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Contents

Introduction 4

1. Making Memories, Creating Communities 6
   1.1 Collective Memory 6
   1.2 Mickey Mouse Memories 10
   1.3 Memory Meets Nation 15

2. China, Japan and 1937 19
   2.1 The Giant and the Dragon 19
   2.2 The Nanjing Atrocities 21
   2.3 The Aftermath of War 27

3. The Art of Remembering 36
   3.1 Sites of Remembrance 36
   3.2 Do You Remember? – China 40
   3.3 Let’s Meet at Yasukuni - Japan 49

4. The ‘Magic’ of Memory 58
   4.1 Changing Narratives 58
   4.2 ‘Advertising’ War 65
   4.3 War of the Ghosts 79

Conclusion 87

References 90
The past is never dead.

It’s not even past.

William Faulkner
Requiem for a Nun, 1951
Introduction

In the summer of 2011, the celebration of the 90th anniversary of China’s Communist Party is in full swing. People carrying Chinese flags wander around the huge party emblem at Tiananmen Square, where the dates ‘1921-2011’ are displayed in gold numbers. All over the nation festivals and concerts are organized to commemorate the Party’s founding. Joining the festivities, some kindergartens perform musicals about the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). One teacher, playing a Japanese soldier, violently ‘kills’ a Chinese farmer girl with his sword as the schoolchildren commence their singing (Wong, 2011).

Presently, the past is actively commemorated in China. Within this commemoration, the Second Sino-Japanese War1 plays an important role. The war, which started on July 7th 19372, merged into World War II after Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and ended on August 15th 1945 when the Japanese troops surrendered. Its history is very much alive, not only in China, but also in Japan and especially within Sino-Japanese relations. In the last ten to fifteen years there has been an overall surge of interest in this war. Countless new books have appeared about the subject and memorial sites in China and Japan keep its memory alive by organizing special exhibitions and frequent renovations. As historian Rana Mitter points out, a “new remembering of World War II” is currently taking place (2000, 279). Within this ‘re-remembrance’ of war the ‘Nanjing Atrocities’ of 1937 stand out. This violent episode has become the major theme dominating studies, novels and movies on the Second Sino-Japanese War.

In the world of marketing, psychologists have since long discovered that consumer’s memory can be influenced through advertising exposure. Not only can old memories be revived, new ones can also be created (Braun et al 2002; Fennis & Stroebe 2010). If our memories can be affected by advertising, they must also, to some extent, be affected by the way in which histories of war are nationally remembered. In this thesis, I will explore how the collective memory of war is constructed in both China and Japan. What message on the Sino-Japanese War, if any, are these nations ‘selling’ their citizens?

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1 In China this war is commonly referred to as the Chinese War of Resistance Against Japan (中国抗日战争).
2 Some historians regard September 18th 1931 (the ‘Manchurian Incident’) as the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War.
What are the shared frameworks in which war is remembered? How, if at all, does the Chinese ‘new’ remembrance of war differ from that of Japan?

If we would, hypothetically, take the governments of China and Japan as advertising agencies ‘selling’ or ‘advertising’ their history of the Second Sino-Japanese War to citizens, their means of promotion would consist of official textbooks, commemorative events, museums and memorial sites. This thesis explores the difference in the re-remembrance of war between China and Japan by specifically focusing on their main memorial sites since these are government’s signposts of how the people should nationally imagine their war.

This thesis describes the journey of the memory of war from 1937 to present- a route where narratives of war are reformed, reconstructed, glorified, downplayed or restrained, both in China and in Japan.

In order to take on the journey of the remembrance of war, I will set out the theoretical framework of memory in the first chapter. What is memory? What is collective memory? And if we take ‘nation’ as the ‘collective’, then what is it- and what are issues of ‘nationalism’? In the second and third chapter, I will focus on the Second Sino-Japanese War and how China and Japan commemorate it in their main war memorials. The last chapter will bring their memories together- how and why did their narratives on war change? How are they different and how, if at all, are they similar? Finally, the essence of this thesis is the exposure of the processes that underlie how memories are made and why they change through time.
1. Making Memories, Creating Communities

1.1 Collective Memory

*What is memory?* For thousands of years, scholars have been trying to answer this question. In classical times Plato understood memory as a clay tablet in our heads, where impressions would be registered and saved in order for us to retrieve them at a later point. For a long time, traditional thinkers in the field of memory adhered to this kind of thinking, assuming that the main goal of remembering is to bring items back to mind as soon and as accurately as possible. Two researchers that have greatly contributed to the study of memory are Hermann Ebbinghaus, who wrote *On Memory* (1885), and Frederick Bartlett, author of *Remembering* (1932) (Foster 2009, 6-12).

The core of any memory system, including human memory, is the process of encoding, storing and retrieving. Plato already understood this from personal experience, and Ebbinghaus later proved it through systemic research on remembering and forgetting. He conducted this research by testing his own memory with 169 lists of 13 meaningless syllables, studying them with intervals between 21 minutes to 31 days (Foster 2009, 8-9). Ebbinghaus discovered that the process of forgetting is exponential; initially, information is forgotten rapidly, but the rate of forgetting slows down after time. This implies that, over time, we retain more information than we might think (ibid., 9). Ebbinghaus proved that when current events, feelings or ideas become the past, they are actually not removed from our memory. Instead, they are stored up. These records of the past emerge again once one retrieves them at a future time (ibid.; Wagner&Davachi 2001). During the time of Ebbinghaus and his contemporaries, the study of memory belonged to the field of psychology. Memory was mainly perceived as a “tool of retrieval” (Zelizer 1995, 215).

Frederick Bartlett had a different method of studying memory. Instead of approaching processes of remembering in a mathematical way and perceiving them as being intrinsically individual, he was looking for the *meaning* behind memory. He therefore studied memory in a social context. One part of his research concerned the exposure of participants to stories they were required to recall at later times. A famous example is the ‘War of the Ghosts’, a North American folktale that involved two young
men from a place called 'Egulac' who, on their way to hunt seals, encounter five men in a canoe inviting them up the river to make war on the people (Foster 2009, 15). This story did not relate to the cultural environment of the English participants, which is exactly why it was used for the experiment. Bartlett discovered that all individuals reproduced the story in comparable ways. Not only did they make it shorter, they also made it more coherent by linking the storyline to their own pre-existing ideas or cultural assumptions. Furthermore, the reproduction of the story was influenced by the reactions or emotions experienced by the individuals upon first hearing it (ibid., 11-16). The point of Bartlett’s experiment was to show that people impose meaning on what they observe or hear, and that this influences the way they remember. Bartlett’s findings caused a shift in the analysis of memory. Memory was now perceived as constructive process that needed some sort of social framework in order to function. This made the concept of memory essentially different from Plato’s clay tablet, since remembering now appeared to be entangled with cultural norms and social interaction (Zelizer 1995, 214-15).

Bartlett’s findings were the starting point to the branch within memory studies that is now irregularly referred to as “collective memory”, “social memory”, “popular memory”, “public memory” or “cultural memory” (ibid., 214). What is exactly meant by these terms? What in remembering is ‘social’ or ‘collective’? Is it the frameworks in which we remember? Or is it the act of remembering itself? Actually, it is both.

The ‘father’ of contemporary research on collective memory is French scholar Maurice Halbwachs, author of On Collective Memory (1951). According to Halbwachs, all of our memories require feeding from collective sources, and it is these collective sources that sustain our memories. It is a perpetuum mobile that leaves out any type of memory that is not collective. Halbwachs states that “no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections” (Halbwachs 1951, 43). In other words: all memories are collective memories.

Halbwachs points out that we always remember past events in the present. This ‘present’ in which we reproduce memories is not a neutral place; it is influenced by the current social milieu. Society pressures the mind to reconstruct its memories. Memories become colored through this process. Individual memories dissolve in the constant stream of shared remembrance. They only hang together because they are part of a totality of thoughts common to a group (ibid., 52). This ‘group’ can be any collective of
people the individual is connected to. This relates to Bartlett, who established that the individual imposes meaning on what is observed and remembered - when thinking about the past one always discourses upon it, and when something is put into a framework (or 'discourse') it automatically connects to a single system of ideas that belongs to a collective (ibid., 53).

Where does this leave the individual? According to Halbwachs, every person does have a unique capability for memory that depends on his individual nature and background:

But individual memory is nevertheless a part or an aspect of group memory, since each impression and each fact, even if it apparently concerns a particular person exclusively, leaves a lasting memory only to the extent that one has thought it over- to the extent that it is connected with the thoughts that come to us from the social milieu (Halbwachs 1951, 53).

The moment an individual encounters an object, it is perceived through an alignment with what we know through others. There is thus a “collective perception”, consisting of remembered words and notions, that makes understanding possible. According to Halbwachs, without these recollections, there can be no perception (ibid., 168). If an individual would remember things of the past without any social framework, without any collective notions on remembering, then, as Halbwachs says: “(...) he would become fused with this past; that is, he would have the illusion of reliving it” (ibid., 168-169). In other words: our memories always need a frame of reference. This frame of reference is determined by the social milieu that structure them. Without ‘framing’ memories, the past would constantly be relived- cutting the individual off from society.

Since renewed recognition for Halbwachs after the 1992 translation of his work, scholars from all kinds of disciplines have come to appreciate memory as a social activity (Zelizer 1995, 215). There are, however, also academics that criticize Halbwachs’ work. In the article “Collective Memory- What Is It?”, Gedi and Elam express their discontentment with the popularity of the term ‘collective memory’, that has “infiltrated” into every corner of social sciences (Gedi&Elam 1996, 30). The authors argue that although Halbwachs is supposed to be the “theoretical anchor” of ‘collective memory’, his work lacks theoretical foundation; it does not provide a clear definition on what collective memory actually is, nor does it give a solid theory that would explain how it is formed (ibid., 35-37).
Gedi and Elam also query what presumably is so ‘innovative’ about the term ‘collective memory’. After all, historians have since long employed this as the general idea to explain the “spirit” of a society or nation that is assumed to live at the root of shared myths, traditions or customs (ibid., 35). The only thing that would be novel within the work of Halbwachs is the idea that perception or conceptualization essentially is a social function. Since this “tool” of the human mind is basically social, society has the power to influence it and manipulate the thoughts or memories of individuals (ibid., 35-38).

This evokes the question what or who the ‘society’ is that determines collective conceptualizations of ideas or memories. According to Gedi and Elam, there are two possible interpretations. First, individuals all have personal processes of perception. By sharing individual ideas and views, they join a common ‘pool’ of notions that is called ‘society’. In this view, society is a contested field where different viewpoints struggle over what the ‘better notion’ is. Gedi and Elam state that in an ideal society, the best notions would prevail and “lead the field” (ibid., 39). In reality, there are generally just a handful of individuals that take over the field and appoint themselves as the representatives of this “so-called society” (ibid., 39). According to the second interpretation, ‘society’ is not just a framework or a totality made up of individuals; it actually is a reality that presents itself through all kinds of social products, such as norms and laws, but also institutions or ceremonies (ibid.). The authors perceive ‘society’ according to Halbwachs through these two possible interpretations.

Gedi and Elam have indeed elucidated the weaknesses in Halbwachs’ work, that lacks clear descriptions on what ‘collective memory’ and ‘society’ actually mean. Their own interpretations of ‘society’ are viable. They do not need to be mutually exclusive, since the first view, where certain individuals (or groups of individuals) take over the field, ultimately merges with the second, where society is a real entity that is manifested through its traditions, practices and institutions.

Although the authors cannot appreciate the hype that has surrounded the term ‘collective memory’ since the early 1990s, they essentially do accept the common idea behind it. Most importantly, they recognize the changeability of the past, which is one of Halbwachs’ main points: “Society is (...) capable of reconstructing its past at any given moment. The past becomes, through this process, a reflection of society’s needs rather than a reflection of the real events which once took place” (Gedi&Elam 1996, 39-40).

Gedi and Elam take on another interesting point. According to them, one problem
with Halbwachs’ work is that it remains unclear which processes of collective memory are conscious and which are subconscious. There have been scholars before who made a distinction between “collective subconscious” when talking about legends or national myths, and “collective conscious” when referring to the import of new national images or ideologies (ibid., 32). I believe that the collective memory of every society is an accumulation of memory-forming processes that take place on both conscious and non-conscious levels. I will come back to this issue later when talking about Chinese and Japanese collective memories. For now it is important to stress that collective memory indeed (also) operates on a non-conscious level. The next paragraph exemplifies that people have subconsciously attained (false) memories through society. For Halbwachs, however, these issues of (non-)consciousness are irrelevant. The core of his work expresses just one thing: that ‘collective memory’ is inescapable.

1.2 Mickey Mouse Memories

People face advertising everyday in newspapers, on television or at bus stops. Advertising has become so commonplace that one hardly seems to notice it anymore. Even so, it influences consumers more than one might expect. In 2002, Psychology and Marketing featured an article called “Make My Memory: How Advertising Can Change Our Memories of the Past” by Braun, Ellis and Loftus. In this article, the authors demonstrate how individual memories can be influenced by autobiographical advertising that creates nostalgia for products. Central to this research is an 1998 ad campaign by Disney, named “Remember the Magic”, that was used to promote the celebration of Disney World’s 25th anniversary. “Autobiographical memory” is defined as “memory of past personal experiences” (ibid. 2002, 3). “Autobiographical advertising” is the kind of advertising that captures the memories and emotions of consumers by referencing to personal events (ibid., 2).

The particular ad by Disney depicts an image of Mickey Mouse, saying: "Mickey asks you to ‘Remember the Magic’" (ibid., figure I, 6). The advertisement text is as follows:

Go back to your childhood...and remember the characters of your youth, Mickey, Goofy, and Daffy Duck...Try to recall the day your parents finally brought you to their “home” at Walt Disney World® resort...Imagine how you felt when you first saw
Mickey with your own eyes up close... Your mother pushing you in his direction so you would shake his hand, wanting to capture the moment in a picture. You needed no urging, but somehow the closer you got, the bigger he got... He doesn’t look that big on TV, you thought. And a moment before reaching him you stop in your tracks. It hits you. And it hits you hard. Mickey, the character you’ve idolized on TV, is only several feet away. Your heart stops but that doesn’t stop your hands from sweating. You wipe them off just before reaching up to grab his hand. The excitement rushes through you, you don’t know whether you’ll faint or explode. And then the moment is over, the only remnants being your flushed face and a soon-to-be developed picture.

Memories such as these are lived every day at Walt Disney World® resort. All children get the chance to meet their favorite characters up-close. It’s a memory we all share and hold dear as part of our childhood.

But the happy memories don’t have to end there... (...) Relive your favorite Disney memories and create everlasting new ones anytime between now and January 31, 1998! (2002, 6 [Figure 1]).

The authors wanted to find out to what extent the “Remember the Magic” campaign impacted the idea that individuals had personally met Mickey Mouse and shook his hand when they were young.

To determine the effect of the campaign, 107 undergraduate students were asked to participate in an experiment. In the first week of the experiment, the students had to fill in a list of twenty childhood events, of which “met and shook hands with a favorite TV character at a theme resort” came in fourth. Participants had to indicate whether or not they had experienced these items, rating them from ‘0’ (“definitely did not happen”) to ‘100’ (“definitely did happen”) (ibid., 7). One week later, a second teacher carried out a ‘new’ experiment with these students; half of them were given the Disney “Remember the Magic” ad while the other half received a non-Disney ad that served as a control. After they had read the ads and wrote down their attitudes and feelings on them, the students were diverted with other assignments when suddenly the first teacher entered the classroom, stating there were problems with the data of the first week’s experiments and asking them to fill out the questions again. During a later moment in class a third teacher surveyed the students on their memories of Disney, asking them if they had ever been to the theme park, what they remembered, how clear these memories were, etc. (ibid., 7/8).

Independent analysis of data retrieved from this experiment showed significant differences between the students who had received the control ad and the students who were given the Disney one. In comparison, the latter had more positive thoughts about a
presumed past visit to a Disney theme park. Furthermore, they felt these memories were more clear, personally important and central to their childhood than the ones who received the control ad. More importantly, they felt more confident they had shaken hands with Mickey— even if they had initially indicated it was not likely that they had shaken hands with “a favorite TV character at a theme resort” (ibid., 10-11).

Figure 1. An example of one of the ‘Remember the Magic’ campaign ads.

Because the first experiment does not answer the question if the Disney ad intensified existing (albeit faded) memories or created new ones, a comparable second experiment followed, but instead of describing events that could have possibly taken place in the Disney resort, it set out non-existent events, namely shaking hands with Bugs Bunny (a Warner Bros character) or Ariel the Mermaid (a character that did not yet exist during the participant’s childhood). This new experiment demonstrated that participants also ‘remembered’ shaking hands with either Bugs Bunny or Ariel, leading to the conclusion
that “featured impossible events in autobiographical advertising can cause people to believe they had experienced the events” (ibid., 17).

The article by Braun, Ellis and Loftus is very insightful since it proves that memories of the past can be revived, altered or distorted quite easily. Moreover, it shows that memories are reconstructed in light of the present. As the authors say: “A consumer’s past is constantly being updated to fit one’s changing self-knowledge and social contexts” (ibid., 3). There is, however, a great shortcoming in the article. The authors explore memories of Disney and mention the influence of ‘social contexts’, but do not mention what these social contexts are. The ‘missing link’ of the article thus is this connection between the backgrounds of the participants of the experiment (carried out in North-America, Midwestern University) and the cultural significance of Disney to these American citizens.

Walt Disney, the creator of Mickey Mouse and friends, emerged as a major figure in American culture during the 1930s. Disney referred to himself as a spokesman for the “American way of life”, and his creations became prominent symbols for it (Watts 1997, 143-163). Since the early start of his enterprise, Walt Disney was involved in capturing the ‘spirit’ of the American nation. As he said in a 1942-broadcasted speech at the New York Metropolitan Opera: “The essence of American culture (...) lays in freedom. Freedom to believe what you choose and read, think and say (...). This spiritual and intellectual freedom which we Americans enjoy is our greatest cultural blessing” (Watts 1997, 163). As inscribed in a 1955 plaque in Disneyland’s Town Square, the entertainment park itself was: “(...) dedicated to the ideals, the dreams and the hard facts that have created America” (King 1981, 116). According to Steven Watts (1997), Walt Disney had helped the nation smooth the "jagged transition from the values of the Victorian age” to those of a “fledging consumer America” (163). He broke down the barriers between highbrow and lowbrow cultures and “negotiated the treacherous waters that lay between art and politics” (ibid., 163). In this way, he greatly contributed to contemporary American culture.

Mickey Mouse is the ambassador figure of Disney’s enterprise. The popular mouse already had its own club in the early 1930s. This so-called Mickey Mouse Club, where children watched movies and participated in organized activities, soon had ventures all over the nation, subsidized by local newspapers and businesses. In the summer of 1932, there were Mickey Mouse Clubs in over 500 American cities and half a
Participants’ ‘fake’ memories on Bugs Bunny and Ariel were also part of the experiment. Although relatively new, Ariel is an important and recurring figure within the Disney Company. The Warner Brothers’ figure of Bugs Bunny, like Mickey Mouse, has been a popular American animated character since 1944. The enterprise of Warner Brothers Studios was founded in 1933 and, together with Disney, has been one of the most successful animation studios of America. It is therefore likely that there are mnemonic associations between Disney and Warner Brothers. For further reference on Bugs Bunny, see Joe Adamson’s *Bugs Bunny: Fifty Years Old and Only One Grey Hare* (1991).
research on “Remember the Magic” is that of American national memory. The naturalness in which memories of participants were influenced is thus connected to the collective memory of the nation. Scholars and politicians have recognized this fundamental relationship between memory and the nation ever since the nineteenth century (Olick 1998, 377). What do these kind of ‘Mickey Mouse memories’ mean? Why do we jointly remember in national contexts? To address these issues, we will need to go beyond Disney.

1.3 Memory Meets Nation

What does it mean to be an American? Americans are not necessarily united through shared race, ethnicity, ancestry or religion. Neither, as Benedict Anderson (1983) points out, will an American ever meet or know the names of his fellow-Americans. He can never be aware of what they are doing at any time. And yet, even so, the American “has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity” (ibid., 26). In his renowned work, Imagined Communities (1983), Anderson argues that the world is made up of ‘imagined communities’ that we call nations. It is imagined because the members of a nation, whether big or small, will never encounter most of the members, nor hear from them- yet still in their minds they have the idea they somehow belong together (ibid., 6).

