

THE DYNAMICS OF COLLECTIVE WAR MEMORY IN JAPAN: THE  
HIROSHIMA PEACE MEMORIAL, YASUKUNI SHRINE, AND THE  
LEGACY OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC WAR

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## Chapter 1

### Legacies of World War II: Yasukuni Shrine, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, and War Memory in Japan

In the first chapter of their edited volume *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper assert that since the 1980s “there has been a proliferation of public interest and concern throughout the world in the...phenomena of war memory, and in the forms and practices of war commemoration.”<sup>1</sup> This proliferation may be directly attributable to the impact of globalization that has made every country’s war memory and means of commemoration accessible and susceptible to the investigation of the remainder of the world. In this regard, Japan is no different. In fact, Japan’s memories of the war may be more heavily scrutinized than anywhere else. This is inherently related to the fact that these memories overwhelmingly exist in regards to World War II, the most expansive conflict ever fought and one that fundamentally altered the evolution of global geopolitics and the development of the many countries involved. Since the end of the war, a debate has unfolded over how Japan’s actions leading up to and during the war are to be remembered, with some contending that Imperial Japan was the aggressor and must be held accountable for its actions and others arguing that Japan was fighting a defensive war against Western imperialism, and many more with opinions that fall between these two extremes. However, the 1982 textbook controversy, in which the Japanese Ministry of Education attempted to alter certain textbook accounts of some of Imperial Japan’s actions during the war, drew tremendous media attention, both domestic and

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<sup>1</sup> T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper, *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration* (New York; London: Routledge, 2000), 3.

international, which provided the international community its first real glance at the state of Japanese war memory.<sup>2</sup> This attention instigated international debate on how Japan ought to remember the war and further intensified the Japanese domestic debate, both of which continue to this day.

How is one supposed to make sense of this debate? War memory is by its very nature abstract, making it difficult to operationalize. In the case of Japan, however, the massive impact of the war on the Japanese people has become so pervasive and embedded in Japanese society that it has engendered a form of collective memory that manifests itself in a number of diverse forms, from popular media to contemporary international relations. Collective memory may be understood as the process by which the Japanese people shape their beliefs about the war through interaction with each other and their respective interpretations of the past, a point which will be expanded on in the following section.

It is through one of those manifestations of collective memory, war memorials, that the way in which the war is remembered in Japan may be most easily apprehended. War memorials provide a means to do so, as they utilize physical space and tangible artifacts to represent and elicit memories associated with them. It is for this very reason that war memorials have become a central aspect of the war memory debate, each endorsed to present a particular view. While there are countless war memorials in Japan, the two most well-known are the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial in Hiroshima. Although the ways in which these memorials conceptualize, remember, and commemorate the war remain disputed, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni

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<sup>2</sup> Yoshiko Nozaki, *War Memory, Nationalism and Education in Postwar Japan, 1945-2007: The Japanese History Textbook Controversy and Ienaga Saburo's Court Challenges*, Routledge Contemporary Japan Series (New York; London: 2008), 78-80.

Shrine have consistently offered the world a glimpse of the Japanese struggle to come to terms with the war and its legacies.

Both are dedicated to those who died during the war, but the ways in which the dead are commemorated at each war memorial are quite different. It is commonly thought that these differences manifest as a dichotomy in which Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial represent two mutually exclusive ways of remembering the war affiliated with two ideologically opposed strands of war memory. Yasukuni Shrine is associated with the conservative element that desires to downplay Japanese wartime aggression and has been mobilized as a symbol of the right wing through the glorification of wartime Japan, evidenced by the numerous right wing groups that make their presence known there, as observed by Ben-Ari.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial has been associated with the progressive element that seeks to refute such revisions through an emphasis on the horrors of war exemplified by the dropping of the atomic bomb.

However, this polarized dichotomy is too simplistic and in essence fundamentally misunderstands the roles that these two memorials have come to play in Japan's attempts to deal with the legacy of World War II. Rather than zero-sum opposites, this paper will argue that Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial determine and constitute each other in a dialectic process in which conflicting memories co-exist as a means of understanding World War II in a cohesive way, with Yasukuni Shrine representing and facilitating Japan's connection to its Imperial Past and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial representing Japan's connection to its future. With this in mind, this thesis will pursue a comparative analysis of the two war memorials. This chapter will begin with an outline of

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<sup>3</sup> Eyal Ben-Ari, "Coincident of Events of Remembrance, Coexisting Spaces of Memory: The Annual Memorial Rites at Yasukuni Shrine," in *Perspectives on Social Memory in Japan*, ed. Tsu Yun Hui, Jan Van Bremen, and Eyal Ben-Ari (Folkstone, UK: Global Oriental, 2005), 84-85.

the conceptual framework that will be utilized to examine Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, along with the information regarding each war memorial necessary to contextualize the remainder of the chapter's analysis. The two memorials will next be examined in terms of physical layout, museum content and presentation, and ritual. Next, this chapter will investigate the symbolism of each memorial, and conclude with an examination of their relationship to one another. In addition to providing insight into the types of memories each memorial is designed to elicit, the analysis of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine will also establish the contextual foundation upon which subsequent chapters will build.

### *Conceptual Framework*

In order to make sense of Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, it is necessary to first establish a framework through which to analyze them. To this end, it also becomes necessary to clearly define several concepts that are central to any discussion of war memory in Japan. The first of these concepts is collective memory itself. The definition of collective memory as put forward by Barry Schwartz, Kazuya Fukuoka, and Sachiko Takita-Ishii is the most useful, as they define it as a *process* in which the individual generates beliefs regarding the past as a result of interaction with other people.<sup>4</sup> This has two implications. This establishes collective memory as an ongoing action that is constantly changing in response to variables like shifts in social and political context, as opposed to a static, overarching sense of undifferentiated and universal memory. Secondly,

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<sup>4</sup> Barry Schwartz, Kazuya Fukuoka, and Sachiko Takita-Ishii, "Collective Memory: Why Culture Matters," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Culture*, edited by Mark D. Jacobs and Nancy Weiss Hanrahan, 253-271 (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 254.

by positing that the individual is the agent of memory creation, it marks collective memory as inherently subjective, as different individuals respond differently to the same events. It is this type of subjective memory upon which the debate regarding how to remember a war is built. Thus, to adapt Schwartz et al's definition of collective memory to this particular study, war memory is defined as a process in which the individual generates beliefs regarding World War II as a result of interaction with other people.

It is also important to define what constitutes a war memorial. James M. Mayo asserts that a war memorial is an "arrangement of space and artifacts" used to preserve the memory of the war dead.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, this definition raises the question of what the connection is between "space" and war memorials. To this end, Jung-Sun Han addresses the notion of space through the assertion that "memory is condensed into place," contending that a place is a space that is assigned a particular concentration of intention that marks it as distinct from the remainder of space.<sup>6</sup> This concentration of intention is what assigns meaning to a place, which in turn assigns meaning to the memorial built there, as illustrated by the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, Germany. This memorial is comprised entirely of concrete slabs that provide no overt reference to the Holocaust, but its location in the heart of Berlin reveal an obvious determination to not forget the events that led to the deaths of millions of people. In this way, Han's definition provides important insight into why and how locations are chosen for memorials, usually coinciding with a place of significant subjective importance to the group of people responsible for the memorial's construction.

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<sup>5</sup> James M. Mayo, "War Memorials as Political Memory," *Geographical Review* 78, no. 1(2005): 62.

<sup>6</sup> Jung-Sun Han, "Conserving the Heritage of Shame: War Remembrance and War-Related Sites in Contemporary Japan," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 42, no. 3 (2012): 495.

In addition, while there is an original intentionality regarding a space that is designated to be a “place,” the connection of an individual or group to a place can develop into an emotional stake. Han asserts that this is especially true in the case of war memorials, which, by their very nature of memorializing a violent and traumatic event, are capable of generating intense memories that raise one’s emotional stake in a place. To continue, these places, often evoking simultaneously similar and competing images and memories become linked together in a network of sorts that becomes the means through which collective memory is engaged and spread.<sup>7</sup> According to Dolores Hayden, “while a single preserved historic place may trigger potent memories, networks of such places begin to reconnect social memory on an urban scale,” meaning that these “memory networks” essentially constitute the “field” in which the social process of collective memory plays out.<sup>8</sup>

As such, this concept of place is essential in understanding and analyzing the physical layout of both Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. In this way, the concentration of intention as espoused by Han can be understood through an analysis of the structural and positional relationships seen at each site. In other words, examining how buildings and statues are positioned and their spatial relationship to one another allows for an understanding of what memories the architect/site planner intended to elicit. This is the first aspect of Yasukuni and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial that will be comparatively analyzed.

