Koizumi makes his fourth visit to Yasukuni.
October 17, 2005	Koizumi pays his fifth visit to Yasukuni.
April 15, 2006	Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe reportedly visits Yasukuni.
August 15, 2006	Koizumi pays his sixth visit to Yasukuni.

Table 1: Chronology of events related to prime ministers’ visits to Yasukuni Shrine.⁴⁹

The table by the Japan Times, nevertheless, is contested. In his thesis entitled *In Response to Yasukuni, The Curious Approach the Chinese and South Korean Governments Take Toward an Unresolved Link to the Past*, Lewentowicz presents another table which also includes the Japanese prime ministers' visits between 1955 and 1975.⁵⁰ Although Hatoyama Ichirō and Ishibashi Tanzan did not pay any visits to Yasukuni, other visits by the Japanese prime ministers to the Shrine between 1955 and 1975 are listed as can be seen below.

Prime Minister	Term	Visits	Dates	Prime Minister	Term	Visits	Dates			
Yoshida Shigeru	1948-1954	5	18 Oct 1951	Suzuki Zenko	1980-1982	9	15-Aug-1980			
			17 Oct 1952				18-Oct-1980			
			23-Apr-1953				21-Nov-1980			
			24-Oct-1953				21-Apr-1981			
			24-Apr-1954				15-Aug-1981			
Hatoyama Ichiro	1954-1956	0							17-Oct-1981	
Ishibashi Tanzan	1956-1957	0							21-Apr-1982	
Kishi Nobusuke	1957-1960	2	24-Apr-1957							15-Aug-1982
			21-Oct-1958							18-Oct-1982
Ikeda Hayato	1960-1964	5	10-Oct-1960	Nakasone Yasuhiro	1982-1987	10	21-Apr-1983			
			18-Jun-1961				15-Aug-1983			
			15-Nov-1961				18-Oct-1983			
			4-Nov-1962				5-Jan-1984			
			22-Sep-1963				21-Apr-1984			
Sato Eisaku	1964-1972	11	21-Apr-1965							15-Aug-1984
			21-Apr-1966							18-Oct-1984
			22-Apr-1967							21-Jan-1985
			23-Apr-1968							22-Apr-1985
			22-Apr-1969							15-Aug-1985
			18-Oct-1969							
			22-Apr-1970							
			17-Oct-1970							
			22-Apr-1971							
			19-Oct-1971							
			22-Apr-1972							
Tanaka Kakuei	1972-1974	5	8-Jul-1972	Takeshita Noboru	1987-1989	0				
			23-Apr-1973	Uno Sosuke	1989-1989	0				
			18-Oct-1973	Kaifu Toshiki	1989-1991	0				
			23-Apr-1974	Miyazawa Kiichi	1991-1993	0				
			19-Oct-1974	Hosokawa Morihiro	1993-1994	0				
Miki Takeo	1974-1976	3	22-Apr-1975	Hata Tsutomu	1994-1994	0				
			15-Aug-1975	Murayama Tomiichi	1994-1996	0				
			18-Oct-1976	Hashimoto Ryutaro	1996-1998	1	29-Jul-1996			
Fukuda Takeo	1976-1978	4	21-Apr-1977	Obuchi Keizo	1998-2000	0				
			21-Apr-1978	Mori Yoshiro	2000-2001	0				
			15-Aug-1978	Koizumi Junichiro	2001-2006	6	13-Aug-2001			
			18-Oct-1978				21-Apr-2002			
Ohira Masayoshi	1978-1980	3	21-Apr-1979				14-Jan-2003			
			18-Oct-1979				1-Jan-2004			
			21-Apr-1980				17-Oct-2005			
							15-Aug-2006			
				Abe Shinzo	2006-2007	0				
				Fukuda Yasuo	2007-2008	0				
				Aso Taro	2008-2009	0				
				Hatoyama Yukio	2009-2010	0				
				Kan Naoto	2010-2011	0				
				Noda Yoshihiko	2011-2012	0				
				Abe Shinzo	2012					

Table 2: Japanese Prime Minister Visits to Yasukuni (1951-2013).⁵¹

⁴⁹ "Prime ministers' Yasukuni visits," *The Japan Times*, August 16, 2006, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2006/08/16/national/politics-diplomacy/prime-ministers-yasukuni-visits/#.Xg_AES2B10s.

⁵⁰ Steven E. Lewentowicz, "In Response to Yasukuni: The Curious Approach the Chinese and South Korean Governments Take Toward an Unresolved Link to the Past," 21.