‘Nation’ and ‘nationalism’ are contested terms that are often used in divergent ways. ‘Nation’ is not synonymous to ‘country’ or ‘state’, although it is sometimes used this way. ‘State’ refers to the political unity that corresponds to a territory and a set of governing institutions, and ‘country’ only is the territorial component of that state (Barrington 1997, 713). In Japanese and Chinese the word ‘民族’ (respectively minzoku and minzu), alternatively meaning ‘people’, is commonly used to translate ‘nation’; this clearly distinguishes it from both ‘state’ or ‘country’ (Ma 2001; Kashiwada 2010). According to Barrington, ‘nation’ refers to a “collective of people”, “united by shared cultural features (myths, values, etc.) and the belief in the right to territorial self-determination” (Barrington 1997, 713). ‘Nationalism’ then refers to the “creation of the unifying features of the nation, or the actions that result from the beliefs of the group” (ibid., 714). Hobsbawn and Kertzer describe nationalism as a “political programme”, in
which nation-groups consider it their right to form or maintain territorial states (1992, 4).

“We have made Italy, now we have to make Italians” (Hobsbawn & Kertzer 1992, 4; Özkirimli 2000, 220). This famous sentence comes from statesman Massimo d’Azeglio upon the unification of Italy in 1861, and has become a textbook example of how nationalism works. The strength of nationalism lies in its capacity to create a sense of identity (Bell 2003, 66). The Kingdom of Italy was founded–now the Italians, consisting of all sorts of identities, had to join and become one nation. This meant that individuals had to search for a form of identity that tied all these strangers together. Political leaders had to invent and disseminate traditions that would legitimize their rule, whilst historians constructed a narration of the nation that validated its existence (Hobsbawn & Kertzer 1992, 4; Haas 1986, 709; Olick 1998, 337).

If nationalism is successful, the members of a nation will have a certain extent of social harmony that is achieved though the acceptance of shared symbols and values (Haas 1986, 709). The degree in which a state has legitimate authority is closely connection to this ‘success’. As Haas points out: “when the national identity is in doubt, one prop supporting legitimacy is knocked away” (ibid.). If nationalism fails, then so does the nation.

A crucial way in which national identity manifests itself is the idea of “us versus them”; beliefs about “we-ness” and “they-ness” are tied up with the construction of nationalism (Zheng 1999, 46). The nation’s own culture is only unique when other cultures are imagined as being very different. In other words; there is no “us” if there is no “them” (ibid.; Özkirimli 2000, 200-201). But what is it that sets one national identity apart from the other, and that creates this specific we-ness that makes members of a nation share a common identity? As Takei (1998) also points out, the answer lies in the collective memory that exists amongst the nation’s individuals.

Collective memory and the nation are tied together in various ways. Memory does not only legitimate the existence of the nation, it also serves as a powerful unifying force. The construction of the nation depends heavily upon its historical lineage and inherited folklore, although these narratives are hardly ever factually correct. Accurate or not, these ‘memories’ contribute to the understanding of a nation’s present that sets it apart from others (Grosby 2005, 8). Aside from memories from the distant past,
memories from more recent historical events are equally important in the formation of collective identities:

People can fail to speak the language of their ancestors; they can change their religion; they can adopt the way of life of a dominant group; but if they retain the distinctive collective memory that sets them apart, they remain members of the social group (Takei 1998, 60).

Similarly, Bell (2003) explains:

[Memories] can (...) be invented, acquired, and embellished, although more often than not they assume a life-force of their own, escaping the clutches of any individual or group and becoming embedded in the very fabric, material and psychological of the nation (70).

Collective memory can thus be perceived as the glue that keeps the nation together.

Benedict Anderson regards nations as “imagined communities”. One could say that the nation is imagined on two levels. First, the past on which a nation bases its existence is not always certain or infallible; it is thus ‘imagined’ and often based on myths. Second, the present members of a nation ‘imagine’ they are somehow the same, although they do not even know each other. Memory and nation are connected in similar ways. To begin with, the nation has to establish a solid collective ‘memory’ of the past to legitimize its existence. Then it has to constantly re-construct, re-polish and re-invent old and new memories in order to legitimize its present continuity. As Bell (70) explains: “Memory, almost by definition, is integral to cultural identity, and the cultivation of shared memories is essential to the survival and destiny of such collective identities.” Or, in the words of Smith (1996): “(...) no memory, no identity, no identity, no nation” (383). Members of a nation only have territorial self-determination because they are a nation based on their shared past, and they are a nation based on their shared present that exists through their past. This needs to be continuously affirmed in order for the nation to thrive.

The way in which collective memories are perpetually in flux to legitimate the nation shows that nations are not autonomous entities, but “dynamic and contentious domains of practice” (Shapiro 2004, 35). The establishment of collective memories is a cultural process where people have to negotiate their past and their nationalism. We can
therefore perceive ‘nationalism’ as a “socially constructed “cultural artefact”” (Schneider, forthcoming, 3).

Nationalism brings forth stories, myths and histories that contribute to an understanding of the nation’s present (Grosby 2005, 8). Instead of referring to this as national or collective ‘memory’, Bell (2003) proposes to speak of “governing myths” (74). The use of the term ‘memory’ conjures up the idea that there is a unified and coherent memory shared by “all of the people concerning their national past” (2003, 74). This is not the case, since different (social) groups within a nation might have different views on past events. The ‘myth’, according to Bell, is “the imposed memory through representations of history which are taught in schools etc.” (ibid., 75, emphasis added). The nation remembers in the context of and relation to “national mythscapes”, which can be best described as “the discursive realm, constituted by and through temporal and spatial dimensions, in which the myths of the nation are forged, transmitted, reconstructed and negotiated constantly” (ibid.).

What Bell conceives as ‘national mythscape’ is in fact not different from what Halbwachs describes as ‘collective memory’. Memories never exist on their own: they always belong to a social group. As Nora (1989) notes: “Memory is blind to all but the group it binds” (9). When we remember, we only have to “place ourselves in the perspective of this group, (...) adopt its interests and follow the slant of its reflections” (Halbwachs 1951, 52). From a certain group’s perspective, such as the nation’s, some memories will be privileged over others through ceremonies or collective remembrances, whether the individual agrees or not (Bell 2003, 77).

The term ‘governing myth’ reveals the manufacturability of memory. Leading social groups can determine what is to be remembered and to what purpose, turning certain parts of history into society’s dominant narrative. Histories can be bend and twisted to suit present priorities: every nation has stories that are simplified, dramatized or falsified to benefit the ever-changing cultural artifact of nationalism. This ultimately also makes memory a political tool.

If Disney can make American students believe they shook Mickey’s hand through an ad campaign, then what can today’s great political powers make their citizens believe about their national histories? Before addressing this issue, we will go back to 1937.
2. China, Japan and 1937

2.1 The Giant and the Dragon

International society is currently witnessing an enormous shift in the balance of the world’s economy; the 21st century is believed to be the ‘Asian Century’. Japan is one of Asia’s early modernizers, and since its economic successes in the 1960s has often been called Asia’s “giant”. In the meantime, China’s economy has grown at an impressive rate. China is on the rise and has become one of the world’s most important economic powers. It has now taken on the front role as Asia’s “leading dragon” (Miller 2006, 32; Lin 2011). China and Japan are both influential nations and the wellbeing of their bilateral relations is of importance to international and regional economy and security. Although at present the economic ties between the countries are closer than ever before, their political relations are unstable. Disagreements have repeatedly escalated into full out clashes between the two, and popular opinion about one another has worsened throughout the years (Jiang 2007). An extensive joint survey by China Daily and Japanese think-tank Genron NPO, held in 2011, showed that the number of Chinese people who had a positive attitude towards Japan had dropped from 38.3% (2010) to 28.6%. In Japan, only 20.8% of the people indicated they “liked” China in 2011. Things looked even more grim in 2006, when only 11.6% of the Chinese people said to have a positive attitude towards Japan (Genron NPO 2011; Liu 2010, 1). In China, anti-Japanese sentiments have surfaced on multiple occasions. After China was defeated by Japan in the Asian Cup of 2004, a large mob started rioting in the streets of Beijing, yelling patriotic slogans. The subject of the protest was related to atrocities committed by the Japanese in World War II. Chinese people still feel especially bitter about the Imperial Japanese Army’s excessive behavior in Nanjing in 1937 (BBC 2004). If football matches are indeed a good way to measure the state of nations, as Buruma (2009) says, then one can conclude that Sino-Japanese relations are not doing well- the dynamics of their shared histories stand in their way.

Ties between China and Japan are hampered by the history of war (1937-1945), but their relations started long before 1937. The two nations historically always had a clear pattern of dominance where one was more powerful than the other. Before the
19th century China was considered an empire superior to Japan, with an economy that was far more developed. Japanese rulers therefore looked to their neighbor to guide and inspire the establishment of their own culture and commenced a long period of cultural borrowing. The admiration expressed by the Japanese was not reciprocated by China; Chinese emperors considered the Japanese one of the lesser people living outside their ‘Middle Kingdom’, and commonly referred to Japan as the “Land of Dwarfs” (Calder 2006; Hansen 2000; Varley 2000, 57). When China’s Tang Dynasty (618-907), a great model for Japan’s reform, fell down, the Japanese took less of an interest in China as a prototype, and focused more on domestic self-strengthening.

Relations between China and Japan first became strained during the Ming Dynasty. In this era, Asia’s first regional war took place: the Sino-Japanese-Korean War of 1592-1598. Toyotomi Hideyoshi, overlord of Japan, was the mastermind behind this war that was supposed to be the initial stage in Japan’s conquest of China. Although the Japanese were defeated by a Sino-Korean alliance, the myth of this war lived on in Japan’s collective memory. This shows in the very fact that the Japanese invaders of 1930s carefully followed the route through China in the exact way that Hideyoshi had initially planned over three centuries before (Swope 2005, 11-13).

In the late 19th century a clear shift in balance took place between China and Japan. After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, when the shogunate regime was overthrown and a new government was established, Japan was modernizing quickly whilst Chinese power, affected by the Opium Wars, was in serious decline. By the 1880s a distinguished British diplomat who served in Japan remarked how he was positively taken with the “healthy qualities” of Japanese nationalism that carried a patriotic spirit, something that, he claimed, was missing in the Chinese (Nish 2000, 83). It was only a matter of time before Japan defeated China in the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894. China was no longer the giant facing the dwarf. When Japan threatened to start another war in 1915, the Chinese government was forced to its knees and had to give the Japanese government special privileges throughout China. The last dynasty had collapsed, and China was now officially a republic, albeit a weak and divided one. President Yuan Shikai signed the Sino-Japanese agreements on May 7, 1915, which was later commemorated as China’s National Day of Humiliation; anti-Japanese sentiment had now officially taken root in Chinese society. These sentiments were further intensified in the anti-Japanese ‘May Fourth’ protests of 1919. Chinese students were angered by the outcome of the First
World War. Japan's position was fortified and China's efforts were ignored (Schoppa 2000, 90-93; Spence 1991, 411-431). Around this time Chinese intellectuals were looking for the right path to modernization. They found communism - an ideology that many hoped would help China solve its problems. In 1921, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was established in Shanghai. One of the people attending this meeting was a 28-year-old farmer's son named Mao Zedong.

While China was looking for ways to keep the nation together, as it was divided between Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists and Mao's Communists, Japan was planning to expand its national influence in East Asia. The 'holy war' with China was the first step in Japan's expansion (Chang 1997, 19-34; Gordon 2003, 204-212). In 1931 the Japanese occupied Manchuria and in 1937 a minor incident with Chinese soldiers at the Marco Polo Bridge led to the direct attack and occupation of Beijing and Tianjin. The Second Sino-Japanese War was underway; a war where the Japanese army would unleash an unprecedented violence on Chinese soldiers and civilians, and a war that would continue to haunt Sino-Japanese relations in the next century. Sixty years later, in 1997, when some one hundred thousand Chinese were asked what they associated most with Japan, no less than 84% answered: "the Nanjing Massacre" (Yang 2001, 50).

2.2 The Nanjing Atrocities

When the Japanese army launched its large-scale invasion of China on July 7 1937, its nationalist spirit was sky-high. Japan had won one war after the other, and was now preparing for its main priority: war with the Soviet Union. The battle with China was merely regarded an 'incident' that would end as soon as the Imperial Army would achieve one major victory. A deep contempt for the Chinese was rooted amongst Japanese leaders and militarists, who despised the weakened state of the country. The victories achieved by the imperial army only strengthened this contempt. Their goal in China was to "chastise the unruly Chinks", something that was expected to be achieved without too much effort (Fujiwara 2008, 31; Spence 1991; Gordon 2003; Tokushi 2002).

By November 1937, over 9000 Japanese soldiers were killed and over 30,000 were wounded during the invasion of Shanghai. The Chinese defense was stronger than

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the Japanese side had anticipated. The Imperial Army was shocked to see their provisions run low and their need for reinforcements rising. It was never the intention to start a long and exhausting war with China, but the army had no other choice now; they could not first trivialize the war with China and then fail to win it. After the fall of Shanghai, General Matsui, commander of the Central China Area Army (CCAA), gave the orders to capture Nanjing on December 1st. Nanjing was China's Nationalist capital, an ancient city praised as one of the greatest cultural and political centers of China. It had already been the capital city from the third to the sixth century, and then irregularly after the 14th century (Chang 1997, 61). According to Matsui, the Japanese army had to make China surrender within one “knock-out blow”. As he declared: “We must resolve to order troops into action as needed based on our traditional spirit of 'instant engagement, instant victory' by shifting our main forces (...) to Nanking. (...) Right now we must make Nanking our main target” (Fujiwara 2008, 32).

What exactly happened during those Nanjing winter days is a politically sensitive subject up to this day. There is not one official term to identify the event. In China, it is generally called “Nanjing Datusha”, literally: “The Nanjing Massacre”. This term is perceived problematic in Japan, since there is no agreement on whether or not the killings in Nanjing could be labeled a ‘massacre’. A common referral in Japan is “Nankin Jiken”, literally: “The Nanjing Incident”. In the West, the event is commonly referred to as the “Rape of Nanking” or the more neutral “Nanjing Atrocities” (Askew 2004, 67-68). Here, I will adhere to the latter.

Any attempt to construct a historical narrative on what happened in the winter of 1937/1938 unavoidably also requires subjective decisions on what (not) to include (ibid., 71). Because the Nanjing Atrocities are still so contested today, both historically and politically, it is almost impossible to assume an objective position. In his article about Japanese crimes in Nanjing, the author Jean-Louis Margolin (2006) argues for “less politics, more history, please!” (2). Yet he unequivocally calls the event a “massacre” (ibid., 2), which, nevertheless, gives his work a political nature. The Nanjing Atrocities are so susceptible to heated debates and conflicting representations of the past because of the lack of historical clarity on the exact crimes of the Japanese in Nanjing. There are multiple reasons for this lack of historical facts. One is the fact that the atrocities were not fully documented by the authorities at the time. Some photographs turned out to be staged, and written documents were revised or rewritten. Oral accounts of witnesses
were not always reliable because of the long times that had passed. The Chinese government did not commence systematic research on the atrocities until the 1980s, and victims’ perceptions had been influenced during that period. There were some convincing reports written by foreign correspondents, such as Harold Timperley, or foreign nationals in the International Safety Zone who kept records of the atrocities, but many reports were never verified, and most foreigners had left by December 15, making the scope of their testimonies limited (Askew 2004, 73; Shudo 2002, 104; Yang 2000, 138-139). However, there are main facts about Nanjing that are not under discussion. The Japanese killed large numbers of Chinese in and around the city. Many women were raped and many houses were looted and burned. As Askew comments: “The debate about Nanjing, therefore, is not whether atrocities were committed or not, but about the scale of these atrocities” (Askew 2004, 76).

In 1996, Iris Chang’s bestselling book *The Rape of Nanking* was first published. This was one of the very first non-fiction works on the Nanjing Atrocities in English, and remains the most popular book on this topic to this day. Some academics consider it one of the more refined works on the topic, whilst others have labeled it as “half-baked history” (Jeans 2003, 149; Yang 1999). Either way, Chang surely deserves credit for being a pioneering author on the subject and bringing the Nanjing Atrocities under the attention of a wider audience. She also deserves praise for the extensive research she did, drawing a considerable part of her information from interviews she held with survivors or former soldiers. In her book, Chang meticulously describes the passing of the Nanjing Atrocities. Her narrative of the atrocities commences on December 9, when the Japanese Air Force spread leaflets over the city, promising the people of Nanjing proper treatment if they would cooperate with the army. The half of Nanjing’s inhabitants who had the means to flee escaped the city before the Japanese arrived. The other half, the 500,000 people that were the “poorest of the poor”, was left behind in the city (Shudo 2002, 95).

On December 13th, the Japanese army completely encircled the city walls of Nanjing. Compared to Shanghai, the seizure of Nanjing was completed in the blink of an eye. The defense strategy of the Chinese army was weak; Nanjing Defense Commander Tang Shengzhi had ordered his troops to retreat and quickly fled the city himself on December 12. The abandoned army was in chaos. Soldiers and civilians were trapped like rats within their own city, and had no choice but to surrender. Instead of offering
their prisoners the promised “proper treatment”, the imperial army opened fire on both soldiers and civilians. Fujiwara (2008) writes: “It is clearly wrong to call this a combat operation; it was slaughter, a massacre” (44).

When one speaks of the Nanjing ‘massacre’, the time-period referred to roughly is the first six to eight weeks after the fall of the city. Some scholars, such as Fujiwara, state that it started two weeks earlier, on December 1st 1937, when the first orders were given to attack Nanjing, lasting until January 5th 1938, when a relative calm returned to the city (ibid., 34). Because the army had started killing all the way from Shanghai to Nanjing, one could say the ‘massacre’ had begun long before the army reached the city; killings had taken place from Suzhou to Wuxi and from Jiaxing to Huzhou (Yang 2000, 138; Honda 1999).

Chang illustrates the different cruelties that took place during the occupation of Nanjing. People were bombed out of their homes and soldiers marched the streets firing at innocent citizens. Groups of Chinese captives, who were initially promised food and work, were shot at isolated areas. Japanese soldiers tortured and killed large numbers of common people; their corpses were piled up along the river. Rape was commonplace in Nanjing; women were seized and brought back to the camps where each of them was allocated to a group of 15 to 20 soldiers to be abused (Chang 1997, 49). Since the military police officially did not allow these rapes, so-called “comfort houses” were created to stop troops from raping women in Japanese-controlled areas. A large network of military prostitution was called to life of which the one in Nanjing was the first. Women were lured or kidnapped to work in these brothels in abominable conditions (ibid., 52-53). Other atrocities include live burials or death by fire (ibid., 87-88).

A specifically sensitive topic within the debate on the atrocities in Nanjing is that of the ‘killing contests’ that presumably took place amongst the Japanese soldiers to see who could kill the most captives. Chang mentions the account of Nanjing resident Tang Shunsan, who was 25 years old when he fell into the hands of Japanese. Miraculously, he survived a killing contest when he fell underneath a dead body and pretended to be killed himself. Tang explains how Japanese soldiers forced prisoners to line up, and how they laughingly beheaded them one-by-one, competing over whom could kill the fastest (ibid., 83-85). In his account on the Nanjing Atrocities, Japanese journalist Honda Katsuichi states how the development of one of these contests, the “contest to cut down a hundred”, was described in the Tokyo Nichinichi Shimbun on four different occasions
from November 30 to December 13 (Honda 1999, 124-135). The truth to these murder contests has been debated up to this day. According to several academics, including Bob Wakabayashi (2000), the entire episode was fabricated.

Why the Japanese army unleashed such incredible violence on the soldiers and civilians of Nanjing is hard to explain. There are no motives that can justify these atrocities. There were, however, some factors that may have contributed to the intensity of the violence. There was an overall contempt for the Chinese people and for China as a modern nation amongst the Imperial Army that also led to contempt for international laws concerning war. Many Japanese soldiers somehow assumed these laws did not need to be applied to the Chinese. They therefore also did not feel the need to protect civilians. The rule over the army was messy; military police staff, needed to control the troops, were scarce. Since some branches of the Japanese army were set up haphazardly, many soldiers were barely educated for combat. There were hardly any units to supply the troops with material or resources; they therefore relied on plundering for supply, which resulted into direct contact with and violence on Chinese civilians. Furthermore, within the army, the relations with Japanese diplomatic officers were almost non-existent, which gave them no authority over the actions of the soldiers (Inagaki 2006; Fujiwara 2008, 36). All these reasons contributed to the seemingly lawless situation in which the atrocities took place.