In his above definition of war memorials, Mayo contends that arrangements of artifacts constitute an integral aspect of memorials. This is best represented in the museums located at each site: the Yūshūkan war museum within the Yasukuni Shrine complex and

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 78.



the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. The artifacts themselves are important because understanding each museum's mnemonic stance towards the war depends on understanding which artifacts are present and what they represent. One must also investigate what artifacts or types of artifacts are not presented, as this discrepancy sheds light on how and why certain artifacts are selected or omitted, which further informs each museum's respective stance on war memory. This is the second aspect of Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial that will be comparatively analyzed.

The third aspect of the two war memorials that will be comparatively analyzed is ritual. Mayo contends that "war memory...becomes active in a landscape through rituals that enable people to use war as an ongoing event in their lives."<sup>9</sup> This is especially important in the case of Yasukuni Shrine as it is an actual Shinto shrine, with religious rites holding a central importance to its existence and one of the most prominent ways that people interact with the memorial. Although not specifically a religious site, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum's rituals also define it in many ways and offer an opportunity and means for individuals to interact with the museum. Furthermore, rituals are perhaps the most important aspect of engagement to these sites as they "transform the landscape and memory associated with it," making ritual a dynamic interaction with war memory, capable of eliciting memories from participants in a fundamentally different way than the more passive representations of the war (spatial and artifact presentations) are able.

### ***Background***

In order to examine how memories are embodied and the past exhibited by Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, a brief explanation of the historical development

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<sup>9</sup> Mayo, "War Memorials as Political Memory," 71.

of each memorial is necessary. Understanding the historical subtext is important firstly because it allows one to better conceptualize how the design and mnemonic presentation (the manner in which structures designed to elicit memory are arranged for and presented to the viewer) of both memorials have changed since their construction. Secondly, this presentation of history allows one to contextualize the temporality of Yasukuni and the Peace Memorial Museum and how their respective placement on the timeline affects their mnemonic message as well as their relationship to one another.

Originally known as Tokyo Shōkonsha, Yasukuni Shrine was founded in 1869 in Tokyo in order to commemorate those who died fighting for the emperor during the Meiji Restoration. Following its renaming a decade later, Yasukuni quickly fell under the control of the Army and Navy ministries in an increasingly militaristic Japan. Accordingly, “a close relationship developed between the military the emperor, and the shrine” that afforded Yasukuni a special status among other Shinto shrines and directly associated it with the military.<sup>10</sup> This status subsequently led to Yasukuni Shrine becoming the central shrine for honoring the war dead, as other, smaller shrines with similar functions became subsidiaries. At the turn of the century the shrine increased in prominence again, becoming a symbol of victory as the souls of those who died in the Russo-Japanese War were enshrined at Yasukuni in massive numbers due to the extraordinary casualties Japan suffered during the conflict.

As Japan progressed towards empire and into the Sino-Japanese War in the 1930s and 1940s, the state saw the usefulness of Yasukuni Shrine in engendering political capital

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<sup>10</sup> Franziska Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005* (Cambridge, MA: London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 231.

and accordingly nationalized the shrine, making its priests public officials.<sup>11</sup> The new, state-sponsored shrine quickly became a means of mobilizing support for the war due to its function as a bastion of widely propagated imperial values, such as loyalty and sacrifice in the name of the emperor.<sup>12</sup> However, following the war, the American occupation specifically targeted Yasukuni as a central pillar of Japanese militarism and effectively separated the shrine from the Japanese state by declaring it a private religious institution.<sup>13</sup> Although this legally ended the unique relationship forged half a century earlier, from that point on, the relationship between Yasukuni Shrine and the Japanese state remained intact, at least informally, and questions concerning the nature of this relationship have permeated Japanese perception of the memorial, often viscerally manifesting both domestically and internationally as a result of visits by prominent governmental and bureaucratic figures.

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial, on the other hand, is a much more recent construction and accordingly, has a shorter historical period. In 1946, a year after the atomic bomb drop that destroyed Hiroshima and decimated its population, the government of Hiroshima City created a City Reconstruction Bureau to rebuild the city and its society. Three years later, in 1949, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Law was approved and begun.<sup>14</sup> A key aspect of this plan was the construction of a “Peace Park” that would commemorate the legacy of the atomic bomb explosion, including the victims and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 231-233.

<sup>12</sup> Shaun O’Dwyer, “The Yasukuni Shrine and the Competing Pasts of East Asia,” *History and Memory* 22, no. 2 (2010): 150.

<sup>13</sup> Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*, 235.

<sup>14</sup> Yushi Utaka, “The Hiroshima ‘Peace Memorial’: Transforming Legacy, Memories and Landscapes,” in *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with ‘Difficult Heritage,’* ed. William Logan and Keir Reeves (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), 37.

destruction thereof. Preliminary construction of the Peace Park was completed in 1954, on the heels of the conclusion of the American occupation.<sup>15</sup>

As the years went on, more statues and monuments were added to the memorial, increasing symbolic value. The heavy censorship of the American occupation prevented criticism of the bomb, instead helping to establish a narrative that associated the bomb with peace because “the only safe way to mourn was by connecting Hiroshima’s destruction with peace.”<sup>16</sup> Following the end of the occupation, this narrative persisted as the Hiroshima elite actively promoted the city as a “city of peace,” continuing the ideological trend initiated with the passage of the 1949 Peace City Law. However, following the *Lucky Dragon Five* incident in 1954, in which a Japanese fishing boat was exposed to radiation from the American hydrogen bomb test on the Bikini Atoll, the bomb began to be regarded negatively, as a terrible instrument of war as opposed to a necessary step towards peace.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, the city and memorial became increasingly associated with the anti-nuclear movement and the testimony of survivors of the atomic bomb blast (*hibakusha*) gained prominence, a trend which has continued well into the current century.

### ***Physical Layout***

In order to understand how memory is represented at Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, one must understand the physical layout of each memorial. According to Han, “place” denotes a concentration of intentionality that serves to separate a place from the remainder of space. When analyzing Yasukuni and the Hiroshima Peace

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<sup>15</sup> Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space and the Dialectics of Memory* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1999), 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ran Zwigenberg, *Hiroshima: The Origins of Global Memory Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 30.