In this view, there are two sources in terms of the chronology of the Japanese prime ministers' visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. However, for this paper, the visits between 1955-75 will not be thoroughly discussed, but rather the focus will be on Prime Minister Koizumi and Prime Minister Abe. After the prohibition during the years 1955 and 1975, the controversial visits began with the Japanese Prime Minister Miki on August 15, 1975, reigniting the controversy nearly every year since 1975. Prime Minister Miki's visit to the shrine as a private individual on August 15 was also the day that Japan commemorates the end of World War II. The next year, Joseph states, his successor Fukuda visited as a private individual yet signed the guest book as prime minister. Several other Japanese prime ministers have visited the shrine since 1979: Ōhira Masayoshi in 1979; Suzuki Zenkō in 1980, 1981 and 1982; Nakasone Yasuhiro in 1983 and 1985; Miyazawa Kiichi in 1992; Hashimoto Ryūtarō in 1996; and Koizumi Jun'ichirō, who visited six times (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006). Visits by Japanese prime ministers to the shrine have resulted in official condemnation by neighboring countries since 1985, as they see it as an attempt to legitimize Japan's past militarism.⁵² Nakasone Yasuhiro—who was in office from 27 November 1982 until 6 November 1987. In other words, the Japanese Prime Ministers—except for Hatoyama Yukio—have visited the controversial religious site since 1955.

4.1.2 The Most Controversial Visits: Koizumi and Abe

Among all the visits to the shrine, Koizumi's and Abe's visits affect the current Sino-Japanese relations the most. The most recent political leaders of Japan, Prime Minister Koizumi and his successor Abe were two of the most outspoken and controversial visitors. Wu Dawei, the People's Republic of China's new ambassador to Japan, told Koizumi about

⁵² Thomas In Sing Leung, "Bleeding Wounds: Japanese Denial of War Crimes and Effects on Human Rights," *China Human Rights* (May 2016), 7.

the visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, “The interest of the Chinese government and the people is focused on the Yasukuni issue... A proper understanding of history is vital for Japan-China relations.”⁵³ To begin with, the controversies surrounding Koizumi’s visits incited conflict in Sino-Japanese relations. The Prime Minister visited the shrine for the fifth time since taking office on October 17, 2005. Although Koizumi claimed that his visit was a private affair and explained that he signed the guest book not as a prime minister but rather as an unofficial visitor, it came only days before the Japanese government scheduled Japanese Foreign Minister Machimura Nobutaka to visit Chinese officials in Beijing to strengthen Sino-Japanese relations. The People’s Republic of China responded to Koizumi’s fifth visit by canceling the scheduled visit as they considered the shrine a glorification of Japan’s past military aggression.⁵⁴ Signing the Yasukuni guest book as “Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichirō” and paying 30,000 yen of his own money for flowers, Koizumi explained his usual defense of the visits by stating, “As I’ve said many times, I did not pray for specific people. I prayed for the war dead as a whole to express grief. They (the war criminals) were punished because of the responsibility of the war, and they admitted it. But this (praying for the dead) is a different matter.”⁵⁵ On a question—if he intended on an official visit or a private one—the prime minister answered: “I did not pray as part of my duty.”⁵⁶ The People’s Republic of China, on the other hand, was not assured by Koizumi’s statements and condemned Koizumi for paying regular visits to the shrine. Furthermore, on Koizumi’s sixth to the Yasukuni Shrine, the Foreign Ministry of the People’s Republic of China stated in Beijing on August 15, strongly protesting Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi’s visit, again, to

⁵³ Arpita Mathur, “Koizumi’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine,” *Strategic Analysis*, (2001), 825-830.

⁵⁴ Jonathan Watts, “China refuses apology to ‘hurtful’ Japan,” *The Guardian*, April 18, 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/guardianweekly/story/0,,1464954,00.html>.

⁵⁵ Hiroko Nakata, Masami Ito, “Defiant Koizumi visits Yasukuni,” *The Japan Times*, August 16, 2016. https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2006/08/16/national/politics-diplomacy/defiant-koizumi-visits-yasukuni/#.Xg9_sS2B3s0.

⁵⁶ Hiroko Nakata, Masami Ito, “Defiant Koizumi visits Yasukuni.”

the war criminals-honoring Yasukuni Shrine. Beginning with the words “China is the biggest victim of Japanese militarists’ aggression and the Chinese people experienced severe sufferings during the Second Sino-Japanese War,”⁵⁷ the official announcement by the Foreign Ministry created disturbances in terms of the Sino-Japanese relations at the beginning of the 21st century. In the following statement by the Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and Japanese Ambassador to China Miyamoto Yuji in Beijing, China lodged serious and solemn representations and strong protests against the Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi’s sixth visit to the war criminals-honoring Yasukuni.