Chang calls the Nanjing Atrocities a “forgotten Holocaust”\(^5\). She says it is ‘forgotten’ because the event is relatively unknown in the West; it has not been included in most works that cover the Second World War (1996, 7). Furthermore, there is still no absolute agreement on the number of people killed in Nanjing in those winter weeks of 1937/38. Figures go from 260,000 casualties to a death toll of 350,000 (ibid., 6). According to historian Ying-shih Yu the number is no less than 369,366 (Young&Yin 1999, xi). There are also Japanese academics and politicians who claim the number of deaths is as low as 40,000, or even 10,000 (Inagaki 2006, 122; Wakabayashi 2000, 337). This has resulted in a “number's game”, where one's position on the number of casualties has come to reflect one's position in the overall debate (Li, Sabella, Liu 2002, 47).

Although one could state that Nanjing, through time, was ‘forgotten’ in the major discourse of the Second World War, its atrocities were documented in China, Japan and

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\(^5\) The subtitle of Chang’s book is: “The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II”.

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the West since the early days of war. Within a week after the occupation of Nanjing, the Western world was informed about the atrocities through articles in the *New York Times* and *Chicago Daily News* (Yang 2001, 51). Australian journalist Harold Timperley, who was a correspondent in China from the 1920s to 1940s, published his book on the violent attack on Nanjing in *Japanese Terror in China* in 1938 (Zhang 2009). In February 1938, the Chinese government internationally described and condemned the atrocities of Nanjing during the Council of the League of Nations in Geneva (Yoshida 2006, 28). In Japan, the occupation of Nanjing was all over the newspapers- it was celebrated as a military victory. Nevertheless, there was a lot of censorship in Japan during the war. The ones who did know what was going on in Nanjing probably did not care much about it since the seizure was considered a triumph. Others only learnt of Nanjing after the war had ended (Yang 2001, 52-53).

What happened in Nanjing was by no means the only atrocity that occurred during the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945. As the war continued and the Japanese increasingly faced opposition, military methods became more aggressive. In 1940 the Japanese army launched a military campaign against Chinese Communist guerillas in North China, called the “Three-Alls Operation” (“Sanko Seisaku”), in which soldiers were expected to “burn all, kill all, loot all”. According to reports, 3,180,000 soldiers and civilians were killed during this period that reached its peak in 1942-43 (Lee 2002, 48; Yoshida 2006, 35).

Japan's bacteriological activities are a particularly grim part of the Second Sino-Japanese War. Japan's biological warfare in China was conducted on a larger scale than anywhere else between the 1930s and 1940s. The Japanese had a number of military units specialized in biological weapon research, of which Unit 731, based in Harbin, was the most notorious. Established in 1936, the unit consisted of 150 different buildings and a staff of 3000 that conducted research using both animals and imprisoned human subjects. It is estimated that around 10,000 people in China and Manchuria died in these experiments. Apart from the research conducted in the units, the Japanese were also involved in ‘field tests’ that included large-scale contamination of water and food-supplies. There were outbreaks of plague, cholera and typhus due to aerial spraying and the dropping of bombs that consisted of infected fleas (Klietmann&Ruoff 2001).

Amongst Japan’s most heinous war crimes is also the issue of the comfort women. In all Japanese-occupied territories divisions of “comforters” were set up where women
practically worked as sex machines, forced to have continuous intercourse with soldiers and subjected to torture. Not only did these women generally have health problems, many were also killed after they served their function. The United Nations officially acknowledged these large-scale wartime “comfort” installations as a “crime against humanity” in 1996 (Lie 1997; McCormack 2001, 5).

As demonstrated, the Nanjing Atrocities were widely known from early on, but by 1945 had become but one episode in a long sequence of Japanese war crimes. In 1938, the Chinese government considered gas attacks and aerial bombings as Japan’s most cruel deeds. Yoshida (2006) writes: “(...) the Chiang Kai-shek government at the time regarded Nanjing as only one of many such outrages visited on the nation by the Imperial Japanese Army” (35). Nanjing’s occupation came to an end in 1945, when the United States dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing approximately 300,000 people (Gordon 2003, 225). The Japanese surrendered on August 15.

2.3 The Aftermath of War

The International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) commenced in Tokyo in 1946. During these trials the assault on Nanjing was one of the many episodes of war examined. From 1937 to 1945, the Japanese army reportedly committed 75,000 crimes in China alone. Nanjing was investigated thoroughly by the IMTFE; the Tribunal spent three full weeks on researching the case, whilst its prosecution had done months of preliminary work, collecting over a hundred testimonies and supporting evidence (Lee 2002, 49-51).

The Tokyo Trials have often been labeled as “victor’s justice”, meaning that the Allied powers as victors of the war passed judgment on the nation they defeated without a present ‘neutral’ party. This was supposedly done under international law, at a time when the Americans occupied Japan under the command of Douglas MacArthur. The trials could be considered part of the new US policies in Japan. One part of these policies was to protect and preserve the emperor, which meant he was to be kept out of the trials. On the one hand, this was in line with US’s democratization of Japan where the emperor merely served as a symbol and had no political authority or power. On the
other hand the policy also related to the idea that chaos would erupt in Japanese society if the emperor were to be completely removed (Goto-Jones 2009, 91).

The trials emphasized the international norm of “civilization”, in which the Allied powers were the “civilized” ones, judging and punishing the “barbaric” acts of the Japanese. This ultimately also made the IMTFE about “civilization versus barbarism” (Onuma 2002, 207-208). Within this framework, the Nanjing Atrocities emerged as one of the most barbarous acts of the Japanese military. Adding to this importance of Nanjing during the Tokyo Trials is the implementation of “crimes against humanity” as a newly defined category during the Nuremberg Trials. As Buruma (2002) points out, in order to apply this new law to the IMTFE, there had to be “a parallel to the Holocaust” (7). The Nanjing Atrocities were therefore given significant prominence as an event that could equate the Nazi’s Holocaust.

The IMTFE sentenced twenty-eight Japanese military and political officials to death or imprisonment. Two of them were directly held responsible for the Nanjing Atrocities; commander General Matsui and foreign minister Hirota Koki, who were both hanged (Brook 2001, 2008; Comnys-Carr 194). The IMTFE estimated that more than 200,000 people were killed in and around the city of Nanjing during the first six weeks after capitulation; this number was, amongst others, based on the records of several societies that collectively had buried over 155,000 bodies (Yoshida 2000; Lee 2002).

During the Tokyo Trials, the Nanjing Atrocities came to stand out as the worst and most representative savagery conducted by the Japanese army in China. It had become a “symbol of Japanese evil” that overshadowed other incidents. This ‘symbol’ also justified the Allies’ implementation of Article 9 in the new Japanese constitution: Japan was to be denied the right to warfare (Buruma 2001, 8; Brook 2001, 676-677). By the end of the IMTFE, that had taken over two and a half years to finish, public interest over the trials had started to wane. On the Japanese side there was an overall unwillingness to acknowledge war responsibility, and on the Chinese side there was an overall weariness about the war in general (Brook 2008, 150). Priorities had shifted: the war was over.

Although the chapter of Sino-Japanese War seemingly had been closed around 1953, it was fully reopened half a century later. The Nanjing Atrocities (internationally) started attracting the public eye again and became a reappearing theme in both the academic world as in popular culture. Chang’s 1996 book is but one publication in a long
sequence of bestselling novels or (semi-) academic books on this topic. John Rabe, also called the ‘Oskar Schindler’ of China, became a figure of interest through Chang, who first discovered the existence of his wartime journals. Rabe was a Nanjing-based German Nazi who led the Siemens factory and later presided over Nanjing’s International Safety Zone, keeping thousands of people out of the hands of the Japanese. His diary, *The Good Man of Nanking*, came out in 1998, becoming an international bestseller that was followed up by the award-winning movie *John Rabe* (2009). A comparable publication is *The Undaunted Women of Nanking* (2010), based on the diaries of missionary Minnie Vautrin and her assistant, who ran a girl’s college in Nanjing and was able to save the lives of many girls. Another bestselling wartime diary is that of Azuma Shiro, first fully published in 1999\(^6\). Azuma was a Japanese soldier who served the army during the invasion of Nanjing. The diary describes the horrible acts committed by Azuma and his superiors, causing much controversy in Japan.

*Don’t Cry, Nanking*\(^7\) (1996) is one of the popular movies based on the theme of the Nanjing Atrocities. Around the same time, the movie *Pride*\(^8\) hit Japanese box-offices; a production that depicted General Hideki Tojo, an accused A-class war criminal, as a national hero (Kristof 1998). American production *Nanking* came out in 2007, followed by *City of Life and Death*\(^9\) in 2009. A new film by Zhang Yimou on Nanjing, *The Flowers of War*, was released in 2011. Besides the diaries and the movies, a great number of other works on Sino-Japanese War and the Nanjing Atrocities have appeared since the late 1990s, revealing new insights and perspectives on what happened in 1937 and after.

The renewed popular interest in Nanjing, which could be called a ‘re-remembrance’, appeared at a time when memories of war were reproduced on a global scale with the fifty-year commemoratives of the end of the war and, for example, Pearl Harbor or the Night of Broken Glass (‘Kristallnacht’). Fujitani and White (2001) identify this period, starting in the mid-1990s, as a “historically unparalleled period of memory making on the subject of the Second World War” (1). A large-scale commemoration of Nanjing has, evidently, also taken place over the last fifteen years, merging with these overall remembrances of the Second World War.

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\(^7\) Chinese title: *Nanjing 1937*.

\(^8\) Japanese title: *Puraido: Unmei no Toki*.

\(^9\) Chinese title: *Nanjing! Nanjing!*
Alive as the Sino-Japanese War may seem in the present, for nearly forty years following the war little to nothing was published about the Japanese occupation of China - not in the West, nor in China or Japan. Major works on the Second World War, including Churchill’s *Memoirs of the Second World War* (1959) or Michel’s *Second World War* (1947) do not mention the Nanjing Atrocities at all (Chang 1997, 7). Journalists Young and Yin have rightfully pointed out that before the first Chinese/English edition of their book *The Rape of Nanking: An Undeniable History in Photographs* (1996) there were hardly any printed sources in English dedicated to this topic at all (xiii). What does the renewed interest in the Sino-Japanese War in popular culture imply? Or rather, what did the 25-or-so years of relative silence on war indicate?

Memories of war are formed and negotiated at multiple levels. Seaton (2007) explains how this process of ‘memory making’ of war works on two different levels, and how these levels are entwined. On the first level, memories of war are negotiated between different groups that experienced war in different ways. In many cases, these memories will not be shared with others due to various reasons; shame, (political) oppression, or otherwise. If they are expressed and heard, diverging groups emerge, that identify with each other through their shared memories (Seaton 2007, 13-14). The next challenge is for these memories to enter the big collective ‘pool’ of memories that exists on a national level. In this public sphere, different narratives have to compete with each other, since all ‘memory groups’ rival over recognition. All want their version of war to be acknowledged. For instance, a group of Korean comfort women have been seeking recognition for their shared war past for the last seventy years. In December 2011, they protested in front of South Korea’s Japanese embassy for the 1000th time (BBC 2011) to let their histories, where they were forced by Japanese aggressors to work as prostitutes, be acknowledged by the authorities.

On the second level, memories are also negotiated between the ‘war-generation’ and the ‘post-war generation’. The collective memories of those who experienced war need to be transferred to the next generation that did not experience the war. When the last survivors of war pass away, the post-war generation is entirely responsible to conduct the discourse of war. Narratives might be adjusted to suit the needs of the next generations: they make the war of the past something they can relate to in their present situation.
The result of these two processes is that a dominant narrative of war emerges in society. Which memories eventually become incorporated into this dominant national narrative of war all depends on which versions of history are chosen by the most (politically) powerful group(s). As Seaton states: “The power of narratives depends largely on access to those who wield political and cultural power” (2007, 14). In the case of the comfort women, before the 1990s, their experiences have been omitted or marginalized in the dominant Korean history of war. In 2011, however, the South Korean government fully recognized their stories as part of national war history (Fackler 2011; Kim 1997). Eventually one of the most important questions in the process of ‘memory making’ is the will to remember. Without a (collectively shared) will to remember, there is no memory of war at all.

In the first chapter, I remarked how the collective memory of a society is an accumulation of memory-making processes that occur on both conscious and non-conscious levels. In fact, the entire process of national memory-forming is a combination of the two. On state-level, the nation mainly builds on myths that are often non-consciously held to be true (e.g. that a ‘nation’ is entitled to territorial sovereignty). This idea of the nation is reinforced by governments through conscious processes of representations of war, propagated through state-funded textbooks, documentaries, museums, national commemorations etc. These representations of war end up in the collective memory of a nation’s people, who, once again, non-consciously ‘remember’ their national narrative on war. What is written or said about war on a ‘popular’ level is a reflection on what happens at state-level; vice versa, what is said about war on government-level is partly constructed through what has been narrated amongst the people. As He (2007) points out: “Memory construction almost always exists between ruling elites and societal forces” (47).

In the first decades after World War II, there was no active collective remembering of war in China or Japan, and there were hardly any publications on the topic at all. There seemed to exist no will to remember what had happened from 1937 to 1945. The governments of China and Japan generally disregarded the topic.

In the aftermath of war, Japanese leaders had seemed to ‘forgotten’ Japan’s war of aggression. Instead, a general sense of victimhood emerged. How did the Japanese nation become the victimized party in a war where it had acted out as the aggressor? Firstly, Japan had lost the war and fell victim to the world’s most powerful bombs.
Society had to deal with its devastating effects in the first weeks, months and years following the end of war. Many Japanese felt humiliated and people had to deal with starvation and hardship as the economy had crumbled (Goto-Jones 2009, 90). Although the Tokyo Trials had informed Japanese people about the Imperial Army’s overseas war crimes, there seemed to be no real guilt issues amongst the Japanese people for multiple reasons. There were no personal direct memories of war since all the major battles and the Nanjing Atrocities had taken place across the ocean. The government’s wartime censorship was strict, and after the war had ended, returning soldiers kept silent. The Allied Occupation also practiced strong censorship, and many Japanese assumed that gruesome stories about war crimes or Nanjing were only propagated to turn Japan into the black sheep of the international community (Tokushi 2002, 85-88). Japan’s own war past always stayed at a distance; memories of Japan’s war crimes were therefore never fully incorporated into society’s collective memory.

Another major reason contributing to Japan’s postwar claim of victimhood and coexisting ‘amnesia’ is the fact that General MacArthur decided to keep the emperor out of the Tokyo Trials; this made the majority of Japanese understand their war past in a particular way. After stories of overseas brutalities emerged in the postwar years, the question arose in society on how the Japanese could have believed in a ‘holy’ war that turned out to be an internationally condemned war of aggression. People pointed the finger at the military and a strong separation was made between the ‘people’ and the ‘army’. Society had simply fallen victim to bad military leadership. But since the military had acted out in the name of the emperor, and because the emperor was not put on trial (and therefore remained ‘innocent’), the Imperial Army also remained free from guilt. Those who had acted out in the army did not have the individual power to influence events in which they took part (Nish 2000, 86; Onuma 2002, 206; Seaton 2007; 40-41). In short, it was commonly understood that the people and the military alike had all been victimized by a system over which they had no control.

International developments surrounding the Cold War also pushed memories of war further to the background. In the heat of Cold War’s bipolarity (±‘45-’72) the United States needed strong international players on its side. Fighting the communists had become more important than prosecuting war criminals, and the US therefore took a “reverse course” in its policy towards Japan. Instead of a WWII-enemy, Japan was now needed as a Cold War-ally (Seaton 2007, 41). In these settings it was not convenient to
remind Japan of its own war past: the US needed a nationally stable and economically strong ally, not a defeated nation that was crying over its own history. Prewar politicians returned to their former posts, and economy started to flourish when Japan supplied the UN-forces with military material during the Korean War (1950-1953). The material prosperity that came with the swift recovery of the nation had an “amnesiac effect on people’s historical memory” (Barker&Chang 2001, 55). Japan stayed on the path of economic success after the government regained sovereignty. In 1957, convicted war criminal Kishi Nobusuke became the new prime minister. There were many individuals at influential positions who did not wish to be reminded of the war. Their intentions correlated with those of Japanese society at large that wished to build a cheerful and peaceful national image – the aggressive nature of war was therefore denied. There was no need (nor will) to focus on what had happened in the past (Heinzen 2004, 151; Tokushi 2002, 89).

The brand-new People’s Republic of China (PRC) (1949), in the meantime, also had better things to do then to grieve over its wartime sufferings. Instead of dwelling on the past, people had to cheer for the present powerful leadership. Postwar focus had clearly shifted from international to domestic conflict. The communist regime was working hard to defeat class enemies, and the Party under Mao’s rule became the center of society (Coble 2007, 395; Yang 2001, 55). Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists had fled to Taiwan in 1949 and Mao did not want to emphasize their victories nor their losses. Nanjing had been the Nationalist’s capital, and there were “no communist heroes there” (Buruma 2002, 8). Or, as Link (2002) states: “to champion its case would lend glory to a rival” (xiii). The history of Sino-Japanese War and Nanjing was an uncomfortable one for the Communist Party of China (CPC). Whilst Mao safely resided Yan’an, far away from the battlefield, Chiang and the Nationalists were shedding their blood to fight the Japanese (Van Oudheusden 2008, 123). There was thus no reason for the Party to commemorate what had happened in Nanjing. Many Chinese victims of war also kept silent in the postwar years since they were afraid to acknowledge they had fought war on the Nationalists’ side.

Communism contributed to the evasion of China’s war past in another way as well. The communist ideal was not only propagated on national level, but was also promoted through China’s foreign affairs; as Mao Zedong said, the Chinese revolution
was only one part of the world revolution.\(^{10}\) China thus focused on “people’s diplomacy”\(^{11}\) to benefit the greater communist movement in East Asia. This implied that the Chinese government, similar to the Japanese themselves, made a divide between the Japanese “people” and the army. Japanese militarism was the shared enemy of both the Chinese and Japanese people. It was China’s goal to build on the friendship between the people of China and the people of Japan, using communism as the bridge between the two. The figure of Nosaka Sanzo, one of the most important leaders of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), therefore became pivotal to early postwar Sino-Japanese relations. Nosaka kept close relations with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. As part of “people’s diplomacy”, the Chinese government helped to send home about 60,000 Japanese soldiers who were left behind after Japan’s defeat. It also released 1017 of the 1062 captive war criminals. Furthermore, the government renounced its rights to war reparations (Liu 2010, 260-266).

The Cold War framework also played an important part in China’s motivations to play down the history of the Sino-Japanese War. The government hoped to balance the American power front by building on its diplomatic and trade relations with Japan. This was also related to the fact that Beijing was competing with Taipei, its Nationalist enemy, over its relations with Japan (Link 2002, xiii; He 2007, 47). This was not the time to start talking about atrocities. Chinese and Japanese governments both seemed to agree that the war was better left in the past.

Although the memories of Second Sino-Japanese War, and especially the Nanjing Atrocities, seemed ‘forgotten’ throughout the 1950s, 1960s and part of the 1970s, they resurfaced in the 1980s and then throughout the 1990s and 2000s. The rise of this ‘re-remembrance’ has become particularly visible through the establishment of new memorial sites dedicated to war, or through the regained popular interest in old ones. China’s Maoist era, for instance, did not have any memorials, museums or historical literature dedicated to the Second Sino-Japanese War at all (Coble 2007, 395). At present, however, memories of war are prevalent everywhere; both in sites of commemoration or historical writing.

How do the Chinese and Japanese government currently portray World War II? How do they want the nation to collectively remember the war and why? The next

\(^{10}\) “中国革命是世界革命的一部分” (Liu 2010, 28).
\(^{11}\) “人民外交” (Liu 2010, 28).
chapter focuses on the different national war memorials in both Japan and China to investigate which history of war is presently promoted as the dominant narrative. As Mayo (1988) writes: “Forms of meaning in war memorials are influenced by reinterpretations of political history that enhance, contradict, or deemphasize the status of past wars” (62). This makes war museums highly politicized spaces. They are the physical representation of how collective memories change, disappear, or come up as a response to present situations. In this way, it is not so much the museums themselves that are the central focus- but the story that is obliquely told behind their walls.
3. The Art of Remembering

3.1 Sites of Remembrance

“We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left,” says Pierre Nora in ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire’ (1989, 7). Over the past century time, and with it history, has moved with incredible speed. Following new media and the rise of mass culture, modern societies have had a clear break with the past. The past has become a place where memories were processed in different ways. Collectively remembered values were conveyed and conserved through institutions such as the church, school or family. Now the times have changed, and, as Nora says, societies have become “forgetful” and try to organize the past through history (1989, 7-8).