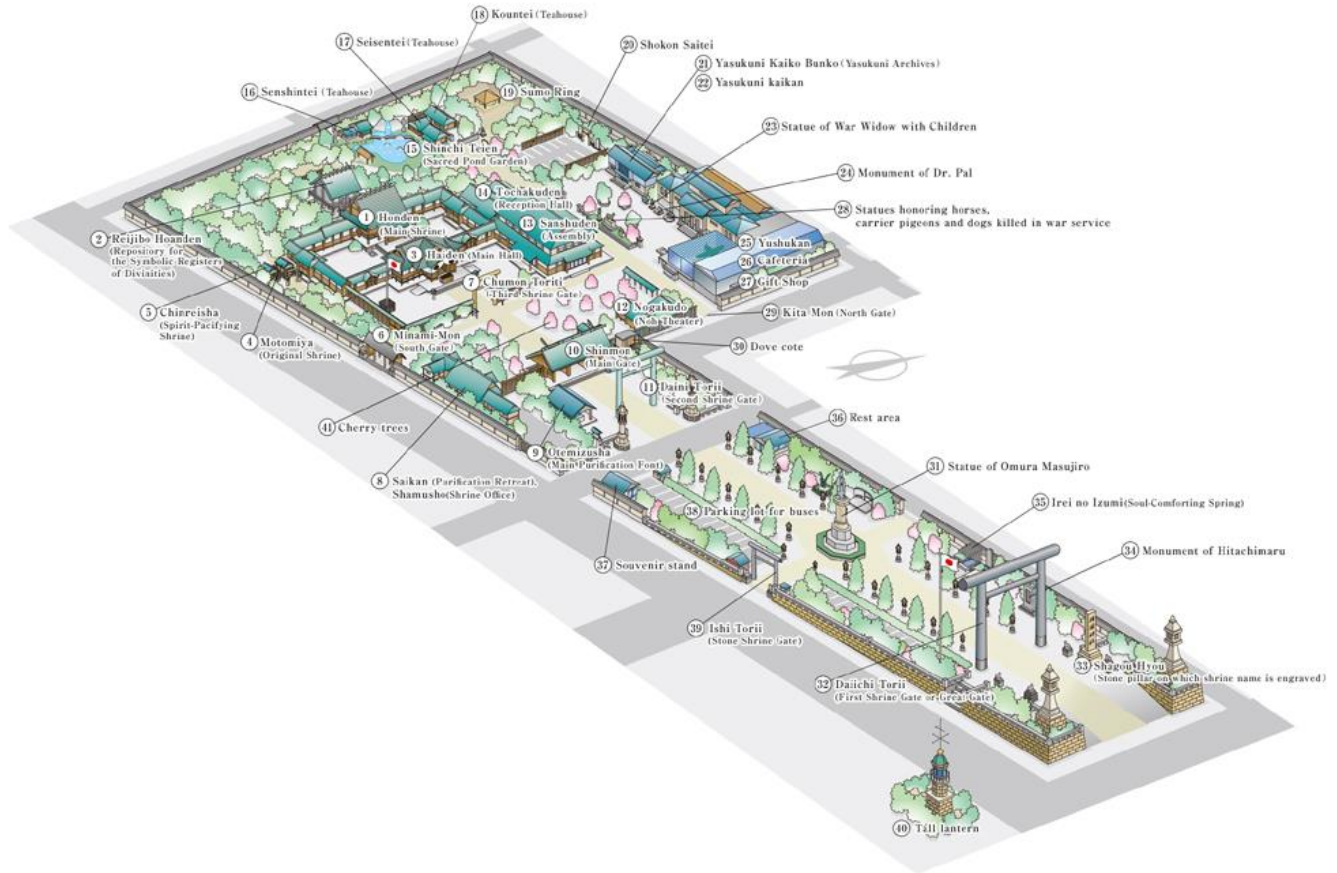
<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 39, 78-79.

Memorial, such intentionality can be interpreted as the desire for certain memories to be elicited by certain structures, spatial relationships, or a combination of the two. The following analysis utilizes this principle to highlight key similarities and differences between Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial.

Although the physical layouts of the respective memorials are very different, one feature that both share is the use of linear alignment to highlight the primary mnemonic foci of each. At Yasukuni, this linear alignment is achieved through the structural design of the shrine complex. Although there are several different entrances one can utilize to gain access to the main shrine area, the main gate is distinguished as the principle means of doing so. The main sanctuary opens into a large square area, with the shrine itself offset slightly to one side. The main gate, with its centrality emphasized by the fact that it is larger than any other entrance to the main sanctuary, is also offset to correspond to the position of the shrine. This means that when one enters via the main gate, the very first thing that one sees is the shrine. Furthermore, although there are several other large structures within the complex, they are positioned against the sides of the site so as not to detract from the main shrine, all of which serves to highlight the Yasukuni Shrine itself as the primary focus of the memorial.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Yasukuni Shrine, "Precinct Map," *Yasukuni Shrine*, <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/precinct/index.html>, (accessed on April 3, 2015).



**Figure 1.1** Map of the Yasukuni Shrine complex.<sup>19</sup>

Additionally, this linear alignment is further augmented by a long, straight pathway that lines up directly with the main gate, and accordingly, the main shrine. Although the main gate is positionally designated to be the main entrance to the main sanctuary, the pathway is clearly intended to be the primary means of access to the memorial itself. This is indicated by the presence of three *torii* gates placed at various intervals on the pathway that act as directional markers, as these gates get progressively smaller as one advances toward the shrine. The first gate, designated the *daiichi torii* (first shrine gate) is located

<sup>19</sup> Yasukuni Shrine, “Precinct Map,” Digital Image, *Yasukuni Shrine*, accessed May 8, 2015, <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/precinct/index.html>.

directly at the beginning of the pathway, signifying the intended entrance. The *daini torii* (second shrine gate) is located immediately before the main gate, again signifying the intended entrance, this time to the main sanctuary. The third and final shrine gate, the *chumon torii* (third shrine gate) is positioned directly in front of the main shrine and is actually part of the main shrine's structure.<sup>20</sup>

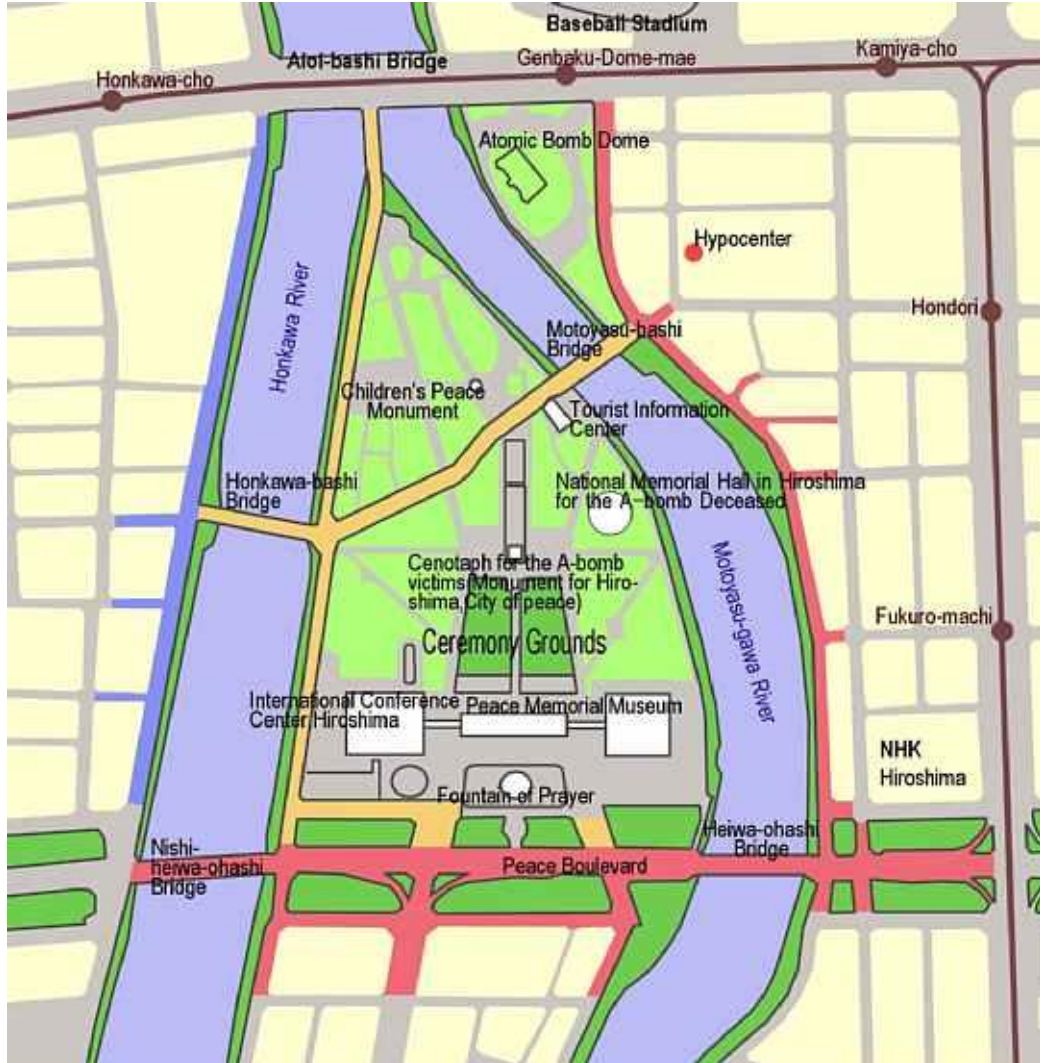
The Hiroshima Peace Memorial shares the same type of linear alignment seen at Yasukuni Shrine: attention on its primary mnemonic foci is accomplished through the spatial relationship between several central monuments: the Cenotaph for the A-bomb Victims, the A-bomb Dome, and the Peace Memorial Museum. The latter two are the central focal points of the memorial, while the former is the relative center of the Peace Memorial Park and the point that serves to direct one's gaze to the aforementioned monuments.<sup>21</sup> The A-bomb Dome is the ruin of the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall, one of the few structures that survived the blast, albeit severely damaged, and was subsequently preserved.<sup>22</sup> As such, it is capable of conjuring vivid memories of the atomic bomb blast and the horrific aftermath. The Cenotaph for the A-bomb Victims is a large arch that conceals a small memorial to those who died as a result of the atomic bomb. However, its main purpose is not as a memorial in and of itself, but rather to visually highlight the A-bomb Dome. When one faces the direction of the A-bomb Dome while standing directly in front of the Cenotaph, the arch of the Cenotaph encircles the A-bomb Dome while simultaneously narrowing one's field of vision so that only the A-bomb Dome is visible and not the skyscrapers of modern Hiroshima that constitute the background.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Hiroshima City, "Guided Tours to Peace Memorial Park and Vicinity," *Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum WebSite*, [http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/frame/Virtual\\_e/tour\\_e/guide1.html](http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/frame/Virtual_e/tour_e/guide1.html), (accessed on April 3, 2015).