Koizumi repeatedly hurt the feelings of the Chinese people and his acts have made him lose credit to the international community and the Japanese people alike and undermined Japan’s state image and interests. The Chinese government expresses “strong protests” against such a move that severely harms the sentiment of the peoples victimized by Japanese militarists’ aggression and damages the political basis of the Sino-Japanese relations.⁵⁸

4.2 Abe’s Visit and Regret

A more recent controversy that created turmoil in Sino-Japanese relations signifies Abe’s visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. When Koizumi’s expected successor, Abe, visited the shrine in April 2006 before he took office. Although his visit concerned the Chinese government, Abe remained dubious as to whether he had visited—or would visit—the shrine in the future. Qin Gang—the current Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China and the former Foreign Ministry spokesperson—stated this conflictual situation emerged due to Abe’s visit as follows

We hope that the Japanese side will make similar efforts along with the Chinese side to push Sino-Japanese ties back to the track of normal development at an early date. It is a common aspiration of the two peoples and conforms with the fundamental interest of the two countries for Japanese leaders to stop visiting Yasukuni Shrine, where World War II crimes were worshiped, and take

⁵⁷ “China strongly protests against Koizumi’s visit to Yasukuni Shrine,” Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America, August 15, 2006, <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/gyzg/t267720.htm>.

⁵⁸ “China strongly protests against Koizumi’s visit to Yasukuni Shrine,” Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America.

tangible action to eliminate political obstacles hindering the normal development of Sino-Japanese relations.⁵⁹

In an interview conducted by CNN International, Abe expressed the following statement as to Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni which created disturbances in Sino-Japanese relations

The visits Prime Minister Koizumi made to the Yasukuni Shrine, I believe, had nothing to do with approval ratings. He paid respects at the Yasukuni Shrine to pay respects to the people of Japan who fought and lost their lives for the country and to pray for the peace of their souls. In fact, I believe, to visit the Yasukuni Shrine for the purpose of having your approval rating up will be an affront to the people who lost their lives for the country.⁶⁰

Abe's visits to Yasukuni, similar to those of Koizumi, had their repercussions when the Prime Minister visited the shrine several times before elected as Prime Minister. After taking office in 2006, Abe did not pay any visit to the Yasukuni Shrine during his first term as prime minister from September 2006 to September 2007, however, made a ceremonial offering to the shrine in April 2007. A striking aspect of Abe's stance towards the shrine is incontrovertibly his statement while campaigning for the presidency of the LDP in 2012. The August 15 commemoration of the end of the war passed without a visit, but on October 19, Abe noted in the Diet that he "regretted" not visiting the shrine during his first term in office.⁶¹ Abe's open declaration that he regretted not visiting the shrine while serving as Prime Minister and his official visit in October resulted in further controversy and disturbed the relations between the two neighbors.

⁵⁹ "China expresses concern over reported Abe visit to Yasukuni," *Kyodo News*, July 23, 2008, <https://web.archive.org/web/20080622132708/http://asia.news.yahoo.com/060804/kyodo/d8j9m1ko0.html>.

⁶⁰ "Shinzo Abe Talk Asia Interview," *CNN International*, April 30, 2007, <http://edition.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/asiapcf/04/30/talkasia.abe/index.html>.

⁶¹ Sheila Smith, "The Abe Factor," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 16, no. 1 (2015): 63.

4.3 Abe's Official Visit in 2013 and China's Reaction

Abe's official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine on December 26, 2013, however, exacerbated the already tense Sino-Japanese relations. The visit evoked feelings of tension and suspense, and the government officials of the People's Republic of China condemned the visit. While Abe stated, "It is not my intention at all to hurt the feelings of the Chinese and Korean people," claiming his visit was an anti-war gesture, the People's Republic of China called the visit "absolutely unacceptable to the Chinese people" and summoned Japan's Beijing envoy to lodge a "strong protest."⁶² Moreover, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Qin Gang said Beijing seriously condemned the visit, stating that "This poses a major political obstacle in the improvement of bilateral relations. Japan must take responsibility for all the consequences that this creates."⁶³

On the reactions from the People's Republic of China, Prime Minister Abe also stated

Regrettably, it is a reality that the visit to Yasukuni Shrine has become a political and diplomatic issue. Some people criticize the visit to Yasukuni as paying homage to war criminals, but the purpose of my visit today, on the anniversary of my administration's taking office, is to report before the souls of the war dead how my administration has worked for one year and to renew the pledge that Japan must never wage a war again. It is not my intention at all to hurt the feelings of the Chinese and Korean people. It is my wish to respect each other's character, protect freedom and democracy, and build a friendship with China and Korea with respect, as did all the previous Prime Ministers who visited Yasukuni Shrine.⁶⁴

In spite of Abe's argument as to the anti-political nature of the Yasukuni Shrine, the visit by Abe was regarded as nothing but a substantial impediment in the enhancement of the two countries' relations by the Chinese state—as is evident in the statements of government officials of the People's Republic of China. The People's Liberation Army Daily of the Chinese military published an editorial headlined 'Abe's paying homage to the devils

⁶² Rupert Wingfield-Hayes, "China condemns Japan PM Shinzo Abe's Yasukuni shrine visit," December 26, December 26, 2013. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-25518166>.