Contemporary societies are more focused on remembering than ever before. The modern era is preoccupied with documenting everything that would otherwise be impossible to memorize. It is the “obsession with the archive that marks our age” (ibid., 13). Never before in history did the world have so many archives – collecting names, testimonies and documents. In the past few decades an unparalleled number of museums have appeared all over the globe. In fact, 75% of all active museums in the world were established after 1945 (ibid.; Denton 2005).

Sites of memory are, according to Nora, places “where memory crystallizes and secretes itself” (1989, 7). They might be physical institutions such as archives, museums, cemeteries or memorialis, but they can also be organized rituals or commemorations. Lieux de mémoire come into existence through the reciprocity between memory and history. This interaction is mainly generated, as mentioned earlier, by the will to remember. If there is no will or need to remember, sites of memory are not created. In that case, they just are what they are: historical places (“lieux d’histoire”) without any other meaning attached to them (ibid., 19).

Another important factor in the interaction between memory and history is the interference of time and change. As long as time continues, the significance of sites of memory changes accordingly. This is what Nora calls: “an endless recycling of meaning” (ibid., 19). Lieux de mémoire can only exist if the act of remembering remains relevant; this means that its intention adapts to the different times in which it exists. This process
also explains why historical places or monuments related to for example the Holocaust unquestionably are still strong *lieux de mémoire*, while those relating to, for instance, the French Revolution have become *lieux d’histoire*. The first historical happening is closer to the present in time, and the will to actively remember it is still here; its memory remains relevant in the present. The second literally has become a thing of the past - a past that we, the present generation and the ones before us, have become estranged from: ‘we’ were not there.

There is a difference in dominant and dominated *lieux de mémoire*. “Dominated” *lieux de mémoire* are the kinds of places or rituals that spontaneously become sites of remembrance and devotion. They are often born out of protest against the “dominant” *lieux de mémoire*, which is the kind of memorial site imposed by a national government or other authority (Nora 1989, 23). The “dominant” *lieux de mémoire* are central to this thesis since it is this kind of memorial that conveys what the state wants the people to remember.

In discussing sites of memory, Nora has neglected the issue of identity although it is crucial to the act of remembrance. In fact, as we have seen in the first chapter, memories do not exist on their own. Every memory belongs to a social group and every social group, in turn, has a memory that binds them. These memories validate their existence and construct their identity. Monuments, museums, memorials or shrines are all sites of remembrance that construct a collective memory. Benedict Anderson already pointed out that “the formation of museums came to represent the social memory of “imagined communities”” - the ‘imagined communities’ that we refer to as ‘nations’ (Kim 2007, 75).

It is interesting how these two concepts, identity and memory, keep each other alive while they are both incomplete and non-objective. They are both *representations* and *constructions* of reality. One could visualize them as two broken mirrors reflecting each other. Peoples and nations will always look for their ‘identity’, an ever-fluctuating concept that can never really be pinpointed. Similarly, memories can never be complete and are always limited by the group to which they belong. The reflection in the mirror(s) therefore always remains a contorted version of reality.

The way in which (national) identities and memories are constructed relates to specific interests of particular groups or authorities that determine “what is remembered (or forgotten) by whom and for what end” (Wolschke-Bulmahn 2001, 2).
These specific interests and the existing power relations are absolutely crucial to the development of a memorial site, since the source of money or funds eventually determines how it is managed, designed, and what its aims are (ibid.; Uchida 2010). Wolschke-Bulmahn notes:

Identity is probably inconceivable without history and without the remembrance and commemoration of history, however much such remembrance may distort historical events and facts (2001, 2).

This explains why commemoration particularly receives attention when political and social revolutionary processes are taking place, or when an existing government needs to strengthen its authority. The creation of commemorative monuments, with iconic landscapes and mythic narratives, helps to establish social order and gain public support. It cultivates a cohesive collective memory. This united collective memory dominates the realities of plurality and diversity that underlie any historical commemoration (Osborne 2001).

War-related memorials hold a special position within the discourse of ‘memory sites’. It namely particularly is in times of war that the strengths and weaknesses of a society are exposed. These qualities are reflected in memorials dedicated to war. They portray what a contemporary society values and what it, in that light, wants to remember and commemorate from its past wars. Mayo (1988) argues that war memorials are the bare necessities to the nation, since they help sustain the spiritual origins of a society (75). Malvern (2000) agrees that war memorials are of great importance since they project the national identity that is defined through war (178). In other words: it is in times of war that the nation falls back to its ‘essence’. It is this ‘essence’ that is reconstructed in a nation’s war memorials. In the presence, however, the government does not just evoke the history of war, but the history of war it wants society to remember. It is for this reason that practically every nation in the world has established its own war memorials and museums in the twentieth century.

*Lieux de mémoire*, sites of remembrance, especially those that refer to the memory of war, are extremely contested and politicized spaces. On the one hand they deal with history – a problematic and often incomplete reconstruction of the past - and on the other hand they deal with memory – that “only accommodates those facts that suit it” (Nora 1989, 8). This makes them exceptionally suitable tools for the
establishment of a dominant, imposed mode of the collective remembrance of war, which ultimately is a collective remembrance of national history: the foundation on which a nation is built.

The following two paragraphs explore the most relevant *lieux de mémoire* of the Second Sino-Japanese War in both China and Japan. They do not only review their respective backgrounds, but also focus on their design and on the history that is conveyed. The style in which a war monument (memorial, museum) is built is essential since it is tied to (new) narratives of history that serve the interests of those who developed it. Denton (2005) remarks how, for example, the architecture of China’s museum buildings is becoming bolder and more sophisticated as China seeks to “join the world” economically and culturally (571). In this way, a monument’s aesthetics tells a story of its own. Besides architecture, its location is also noteworthy, as it often is sited on prominent spots to stress the importance of the nation’s experience in war. By establishing a memorial on a certain place, a “symbolic landscape of power” is constructed: it becomes a place that is representative to the nation. Osborne (2001) states that people’s identification with these kinds of places is essential for the cultivation of an awareness of national identity – that which is called “a-*where-ness*” (39; Hagopian 2001).

A war memorial needs to deal with certain themes in its landscape and/or interior design to fulfill its purpose. Different kinds of war memorials sometimes need to deal with different kinds of themes. In general, war memorials attend to a few common issues: those who fought need to be recognized, those who died need to be honored and those who survived need to be able to express their grief. A recurring motif is the “healing” of the nation. Ultimately, the main goal in creating a memorial is for all the people to involve in collective remembrance. This entails bridging the gap between soldiers and civilians, men and women, young and old, or between those who disagreed on the rights and wrongs of war (Hagopian 2001, 311-313). These issues can also be expressed through the design of a memorial or museum. For example, there often is a list on display with names of the people who died during war. According to Hagopian this remembrance of the losses of a nation is the “least controversial and most emotive gesture of commemoration” (ibid., 311). More importantly, it stresses the collective loss of the nation. Sculptures are also commonly used in the design of commemorative places. These rarely are statues of individual military leaders or hero-like figures.
Instead, they are often group-sculptures depicting representative members of lower-ranks, both black and white, not in fighter’s posture, but rather depicted in times of injury or mutual care (ibid., 312). This kind of portrayal stresses the collective experience of war instead of focusing on individuals.

The narrative expressed through a memorial’s contents is its most powerful feature. Which aspect of war is emphasized in the memorial? Who or what is at the centre of the narrative? Which theme is most important? This will be explored in the following paragraphs.

3.2 Do You Remember? – China’s Commemoration of War

Since the early 1980s, museums and memorials have been popping up like mushrooms all over China. By now, there are over 2000 museums in the People’s Republic, roughly attracting 150 million visitors per year (Denton 2005, 567). Part of these museums and memorials are dedicated to the history of the Second Sino-Japanese War. China’s most emblematic museum, the National Museum of China at Beijing’s Tiananmen Square, has assigned a significant segment of one of its permanent exhibitions to this war. The War of Resistance Museum, also in Beijing, is entirely focused on the war starting from 1931 to 1945. The Unit 731 Museum in Harbin is specifically focused on the biological and chemical warfare atrocities committed by the Japanese army. Of all of China’s memorials to war, the Memorial Hall of the Victims in the Nanjing Massacre12 unmistakably has become China’s most famous memorial to war. It is the only government-funded museum in China that is solely dedicated to the Nanjing Atrocities. With its 74,000 square meters of outdoor exhibition space, indoor museum and Peace Park, it constitutes an impressive place of commemoration. I personally visited the memorial in the summer of 2011.

The Nanjing Memorial was opened in 1985 on the 40th anniversary of Japanese surrender. It was fully renovated in 1994 and again in 2005. The former president of the PRC, Deng Xiaoping, inscribed the name of the building at the time of its construction. The Chinese government later officially turned the memorial into a “site of national

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12 Full name: 侵华日军南京大屠杀遇难同胞纪念馆 [The Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders], here also referred to as the ‘Nanjing Memorial’.
patriotic education” (Denton 2005; Yang 2001, 72). The museum was built on the site of the ‘Mass Grave of 10,000 corpses’, the same location where many people were killed by the Japanese army at the former Jiangdong Gate in Nanjing. The site of the museum is thus directly linked to the site where the atrocities took place. However, there is more to the memorial’s siting than this.

The Nanjing Memorial is located in a somewhat remote area. It is not surrounded by shops and does not have any crowded pedestrian areas around it. Memorial sites such as these are often constructed in out-of-the-way places in order for them to become a clear reference point to official collective memory. Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre articulated ‘space’ as socially produced; the moment a space is taken over by social activity, it becomes dependent of this and is historiciized because of it. In other words, since the site of the Nanjing Memorial is so quiet and not located in a central part of town, it is improbable for it to be linked to anything other than the memory of war or for it to be overtaken by a subversive popular memory (Mitter 2000, 282; Hubbard et al 2004).

The fact that the memorial area does not have any other big buildings surrounding it particularly makes the modern design of the museum stand out. It was designed by Qi Kang, an architect from the South China University of Technology, and is meant to symbolize the bow of a ship rising above the ground, representing the ‘Ship of Peace’ (Zhu 2007). Qi Kang is well known for this kind of philosophical architectural work on museums and memorial sites. The design of the Nanjing Memorial characterizes a new trend where Chinese museums and memorials all over the country increasingly take up innovative styles of architecture. This is not only done, as Denton puts it, for China to display its competence to “join the world” (2005, 571), but also to boost tourism and local economy. With its modern aesthetics, the Nanjing Memorial has become an advertisement to the city.

The outside of the museum is relevant to what is told on the inside: a modern design promises innovative approaches in exhibition-style (ibid., 574). This definitely holds true for this memorial, since a visit to the museum really is an experience. From entrance to exit the visitor can see, read, hear and feel the Nanjing Atrocities. The museum uses sculptures, pictures, texts, paintings, multimedia screens, films, objects, spatial design, special lighting and sound effects to get its narrative across.
The basic themes of war memorials are all attended to at the Nanjing Memorial; those who fought are praised and those who died are honored. There is place to grieve and there is place for communal commemoration. When speaking of the design of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, Hagopian (2001) explains how the most important requirements of the design were that it was to bring national reconciliation and that it needed to bridge the gap between veterans and non-veterans. The memorial planners believed these criteria would be met if the design were reflective and contemplative in nature and reserved a prominent place for the names of all who died. Furthermore, the memorial needed to abstain from strong political statements in order for all visitors, regardless of their own (political) views, to join in commemoration. In this way, people could feel united in healing the wounds of war (ibid. 2001, 315-318). In many aspects, the planners of the Nanjing Memorial followed the same track as those of the Vietnam Memorial, although the backgrounds of the commemorated wars are different.

![Image: "A Ruined Family": sculpture of a mother holding her dead child outside the Nanjing Memorial.]

The Nanjing Memorial incorporates both statuary and walls of names. These two features have probably become the most prevalent in memorials all over the world. The pavement leading to the entrance of the Nanjing Memorial has about a dozen of copper sculptures lined up, each of them portraying civilians victimized by the Japanese. The most prominent one, a sculpture of over ten meters high, is that of a mother holding her
dead child. Others include a dying couple, a crying orphan and a killed grandmother that
is carried away by her teenage son. As indicated by Hagopian (2001), this kind of
statuary is emblematic to memorials since they aim to represent all of the nation’s
casualties, irrespective of their rank, age or gender. They are not heroic, but portray the
suffering of people. It emphasizes the collective experience of the mother, the child, the
husband, etc., instead of focusing on individual cases. The wall of names represents a
similar emphasis on the collective experience and collective loss. In the prologue hall of
the museum a list of 10,000 names of victims is carved on the walls on both sides. Since
the hall is dimly lit, the names are barely visible. Instead, a bright projection of the
words “victims 300,000” is directed on the ceiling while a picture of a victim is shown on
a big screen in the front of the hall, changing every twelve seconds on the sound of a bell.
As one memorial designer put it: “(…) these names, seemingly infinite in number, convey
the sense of overwhelming numbers, while unifying those individuals into a whole”
(Hagopian 2001, 33213). Another wall with 10,000 carved names is located in the
outside area of the exhibition.

Figure 3. Stone wall at the Nanjing Memorial with names of victims.

Some parts of the Nanjing Memorial have clearly been designed to cultivate the
“reflection” and “contemplation” Hagopian refers to. Following the exhibition area,
visitors first cross the outside landscape of the memorial and are then led to the sites of
the ‘Excavation of Victim Remains in 1983’ and the ‘Mass Grave of 10,000 Corpses’.
These are places where the skeletons of the people killed at Jiangdongmen Gate in 1937

13 The memorial designer referred to is Maya Lin, designer of the Vietnam Memorial.
were dug up from the ground. Upon entering these sites visitors are informed through signs that they need to remain quiet and behave “solemn and respectful”. Whereas the first site shows scattered bones, the second site shows skeletons that were carefully excavated, revealing the ways in which the victims were killed and the position in which they died. The hall of the ‘Mass Grave of 10,000 Corpses’ repeatedly plays background music, similar to music used in thriller films with a high-pitched female voice singing in the distance. Certain parts of the hall are eerily dark, but the bones of victims are brightly lit through spotlights.

Upon exiting the hall, the visitor is lead to the ‘Meditation Hall’, a space only lit with imitation candles that has a pond running though it. A small bridge over the water leads the visitor to the other side. The black marble on the walls mirrors one’s own reflection. The lights, music and settings all add to the absorbing and reflective nature of the memorial.
Overall, the Nanjing Memorial is mainly focused on the collective suffering of the people of China at the hands of the Japanese. The theme of collective suffering is conveyed through photographs, textual narratives and simulations of wartime happenings. Throughout the museum, personal stories of survivors are told through written narrative and pictures on panels, interviews shown on screens, or statuary with accompanying text.

In highlighting the atrocious happenings, the fact that the Japanese committed them is especially emphasized. The visitor is constantly reminded who the ‘enemy’ is. This is done, for example, through the name of the Memorial (“The Memorial Hall of the Victims of the Nanjing Massacre by the Japanese Invaders”) and through textual repeat of the fact that the Japanese were responsible of the horrible war crimes.

During my visits to the memorial, I particularly noticed how the suffering of the Chinese people in Nanjing was almost sensationalized. The entrance to the exhibition hall consists of long stairs leading to a bunker-like hall where the visitor sees little burned houses whilst hearing the sound of bombs dropping. Real footage of the invasion is projected against the wall. The museum’s indoor exhibition hall shows enormous Hollywood-like three-dimensional steel letters, reading: “A Human Holocaust”. In one of the first rooms gruesome pictures are shown, some of dead babies, while, in the background, the visitor again hears the sound of bombings, accompanied by flashing lights. Another part of the museum shows pictures of atrocities committed by the Japanese, categorized in “shooting Chinese”, “sabering Chinese”, “burning Chinese”, “killing Chinese for competition”, “killing the Chinese for pleasure” and “burying Chinese”. One of the most striking parts of the exhibition involves the reconstruction of a horrific household scene entitled “Ruined Families”. A real-life stone house stands in the exhibition room. Looking through the windows of the houses, one can ‘witness’ the atrocities committed by the Japanese in one particular family, reenacted by human-like dolls. The house displays a murder scene where an entire Chinese family was just killed by the Japanese. Some puppets are lying naked on the floor. Two small children are still alive. Textual narrative explains how the children, who had witnessed the gang rape of their mother and two sisters, had lived amidst the corpses of their grandparents, parents and sisters for fourteen days. They survived by eating leftovers and were finally rescued by a neighbor. Another section is dedicated to the different ways in which the Japanese got rid of corpses by throwing them in the river, burying or burning them.
The Nanjing Memorial exhibition is, without a doubt, quite powerful when it comes
down to images and information on victim’s experiences. It evokes reactions from the
visitors- it is bound to stir up emotions through its shocking pictures and detailed
personal stories. It also rouses the imagination of the visitor through the reconstruction
of scenes, sound effects and lighting. In fact, after seeing this exhibition, it should not be
hard for any visitor to imagine what happened in 1937 Nanjing. The exhibition is also
impactful in the way it was set up: every wall displays at least twenty pictures and
television screens playing real footage, some amount of relics and heaps of documents
and paintings. The multitude of information, in this sense, is overwhelming. The
epilogue of the exhibition states that “history must not be forgotten. The Nanjing
Massacre is a true tragedy for the Chinese nation, a national humiliation that must be
remembered”. The last room of the exhibition provides a place for visitors to share their
feelings through interactive screens. Here, people can give their condolences, leave a
message or pose any questions they might have. There is also a ‘pop-quiz’ for visitors to
see how much they remembered. This idea of ‘remembrance’ is emphasized again when
visitors exit the hall. Above the gate a large question mark is depicted, followed by the
question: “Do you remember?”

Another recurring theme in the memorial’s narrative of war is that of patriotism
and the strengthening of the nation. The theme of patriotism is carried out through the
display of pictures and recollections of the many individuals who sacrificed their lives
for the nation, such as Chinese military officers who would “rather die than surrender”.
This patriotism is linked to the theme of strengthening the nation:

We can never forget (...) the tragedy disaster our people suffered. Under
patriotic enthusiasm, we should struggle unceasingly for the construction of
socialism with Chinese characteristics, the realization of the peaceful
reunification of our motherland and the maintenance of world peace.

The outdoor exhibition area also emphasizes the revitalization of the nation in its texts
on several memorial stones, such as: “The past kept in mind is a guide for the future.
Thus was this memorial tablet specially raised in order to console the dead as well as to
courage future generations to love our nation, strengthen the fatherland, oppose
aggression and uphold peace”. Or: “This memorial stone was (...) established to (...) urge
future generations to remember this history and revitalize China”. The patriotic side to
the museum is also visible in its official memorial shop; it sells a wide range of Mao
Zedong collectibles: postcards, key chains, handbags, books and DVD’s. This seems somewhat unusual, since Mao does not often reappear in the exhibition itself. In other museums, however, Mao Zedong and the Communist Party play a significantly larger role.

In the summer of 2011, I visited the National Museum of China and the Beijing War of Resistance Museum. The latter is China’s only museum solely dedicated to the Sino-Japanese War, established in 1987 and renovated and reopened in 2010. This museum also focuses on Nanjing and the suffering caused by the Japanese, but its main theme is the rise and strengthening of the Chinese nation and its national sacrifices for the struggle against fascism. Mao Zedong and the Communist Party are at the core of the museum’s narrative. It is particularly emphasized how the entire nation (including the Nationalists) unified under the leadership of the CPC to defend the country. The museum starts its historical account in 1931 when Japan launched its war of aggression and the Communist Party announced the “awakening of the Chinese nation.” The narrative claims that the Chinese nation was revitalized through the uniting strength of the CPC and that China gained great international status because of its enormous sacrifice to the world’s “Anti-Fascist War”. In this way, the history of war is fully incorporated into the history of the Communist Party. The CPC is declared “the lighthouse and mainstay during the Anti-Japanese War.” Special emphasis is placed on the fact that all of China, including the “Taiwan compatriots” and people from Hong-Kong and Macao, took part in “the struggle that decided the life or death of the nation.” According to the museum’s narrative, this unified struggle resulted in the historic victory of China. As the display says:

After the 14 years’ heroic and unyielding struggles, the Chinese people (...) defeated the enemy of much stronger economic strength and more advanced military equipment (...) This earth-shaking victory made the Chinese nation wipe out its 100-year humiliation and display a new image in the world.