<sup>22</sup> Utaka, "The Hiroshima 'Peace Memorial,'" 36.



**Figure 1.2** A simplified map of Hiroshima Peace Park.<sup>23</sup>

While the A-bomb Dome is one of the primary mnemonic foci of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, the Peace Memorial Museum is the other and is also linearly aligned with the Cenotaph and the A-bomb Dome. When one is positioned in directly in front of the Cenotaph and then turns one hundred-eighty degrees, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial

<sup>23</sup> The City of Hiroshima, "Map of Environs of Ceremony Grounds," Digital Image, *Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony*, accessed May 8, 2015, [http://www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/shimin/shimin/shikiten/image/map\\_e.jpg](http://www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/shimin/shimin/shikiten/image/map_e.jpg).



Museum dominates the view that is presented. In this way, the Cenotaph provides a visual alignment that connects the A-bomb Dome and the Peace Memorial Museum, further emphasizing the importance of the two structures.<sup>24</sup>

Although there is a striking similarity in the use of special relationships to direct attention to their primary bastions of memory, there is a significant difference as well. This difference manifests as a result of the different temporalities that each site expresses through the spatial relationship to the surrounding environment and the architectural elements emphasized. The physical layout and architectural style of Yasukuni is designed to engender a profound and “timeless” connection to the past while that of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial is specifically designed to reflect the passing of time and a strong connection to the future.

The most obvious way in which the structure of the Yasukuni complex facilitates a temporal connection with the past is through the use of a large wall that completely encircles the facility and, in the words of Eyal Ben-Ari, “makes it impossible to see what goes on inside.”<sup>25</sup> This wall is only open for select entrances, the largest being the main entrance to the entire complex, designated with the *daiichi torii*. This wall effectively separates the shrine and the activities that take place inside of the complex from the remainder of Tokyo, in essence creating a temporal bubble inside which modernity has little influence. Furthermore, the structure of the Yasukuni complex is designed upon progressively more intimate levels of “enclosedness.” Upon entering the main pathway, one is both separated and insulated from the remainder of Tokyo. This enclosure is magnified as one enters the main sanctuary, which is definitively separate from the main

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<sup>24</sup> Hiroshima City, “Guided Tours to Peace Memorial Park and Vicinity.”

<sup>25</sup> Ben-Ari, “Coincident Events of Remembrance, Coexisting Spaces of Memory,” 77.

pathway and more insulated. Finally, as one enters the main shrine, one is enclosed from the main sanctuary itself by means of more walls and a large number of tall trees surrounding the shrine. These increasing levels of insulation serve to progressively distance one from the modernity present outside the walls of the shrine complex, a phenomenon noted by Joy Hendry, who observed that “large Shinto shrines...enclose their most sacred area with several layers of space which becomes increasingly sacred as approach is made from the outside world.”<sup>26</sup>

Additionally, there are numerous other statues and structures whose design serves to further facilitate this connection to the past. As one enters the long pathway that leads to the main sanctuary, one passes a stone pillar upon which the name of the Shrine is engraved, a simple structure composed in a traditional Japanese style that reinforces the idea that one is stepping into the past. However, immediately upon entering the complex, one’s view is dominated by a massive statue of the founder of the modern Japanese army, Ōmura Masujirō, erected directly in the middle of the pathway.<sup>27</sup> Although he was the founder of the modern Japanese army that dressed in Western-style military uniforms, he is depicted in traditional Japanese clothing, simultaneously conveying to the viewer his Japaneseness and his connection to a pre-modern Japan. Within the main sanctuary and in addition to the shrine itself, there are other structures that serve to generate a sense of connectivity to the past as well, including a noh theater, a sumo ring, a Japanese style pond garden, and two separate teahouses, all of which are icons of pre-modern Japanese tradition. In fact, the only “modern” style structures in the main sanctuary are the Yūshūkan and the adjoining

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<sup>26</sup> Joy Hendry, *Wrapping Culture: Politeness, Presentation and Power in Japan and Other Societies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 109.

<sup>27</sup> John Breen, “Introduction: A Yasukuni Genealogy,” in *Yasukuni, the War Dead, and the Struggle for Japan’s Past*, ed. John Breen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 16.

cafeteria and gift shop, and these structures are grouped in corner that occupies only a relatively small portion of the sanctuary's total area.<sup>28</sup>



**Figure 1.3** The Main Hall of Yasukuni Shrine. Note the traditional Japanese architectural elements, such as the *torii* gate and gabled roof.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, it is important to note that these structures are all viewed against a background of the distinctive architectural aesthetics associated with Shinto shrines that have in many ways become synonymous with pre-modern Japan. This architecture is deeply symbolic of the past and this symbolism is only magnified by stark contrast with the modern city which one steps out of when entering the shrine complex. To begin, the

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<sup>28</sup> "Precinct Map," *Yasukuni Shrine*.

<sup>29</sup> Kikidai, *Yasukuni Shrine 2012*, Digital Image, March 20, 2012, Tokyo, Japan, in *Wikipedia*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yasukuni\\_Shrine#/media/File:Yasukuni\\_Shrine\\_2012.JPG](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yasukuni_Shrine#/media/File:Yasukuni_Shrine_2012.JPG).

complex is littered with constructions deeply associated with Shinto shrines, including the prominent *torii* gates that designate the site as Shinto, the purification font (*otemizusha*) found immediately outside the main gate used to purify oneself before entering the main sanctuary, and the structure of the shrine itself. The construction of the shrine is illustrative of Shinto-style construction, notably the roof, which is easily the most visually dominant aspect of the building and the most reflective of its architectural style. The roof is hipped-and-gabled, a style which is associated with shrine architecture and directly characterizes the rest of the building as distinctly Shinto, which in turn, permeates the remainder of the complex.<sup>30</sup> Thus, at Yasukuni Shrine, an enclosed space saturated with mnemonic symbols strongly affiliated with pre-modern Japan create an atmosphere inherently rooted in the past.

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial is fundamentally different in that its temporal orientation is towards the future, a fact which is also reflected in the structure of its physical layout and architecture. In exactly the opposite manner of Yasukuni's construction, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial is entirely open, with no walls that separate the memorial from the city.<sup>31</sup> This design element is an essential aspect of situating Hiroshima's temporality, as Hiroshima's modern skyscrapers surround and envelop the memorial, deliberately situating the Hiroshima Peace Memorial within the city. This inclusion within the modernity of the city is a fundamental distinction from Yasukuni, which utilized walls and enclosure to separate itself from the modernity of Tokyo. While the Hiroshima Peace Memorial is spatially segregated from the rest of the city by means of a river that surrounds the memorial's spatial area, there are no less than four bridges that connect the city to the memorial directly and the modern skyline of the city is visible from almost anywhere within

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<sup>30</sup> Hirotaro Ota, ed., *Traditional Japanese Architecture and Gardens* (Yokohama: Japan Cultural Society, 1972), 72-73.

<sup>31</sup> Hiroshima City, "Guided Tours to Peace Memorial Park and Vicinity," *Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum*.

the Peace Park. This interconnectedness was a core value that the Hiroshima Peace Memorial's designer Kenzo Tange intended to implement, implied by the self-professed role "inner and outer functions, private and social spaces, human scale and mass-human scale, began to play in [his] methodology of design."<sup>32</sup> Thus, this spatial relationship between the city and the memorial signifies that the city itself is a fundamental piece of the memorial, the future against which the events of Hiroshima are to be contrasted and accordingly remembered and conversely, the Hiroshima Peace memorial represents the past against which the city's progress towards the future can be measured.