⁶³ Rupert Wingfield-Hayes, "China condemns Japan PM Shinzo Abe's Yasukuni shrine visit."

⁶⁴ *Statement by Prime Minister Abe -Pledge for everlasting peace-*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, December 26, 2013, https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page24e_000021.html.

[emphasis added] makes people outraged,’ and stated Abe’s action had “seriously undermined the stability of the region.”⁶⁵ This headline, as well as the statement it covers, reveals the controversial nature of the prime ministers’ visit to the Yasukuni Shrine and how it has created conflictual periods in the history of current Sino-Japanese relations.

4.4 Recent Developments

In 2018, Abe skipped a visit to Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo on the 73rd anniversary of Japan’s surrender in World War II. Furthermore, in August 2019, he sent a ritual offering to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine for war dead on the 74th anniversary of Japan’s World War II surrender but refrained from visiting in person amid tense ties with the People’s Republic of China. Ruling Liberal Democratic Party lawmaker Inada Tomomi—whose statements Chapter 2 covers (see page 9)—made the monetary offering, a *tamagushi*⁶⁶, on the premier’s behalf. Inada also quoted Abe as saying, “The peace and prosperity of our country are due to those heroes who gave their lives for their homeland, and I express my gratitude and respect.”⁶⁷ Therefore, while Abe skipped visits to the shrine due to already tense Sino-Japanese relations, Inada’s referral to the Japanese soldiers who lost their lives during World War II as “heroes” also thwarted the connections between the two countries in 2019.

5 Conclusion

In sum, the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45 still has its negative manifestations on Sino-Japanese relations, further aggravating the partnership between the two countries: Japan and the People’s Republic of China. Among the factors that contribute to instigation of

⁶⁵ “China media condemns Japan PM for paying homage to ‘devils,’” *Reuters*, December 27, 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-shrine/china-media-condemns-japan-pm-for-paying-homage-to-devils-idUSBRE9BQ01420131227>.

⁶⁶ *Tamagushi* (玉串, literally “jewel skewer”) is a form of Shinto offering made from a sakaki-tree branch decorated with shide strips of washi paper, silk, or cotton.

⁶⁷ Elaine Lies, Tim Kelly, “Japan PM Abe sends offering to Yasukuni shrine for war dead: Kyodo,” August 15, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ww2-anniversary-japan/japan-pm-abe-sends-offering-to-yasukuni-shrine-for-war-dead-kyodo-idUSKCN1V500Q>.

conflicts between two countries today are the malleable and contested historical event, the Rape of Nanking (1937-38), the narration of the Rape of Nanking and the choice of words to describe it in the Japanese and Chinese history textbooks and Japanese prime ministers' visits to the controversial religious site—the Yasukuni Shrine. It is possible to see that Japan, throughout the period after World War II, has attempted to whitewash—or even deny—the Rape of Nanking. As can be seen in Chapter 2 (see page 3), former Japanese Minister of Justice Nagano, former Japanese Minister of Defense Inada and Tanaka Masaaki have attempted to deny the Rape of Nanking, either calling it “fabrication” and “lie” or denying the wartime atrocities that the Armed Forces of the Empire of Japan committed during the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45. Furthermore, the Verdict of the Tokyo High Court on Azuma Shirō and the controversial symposium held to refute the existence of the Nanjing Massacre further instigated the tensions between Japan and the People's Republic of China. The People's Republic of China, on the other side, has kept reviving the issue of the Rape of Nanking by certain attempts such as Hua Chunying's Press Conference and Beijing's application for the inclusion of the 1937 Nanjing massacre in UNESCO's “Memory of the World” program. The Rape of Nanking, ergo, still acts as a major roadblock in Sino-Japanese relations, which also shows that the historical legacy of the Second-Sino Japanese War impedes the enhancement of Sino-Japanese relations. As a second point, the revisions the Japanese and Chinese history textbooks have underwent since the end of World War II have created differences in the narration of the Rape of Nanking and the Second Sino-Japanese War in general. Henceforth, the difference between the two countries' textbooks has been a principal source of conflict in Sino-Japanese relations. As a third—and final point—Japanese prime ministers' visits to the Yasukuni Shrine have impeded the improvement of Sino-Japanese relations, given that the religious site enshrines war criminals of the Second Sino-Japanese War, 14 of whom are A-Class, leading to many controversies surrounding the

shrine. In conclusion, the legacy of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45 has been—and probably will remain—a hindrance, a bitter memory of the past. The legacy of the war has worsened current Sino-Japanese relations, and the history of Sino-Japanese relations shows that it will remain do act so.

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