The National Museum of China and the Beijing War of Resistance Museum provide similar narratives on the Second Sino-Japanese War. The National Museum is China’s oldest museum, and its location, Tiananmen Square, is very symbolic as the square was designed by the early PRC government to display the power and dominance of the Communist Party (Mitter 2000, 282). The museum was fully renovated in March 2011. “The Road of Rejuvenation” (Fuxing zhi Lu) is the museum’s permanent exhibition that
reflects on China’s history from 1840 onwards. It is called the ‘Road of Rejuvenation’ because, according to the exhibition’s preface, Chinese people have tried to rejuvenate the nation in every way since the Opium War. The Second Sino-Japanese War plays an important role in this ‘rejuvenation’ of the nation. Mao and the CPC are presented as the main factors that succeeded in “saving the nation”. The Nanjing Atrocities are again singled out; the museum displays explicit pictures of beheaded corpses, mass-graves and emaciated Chinese in camps set up by the Japanese invaders. A wooden tablet on the wall shows words by Mao:

Mobilize the masses, strengthen the power of the people. Under the leadership of the Party, we will defeat the Japanese invader, liberate the people all over the nation and set up a New Democratic China.14

The final part of the exhibition shows how the CPC overthrew the Nationalists (Guomindang) and helped the nation to heal the wounds of war. A new era in the history of the Chinese nation had begun. The achievement of national independence, liberation of the people and unity of China’s ethnic groups are all presented as the successes of the CPC. Although the “Road to Rejuvenation” is an exhibition that narrates the history of China from 1840 to the present, many historical happenings are left out. The great famine of 1958-1962, where an estimated 45 million Chinese people died under the leadership of Mao Zedong (Dikötter 2010) is omitted. The hardships of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) are not mentioned, neither are the 1989 student protests on Tiananmen Square (also known as the ‘Tiananmen Massacre’).

China’s war memorials have corresponding main themes, such as the patriotic narrative of heroic resistance and the emphasis on the Japanese atrocities. These themes are typical to China’s “new remembering” of war (Coble 2007, 394, 409). The collective suffering and the horrors of war, committed by a clear enemy (the Japanese), are continuously repeated. Despite this emphasis on suffering, the rise and strengthening of the nation is described as a positive outcome of the war, thanks to the patriotic resistance of the people and the Communist Party. The Nanjing Atrocities are singled as the greatest national humiliation that represents the suffering caused by the Japanese in China.

14“放手发动群众，壮大人民力量，在我党的领导下，打败日本侵略者，解放全国人民，建立一个新民主主义的中国”
3.3 Let’s Meet at Yasukuni– Japan’s War Memorials

Around the beginning of the 1990s, a renewed discussion on Japan’s war past flared up in Japanese society. This ongoing reassessment of Japan’s war legacies led to the construction of new war memorials and museums all over the nation. At present, Japan has over 200 memorial museums and exhibit halls that focus on WWII (Hein&Takenaka 2007, 67). In The Rape of Nanking, Chang presents somewhat of a monolithic Japanese view on war as she depicts “Japan” as a nation that is still trying to “bury the victims of Nanking (...) into historical oblivion” (1997, 220). As academics like Roger Jeans (2005) have argued, there is no actual unified Japanese view of the war: “the reality is a struggle in which conservatives and right-wingers duel with moderates and leftists over the “correct history” of the war” (149). This struggle has become especially apparent through the controversies surrounding different war museums in Japan.

One can roughly discern three types of war museums in Japan. The first is the category of museums managed by the Japanese Self Defense Forces. These museums mainly focus on the continuous history of the Self Defense Forces, starting from the establishment of the imperial armed forces to the present. They stress the technology of warfare and military strategies, and have hardly caused any controversies in Japan (Hein&Takenaka 2007, 67). The other two types of war museums, however, have triggered heated debates amongst various groups of politicians and citizens. They could be divided into what Jeans calls “true war museums” and “peace museums” (Jeans 2005, 150).

New so-called “peace museums” have been appearing in several Japanese cities since the early 1990s. This ‘category’ of museums assumes a critical stance on Japan’s war history by not just presenting Japan as a victim but also as a victimizer in war. Because they acknowledge the acts of war committed by the Japanese army, they are sometimes also referred to as “aggression museums” (Hein&Takenaka 2007; Jeans 2005, 150). The Osaka International Peace Center and Kyoto Museum for World Peace are well-known examples. Other peace museums have been established in Kawasaki, Nagasaki and Saitama.

The Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum and Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum could be labeled as “peace museums”, although they do not necessarily stress the acts of
aggression committed by the Japanese. They rather focus on the suffering caused by the A-bombs and emphasize universal peace. These memorials were both founded in 1955 by the cities’ municipal governments, ten years after the bombs fell. The Hiroshima Memorial is Japan’s most famous peace museum. In *The Wages of Guilt* (1994), Ian Buruma critically assesses the Hiroshima museum when he speaks of the “myth of Hiroshima” and its “pacifist cult” (101). Buruma’s main critique of the memorial is that it misses any broader historical perspective beyond August 6, 1945. The devastation caused by the atomic bomb is at the center of the museum’s narrative and in this way “Japanese sins are dissolved in the sins of mankind” (ibid., 104). He continues:

This allows the Japanese to take two routes at once, a national one, as unique victims of the A-bomb, and a universal one, as the apostles of the Hiroshima spirit. This, then, is how Japanese pacifists (...) define the Japanese identity (104).

However, some things did change after Buruma’s visit to the memorial. Since 1987 there have been groups petitioning for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki museums to provide a broader context to the history of the bombings. This eventually led to the placement of an “aggressors corner” to the Hiroshima museum, describing the atrocities committed by the Japanese army, including a display on the war crimes in Nanjing. Similar efforts did not succeed in Nagasaki, where attempts by the curators to add photographs of the Nanjing Atrocities to the exhibition stirred up so much protest from nationalist groups that it was decided to remove them (Hein&Takenaka 2007, 65).

The emergence of peace museums and their changing historical narrative is definitely noteworthy; their existence is representative to the diverging views on war in Japan’s society. However, since virtually all of these museums are locally run and sponsored, they do not represent the commemoration of war on national government level. The first official war-related museum that was built and funded by the central government is the Showa Hall in Tokyo. This could thus be regarded the national “memory site” of war (Smits 2002, 37). Nevertheless, it is not Showa Hall but Yasukuni Shrine that has unquestionably become the most important place for national commemoration of war. Within the premises of the Shrine also lies Japan’s oldest war museum, the famous Yushukan. The Yasukuni site, including both shrine and museum, is the place where bereaved families commemorate those who passed away and where veterans honor their comrades (Rose 2007, 25; Breen 2007, 11).
The Yushukan and Showa Hall could both be categorized in what Jeans calls “true war museums”. This category can crudely be described as those museums that avoid any controversy concerning cruelties inflict by the Japanese in order to console survivors and focus on the nation’s own sufferings (Jeans 2005; Hein&Takenaka 2007). Yushukan is intrinsically linked to the history of Yasukuni Shrine. Not only is Yushukan located within the Yasukuni area (just about fifty meters west of the shrine), its exhibition is a concrete extension of Yasukuni’s implicit narrative. While the core narrative of the Nanjing Memorial can mainly be found in its present physical contents, the essence of Yasukuni’s narrative predominantly lies in its historical and spiritual background. The story of Yasukuni is deeply ingrained in the overall culture and modern history of Japan. The Shrine was built around the time of the Meiji Restoration (1868), when Japan established its modern national political order that was centered on the emperor. The new leaders of Japan wanted to create a fresh religious landscape that would boost the national spirit. Shinto was therefore introduced as the nation’s unique religion, and Yasukuni was constructed in Tokyo as such a state-funded Shinto shrine. It was dedicated to all of those who had sacrificed their lives for the emperor (Breen 2007, 12-13). The Yushukan was built in 1882 to display the belongings of the war dead. The Shrine became especially important for the Japanese nation during wartime, since the government used Yasukuni as an incentive to war for soldiers. When the emperor visited the Shrine in 1874, he composed a poem, saying: “I assure those of you who fought and died for your country that your names will live forever at this shrine in Musashino” (Yasukuni 2011). Young men were promised to be immortalized at the Shrine and to be honored by the emperor if they died for the sake of the nation. As a result, “Let’s meet at Yasukuni” became a catchphrase amongst WWII soldiers before dying. Dying in war was inextricably connected to devoting the emperor, loyalty to the nation and Japan’s unique religion. Yasukuni became the pure embodiment of this connection, creating a triangle of ‘state – shrine - soldiers’ that was integral to the (‘imagined’) Japanese nation (Breen 2007; Trefalt 2002). Losing one’s life during battle, and being enshrined at Yasukuni, was conceived of as a noble cause rather than a tragedy.

The ‘enshrinement’ of Japan’s soldiers at Yasukuni finds its root in the common Japanese belief that every death brings forth a spirit. At the Shrine these spirits of the war dead are worshipped as deities (kami). Yasukuni is thus not a burial ground - it is the
place (in the Main Sanctuary or Honden) where the souls of the soldiers reside (Nelson 2003, 450; Breen 2005; Selden 2008). At present, nearly 2.5 million kami are enshrined at Yasukuni. Their details are recorded in the Repository for the Register of Deities (Reijibo Hoanden), which is a small shrine behind the Main Sanctuary. This register, where the names of the kami are written on handmade Japanese paper, is also referred to as the “Book of Souls” (Yang 2006, 67; Yasukuni 2012). The repository contains all the names of the people who fought and died for their country since 1853. This also includes the First Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, World War I and World War II. According to Breen (2005) it contains “the most accurate records of those who died in Japanese uniform” in WWII. It is noteworthy that this ‘Shrine archive’ was build long after the war had ended, in 1972, with the financial support of the emperor, and that the controversial enshrinement of the Tokyo Trials’ Class A war criminals did not take place until 1978 (Yasukuni 2012; Breen 2005).

After the defeat of Japan in 1945, the Allied Powers implemented rigorous rules on Japan’s religious rites and monuments to war that affected Yasukuni’s status quo. Not only did they restrict the connection between state and religion, they initially also prevented the government from commemorating its fallen soldiers. These new legal circumstances officially eliminated the ‘state – shrine’ link along with that of the state and the soldiers. Of the former ‘state – shrine - soldiers’ triangle, it was thus only the connection between the Shrine and the soldiers that continued to exist (Trefalt 2002, 120-121). Since Yasukuni was no longer allowed to be state-sponsored, it became a non-governmental religious institution that became mainly financed through the wealthy ‘Japan Society for the War Bereaved’ (Nihon Izokukai) that currently has a membership of 80,000, many of whom are influential figures (Breen 2007, 5).

The Yasukuni Shrine officially is an independent institution that does not speak for the government. However, it always maintained powerful relations with the state. Closer examinations of post-war enshrinement procedures have exposed the intrinsic influence of government officials on the Shrine’s affairs; extensive documents¹⁵ on Yasukuni’s history have recently revealed that the government played a crucial role in the enshrinement of war criminals. Japan’s Health Ministry, responsible for all governmental dealings with the war dead, closely cooperated with Shrine officials since

¹⁵ These documents, preserved at the National Diet Library, were publicized in 2007, titled New Edition: a collection of Yasukuni shrine problem documents (Shinpen Yasukuni jinja mondai shiryou shu) (Breen 2007, 6; Mullins 2009).
1956 to prepare the data files of fallen soldiers that were necessary to carry out
enshrinement rituals (Breen 2007, 6-8; Mullins 2009). Breen describes how the
government pressured the inclusion of fourteen Class A war criminals at the Shrine. The
main argument was that, since these convicted criminals were executed during the
Occupation, they actually died during “war time” and thus could technically be regarded
“war-dead” (ibid. 2007, 8). The fact that their enshrinement was not carried out until
1978 had more to do with hesitance on the side of Yasukuni priests than with
cautiousness on the side of the Ministry (ibid.). After the enshrinement of Class A war
criminals, the emperor did not visit the Shrine again. Although his reasons for this are
not clear (Breen speculates he might have wanted to avoid any controversy on his own
involvement in war), his last visit remains to be that of 1975.

Yasukuni’s relations to the government also emerge from the fact that important
figures at government level have continued to visit the Shrine, stirring up protest in
China and other countries. Former Prime Minister Nakasone was the first postwar
leader of Japan to worship at Yasukuni in his official function in 1985, followed by
Koizumi who visited it every year of his premiership from 2001 to 2006. Other prime
ministers to visit the Shrine were Miyazawa in 1992 and Hashimoto in 1996, although
they both stressed the private nature of their visits. Abe, Koizumi’s successor, did not
visit Yasukuni in person, but he did send flowers to the Shrine in order for them to be
offered to the kami on his behalf. In 2011, 68 members of Japan’s parliament paid a
collective visit to Yasukuni (Asahi 2011; Breen 2007, 1; Tamamoto 2001). These visits
mainly cause recurring controversies because of Yasukuni’s enshrinement of war
criminals. It is evident that although the “state-shrine-soldiers” triangle legally no longer
exists, it is still very much alive in the imagination and collective memory of the
Japanese nation. Despite government plans to establish a new national site to
commemorate war, Koizumi has stated that “no facility can serve as a substitute for
Yasukuni Shrine” (Seaton 2007b, 171).

In 1985, the Yushukan museum reopened to the public after it had been closed
since 1945. It was renewed again in 2002. At the time of its reopening Yushukan was the
only museum in Japan that dealt with the history of WWII. The museum holds about
100,000 artifacts, such as paintings, costumes, weapons and letters that once belonged
to the enshrined soldiers (Yasukuni 2011; Hein & Takenaka 2007, 88-89). The building
itself is a mixture of European-style architecture with Japanese forms. This type of
design is representative to the period in which Yushukan was established. After the Meiji Restoration, Japan adopted a new kind of architecture where Western styles and material were combined with typical Japanese shapes. This was done to show that Japan was adapting and absorbing Western ideas and technology, without losing its own cultural tradition (Visita 2009).

![Yushukan Museum](image)

*Figure 7. The Yushukan Museum within the Yasukuni premises.*

The most important topics a memorial has to deal with, as mentioned before, are the recognition of those who fought and the honoring of those who died. In addition, survivors have to be given space to grieve. All of these ‘criteria’ are met at Yasukuni and Yushukan. What ultimately is the most important goal for any national place of commemoration is to let people join in commemoration. One way to unite people and to incorporate memories of war into the collective history of the nation is to specifically emphasize concepts of separation and reunion. By focusing on those who died, the ones who live are all united in their remembrance of the dead. No matter if they are young or old, male or female, veteran or non-veteran, they are all connected because they commemorate those who died in their national war (Hagopian 2001, 311). Since this sense of collectivity needs to overcome all other differences between people (gender, age, backgrounds, opinions, etc.), memorials should abstain from conveying strong political views that divide people. A memorial needs to cultivate contemplation to set the ‘right mood’ for collective remembrance. This is not difficult in the case of Yasukuni and its premises; being a shrine, it is meditative by nature. Yasukuni also emphasizes it makes no difference between the *kami* it honors: “These people, regardless of their rank or social standing, are considered to be completely equal and worshipped as venerable divinities of Yasukuni” (Yasukuni 2011). The former status of the spirits is subordinate
to the mere fact that they died for their nation. This turns Yasukuni into a place that
does not commemorate individuals (or specific war criminals); it stresses the collective
dedication to the nation. Instead of emphasizing the suffering of the people, it focuses on
the loyalty soldiers showed to their country.

Statuary is also incorporated in the Yasukuni premises to stress its collective
dedication to war. There are particularly two statues before the entrance of the museum
that stand out. The first is that of a mother alone with her three children, erected to
honor all the widows of war that had to endure hardship and loneliness in raising their
children on their own. Near to the mother stands the bronze statue of an anonymous
kamikaze pilot, erected to honor all those who fought in the Special Defense Forces. In
this way, mother and pilot are united at the entrance. Yasukuni further stresses this idea
of collective dedication to war by the statuary of dogs and horses to honor all of Japan’s
animals that died in wartime.

![Image of the widowed mother statue]

*Figure 8. Statue of the widowed mother.*

![Image of the kamikaze statue]

*Figure 9. Nameless kamikaze.*

The main themes expressed at the Shrine’s museum are collective sacrifice, patriotism
and loyalty to the nation. The Second World War plays a significant role; seven of
Yushukan’s fourteen exhibition rooms deal with the 1937-1945 period (Smith 2002, 55).
Emphasis is not placed on the tragic deaths of the war dead. Instead, their deaths are
depicted as glorious and noble. Perkins (2009) describes how one of the TV screens at
Yushukan’s main hall plays a documentary on the Special Attack Force, showing the
faces of Japanese pilots accompanied by rock music, and introducing a former militant, who looks at the camera and says: “My friends were smiling as they left. We were smiling as we said goodbye” (2).

Visitors walk through different exhibit rooms that narrate Japan’s military accomplishments. These rooms are filled with bloodstained clothing, final letters, photographs and personal stories of those who got killed. As Nelson (2003) states: “The narratives that accompany the exhibits are actively evangelical, extolling the commitment, loyalty, bravery and self-sacrifice of those who died in service to the nation and emperor” (454). The museum also uses war weapons, videos, music, and other different artifacts to get its narrative across.

Yasukuni and its museum generally avoid any politically sensitive topics. There is no mention of Japanese atrocities and no reference to Japan as a perpetrator of war. The invasion of Nanjing is neutrally explained as a military “operation” that was executed in order to discourage the Chinese from “waging war against the Japanese” (Yamane 2009, 78). Informative panels on the museum’s walls explain Japan’s acts of war as self-defense (Hein&Takenaka 2007, 89; Nelson 2003). A new statue, placed in front of Yushukan in 2005, depicts Judge Radhabinod Pal. This was the only justice at the Tokyo Trials to find the Japanese defendants not guilty (Brook 2007).

The recurring theme of national patriotism is emphasized through the portrayal of individual heroic stories. One of them is that of Lieutenant Nishi, an equestrian that won gold at the 1932 Olympics and died in a suicidal tank attack against the Americans. Along with the gold medal, the museum displays his picture and honors him as a divinity enshrined at Yasukuni (Breen 2007b). This is one but thousands of such stories displayed at Yushukan. The main narrative of the museum is clear in its message: the Japanese fought for a noble cause (Hein&Takenaka 2007, 89; Nelson 2003; Jeans 2005).

As mentioned earlier, the only official governmental war museum is the Showa Hall, established in 1999. Its narrative is not much different from Yushukan in the sense that it avoids any reference to suffering caused by the Japanese army. It is located only one street from the Yasukuni Shrine. The museum entirely focuses on the hardships of daily life in Japan during and after the Second World War. Former Prime Minister Hashimoto advocated the establishment of the Showa Hall out of his conviction that “the current prosperity of Japan was built upon the pain and suffering of its people during and immediately after the war” (Hein&Takenaka 2007, 77). To stress the collective
hardships of the Japanese people during wartime and avoid controversies, the planning committee had proposed to “show as little war as possible” (Jeans 2005, 77). Showa Hall indeed avoids any references to war and fully focuses on the home-front experiences by displaying a collection of household items, such as clothing, textbooks or food utensils. The abundance of everyday items from the 1930s to the 1950s makes the Showa experience a nostalgic one to many visitors. Kerry Smith (2002) observed an older lady’s reaction as she visited the museum, cheerfully saying “how this makes me remember!” (“natsukashii”)16 while looking over the objects and chatting to other visitors of her age (61-62).

Although the suffering of people in times of fear or hunger are addressed in the exhibition, the main focus is on the courage and sacrifice of the normal citizens that collectively joined forces to create what is now the modern-day Japan. Smith remarks that almost all the videos on display are of smiling people who happily go about their everyday lives. Since the museum avoids any mention of the war outside of Japan, some critics, such as author Ide Magoroku, have stated that except for nostalgia there is “nothing at the core of the exhibition” (ibid., 54). There is, however, something at the heart of Showa Hall, which is the same message expressed at Yasukuni and Yushukan: the Japanese people, both at home and overseas, have patriotically sacrificed their lives for the nation that Japan is today.