Unlike Yasukuni's architecture, done in a more traditional style of architecture that elicits connections with Japan's past, the architecture of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial is characterized by a modernist style that encapsulates Tange's attempt to "make contemporary architecture take root in Japanese realities."<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, the central mnemonic foci of the memorial are relatively modern in style. The large arch form of the Cenotaph for the A-bomb Victims is distinctly non-traditional, at least in the sense of Japanese traditional aesthetics. The Cenotaph's inherently futuristic shape and its usage as a lens to focus the past, represented by the A-bomb Dome, is illustrative of the temporal separation and distance with which Hiroshima *looks back* on the past as opposed to *attempting to directly connect* with it.

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<sup>32</sup> Kenzo Tange, *Kenzo Tange* (Tokyo: Kajima Shuppankai, 1980), 186.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.



**Figure 1.4** The modernist design of the Cenotaph and its use as a lens to focus attention on the A-bomb dome.<sup>34</sup>

As pointed out above, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum is the other central mnemonic focus of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and it also reflects this element of temporal distance that characterizes the entire memorial. Firstly, the museum is a massive vision of contemporary architecture that dominates the landscape with its futuristic visage of concrete and glass that vastly differs from everything else in the park. This idea of

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Oswald, "Cenotaph Hiroshima," Digital Image, April 5, 2006, Hiroshima, Japan, in *Wikipedia*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiroshima\\_Peace\\_Memorial\\_Park#/media/File:Cenotaph\\_Hiroshima.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiroshima_Peace_Memorial_Park#/media/File:Cenotaph_Hiroshima.jpg).

“looking back” on the past is further reinforced through the aforementioned linear alignment, which spatially promotes the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum as one of the main elements of the memorial, emphasizing the centrality and importance of its function, namely preserving artifacts from the past to be consumed.<sup>35</sup> It is important to note that Yasukuni also has a relatively large museum, proportionally speaking, within its complex, but it is relegated to a corner of the main sanctuary so that it does not disrupt the careful mnemonic focusing mentioned earlier.

Thus, through an analysis of the physical layout and aesthetic components of Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial it can be seen that there is a significant similarity and a significant difference. The two memorials are alike in regards to the fact that both utilize direct mnemonic stimulation by means of emphasis on the central memory-making aspects of each memorial to promote the elicitation of memory. Both memorials achieve this by means of a linear alignment that provides the visitor/viewer with a straight line of approach or sight for specific memory-inducing foci. However, they differ in regards to the mnemonic atmosphere that they create. Yasukuni utilizes walls and increasing levels of enclosure to isolate visitors from the modernity of the city while simultaneously utilizing traditional architectural elements and structural components designed to evoke images of the past in an attempt to recreate the environment physically, which allows visitors to directly connect to the past. In contrast, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial’s open space is surrounded by the skyscrapers of the city, which, along with the modernist architectural aspects of the memorial’s various structures, emphasize the memorial’s connectedness to modernity and progress, resulting in a mnemonic atmosphere that emphasizes a sense of looking back on the past.

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<sup>35</sup> Hiroshima City, “Guided Tours to Peace Memorial Park and Vicinity,” *Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum*.

### *Museum Content and Presentation*

The museums at Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, the Yūshūkan and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum respectively, play important roles in the creation and preservation of memory. However, a direct comparison of these museums is difficult, primarily because they are intended to serve vastly different functions at each location. The Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima is designed as a principal mnemonic site within the Hiroshima Peace Memorial while the Yūshūkan is intended as a secondary site of memory, behind the main shrine. That being said, the theme of victimization is prominent in both museums.

As one would expect, the majority of the artifacts and exhibits on display in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum are dedicated to the victims of the atomic bomb. Upon entering the main building of the Peace Museum, the first exhibit one sees is a panorama of the city in 1945 that displays the sheer destruction of the atomic detonation and offers a general explanation of the events of August 6. Immediately beyond this are sections of artifacts from the blast, categorized by the way in which they were damaged: heat waves, the blast, or radiation. In addition, this building also contains testimonials and drawings from the survivors.<sup>36</sup> This focus on personal artifacts from the site of the bomb, arrayed so that one is surrounded by them, when viewed in conjunction with personal testimony and artwork is overwhelming and allows one to identify with the victims by emphasizing their suffering.

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<sup>36</sup> Hiroshima City, “Let’s Look at Displays: Main Building,” *Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum*, [http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/virtual/VirtualMuseum\\_e/visit\\_e/vist\\_fr\\_e.html](http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/virtual/VirtualMuseum_e/visit_e/vist_fr_e.html) (accessed on April 6, 2015).





**Figure 1.5** The warping and deformation of numerous statues, household containers, and other items by the atomic bomb presented in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum.<sup>37</sup>

At the Yūshūkan, this sense of victimization is manifested in a wholly different way. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum focuses on the victimization of *individuals* whereas at the Yūshūkan, the victimization featured is that of the *nation-state*. That is not to say that personal representation is not present: it can be found throughout the museum in the form of portraits, personal stories, and plaques to the heroics of individual soldiers. However, the emphasis given to these individuals is different from that offered to those represented in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, as the artifacts and their

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<sup>37</sup> Xiquinhosilva, "Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum Exhibits," Digital Image, in *Hiroshima and the Peace Memorial Museum*, accessed May 8, 2015, <http://advisortravelguide.com/hiroshima-and-the-peace-memorial-museum/>.

descriptions tend to glorify the cause for which such soldiers died as opposed to the soldiers themselves.



**Figure 1.6** A display case from the Yūshūkan.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, the personal artifacts on display are mostly military, ranging from samurai weapons and armor to the more modern armaments and uniforms utilized by Japanese soldiers in World War II, which emphasizes the glory of combat and the war itself by extension.<sup>39</sup> This emphasis on the uniformity of the Japanese military on display in the Yūshūkan breeds an identification with the soldier as an idea as opposed to the soldier as an individual, which translates into an identification with the Japanese military by extension. This identification is then channeled into a sense that Japan was directly victimized as a

<sup>38</sup> Geraldine Sherman, Digital Image, 1991, in *Japan's War Heroes Have Their Shrine*, <http://www.geraldinesherman.com/WarHeroes.html>.

<sup>39</sup> "Tenjishitsu no goannai: guide map," Yūshūkan, <http://www.yasukuni.jp/~yusyukan/floor/index.html>, (accessed on April 6, 2015).

nation-state by the victors of the war, as explicitly stated in exhibits such as the exhibit commemorating the fifty-seventh anniversary of the end of the war contending that Japan was forced into war by the United States as a means of revitalizing the American economy.<sup>40</sup> According to John Breen, the presence of a large photograph of Justice Radhabinod Pal near the end of the Pacific War section of the museum further illustrates Yūshūkan's stance that Japan was victimized, as Pal was the only judge on the international war crimes tribunal in Tokyo that argued that the "Japanese were innocent of all war crimes; the real aggressors...the Americans and British."<sup>41</sup>

While the two museums share a sense of victimization, the type of victimization featured in the two is very different. Perhaps the largest difference between the two museums is the selection of the artifacts presented. In the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, there appears to be a theme of inclusion of artifacts, representing the suffering of several important groups, such as the Korean victims of the atomic bomb, as well as the inclusion of artifacts that illustrate Japanese aggression during the war. However, the Yūshūkan is notable for its apparently conscious exclusion of such artifacts and in particular any which offer representation of Japan's wartime enemies, imperial colonialism, or wartime aggression.

Stefanie Schäfer characterized the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum as "one of the most balanced accounts of wartime and postwar Japan, one that includes numerous foreign and national counter-memories."<sup>42</sup> While the focus of the museum is obviously the

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<sup>40</sup> Roger B. Jeans, "Victims or Victimizers? Museums, Textbooks, and the War Debate in Contemporary Japan," *The Journal of Military History* 69, no. 1 (2005): 156-157.

<sup>41</sup> John Breen, "Yasukuni and the Loss of Historical Memory," in *Yasukuni, the War Dead, and the Struggle for Japan's Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 154.

<sup>42</sup> Stefanie Schäfer, "The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and its Exhibition," in *The Power of Memory in Modern Japan*, ed. Sven Saaler and Wolfgang Schwentker (Kent, UK: Global Oriental, 2008), 166.

victims and destruction of the atomic bomb blast, there are artifacts that acknowledge the suffering undergone by the Koreans that were forced to work in factories near Hiroshima due to the Imperial Japanese colonization of Korea and subsequent mobilization of Korean labor.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, and perhaps most significantly, the museum recently added a section that details Japanese aggression during the war and portrays some of the atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers, which assists in promoting a global sense of victimization founded on the horrors of war.

This depiction of the horrors of war is not seen in the Yūshūkan. The notable absence of artifacts relating to the enemy as well as exhibits that acknowledge Japanese wartime aggression, achieves, in the words of John Breen, “an amnesia of perpetration, of defeat, and, above all, the horror of war.”<sup>44</sup> Instead, the focus on Japanese uniforms, weapons, and stories relating the heroics of Japanese soldiers promotes a sense of veneration for the war, and more specifically, those who died fighting it. This manner of commemoration thus allows one to identify with the values that these soldiers supposedly embodied.

In sum, while both the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the Yūshūkan promote a sense of victimization, the focus of this victimization is different. The Peace Memorial Museum’s dedication to personal artifacts and the remnants of the atomic blast emphasize the horror of the war and focus on the individual. The Yūshūkan on the other hand, directs identification to the Japanese military and promotes a victimization centered on the Japanese nation-state suffering under the cruelty of the Allied powers through the presentation of military artifacts and personal sacrifice that glorify the war as a noble

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<sup>43</sup> Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces*, 152.

<sup>44</sup> Breen, “Yasukuni and the Loss of Historical Memory,” 153.

endeavor that Japan was prevented from fully accomplishing. Additionally, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial's exhibit is significant, as acknowledging the veracity of painful events indicates that one fully relegates those events to history, allowing one to "move on." This progression also situates one in a separate location temporally, as one is able to "look back" on the past. This relegation to history is not represented in the Yūshūkan, which promotes an emotional connection to Japan's wartime values through the artifacts and exhibits that highlight the Japanese soldier that died while supposedly embodying them. This refusal to relegate these Imperial values to the past thus manifests in a resentment aimed at the outcome of the war and the subsequent Japanese adoption of Western values.

### *Ritual*

As war memorials, both Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial are site to numerous rituals that allow for an active engagement with memory. However, these rituals are quite different in form and purpose and correspondingly reflect each memorial's different approach to history. The primary difference between the ritual practices of the two memorials stems from the way in which individuals are encouraged to participate in the rites being performed. Anthony Smith asserts that rituals usually fall into one of two types: commemorative or celebratory. The former can be defined by the honoring of those who died for the national community while the latter can be characterized by celebrations over national founding, achievements, or progress.<sup>45</sup> The rituals held at both Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial are commemorative rites, but the differences between them reflect each memorial's differing temporal orientation.

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<sup>45</sup> Anthony D. Smith, "The Rites of Nations: Elites, Masses and the Re-enactment of the 'National Past,'" in *The Cultural Politics of Nationalism and Nation-Building: Ritual and Performance in the Forging of Nations*, ed. Rachel Tsang and Eric Taylor Woods (London; New York: Routledge, 2014), 23.

According to Breen, there are two types of rites at Yasukuni Shrine.<sup>46</sup> The first is the rite of apotheosis, in which the souls of those who died are transformed into sacred beings, or *kami*. These rituals were grandiose affairs during the Pacific War, but given the obvious lack of fallen soldiers to enshrine, these rituals are very rare in contemporary Japan. Nevertheless, the ritual itself is designed fully to commemorate those who died in combat for Japan and is accordingly solemn. However, it is the second of these two rites, the rite of propitiation, that is significantly more common and thus worthy of attention. The rite of propitiation occurs bi-annually, once in the fall and once in the spring, and is designed to honor the souls of those enshrined at Yasukuni while simultaneously pacifying them. While celebratory activities may form the larger part of the festival dedicated to this ritual, the rites themselves are sacred and are treated with great solemnity.

The Great Autumn Rite, one of the largest annual rituals that is officially sanctioned by Yasukuni Shrine, is comprised of three different sequences.<sup>47</sup> In the first sequence, the priests provide offerings of cigarettes, water, wine, and rice to the souls residing in the main shrine before the chief priest offers his own prayers and an evergreen sprig. In the second sequence, an imperial emissary enters and provides his offerings of silk and an evergreen sprig. In the final sequence, representatives from various special interest groups and the Defense Agency enter the shrine to make their offerings and prayers.<sup>48</sup> The remainder of participants only watch, but that does not necessarily mean that they are not actively involved because “through rituals, people can focus on war memory and their performances

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<sup>46</sup> John Breen, “The Dead and the Living in the Land of Peace: A Sociology of the Yasukuni Shrine,” *Mortality* 9, no. 1 (2004): 77-78.

<sup>47</sup> “Festivals (Matsuri Rituals),” *Yasukuni Shrine*, <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/festivals/index.html>, (accessed on April 7, 2015).

<sup>48</sup> Breen, “Yasukuni and the Loss of Historical Memory,” 145-146.



temporarily renew the importance of these memories in the landscape.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, the viewers of the ritual become active participants in the honorary rite, if only as witnesses.



**Figure 1.7** Priests from Yasukuni Shrine collect to cleanse themselves during the Great Autumn Rite.<sup>50</sup>

Such participation accordingly necessitates an engagement with the past, as the entire ritual centers around the honoring of the dead, which is augmented by an atmosphere engendered by structural components of the complex engineered to elicit association with the past. The ritual is comprised of three sequences, all of them involving the traditional Shinto practice of offering particular gifts to the war dead in order to appease them. First, the priests of the shrine present “conventional offerings of water, rice and rice wine”

<sup>49</sup> Mayo, “War Memorials as Political Memory,” 71.

<sup>50</sup> Reuters, Digital Image, in “Japan: PM Shinzo Abe Sends Offering to Yasukuni Shrine, Angering China and South Korea,” by David Sim, *International Business Times* (2014), <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/japan-pm-shinzo-abe-sends-offering-yasukuni-shrine-angering-china-south-korea-1470538>.

alongside offerings of beer, cigarettes, and an evergreen branch as they recite prayers to pacify the enshrined spirits.<sup>51</sup> This process is repeated in the next two stages by different individuals: in the second stage, an imperial emissary presents his offerings and prayers while in the third stage, members of the Defense Agency and various social interest groups present theirs.<sup>52</sup> The emphasis on the “traditional” aspects of the ritual, including Shinto prayers and offerings of stereotypically Japanese items, such as rice and rice wine, as well as the presence of an imperial emissary reinforce the traditional aesthetic and atmosphere of the shrine and promote identification with both Shintoism and the emperor. This identification in turn facilitates a connection to the past for the viewer vicariously engaging in the ritual through the aforementioned parties.

In large part because it is not a specifically designated religious location, Hiroshima is not a “dynamic ritual site” in the same way as Yasukuni.<sup>53</sup> The annual Peace Memorial Ceremony and the accompanying Peace Declaration held at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial is illustrative of this difference. Each year, on the anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb, people numbering in the millions gather at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial to participate in a ceremony that remembers those who died during the terrible events of August 6, 1945. But even more than honoring the dead, the ceremony seems to be focused on the future prospect of peace. According to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial website:

Each August 6, people gather to pray for the peaceful repose of the A-bomb victims, the abolition of nuclear weapons, and the advent of peace. The Peace Memorial Ceremony is held in front of the Cenotaph for the A-bomb Victims (Memorial Monument for Hiroshima, City of Peace), and the

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<sup>51</sup> Breen, “Yasukuni and the Loss of Historical Memory,” 145.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 145-146.

<sup>53</sup> John Breen, “The Nation’s Shrine: Conflict and Commemoration at Yasukuni, Modern Japan’s Shrine to the War Dead,” in *The Cultural Politics of Nationalism and Nation-Building: Ritual and Performance in the Forging of Nations*, ed. Rachel Tsang and Eric Taylor Woods (London; New York: Routledge, 2014), 134.



mayor of Hiroshima delivers his Peace Declaration to the world. Representatives of children, the bearers of the next generation, read the Commitment to Peace, and doves are released to the sky.<sup>54</sup>

The mayor of Hiroshima began the 2014 Peace Declaration with several brief anecdotes that reflect what he refers to as the “absolute evil” of August 6, 1945. These anecdotes are told from the perspective of children, eleven and six years old, which maximizes their dramatic impact and is specifically designed to bring to mind the most horrific images of the atomic bombing of the city. The mayor then implores the audience to identify with this pain to “think and act together with the *hibakusha*” in a “pledge to join forces with people the world over seeking the abolition of the absolute evil, nuclear weapons, and the realization of lasting world peace.”<sup>55</sup> Based upon this description, the actual emphasis of the ceremony appears to be on the future prospect of peace and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial serves only as a reminder to reinforce the importance thereof.