16 “Natsukashii” could also roughly be translated as “I feel nostalgic”.
4. The Magic of Memory

4.1 Changing Narratives

The long postwar period, where neither Chinese nor Japanese governments seemed to want their people to be reminded of the 1937-1945 years, has turned into an era where both China and Japan invest a great deal of money, time and effort in the commemoration of war. Chinese and Japanese war museums were opened in 1985, 1987 and 1999, and exhibitions or museums were renewed and renovated in 1994, 2002, 2005 and 2011. As pointed out earlier, a new stream of literature on the subject of war started emerging from the mid-1990s on. Although Chinese and Japanese national ‘mythscapes’ of the postwar decades generally lacked references to war, both nations seemed to attach great value to the way in which the war past was remembered in the 1990s and 2000s. Different events in the last decennia have triggered these re-remembrances of war, making the Second Sino-Japanese War, and particularly the Nanjing Atrocities, an important issue to China, Japan and their mutual relations. What served as a catalyst for China and Japan’s present ways of remembering their war?

There are, in fact, different happenings that made China and Japan remember the war in their respective ways, and that also made their historical narratives change along the way. This process, where memories reemerged and were reconstructed, was not only generated by events that took place on a national level. On the contrary, this chapter illuminates how international affairs have affected the construction of collective memory. As Seaton (2007) points out: “Societies and the cultural memories they produce do not exist in a vacuum, but as part of an international society of states and cultures” (16). Chinese and Japanese narratives of war were shaped under the influence of the other nation’s narrative and of events within the international society as a whole.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the international environment was changing drastically. In the first postwar decades, the Cold War era had divided the world in a bipolar one where nations were either supporting the Soviet or the US side, automatically also pulling up the wall between China and Japan. From the early 1970s on, however, the global system shifted towards multipolarity as the international community became more interdependent and more focused on global exchange.
Manfred Steger refers to this period as the “contemporary period” (2009, 36; Hook et al 2005, 105). It is this period that paved the way for a new beginning of Sino-Japanese relations, which eventually opened up the ‘Pandora’s box’ of war memories.

In the 1970s, Chinese and Japanese governments, under the influence of a changing international society, were finding their place in this ‘new world’ in their own ways. Whilst the Japanese were mainly focused on international trade and the ‘economic miracle’ that was taking place within the country, China made its ‘reentry’ into international society in 1972 by rekindling its friendship with the United States. This switch, the Sino-US rapprochement, was a result of worsening relations between China and the Soviet and the deterioration of the US’s hegemonic position due to its great losses during the Vietnam War. The Sino-US reconciliation was marked by President Nixon’s historic visit to China. The US now recognized Beijing (and not Taipei) as the legitimate Chinese government. The meeting between Mao and Nixon put an end to twenty-three years of hostility between the two nations (Kornberg&Faust 2005, 137). The PRC suddenly mattered as an international player. This did not go unnoticed in Japan where a true ‘China Boom’ was taking place; public opinion polls indicated that the number of Japanese people who thought well of China was swiftly increasing. In that same year, Japan’s Prime Minister Tanaka visited China to seal the Sino-Japanese normalization agreement (Yang 2001, 60; Mochizuki 2007, 231). The following years could be labeled as a “honeymoon period” of steadily improving Sino-Japanese relations (Heinzen 2004; 151). China needed Japan’s economic assistance and Japan eagerly supplied China with goods. In 1978, the friendship between the two nations was topped off with the Treaty of Peace and Friendship.

The flourishing economic and political ties between China and Japan conjured up Japan’s so-called “victimizer consciousness” (kagaisha ishiki) (Yoshida 2006, 88); government officials could not fully normalize Japan’s relations with Beijing without looking to the past. In 1972, the Japanese government therefore stated it was “keenly aware of and deeply reflects on its responsibility for the great injury it had inflicted in the past on the Chinese people through war” (Mochizuki 2007, 231). The awareness of Japan’s aggressive war past did not just emerge at government-level, but especially amongst academics, journalists and writers who started to publish on Nanjing and the war.
Journalist Honda Katsuichi was one of the pioneering journalists to take on the topic of the Second Sino-Japanese War. His work as a foreign reporter during the Vietnam War triggered his curiosity about Japan’s own war past (Honda 1999, xxvi). In 1971, he toured China for forty days to interview victims of Japanese aggression. These explicit articles were published in the Asahi newspaper, titled Travels in China. The controversial work shocked many readers and ignited a fiery debate on the acts of the Japanese in China, setting off a chain reaction as one publication after the other appeared, either supporting or attacking Honda’s work. Hora Tomio’s The Nanjing Incident, Tanaka Masaaki’s Thesis of Japan’s Innocence, Suzuki Akira’s The Illusion of the Nanjing Massacre and Honda’s new book The Japanese Army in China all came out in 1972. This stream of publications brought the war and Nanjing under the attention of Japan’s general public, portraying it either as an atrocious event the Japanese should feel ashamed of, or as a product of fabrications and exaggerations (Wakabayashi 2000; Yoshida 2006). The increased awareness of Japan’s war history led to an adjustment in school textbooks to slightly mention Nanjing. Two schoolbooks, both in 1977 and 1978, added Nanjing in their footnotes as an incident where the Japanese had killed “a vast number of people” (Yoshida 2006, 89). Although the footnote references to the atrocities might seem insignificant, they were major compared to the decades of silence preceding them (ibid.).

Japan’s media debates of the early 1980s grew even more intense than they already were during the 1970s, as the participating groups of people began to get more and more dispersed. In the summer of 1982, Japan’s newspapers reported that the Ministry of Education had demanded revision in high school textbooks on what had happened in Nanjing. The most disputed issue was that the author was to change the word “shinryaku” (“invade and plunder”) into the more neutral verb “shinshutsu” (“advance into”). Although the media reports were misleading, since the schoolbooks were never adjusted, the issue resulted in a storm of protest of groups within Japan (Inagaki 2006, 126-128; Wakabayashi 2000, 308; Yang 2001; Mochizuki 2007).

By the beginning of the 1980s, the Chinese Communist Party was suffering from a severe threefold legitimacy crisis, composed of a “crisis of faith in socialism”, a “crisis of confidence in the future of the country” and a “crisis of trust in the Party” (Suzuki 2007, 26). Mao Zedong had died in 1976, and the government of Deng Xiaoping had introduced a new state ideology that did not evolve around the communist ideal but
instead focused on economic reform and liberalization (Denton 2007). Deng faced a multitude of problems in his mission to rule and modernize China.

One of these problems was Taiwan. Taiwan’s Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek had passed away in 1975. Now that archenemies Mao and Chiang were both dead and the US acknowledged Beijing as China’s official government, the main hindrances in the reunification of Taiwan with the motherland had vanished. Although Deng had expressed his intention to realize unification in 1980, there were no signs of progress in 1982. As a keen promoter of US-China relations, Deng did not follow a hard-line Taiwan policy. Instead, he wanted to build on “good faith” and “good intentions” between the two sides (Sun 2009, 213). In the meanwhile, the US still engaged in arm sales to Taiwan while Japan continued its vigorous trade with Taipei. Deng was therefore heavily criticized for being too “soft” in his foreign policy (Buruma 2002, 8; Ross 2009).

Deng’s greatest priority was to set China’s economic recovery in motion. Another problem was that although economic reform would bring more prosperity to the nation in the future, the Chinese nation was still unified through Maoist ideals from the past. Since Deng was committed as much to national stability as to modernizing the nation, he could not fully repudiate Mao’s legacy (Coldstream 2009). Instead of renouncing the Mao era, the painful parts of history were avoided, such as the big famine (1958-1962) that had killed millions of people. The revolutionary history, propagating the message of class struggle, was also carefully avoided. New societal issues emerged through the rise of China’s economy, such as problems with migrant workers and greater divisions between the rich and the poor. In this new national environment, old communist ideals of class struggle and ‘mobilization of the masses’ were not only uncalled for, they were potentially threatening to new state ideology (Denton 2007). What was needed were new memories of the past; memories that would unite the people instead of dispersing them.

As a stroke of luck, a possibility for ‘new memories’ arrived in the shape of the textbook debate in Japan (Heinzen 2004, 152). A high-leveled Japanese delegation had visited Taipei in the summer of 1982 right before Japan’s prime minister would come to Beijing. As Buruma (2002) states, this was the right timing for Deng to “twist the knife” (8). The history of Nanjing and the Second Sino-Japanese War were back on China’s radar. Chinese news reports had initially ignored the textbook issue, but by August the government-controlled People’s Daily was condemning Japan’s textbooks and insinuated
a revival of Japanese militarism. The Japanese ambassador in Beijing was summoned by
the foreign ministry and faced a formal protest. Survivors of the Nanjing Massacre were
encouraged to talk to (Japanese) journalists and the People’s Daily printed survivor
accounts (Eykholt 2000; Buruma 2002). The 1982 textbook controversy proved to be an
inducement to further controversy. Prime Minister Nakasone’s visit to Yasukuni Shrine
in 1985, Japan’s increase in military spending and another textbook debacle in 1986 all

Whilst the history of war was dominating reports of Sino-Japanese relations,
Chinese historians were rewriting history. Under the influence of Deng’s reform policy,
historians were making strenuous efforts to ‘renew’ history, not by reproducing
Western-centric works, but by assuming an “own global perspective” (Luo 2010, 328).
One of these historians was Qi Shiron. In his work, Qi states that China played a crucial
role in the world’s battle against fascism. He substantiates this argument by explaining
that China was the sole nation to fight Japan, world’s second greatest fascist power, from
1937 to 1939 (Coble 2007, 398). According to this narrative, China historically held a
special status both internationally and regionally. Internationally, China had been one of
the five greatest nations fighting fascism. Regionally, Chinese people had prevented the
Japanese army from seeking hegemony elsewhere in Asia (Qi 1985, 118). The author
refers to Japan as “the Japanese invader” or “the (ferocious) enemy”17 by which China
was victimized. Qi’s narrative suited Deng’s government for several reasons. It did not
only emphasize that China was an important international and regional player, it also
unified the people by accentuating the role of Mao and the Red Army and the total
contribution of the Chinese people including the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek
(2007, 398). The narrative matched with China as a reforming and modernizing member
of international society, it arose a pride in history for both Mainlanders as Taiwanese,
and it evaded painful memories of the Maoist era without repudiating Mao. Similar
narratives of history were provided by historians such as Li Xin (1986) or Yu Zidao
(1988). They were all positive about the role of the nationalist government and
emphasized Japanese war crimes (Mitter 2007,174). The Central Party History
Commission willingly adopted this general historical line as the official new way of
remembering the war, and issued a collection of these articles in 1988 (ibid., 398). The

17 “日本侵略者”，“敌人”，“凶恶敌人” (1985, 118,122,124,133).
Nanjing Memorial and the Beijing War of Resistance Museum were opened in 1985 and 1987, reproducing this same historical narrative.

Japanese government and society responded to war controversies and Chinese allegations in two consecutive ways. First, Japanese leaders engaged in a so-called “diplomacy of apology” (McCormack 1998, 6). After China’s public outcry about the Yasukuni visit, Prime Minister Nakasone decided never to return to the Shrine for the sake of Sino-Japanese relations (Breen 2007, 10). The Japanese government became more willing to address Japan’s military past, especially after the death of Emperor Hirohito in 1989. The next emperor, Akihito, expressed his “profound regret” in 1992 over the “many and great sufferings” that were caused by Japan to China (Barker&Chang 2001, 56). From 1993 to 1995, Japan directly addressed its regret over war crimes at multiple occasions through its ministers and diplomats. Most notably, Prime Minister Murayama apologized for Japan’s war past in 1994 and 1995. The government also acknowledged the comfort women issue, and set up funds to provide indirect compensation (McCormack 1998; Nish 2000, 88).

The attitude of Japanese leaders and different societal groups towards China changed around the 50th anniversary of WWII, when the so-called ‘China Boom’ turned into reluctance to adhere to China’s continuing complaints about Japan’s war history. After Chinese leaders violently knocked down the Tiananmen student protest, many Japanese expressed their discontent with the fact that the Chinese government stressed Japanese war atrocities but turned a blind eye to its own cruelties. When, despite strong Japanese dissent, the Chinese government carried out nuclear tests in 1995, governmental leaders were offended that Japan’s sensitivities about nuclear issues were ignored (McCormack 1998; Self 2002, 78). An overall aversion against the “diplomacy of apology” emerged. This, amongst others, became visible through a latent desire to create a “distinctive Japanese historical consciousness” (Nihon jishin no rekishi ishiki) (McCormack 1998, 6). Government leaders suggested that schoolchildren should be taught a “love of country” (aikokushugi), and new organizations were formed in 1994 and 1995 by Diet members opposing apologies to war and insisting on the justness of Japan’s war (ibid.; Clifford 2004, 7; Heinzen 2004, 152). Similar organizations were also established outside the Diet, such as the Liberal Historiography Study Group (Jiyuushugi Shikan Kenkyuuukai) founded by Tokyo University Professor Fujioka Nobukatsu. This group, consisting of academics, writers and media personalities, attempted to recast the
narrative of Japan’s war “in a positive and deeply nationalistic light” (Clifford 2004, 1). Fujioka published a best-selling book entitled *History Not Taught in Schoolbooks (Kyoukashou ga Oshienai Rekishi)* in 1996. One of the group’s members, Kobayashi Yoshinori, wrote an even more successful work in 1998. It was a *manga* (a cartoon book) that, under the name of *Analects of War (Sensou Ron)*, claimed that society was suffering from a crisis of national consciousness because Japanese people did not take pride in their own war history. In this work, Kobayashi defends Japan’s war past by stating it was not only fought for the protection of Japan’s national security, but also to protect Asia from Western imperialism and to transform the “racist world order” (Clifford 2004, 1-2). He takes a negative stance towards the US and Chinese governments, condemning them for ‘inventing’ the Nanjing Atrocities, saying: “Since the Americans killed 300,000 people with the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they wanted to pin an equally heinous crime on the Japanese” (ibid., 13). His conclusion is that Japanese society can only flourish if people start to devote themselves again to the national entity, just like their grandfathers who were prepared to die for their nation. Kobayashi’s work sold over a million copies, making it one of the best-selling manga of all times (ibid., 2).

Although Japan’s revisionist groups, such as Fujioka’s one, had revived by the mid 1990s, their narrative of war cannot be identified as the true dominant one of Japan at a national level; pacifist groups also revived in opposition to the revisionists, and they carry a different view on Japan’s war past. Eventually, both sides have their own political reasons for reproducing their respective narratives. As Buruma (2002) stresses, revisionists have mainly denied Japan’s heinous deeds because they want Japan to regain the sovereign right to war. Their motivation for downplaying the Nanjing Atrocities is therefore quite straightforward: Nanjing has become the ultimate symbol of Japan’s barbarity, and a nation with such an atrocious past will not be trusted again with the right to armed forces. The pacifists emphasize Japan’s war atrocities for the same reasons the revisionists deny it: they do not want the constitution to change and want Japan to keep on renouncing war as a sovereign right (Buruma 2002, 8). The difficulty over the fact that there is no consensus on Japan’s ‘new narrative of war’ was reflected in the problems and disagreements over the establishment and content of Tokyo’s Showa Hall in 1999.
Japan’s different leaders cannot not all be labeled pacifists or revisionists. What can be noted though, is that they have effectuated a more assertive attitude in their foreign diplomacy. When Chinese President Jiang Zemin visited Tokyo in 1998 and demanded a written apology for Japan’s war crimes, Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo refused to do so. It angered the Chinese that the government had denied an apology, whilst it annoyed the Japanese that the Chinese government once again had pointed the finger of blame at Tokyo (Mochizuki 2007, 242). From 2001 on, Sino-Japanese relations were pestered by controversies as Prime Minister Koizumi repeatedly worshipped at Yasukuni and new debates emerged over the contents of history textbooks. The history issue had become a never-ending process where the thin lines between cause and effect could hardly be discerned anymore. By now, it is evident that the way Tokyo manages Japan’s postwar identity does not match with how the Chinese government would like to see it; neither can the Japanese government sympathize with Beijing’s protests and interferences over how to handle its war past. Frustrations continue to grow. Chinese will complain over an ‘insincere government’ that worships war criminals while the Japanese will get agitated over a ‘hypocritical government’ that does not let them mourn their war dead (Kristof 1998, 40). The main catalyst keeping these frustrations and misunderstandings alive is not war, but nationalism.

4.2 ‘Advertising’ War

*How do we want the people to remember our national past?* This is the question Chinese and Japanese Ministry planners, exhibit designers and curators must have raised at one point during those first meetings on the development of a national war museum. The complexity of this question can be attested by the mere fact that Japanese museum planners took as long as *twenty years* from the first proposal of the Showa Hall to its realization in 1999 (Smith 2002, 41). The contents and design of war museums are particularly complex because they do not just deal with issues of the physical representations of those who fought and suffered during war (the names, the statues), but also with the issue of what the nation stands for in the present: *what it is that all those people died for?* Since that essence which we call the ‘nation’ is not tangible, it must be ‘imagined’. And because neither Chinese nor Japanese leaders would like bereaved
families, survivors and next generations to think that thousands of people died for a futile cause (a ‘worthless’ nation), they try to construct a narrative that turns fatalities into ‘sacrifice’, suffering into ‘contribution’ and fighting into ‘patriotism’. In other words, they try their best to encourage people to think of and ‘remember’ war in a way that creates harmony over controversy, unification over dispersion, and most importantly, in a way that benefits nationalism instead of shattering it. From this perspective, the formation of a national war past has much in common with the general process of advertising. What is advertising? It is defined as:

(...) any form of paid communication by an identified sponsor aimed to inform and/or persuade target audiences about an organization, product, service or idea (Fennis & Stroebe 2010, 2).

State-funded war museums can be regarded as advertising national war history by informing people about it, and by persuading them to place war within a certain (national) framework and to remember it in that way. In other words, they are places where “someone’s memories” are converted into “our memories” in order for a nation’s people to all have the same memories of war (Ogawa 2008, 104).

Memorial sites to war become especially important at times when national identity is in doubt and an existing government needs to legitimate its leadership. As Haas (1986) explained, when national identity is shaky, the legitimacy of the rulers also becomes unstable and social harmony will be disrupted. This is the time when nationalism can be articulated through the war narrative. The main goal is to unify all the different narratives on war that exist in society and bring them together under the heading of the so-called “good war narrative” (Seaton 2007, 15). Seaton explains this phenomenon, using the British example, as the inculcated belief that despite all fatalities and suffering, the war was a “heroic, just and victorious struggle against the evils of Nazism” (ibid., 15). Particular historical events are used as recurring themes to support this narrative. In the British case, they consist of the Battle of Britain, D-Day and the London Blitz. These events become the symbols, the ‘trademarks’, of the final ‘product’: the good war.

Why did Chinese and Japanese governments particularly ‘advertise’ their histories during the 1990s and 2000s? Their reasons are in fact quite similar. Chinese and Japanese governments were both suffering from a weakly supported nationalism
when the need to emphasize commemoration of war popped up. This governmental lack of social power was, amongst others, caused by the various economic, political and societal problems that emerged as negative side effects of China and Japan’s economic successes (Rose 2000, 169-181).