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<sup>54</sup> “The Peace Memorial Ceremony and the Peace Declaration,” Walking toward Peace, *Hiroshima Peace Site: Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum WebSite*, [http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/virtual/VirtualMuseum\\_e/visit\\_e/est\\_e/panel/A6/6102.htm#](http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/virtual/VirtualMuseum_e/visit_e/est_e/panel/A6/6102.htm#), (accessed on April 7, 2015).

<sup>55</sup> Kazumi Matsui, “Peace Declaration, August 6, 2014,” The City of Hiroshima, <http://www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/www/contents/1317948556078/simple/common/other/53e196c3002.pdf>, (accessed on May 7, 2015).



**Figure 1.8** Hundreds of people gather to take part in the annual Peace Memorial Ceremony.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, while the rituals undertaken at both memorials are commemorative in design, they serve entirely different purposes. The rites of Yasukuni Shrine are structured specifically to not only honor the souls of those who died in service to Japan, but also to engage the viewer/participant in a dynamic interaction with the past. The Peace Memorial Ceremony, on the other hand, commemorates those who died in the atomic bomb blast by utilizing them as a reminder of the need for peace, which is inherently a future-oriented endeavor.

### *Moral Symbolism*

As illustrated in the above analysis of Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, each site is representative of a distinctive temporal orientation that contributes to

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<sup>56</sup> The City of Hiroshima, Digital Image, in *Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony*, accessed May 8, 2015, <http://www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/shimin/shimin/shikiten/shikiten-e.html>.

the attitude and rhetoric of each place. In conjunction with this, each memorial also possess a deeply morally symbolic element that augments said orientations and represents a moral framework endorsed by the respective memorials. Yasukuni Shrine has deep connections with the emperor and has accordingly become symbolic of that relationship and the associated moral values. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial has become inescapably intertwined with the notion of peace and the anti-nuclear movement and has in many ways become a symbol of it, domestically and internationally.

Despite the fact that the American occupation legally separated Yasukuni Shrine and the Imperial family, John Breen has well documented the numerous imperial linkages to Yasukuni, the most visible of which is the imperial chrysanthemum image that can be found in numerous places, including the frame of the main gate, the drapes hung in the main sanctuary and worship hall, as well as on lanterns utilized for rites performed at night.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, the presence of the imperial emissary who participates in the annual rituals is representative of the emperor's direct involvement with the shrine. Breen asserts that this emissary's involvement muddies the focus of the ritual somewhat, meaning that "it is never entirely clear whether it is the war dead as *kami* that are celebrated in these rites, or the emperor and the imperial values which these men embodied."<sup>58</sup> The imperial connection with the shrine is further illustrated by the fact that, although the shrine is ostensibly devoted to the souls of the departed, four of the eleven annual festivals officially put on by the shrine are dedicated to an emperor: Jimmu (Japan's first emperor that supposedly founded Japan), Meiji, Shōwa (Hirohito), and Heisei (Akihito).<sup>59</sup> This focus on the emperor during rites that should be in principle focused primarily on those that died in his name,

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<sup>57</sup> Breen, "Yasukuni and the Loss of Historical Memory," 147.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-147.

<sup>59</sup> "Festivals (Matsuri Rituals)," *Yasukuni Shrine*, <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/festivals/index.html>.

along with the glorious representation of the war and the values for which it was fought seen in the Yūshūkan, promote these imperial values as the moral foundation of pre-war and wartime Japan while simultaneously encouraging their reinstatement in the contemporary world.

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial, on the other hand, as the site of the first use of an atomic weapon in history, has in many ways become synonymous with peace. Ran Zwigenberg documents the implementation of the narrative that identified Hiroshima as a “peace city,” beginning of the association of the bomb with peace under the American occupation.<sup>60</sup> Even following the withdrawal of American forces in 1952, the narrative persisted, in no small part because it offered the city a unique identity that it could exploit for the sake of its tourism industry. This equation of the city with peace was reinforced by its affiliation with the anti-nuclear and *hibakusha* movements, which promoted the horror and indiscriminate destruction of nuclear weapons.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, this identification with peace also served to establish a new moral framework predicated on pacifism that distanced Japan from its militaristic past and overt aggression, allowing the country to “move on.” The city’s evolution into a symbol of peace was finally completed and its pacifistic alignment legitimized when the Hiroshima Peace Memorial was recognized by the international community as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1996.<sup>62</sup>

### *Conclusion*

As this paper has illustrated, Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial have certain similarities and significant differences. Both memorials are designed to elicit

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<sup>60</sup> Zwigenberg, *Hiroshima*, 34.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-97.

<sup>62</sup> Utaka, “The Hiroshima ‘Peace Memorial,’” 39.

specific memories based on their physical layout and architectural aesthetics. The museums present at each memorial reinforce the corresponding narrative engendered by the layout and promote a specific type of victimization. Finally, the rituals of both memorials commemorate the dead, but Yasukuni's rituals emphasize a dynamic connection with the past through the honoring of the dead while the Hiroshima Peace Memorial's rituals utilize the dead as a poignant justification of their pursuit of a peaceful future. Perhaps the most important aspect of each memorial's stance is reflected in all three aspects of their design is their temporal orientation.

This orientation is important because it informs the relationship between Yasukuni and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial within the larger frame of how the war is remembered in Japan. Unlike the dichotomy pitting the historical narrative promoted by Yasukuni against that of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, this opposing temporal distinction does not necessitate the choice of one viewpoint over the other. Instead, it allows for a more complete understanding of the war than is possible by either. In fact, these two opposing orientations are essential for the existence of both, as they simultaneously define each other for several reasons.

Firstly, these two war memorials lie on opposing sides of a broken timeline. The past that Yasukuni represents was ended abruptly by the end of World War II and forced to change in a fundamental and traumatic way which stripped Japan of its national identity: the emperor had to renounce his divinity, the military dictatorship that had run the country for so long was replaced with democracy, and Japan had to relinquish its empire. The future that the Hiroshima Peace Memorial strives for is representative of Japan's attempt to redefine itself in the postwar period. The rapid change instigated by the atomic bomb and

rapid deconstruction of the wartime state offered no transitional period for Japan. Thus there are two identities, each stranded on one side of the trauma of the end of the war, and they define each other in that way.

Secondly, both temporal positions are necessary to justify the end of the war. The position advanced by Yasukuni Shrine is one way of justifying the sacrifices made in a war that was lost, very much in the tradition of tragic heroism described by Ivan Morris.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, Yasukuni's fervent attachment to the past and the glorification thereof can be interpreted as a means of retaliating against the verdict of the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal that found twenty-five wartime leaders of Japan guilty of varying charges of war crimes and crimes against peace, thus salvaging their historic legacy. Hiroshima's future oriented stance can be understood as the only orientation open to a city that had been physically rendered a "tabula rasa" in the wake of the bombing.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, just as vicariously promoting the war can be seen as a means to honor the dead at Yasukuni, promoting peaceful future can be seen as a means to honor those that died in Hiroshima.

Because of this division in the timeline, Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial each represent only half of a total equation and both are thus essential to coming to terms with the war. This dynamic highlights the fundamental nature of the Japanese war experience. Modern Japan was essentially built with World War II as its foundation: Imperial Japanese society, international aggression in Asia, the condemnation of the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal and the international community, and the American Occupation all coalesced to create the framework upon which postwar Japan is constituted. In fact, these myriad and often conflicting interpretations of the war are inherently intertwined in a

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<sup>63</sup> Ivan Morris, *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), xxi.

<sup>64</sup> Zwigenberg, *Hiroshima*, 23.

memory network on top of which Japanese politics, media, economics, public life, and ideology were built. From 1945 onwards, this network “developed with - and as a part of – particular and divergent approaches to postwar democracy.”<sup>65</sup> Thus, in many ways, World War II never ended for Japan, as the legacies of the war so permeate the postwar system and all of its facets that the debate over war memory, and accordingly, Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, is the very struggle to define Japan. So, while Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial represent opposite temporal trajectories, the present from which one may view each of these memorials is the bridge that connects the past of Yasukuni with the future of Hiroshima, connecting the legacy of Japan’s past with the hopes for its future and encapsulating a more complete understanding of the war experience in Japan.