In China during the early 1980s, Deng had to deal with skepticism and criticism on the economic reform and opening up of China. These critiques initially made the Japanese textbook controversy a welcome distraction, and the “strengthening of patriotic education” became one of the pointers on the government’s agenda from 1983 on (Yoshida 2000, 105). Both the Nanjing Memorial and the War of Resistance Museum are products of this time when nationalism needed to be boosted. Note that in Chinese, the concept of ‘nationalism’ is mostly expressed as ‘aiguozhuyi’, literally meaning the ‘principle of loving the country’ (patriotism). Zhao Suizheng (1998) explains that Chinese patriotism can best be understood as a “state-centric conception of nationalism” (290) where leaders, speaking in the name of the nation, encourage citizens to identify with the nation and to let the interests of the state be of superior importance to them (ibid., 290-291). This state-led nationalism had become weak by the end of the 1980s. The post-Mao decade had brought China relatively more wealth and freedom, but had also produced inequality and corruption. The communist ideology had therefore lost its credibility and there was no substitute for it. A strong popular nationalism emerged, where intellectuals and young generations looked to the West for examples to imagine a new China. The pro-democracy movement of 1989 was born out of this movement (Zhao 1998; Shirk 2008). This national united front of the people against the government was the Party’s worst nightmare. The years after the Tiananmen protests were characterized by the attempts of Chinese leaders to catch a handhold on the people. As Shirk (2008) explains, Chinese leaders are afraid that the power of the CPC might be in danger. This was especially true in 1989, when communist governments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet had collapsed (7). But even now, says Shirk, in the wake of daily protests or Arab Spring, the Chinese government’s “number one priority will always be the preservation of Communist Party rule” (ibid., 8). In the first years of the 1990s, in order to iron out national divisions and restore popular faith in the Party, CPC members sought to attack the market reform policies and to revitalize Mao ideologies. The answer to China’s problems, however, was not found there, but in the resuscitation of Chinese state nationalism. This was especially important for post-1993 leaders Jiang Zemin and Hu
Jin Tao, who did not have the iconic status of historical figures Mao and Deng, and who were no longer ruling on the basis of communist ideology (Shirk 2008, 7; Zhao 1998, 296). Leaders believed that nationalism was the “one bedrock of political belief shared by most Chinese people in spite of the rapid decay of Communist official ideology” (Zhao 1998, 288-289). The government made the nationwide campaign of patriotic education a number one priority. A beginning was made in 1991, and by 1994 the campaign was in full swing. The Central Propaganda Department issued an outline of the conduct of patriotic education, stating its objective to:

(...) boost the nation’s spirit, enhance its cohesion, foster its self-esteem and sense of pride, consolidate and develop a patriotic united front to the broadest extent, and direct and rally the masses’ patriotic passions to the great cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics (Zhao 1998, 293).

One of the goals of the campaign was to change the social atmosphere in such a way that it would promote nationalism. Plans were made to construct a patriotic theme park and an impressive national exhibition called ‘China at the Turn of the Century’. Another endeavor was the composition of a list of 100 films that celebrated the CPC and a list of 100 Chinese national heroes. Special emphasis was put on tourist spots such as museums, memorials and historical sites. New museums were constructed and historic sites, such as those related to the Japanese war atrocities in Nanjing or northeast China, were turned into bases for patriotic education. These places were all ordered to “highlight their patriotic identities” (ibid., 295). This patriotic campaign ‘advertised’ the Second Sino-Japanese War as China’s “good war”, “in which noble Chinese patriots, Communist and Nationalist, fought against Japanese devils” (Mitter 2007, 174).

Japanese nationalism from especially the 1990s on was characterized by a similar process to that of China, where national (economic) successes eventually led to a deterioration of state nationalism (Rose 2000). For a long time, Japan was struggling with its post-war identity because ‘nationalism’ was considered taboo. Instead of focusing on patriotism, the Japanese turned to the development of their economy. As McCormack (2000) states: “Japan became rich by swallowing its pride, forgetting about national glory and even about national identity and prestige” (248). However, insecurities about the question of nationalism manifested itself in the early debates on Yasukuni: should the prime minister visit the Shrine? And if so, should it be officially or personally? Whilst right-wingers felt these visits were essential to the nation, left-
wingers were afraid to fall back on symbols of the past (Nish 2000, 87). When Japan became an economically prosperous country and a bigger international player, an overall consensus emerged that a “gradual revival of nationalism would be beneficial and ‘wholesome’ for Japanese society” (ibid.). Politicians and writers started focusing on the ‘uniqueness’ of Japan. The rise of these ‘new nationalists’ of the 1980s characterized Japan’s regained confidence. One of their bestsellers, co-authored by Ishihara Shintaro, Japan Can Say No! (‘No’ to Ieru Nihon) (1989) argued for a more assertive and independent Japan. Rose (2000) defines this nationalist trend as “arrogance through success” (172).

This so-called ‘arrogance’, however, did not last through the 1990s when Japan had to deal with serious setbacks; the crash of the stock market, severe drought, rice crop failure and the devastating Kobe earthquake. In 1993, Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), that had been the number one leading party for forty years, fell from power. The ‘bubble’ burst had shattered confidence in the economy, and the earthquake had revealed Japan’s weak urban infrastructure and the lack of a structured crisis management plan (Edginton 2003, 4). At the same time, China’s economic and military power was on the rise, and Japan neither had the economic nor military power to rival that of its neighbor. This made the Japanese question their leadership and the country fell into a national crisis (McCormack 2000). There was the overall view that Japan’s political and economic problems found their roots in the mere fact that Japan was still struggling with the question of national identity. The government therefore started to invest in the promotion and construction of a stronger Japanese nationalism (ibid., 248). As some Japanese politicians expressed in 1996 interviews: the time was ripe to “create a sense of patriotism” (Rose 2000, 173).

The launch of Japan’s national campaign to promote patriotism was marked by the LDP’s return to power and the new Prime Minister’s visit to Yasukuni. It reached its zenith around 1999, when the former (controversial) Japanese flag and anthem, the Hinomaru and Kimigayo, were formally reestablished. In the 2000s, it became obligatory for teachers to stand up to the Kimigayo and raise the national flag during school ceremonies (Asahi 2012). Also in 1999, the government started to behave in a more assertive way than it had the decades before and pursued a revision of the US-Japan defense guidelines. Ishihara, one of Japan’s leading new nationalists, became the governor of Tokyo.
An integral part of Japan’s campaign to instill patriotism was to promote a “‘pure’, ‘proud’ and ‘correct’ history” (McCormack 2000, 248). New nationalist views on history were not only fostered within the government but also outside the Diet where new study groups were set up and money was invested to stimulate the nationalist cause. The Yushukan’s renovations can be placed within this framework, along with the establishment of the Showa Hall, which was financed by the government to “portray WWII as something Japan should be proud of” (Jeans 2005, 157). It is noteworthy that during the 2001 LDP leadership elections, Koizumi emphatically stated that he, if chosen, would annually worship the war dead at Yasukuni. After he won the elections, he kept his promise.

How are the Chinese and Japanese intentions of instilling a love for the nation and creating a sense of collective identity amongst the people articulated through their museums? In a way, museums and their narratives are advertising ways to, as Schneider (forthcoming) calls it, “brand the nation” (1). A ‘brand image’ is the totality of “beliefs, feelings and evaluations triggered by a brand name”, and this is generally strongly influenced by advertising (Fennis&amp;Stroebe 2010, 123). It is essential to marketers that the message contained in advertising will be remembered over a longer period of time, so that it will affect consumers in their ways of thinking about the brand and in the decisions they make about it (e.g. to buy it). They, therefore, have to affect people’s long term memory. Our long term memory is assumed to store almost boundless amounts of information over infinite periods of time. It is made up of different components that can be divided into ‘conscious memory’ and ‘nonconscious memory’ (ibid., 82). Conscious memory deals with the things we explicitly know we remember, but the latter deals with ‘implicit memory’, which influences our thinking and performing without us being aware that we are, in fact, being triggered by memories. As Fennis and Stroebe point out, long term memory is one single enormous associative network (2010, 90). We have seen through the Mickey Mouse experiment that people indeed form attitudes towards brands on the basis of both conscious and non-conscious forms of memories, that can even influence how past experiences are perceived.

The “Remember the Magic” ad campaign particularly used autobiographical referencing to create a sense of nostalgia. This means that consumers were influenced to somehow imagine themselves in the advertised event and to (unconsciously) focus on feelings and emotions that were brought about by existing or non-existing memories.
This type of advertising distracts consumers from thinking about a product rationally (Braun et al 2002, 2). There are multiple factors that influence the consumer to imagine themselves in a certain situation or event. Sometimes it already happens by simply providing the narrative, but there are a couple of triggers that strengthen the effect. Firstly, it has been proven that memories or beliefs about the past can quite easily be influenced by mere repetition: if people, over and over again, get suggestions that make them imagine themselves in a particular situation, they will start believing it. This effect is also referred to as “imagination deflation” (ibid. 2002, 2-4). The information provided needs to relate to personal experiences that people can easily imagine themselves in (“experiential information”). Additionally, it the use of dramatic narratives will also make it easier for the consumer to ‘remember’. The same is true for the use of pictures or images, as they stimulate stronger remembering (ibid., 4). Lastly, it is beneficial for a campaign to be focused on events that presumably occurred some time ago, since “memories that have had time to fade are particularly subject to distortion” (ibid.). In other words, the less conscious memories people have about an event, the easier it becomes to create (non-conscious) new memories and ‘brand associations’. This particularly resonates with reconstructions of war memories, mainly occurring forty years after the war had ended.

The article by Braun, Ellis and Loftus draws attention to an important point about childhood and advertising. This is that early childhood ‘brand relations’ are of intrinsic value to the world of marketing, because, as Freud already pointed out, childhood is the crucial period of attachment. It is during childhood that personal relations and attachments are first determined. This also applies to attitudes and beliefs about brands; a child’s first feelings towards a brand will determine its relation to it as an adult (2002, 3). In the light of promoting nationalism, it is important that war museums attract and appeal to younger generations. Present-day children have not witnessed WWII; the narrative provided by the museum will therefore be all they ‘remember’ of war. As Ogawa (2008) puts it: “For children that have never experienced war, the museum itself is the battlefield” (105).

War museums engage in memory-making processes that are very similar to those used by marketers; different methods are used in the narrative and display space to get the visitor involved in the past (ibid. 2008, 105). I have already described how Chinese and Japanese war museums deal with recurring commemorative themes in their
contents and design in chapter two; here, I will discuss how several aspects of their exhibitions are likely to influence visitor’s memories. These aspects are: use of repetition, the focus on people’s personal experiences of war, the use of dramatization, the display of images, the stimulation of interaction, and the efforts to engage children.

The Nanjing Memorial specifically activates the memories of visitors by focusing on personal experience and dramatization. The exhibition zooms in on individual accounts of survivors of the Nanjing Atrocities. These are detailed stories on what happened to that person in 1937/1938, including how old they were, the address where they lived, the time when it took place, the suffering they were subjected to and how they felt when it happened. Throughout the museum, these stories are highlighted through textual narratives; the horrific nature of these accounts is further emphasized through images and pictures. Overall, images are displayed everywhere in the museum to support these textual narratives or to tell a story in itself. There are many photographs of dead children or piled-up corpses. These images are likely to evoke reactions in those who see them. Some narratives are particularly dramatized through the reenactment with real-life puppets, sound effects and special lighting. The personal stories of victims stir the emotions of visitors, and the entire setup of the exhibition (images, music, sounds of bombing, imitation of fire etc.) further triggers the visitor’s imagination. My first notes upon entering the museum was that I felt the Nanjing Atrocities were somewhat ‘Disneyfied’. In the first chapter I mentioned how Disney uses some techniques in creating its own world of imagination that influences the memories of consumers. In this way, the museum uses dramatization effects that are similar to those used in some Disneyland attractions. Mitter’s article (2000) also provides an example of the use of this kind of dramatization in the case of Beijing’s War of Resistance Museum:

One (...) display shows a Japanese scientist in a white coat, intent on carrying out a gruesome bacteriological warfare experiment, plunging his scalpel into the living, trussed-up body of a Chinese peasant resistance fighter. But just in case this is not enough to drive the message home, the museum designers have added a refinement: a motor inside the waxwork of the peasant, which makes his body twitch jerkily as if in response to the scalpel, an unending series of little movements until the switch is turned off at closing time (279).
Although this specific scene was not on display at the War of Resistance Museum when I visited it in 2011, there were other scenes of war scenes that used similar puppets, together with sounds of shooting and light-effects.

![Figure 11. Dramatization in Disneyland: the ‘Pirates of the Caribbean’ attraction, resembling displays at the Nanjing Memorial.](image)

The Nanjing Memorial also dramatizes 1937 through its official website design. The homepage shows an animation of streams of blood flowing down Nanjing’s city walls. Bartlett, eighty years ago, already pointed out through his research that it is these particular small outstanding details that are memorized, whilst the bigger story is often partly forgotten or altered in memory (Foster 2009, 12). In other words; those few drops of blood will eventually impact visitors’ memories more than the overall historical account on the Nanjing Atrocities.

One other specific way to emotionally involve people and get them to remember the museum and its narrative is by way of interaction. As Braun et al underline, actions are specifically important to remembering since “they typically form the unique attribute of a specific event” (2002, 5). The Nanjing Memorial encourages people to interact with the museum’s contents by giving them a place to write comments and condolences, said to be “kept in our database forever” (Zhu 2007, 40). The museum weekly selects a top ten of “best comments” (ibid.). There are computers where visitors can play a quiz to see how much they remembered about the Nanjing Atrocities. People can also take files from the giant ‘file wall’ where they can personally look up detailed
testimony of over 12,000 victims, survivors and witnesses (ibid.). The Nanjing Memorial website also encourages visitors to leave a message and provides a virtual ‘mourning hall’ (daoniantang) where people can pick a virtual candle, song, libation, flower or

Figure 12. Nanjing Memorial’s ‘area for interaction’: the wall of files, area for leaving comments, questions for visitors and “do you remember?” sign at exit.
incense to ‘offer’ to the victims of the Nanjing Atrocities. The visitor can choose to direct the offer to all of the 300,000 victims, or more specifically to Iris Chang (writer of *Rape of Nanking*), Li Xiuying or Peng Yuzhen (survivors) (NJ1937.org, 2012).

Although the techniques in which interaction is encouraged at the Nanjing Memorial are not specifically aimed at children (many pictures might even be considered inappropriate for young children), the site has become an official site of patriotic education. It is therefore frequently visited by schoolchildren and maintains close ties with the Chinese education system. It is estimated that seventy percent of all visitors (before 2004) consisted of groups of young people visiting in the context of patriotic education (Ross 2006, 4). This also applies to the War of Resistance Museum. This museum organizes one-day tours specifically for children. The aims of the day are to show the children the “past achievements of the heroes of war” and to promote their “unyielding nation spirit and patriotism”18 (1937china.com 2012).

As discussed in chapter three, the Nanjing Memorial, along with the Beijing Museum, repeats several points in order to get them across. It is reiterated that the Nanjing Massacre was an extremely cruel historical event that was committed by the *Japanese invader*. At the Nanjing Memorial, the “Do You Remember?” sign is representative to the overall message: the visitor cannot forget what it has experienced. This ‘experience’ is double-layered, since it refers to the Second World War, but also to the visit itself. Eventually, it is not the war itself but the museum that creates the memories the people are to remember in a collective fashion.

The Yushukan and Showa Museum also use several different methods to ensure that its visitors will remember Japan’s wartime in a particular way. Yasukuni with its Yushukan, as explained earlier, is a somewhat particular story since the history of the Shrine itself is already deeply ingrained in Japan’s collective memory through the connection between the war dead, the state and its religion. Nevertheless, there is more to say about the museum. The narrative provided at Yushukan does explicitly focus on personalized stories of the war dead, constantly repeating the same message: that they died for a good cause, that they were “noble souls who gave up their lives for the country that they loved” (Yasukuni 2012). ‘De mortuis nil nisi bonum’, to speak nothing but good about those who died, seems to be the mantra at Yasukuni and Yushukan.

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18 以宣传和弘扬抗战时期英雄人物的事迹(...)”,“宣传不屈的民族精神和崇高的爱国主义情操...” (War of Resistance Website 2012).
It is specifically the pictures and personal stories of soldiers that stir up visitors' emotions. The museum displays the handwritten notes of fathers to their daughters, sons to their parents and husbands to their wives. The Yasukuni website also publishes these letters online, every month a new letter in original state. One farewell note, from one soldier to his daughters, ends with: “Daddy will always be there to protect you”19. Another one, from a Lieutenant to his parents, states: “I will return to Yasukuni”20. In the letter he asks his parents to light incense for him at the Shrine if he dies during battle (Yasukuni 2012). The written reaction of museum’s visitors, selectively published on the Yushukan website, reveal that people are moved to tears. As one 21-year-old visitor writes after seeing the Yushukan exhibition:

I cried and cried; I did not even know I could cry so much (...) I am so proud to live in Japan- the country that was protected by all those great men whose faces I don’t even know (“M.T.” Yushukan Jan 2012).21

Other visitors write they are happy to be born in Japan after viewing the exhibition, and that they feel the need to carefully remember this “unforgettable history”22. Another recurring remark is that present-day Japan should take an example of all those people who were willing to sacrifice their lives for the nation.23

The Yushukan museum repeats another message that is similar to that of the Nanjing Memorial, which is that the act of remembering (and not forgetting) is pivotal. To get this message across, the museum regularly shows different films and documentaries in its screening halls, such as We Won’t Forget (Watashitachi wa Wasurenai) or The Legacy of the Spirits (Mitama wo tsuzuku mono) (Yasukuni 2012).

To appeal to the younger generations, Yushukan has set up a youth club (‘Asanagi’) that organizes various activities for children under the age of 18. Another club called “Friends of Yushukan” (‘Yushukan no Tomi no Kai’) particularly recruits adolescents up to the age of 25. For adults over 25 there is the “Yasukuni Support Club” (‘Yasukuni Jinja Suikei Housan Kai’). One of its important aims is to “pass on the spirits of

19 “では、父をお前たちを何時も守って居るよ。父より” (Yasukuni 2012).
20 “靖国の宮に帰ります” (Yasukuni 2012, under the letters published in February 2009).
21 “泣いて泣いて、私はそんなに泣けるのかとおどろきました（…）顔も知らぬ英霊の方が守ってくれた日本に住めることを本当に誇りに思います” (Haikensha no koe, Yushukan 2012).
23 “（…）誇り高き日本を取り戻すために必死で頑張ろうと思いました” (Anonymous, age 41, Haikensha no koe, Yushukan 2012).
the war dead to the next generation.” These clubs gather for lectures, conventions, or to do activities and chores at the Yasukuni premises, such as preparing for commemorative events.

The Showa Hall is very different from Yasukuni and Yushukan: it is a brand-new museum that can only convey its message through its exhibition style and methods. It uses images and pictures in its narrative of war. What is specifically interesting about this museum is that it entirely focuses on experiential information, and in doing so, particularly attracts children. Its contents make it easy for anyone to ‘imagine’ Japan’s war, as the exhibition is fully focused on the everyday life of wartime households. It also appeals to older visitors since it, as Kerry (2002) has elucidated, evokes feelings of nostalgia. The fact that the museum’s narrative does not explicitly refer to war contributes to this idea that the wartime era was a generally ‘positive’ time where households succeeded in living through difficult times.

The Showa Hall has been a common destination for school trips since it opened in 1999 (Showakan 2012). The website of Showa Hall is also specifically aimed at children. It provides a ‘children’s corner’ where the contents of the museum can be explored and children are challenged to test their knowledge about wartime Japan.

Figure 13, Example of the interactive online ‘test’ for children at the Showa Hall website: “In what ways did lives change after the war?”

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24 “英霊のみこころを次の世代に伝えましょう” (Yasukuni 2012).
These questions only relate to those things that were occurring on a national level. It is, for example, explained how ‘1000-stitch belts’ were made to bring luck to the soldiers that were fighting overseas. The museum also organizes special essay contests for schoolchildren, and holds monthly ‘picture plays’ with paper puppets from the 1940s. As the museum director states on the website: “We work hard to manage this museum in order to pass on its charm to future generations.”

How do we want the people to remember our national past? It is a question that Chinese and Japanese politicians are still raising today. Jia and Zhao (2005) have written an article in CPC’s literary magazine (Dangshi Wenyuan) on how the history of war needs to be promoted to create unity in China:

The rejuvenation of the Chinese people can be achieved by promoting anti-Japanese nationalist spirit and commemorating the 60th anniversary of the world’s Anti-Fascist War and China’s War of Resistance (26)(12).

According to Jia and Zhao, it is especially necessary to involve younger generations in war-related education. In this article, where Xinjiang is taken as a case study, they propose an increased use of multimedia and Internet in teachings about war to trigger a stronger “visualization” and “imagination” of war amongst youngsters, so they will never forget the “national humiliation” China suffered. What more will museums do in the future to create and bolster up memories of war? While Jia and Zhao, on the Chinese side, are somewhat disgruntled that not all people in Xinjiang seem to know China’s war history (although 84.9% of the youngsters knew the exact number of people allegedly killed in the Nanjing Atrocities), on the Japanese side, teachers worry about the fact that most young people do not even understand why anti-Japanese protests erupted across China and Korea after the textbook incidents. They blame the government for not fully educating children on war (BBC 2005).

The memorials examined in this thesis all have their respective ways to unify the nation through their design and narration and have their respective methods to activate the memories of visitors. One national war museum by itself will not determine how

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25 “戦中・戦後の労苦を後世代に継承するため、これからも更に魅力ある昭和館の運営に努めてまいります” (Showakan 2012).
26 “为纪念世界反法西斯战争和中国人民抗日战争胜利六十周年, 弘扬抗日民族精神, 实现中华民族的伟大复兴” (Jia&Zhao 2005, 12).
27 “增强教育的形象感和生动性, (...), 使国民尤其是青年人勿忘国耻” (ibid., 13).
people remember their war. After all, one Disneyland campaign does not create the memory of Mickey Mouse. The entire establishment of the brand (pilgrimages to the Disney theme park, the Mickey Mouse club, cartoon images, television shows, songs, etc.) constructs the memory, brick by brick, piece by piece. This determines the final impact of the advertisement. Similarly, Chinese and Japanese governments have constructed their war histories year by year, from lectures to schoolbooks, from documentaries to commemorative events to museums – this totality determines how people remember their war.

Now that we know the basic design and narrative of China’s and Japan’s major war museums, we can see why a child that visited the Nanjing Memorial will have a completely different conception of war than one that has just been to the Yushukan Museum. One was just taught how Japanese soldiers brutally decapitated the Chinese, whilst the other has just learned how brave young men sacrificed their lives out of love for their country. Although these museums refer to the same historical era, their narratives are completely different. Thinking of these two children growing up, and imagining them meeting up and talking about the war, one cannot but comprehend their misunderstandings and frustrations. They will feel as if they were talking about an altogether different event.

4.3 The War of The Ghosts

Frederick Bartlett, the patriarch of constructivist memory studies, used ‘repeated reproduction’ to research how memory works. As explained in the first chapter, he let participants read a North-American folk tale that was somewhat detached from their own English background and then made them repeat it later on. The story was called the ‘War of the Ghosts’, and went like this:

One night two young men from Egulac went down the river to hunt seals, and while they were there it became foggy and calm. Then they heard war cries, and they thought: ‘Maybe this is a war party.’ They escaped to the shore, and hid behind a log. Now canoes came up, and they heard the noise of paddles, and saw one canoe coming up to them. There were five men in the canoe, and they said:

What do you think? We wish to take you along. We are going up the river to make war on the people.’ One of the young men said: ‘I have no arrows.’ ‘Arrows are in the canoe,’ they said. ‘I will not go along. I might be killed. My relatives do not know
where I have gone. But you,’ he said, turning to the other, ‘may go with them.’ So one of the young men went, but the other returned home.

And the warriors went on up the river to a town on the other side of Kalama. The people came down to the water, and they began to fight, and many were killed. But presently the young man heard one of the warriors say: ‘Quick, let us go home: that Indian has been hit.’ Now he thought: ‘Oh, they are ghosts.’ He did not feel sick, but they said he had been shot.

So the canoes went back to Egulac, and the young man went ashore to his house, and made a fire. And he told everybody and said: ‘Behold I accompanied the ghosts, and we went to fight. Many of our fellows were killed, and many of those who attacked us were killed. They said I was hit, and I did not feel sick.’

He told it all, and then became quiet. When the sun rose he fell down. Something black came out of his mouth. His face became contorted. The people jumped up and cried. He was dead (Foster 2009, 15-16).

Bartlett discovered that the participants each had their particular ‘methods’ to recall this story at later times, connecting it to what they felt comfortable with. In Bartlett’s words, they made an “imaginative reconstruction” (or “construction”) of the past (ibid. 2009, 17). An example how one of the participants repeated the story is the following:

 Two youths went down to the river to hunt for seals. They were hiding behind a rock when a boat with some warriors in it came up to them. The warriors, however, said they were friends, and invited them to help them fight an enemy over the river. The elder one said he could not go because his relations would be so anxious if he did not return home. So, the younger one went with the warriors in the boat.

 In the evening he returned and told his friends that he had been fighting in a great battle, and that many were slain on both sides. After lighting a fire he returned to sleep. In the morning, when the sun rose, he fell ill, and his neighbours came to see him. He had told them he had been wounded in the battle but had felt no pain then. But soon he became worse. He writhed and shrieked and fell to the ground dead. Something black came out of his mouth. The neighbours said he must have been at war with the ghosts” (Foster 2009, 16-17).

The participant’s repetition of the story differs from the original in multiple ways. Certain aspects are deleted, some are changed, whilst others are added. Various details are taken out or ‘forgotten’. The participant, for example, does not bring up that the warriors say the Indian has been hit. The names Egulac and Kalama are not mentioned, neither are the arrows, the atmosphere (“foggy and calm”) or the fact that the company of warriors consists of five men. Other details are altered; the log has turned into a rock,
the canoe has become a boat, and the young man now tells his “neighbours” he has been wounded. Then there are details that are added to the story, such as the warriors saying they are friends, the two men differing in age, the young man going to sleep and the neighbours saying he must have been at war with the ghosts. The story has been simplified and shortened. The small outstanding detail that is clearly remembered is that “something black came out of his mouth.” From his research, Bartlett concluded that people remember stories in such a way that it becomes more coherent to them by connecting it to their culturally determined expectations, assumptions and own general knowledge (Foster 2009, 12). The individuals participating in Bartlett’s experiment each had different reproductions of the ‘War of the Ghosts’. But the way in which they reproduced it was very much alike. The same process takes place when people remember the narratives of war presented to them in, for example, museums. But from a greater perspective, the same thing also holds true for China, Japan, and their narrative of war: Chinese and Japanese governments remember the war differently, but the process in which they remember is very similar.

Chinese and Japanese re-remembrances of war have, to a great extent, emerged from the need to unify the people of both nations and to contribute to the reconstruction or strengthening of their national identities. Chinese and Japanese governments did not pay attention to the war history in times when it worked to their advantage not to bring it up. Both Chinese and Japanese leaders changed these ‘policies’ on war history when their governments faced a crisis. In this way, their respective narratives on war are driven by nationalism (Askew 2004, 65). As mentioned before, Chinese and Japanese war narratives are “good war” narratives where soldiers fought for a just cause. Both governments seem to suffer from heavily impaired memories. Yushukan does not mention Japan’s terrible acts of aggression in wartime. Likewise, Nanjing does not mention how the Nationalists under Chiang fought most of the war against the Japanese. Neither does China’s National Museum mention the post-war atrocities that happened at the hand of its own government. Chinese and Japanese planners have meticulously designed their sites of remembrance in such a way that they create “a-where-ness” – these sites will not easily be linked to any other memory than the dominant national one. The sites attend to themes that stress the collective experience of the people. They do this in such a way that children and other visitors will be very likely to integrate these “governing myths” into their own memories and in doing so participate in the
creation and construction of collective remembrance, one of the cornerstones of successful nationalism.

There are differences in the repeated themes at Chinese and Japanese war museums that illustrate their contrasts in remembering war. In the Chinese case, we see a strong emphasis on the horrors of war and emphasis on the enemy. In the Japanese case, there is an absence of the horrors of war and also an absence of enemy. Both sides have their own reasons for this emphasis and absence. In the Chinese case, collective suffering is used as one of the museum’s main themes since it serves as a unifying force for the people. Chinese war museums obliquely say that China became strong through hardship. Through the emphasis on the suffering of all Chinese people, painful questions on who actually suffered the most (the Nationalists?) are evaded. The focus on the Japanese enemy is a form of ‘Otherization’; China uses Japan as the Other through which it can define its own identity. Suzuki (2007) supports this view as he describes how China’s modern national identity is characterized by a self-image of victim that is partly built through the construction of Japan as the enemy (23-24).

In the Japanese case, collective sacrifice is one of the major themes of the government’s war narrative; the idea that people did not die in vain, but sacrificed their lives for the Japanese nation, where people now live in peace. The notion of the ‘peaceful nation’ is a recurring one in relation to Japan’s war. Through Showa and Yushukan one would almost start to believe that Japan’s war was all about smiling soldiers, cherry blossoms and white doves. Japanese aggression and war atrocities do not fit this construction of Japan as the peaceful nation. In fact, Japan’s official narrative of war seems to evade any topic that might be considered sensitive, and in this way, schoolchildren, visitors and citizens are presented a history of war that does not touch upon anything outside the perspective of Japan itself.

Why are Japanese leaders so extremely cautious in presenting their history of war to the people? This has to do with the fact that they are uncomfortable with their national history of war and have not found a proper framework where the history of war is told in such a way that it unifies (and not divides) the people. Seaton (2007) argues that “a truly dominant cultural memory emerges in societies where the contradiction can be ironed out” (15). These ‘contradictions’ are other versions of war that do not suit the official or dominant one. Japanese war museums cannot seem to find a place for these stories. There are many versions of war that do not have a voice in the
official narrative. One example is the diary of former soldier Azuma Shiro that revealed gruesome deeds by the Japanese army. The diary caused major controversy in Japan and even ended up in court when a former officer, whose alleged crimes were described in the book, filed a lawsuit against Azuma for fabricating his accounts. The officer won the case and received compensation (Azuma 1999, 3). Another example is the 2004 manga by Motomiya, titled ‘The Country is Burning’ (Kuni ga Moeru). This cartoon, that tells the story of a young Japanese military officer, included scenes depicting the Nanjing Atrocities. The manga ignited a huge protest, and the publisher eventually yielded to pressure from fierce opponents by deleting the controversial pages (Yiu&Chan 2007, 12-13). But there are also other examples of parts of war history that do not ‘fit’ the dominant narrative. According to Nitta Hitoshi (2007) Japanese schoolbooks do not teach about tragedies concerning Japanese nurses who committed mass suicide to escape their fate to work as sex slaves for the Soviet Army or other stories, since they do not accord with histories propagated by Japan’s pacifists. Nitta says that “Japan is still overwhelmingly in the grip of an overbearing pacifist ideology”, and narratives as such provided by Yushukan are but a “feeble resistance” to this pacifist discourse (Nitta 2007, 141). These examples illustrate the complexity of the war issue in Japan. Philip Cunningham bluntly puts its like this: “No sooner does one politician make a partial apology to victims of Japan's historic aggression, than another politician will claim that Nanjing never happened” (2005). A myriad of events relating to different narrations of Japan’s war history reveal that Japan has, in fact, not found a satisfying way to represent war.

While Japan is a democratic nation with freedom of press where contradicting war narratives cannot be eradicated by the government, Chinese leaders, also uncomfortable with certain parts of their history, censor the past. This makes it less complicated for the government to create a dominant “governing myth”. Chinese leaders have seemingly succeeded in providing a history that unifies the people instead of diverting them. One can see why it is important for China to stress nationalism now that Mao’s ideology and the nation's former symbols have lost their strength. By making the people of China share a past and share an enemy through the memory of Sino-Japanese War, nationalism is stimulated. This benefits China as a strong nation and thereby improves its place in the international society. However, the pitfall of this history is that the powerful memory of war is used to forget others. The National Museum of China
strongly emphasizes the 300,000 deaths at Nanjing, but silences the 45 million deaths under Mao’s rule in the 1960s or the breakdown of the Tiananmen protests. In this way, China’s reflection of history is a ‘house of cards’ that, although heavily safeguarded by CPC leaders, remains extremely fragile.

Several writers on the issue of Sino-Japanese War have stressed the importance to note that not all of Chinese and Japanese representations of war are pure manipulations of history - that it is not all politics. The Nanjing Atrocities have deeply impacted people of China, amongst whose collective memories negative images of the Japanese were already deeply ingrained at the time (Suzuki 2007, 24). Daqing Yang (2001), who has contributed important works on Sino-Japanese War and its memory, argues that it is “too simplistic (...) to reduce the debate to merely a political or ideological battle, because it also raises important questions about how memory works and how histories are to be made” (77). This is true when we look at the ‘War of the Ghosts‘. One may assume that the participants in Bartlett’s experiments did not always intentionally simplify, magnify or change the story they remembered. A large part in interpreting contrasting memories of one event lies in looking at how remembering works. After all, China and Japan did experience war differently; they were fighting on different sides and already had different cultural backgrounds and different nationally shared memories that determined their whole process of remembering war. The ‘re-remembrance’ of the Second Sino-Japanese War has reasons that are deeply rooted in the history and memory of both Japan and China. However, also similarly to the story of the ghosts, the narrative gets told and retold; it changes meaning as its shifts through time. Researchers and politicians cannot accept that prevailing histories of war ‘just exist’ because that is how remembering works. Instead, they should critically assess national remembrances of war and be aware of the ‘magical’ side of memory, which is that, as Nora (1989) states:

Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it, it nourishes recollections that might be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic” (8).

Memory always works from the present. This is also true, and perhaps especially so, in the case of national memories. That is why, when governments set up and fund national
commemorations of war (museums or other memorials), the process of remembering is always political.

The fact that national commemorations of war are inevitably political is not necessarily good or bad. It is almost ‘natural’ for a nation to commemorate and honor its war dead. The government, that is supposed to protect its citizens, has called on these people to go to war and risk their lives for the nation. It is valid for the government to praise them. But Mayo (1998) points out that: “such praise, though important, is sometimes insufficient in proportion to the events that must be remembered” (66).

Memorials are ‘insufficient’ when they only provide a selective view on history, and in doing so, turn into political symbols that refer to themselves rather than to the historical event they claim to represent. It is insufficient to commemorate Nanjing as a symbol of Japanese aggression, just as it is unjustified to ignore or deny these atrocities for political purposes. The Nanjing Atrocities, just as other terrible episodes of the Sino-Japanese War, cannot serve as a political tool- not for the Communist Party nor for Japanese governmental revisionists or pacifists. As Buruma (2002) states:

(…) history should never be used in this way. Once a historical event becomes a political symbol of collective identity, it becomes impossible to question it, challenge accepted opinions about it, discuss it rationally, in short, to act as a responsible historian” (9).

Japanese official history of war nurtures memories that can make the people look back on their national past with pride and dignity. Chinese dominant war narrative makes people remember a past of humiliation and victimization. There is justice in both remembrances. The Chinese have the right to let people know the horrific events that took place in 1937 and later, just as the Japanese have the right to honor the people who fought for their country during this war. However, both sides use a specific dominant version of history that covers up those narratives they do not wish to reveal. Both provide inadequate narratives on war. The power of their war is used to hide the weaknesses within their histories. In an age where people no longer purely depend on museums or schoolbooks to learn about national pasts, these constructions of history will eventually prove to be fragile ones that do not boost state-propagated nationalism, but instead shatter it to pieces; forming craters between different groups of people, and between the people and its government. When people do not longer trust the memories conveyed through the state, the nation is in trouble. To reiterate the message by Smith
(1996, 383): when there is no memory, there is no identity. When there is no identity, there is no nation.

The Sino-Japanese War has become a ‘War of the Ghosts’. Not only did the story of war itself get altered and censored, the people that have personally experienced war have reached old age or passed away.

The Chinese and Japanese share crucial characteristics in their remembrances of war. One is that they both still have the will to commemorate war and that they do this in their respective different ways, but that neither side wants to risk serious confrontations or provoke a breach in Sino-Japanese relations (Rose 2001, 170). Although the overall debate on Sino-Japanese War hardly shows any signs of progress, the fact that there is a mutual regard for the protection of stable relations does indicate that there is light at the end of the tunnel. When both sides stop using historical issues as diplomatic weapons and symbols of their politics, there will be room for discussing new ways of remembering war that do justice to the past and to the present. After all, every nation has the vital right to unite its people in a collective remembrance of its war dead. But history becomes unjustifiable when past memories of the national war dead are used to keep present international hostilities alive. And, to repeat Buruma’s words, history should never be used that way.
Conclusion

China and Japan, the ‘dragon’ and ‘giant’ of Asia, both commemorate and honor their war dead. In doing so, memories of war are altered, evaded or delimited in order to effectuate a unified and harmonious nation. Important ‘media’ to communicate or ‘advertise’ these government-controlled modes of remembrance to the people are museums and memorial sites. As Malvern (2000) says: “Museums are the bearers of history and memory” (179).

The way in which war memories are manipulated, and the extent to which this is done, persistently relates to the nation’s postwar domestic situation, its position in international society and the time that has passed since the end of the war.

I have explained and compared the respective routes Chinese and Japanese governments, over time, have taken in their national commemorations of the Second Sino-Japanese War that have lead to their present ‘re-remembrances’ of war. I thereby used the Nanjing Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine (with its incorporated Yushukan) as pillars to this thesis. Not only are they the most important Chinese and Japanese national memorials to war, their contrasting forms and contents facilitate a better understanding of their respective narratives on war.

The Nanjing Memorial is centered on the collective Chinese humiliation and suffering due to the mass-rape and mass-murder in Nanjing. The Memorial propagates a strong message that is constructed through the clear representation of Japan as the enemy, contributing to the ‘self-imagination’ of the nation. Its main point essentially is that China is a nation that has become strong and unified through the hardships and sufferings of the Chinese people by the hands of the Japanese ‘devils’.

At Yasukuni Shrine, the ‘Book of Souls’, containing the names of all the enshrined deities, is a symbol that represents the strength of Japan as a nation. It honors the patriotism of the soldiers who died for their nation and symbolizes the deep cultural pride in these courageous sacrifices. Central to Yasukuni/Yushukan is the message that the Japanese have remained a unique and unified people through the sacrifice and courage of their kami.

In constructing the historical narrative of war, the Chinese have pinned down a theme that does not reflect on its present national social circumstances. Instead,
national leaders have embraced China’s wartime suffering and, through the repeated testimony of the brutal slaughter of 300,000 Chinese citizens in Nanjing, have incorporated the ‘guilty Japanese’ in their remembrance of war. As a result of this narrative, the shattering consequences of civil war and the deaths of millions of fellow countrymen under the rule of Mao have been forcefully suppressed in cultural memory. They have, however, only been suppressed for now. The public outcry at Tiananmen in 1989 has elucidated that although ‘governing myths’ may dominate society at large, they cannot avoid alternative voices from being heard.

Contrary to the Chinese situation, the Japanese have directed their historical gaze inwards. They have no enemy to hate, but instead cherish their glorious sacrifices to war and continue to revive the ‘unofficial’ connections between the state, the soldier and the Shrine. The bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the effects of the Allied Occupation, along with the prevalent denials of the Nanjing Atrocities, have repressed the collective awareness that Japan acted out as the aggressor in war. Tied to this notion is the unbearable and inconceivable idea that Japan’s courageous young soldiers may have sacrificed their lives for a war that was essentially evil. Strong disagreements between different social groups in Japan on how the government should handle its war past reveal that Japan has not succeeded in finding a dominant mode of narrative that can bring the people together.

The ‘magic’ of memory is the power of memories to influence the historical course of events through conscious and non-conscious forces. It affects different layers of society. It operates on governmental level, where leaders, on the basis of prevalent myths about the origins of the nation, influence the way in which national history is narrated according to the assumed needs of society at the present time. It also operates on a cultural level, where citizens regularly encounter dominant narrations of war and (consciously and non-consciously) record them in their long term memory to such an extent that they collectively start ‘remembering’ their national past in a certain way. This is what ‘collective memory’ ultimately is - an inescapable element to society. Although it is inescapable, one can be aware of its underlying processes and be vigilant (and critical) on how they are formed. After all, ‘magic’ is only magic as long as its true essence cannot be defined. Once all the radars of the memory-forming process are exposed, the magic of a memory wears out.
Through time, history has indeed shown that this happens, although it can take entire
generations before survivors and their offspring can accept that their ancestors died for
a futile cause, or that deeply ingrained memories of war might actually be different than
what they always imagined. It takes remembrances, re-remembrances, changes through
time and increased political and societal awareness before the ‘magic’ of a memory
evaporates. For China and Japan, and their re-remembrances of the Second Sino-
Japanese War, this time has yet to come.

When that time finally arrives, however, the distance between those who
remember and those who have suffered has become too large for governments to repent
and offer heartfelt apologies. By then, narratives of war have changed into historical
accounts of a time long, long ago. The nation will ‘remember’ the events, the dates, the
death toll and names, all safely kept in dusty archives and museums, but the stories of
war will be detached from the current government and its people. Their response will
simply be: “We were not there.” The memory has slowly and silently disappeared from
collective memory. The historical places they were attached to will have changed from
vivid lieu de mémoire to hollow lieu d’histoire. What remains are yet other histories to
rewrite and re-remember. And so the magic continues.
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Figure 1.
As used in the article:

Figure 2.
Author's own image.

Figure 3.
Author's own image.

Figure 4 and 5.
Author's own images.

Figure 6.
Author's own image.

Figure 7.
Figure 8.

Figure 9.

Figure 10.

Figure 11.

Figure 12.
Author’s own images.

Figure 13.

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