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<sup>65</sup> Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*, 4.

## Chapter 2

### Speaking for the Dead: The Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine in Prime Ministers' Speeches

The Pacific War was an incredibly traumatic experience that had a tremendous impact on the development of postwar Japan. Following the war, Japan rebuilt almost from scratch, restructuring its political and economic systems, to say nothing of recovery from the massive damage to the country's infrastructure. However, perhaps most importantly, Japan had to rebuild its identity. From the height of the Meiji era onwards, Japan had conceptualized itself as a "modern nation," a sentiment reinforced by its victories over China and Russia at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Additionally, the rapidity and success of Japanese territorial expansion translated into an identity largely informed by military success and status as an empire. However, the Japanese surrender in 1945, as well as the subsequent demilitarization at the hands of the Allied Occupation and concession of most of the empire's territories made this identity untenable. Accordingly, while the nation was struggling with coming to terms with the war and this sudden identity vacuum, political elites, both American and Japanese, understood the necessity of reframing the war in a way that would provide a foundation for the postwar nation and allow for a new conceptualization of Japanese national identity.

For this purpose, these political actors decided immediately to utilize the collective memory of the war as a means of shaping the nation's future. Accordingly, as prominent repositories of memories regarding the war, the city of Hiroshima and Yasukuni Shrine tapped into the most visceral sentiments of the war experience, making them ideal targets for the generation of political capital in the postwar period. Although the general public



interacted with these sites in a very personal way, the elites sought to utilize them as a means of constructing official national narratives regarding the war that would support postwar Japanese national identity. I do not mean to overlook the importance of analyzing war memory at the grassroots level. However, the complexity of the source material, and the limited scope of the present thesis, among other reasons, have led me to define my scope of analysis narrowly and focus on the postwar heads-of-state, as Japanese Prime Ministers have been central to the process of identity formation. Prime minister speeches, and in particular their annual state of the nation addresses, are widely recognized and referred to as barometers of how Japan as a nation sees itself and the conditions it faces. While my coverage of the topic is incomplete, the analysis presented here is the culmination of my best efforts to address the topic, given limited time, space, and resources.

While there are many ways in which the Prime Minister has engaged the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine since the end of the war, the most consistent and pervasive method has been in political speech. The Japanese Prime Minister occupied a central role in the rhetorical shaping of that symbolism and the subsequent construction of “official” narratives in the sixty years following the Occupation’s end. Specifically, in speeches from the end of the Occupation in 1952 until the mid-1970s, the Japanese Prime Minister sought to galvanize the sense of victimization and sacrifice surrounding the atomic bombings into the Hiroshima Peace Memorial in order to create a symbolic representation of a “nation of peace.” Although Yasukuni Shrine and the state have had a complex relationship, Japanese Prime Ministers sought to utilize anti-militaristic rhetoric in conjunction with personal shrine visits in an attempt to separate Yasukuni from its wartime symbolism and reframe it strictly as memorial to the dead. However, from mid-1970s

onward, international and domestic pressure challenged these narratives, especially regarding the role of Yasukuni Shrine, forcing the Prime Minister to reframe the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine in a more complex narrative that addressed nationalist sentiment while simultaneously recognizing the wartime actions of Imperial Japan.

### **Conceptualizing Identity**

In order to understand how and why Japanese Prime Ministers have engaged the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine in the service of national identity creation, it is important to define identity and how it is constructed. In his work *Strategies of Remembrance*, M. Bruner defines national identity as a “historically developed and politically consequential symbolic construction[n] citizens are enmeshed in.”<sup>66</sup> This definition consists of three distinct yet intertwined aspects, all of which hold significant meaning. Firstly, this definition highlights the importance of history as the conceptual foundation for the national sense of self and raises the issue of memory and historical consciousness. Secondly, it posits that national identity is a “symbolic construction,” which implies not only that it is a representation of the aforementioned historical consciousness, but also that it is built around existing symbols of that consciousness. Thirdly, by describing national identity as a “politically consequential...construction[n] citizens are enmeshed in,” Bruner’s definition suggests national identity as a political bridge between the public and the government that exerts real influence on both parties.

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<sup>66</sup> M. Lane Bruner, *Strategies of Remembrance: The Rhetorical Dimensions of National Identity Construction* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 90-91.

The first aspect of Bruner's definition is that identity is largely a creation of specific remembrances of historical events. For instance, how a nation remembers war directly affects its stance towards waging it. According to Siobhan Kattago, collective identity formation is a process that involves either "external identification with another country or ideology or... internal identification with one's own past." He asserts, with respect to the latter, that internal identification can "either affirm our past cultural traditions or distance ourselves from certain aspects of our collective past."<sup>67</sup> The ways in which history or specific historical events are collectively remembered in a particular group of people are determined by that group's collective values. In other words, the moral/cultural values held by a group influences and shapes the way history is viewed, conceptualized, and ultimately remembered, hence Kattago's assertion that the past is either affirmed or condemned by the way in which it is remembered.

The second aspect of Bruner's definition is the importance of symbolism in national identity. This significance is twofold: national identity is inherently representative (or symbolic) of a group's collective and cultural values but it is also itself primarily comprised of symbolic elements, including "images, rituals, sites and objects."<sup>68</sup> These elements are usually mnemonic loci that are designed to elicit specific types of memories that, as mentioned above, correspondingly reinforce the specific collective values upon which national identity is constructed. Examples of such elements include war memorials, national holidays, and sacred relics.

The third distinct aspect of Bruner's definition is his assertion that national identity is a politically consequential construct in which people are immersed. Eric Langenbacher

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<sup>67</sup> Siobhan Kattago, *Ambiguous Memory: The Nazi Past and German National Identity* (Westport, CT: Praeger), 21.

<sup>68</sup> Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2002), 25.

asserts that in large part, “elite actors hammer out and validate the politically acceptable memory regime” in order to support and legitimate the current social order.<sup>69</sup> This process of memory regime creation is what scholar Yinan He refers to as national mythmaking, in which political elites construct national myths comprised of “half-truth narratives and beliefs about the origins, identity, and purposes of the nation” that are highly selective of politically expedient remembrances of the past, including those that appropriate a notion of superiority (moral or otherwise) from an important historical experience, which are then presented to the populace for acceptance.<sup>70</sup> However, the public also creates their own remembrances of the same experience, which the elites much acknowledge and address. This relationship often fraught with difficulty and divergent memories that lead to political struggle for the endorsement of a particular remembrance and, by extension, national identity.

### **Setting the Stage: The Influence of the Occupation**

In order to understand how Prime Ministers have utilized Yasukuni Shrine and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial to construct postwar identity, it is necessary to understand the relationship these memorials had to national identity during the war and their subsequent evolution during the Occupation. During the war, Yasukuni Shrine had become linked to a Japanese national identity predicated on loyalty to the emperor and military success.

Although a memorial to war dead prior to the advent of Japanese imperialism, Yasukuni

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<sup>69</sup> Eric Langenbacher, “Collective Memory as a Factor in Political Culture and International Relations,” in *Power and the Past: Collective Memory and International Relations*, ed. by Eric Langenbacher and Yossi Shain (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 31.

<sup>70</sup> Yinan He, “National Mythmaking and the Problem of History in Sino-Japanese Relations,” in *Japan’s Relations with China: Facing a Rising Power*, ed. by Lam Peng Er (New York: Routledge, 2006), 70.

gradually became associated with the emperor and militarism through the government's implementation of State Shintō.

For much of Japanese history, foundational myths as set out in *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* had been used to justify the divinity of the emperor and the imperial house. The worshipping of the Sun goddess as the protector god, which the imperial court had practiced, is a strand of Shintō religion, which, after the Meiji Restoration, was reinvented to be a de facto state religion. As part of the state-making process in Meiji Japan, the “emperor, cloaked in mythic Shintō trappings, took center stage” as a means of providing symbolic legitimacy for the Meiji government, which had exacerbated existing nationalistic sentiment because of the Western elements upon which Meiji elites had structured the fledgling state.<sup>71</sup> In order to achieve this symbolic repositioning of the emperor, the government integrated elements of Shintō, especially reverence of the emperor, into state practices, national institutions, and education. Furthermore, the state established a national hierarchy of Shintō shrines as a means of tightening state control of them, as they had previously been largely autonomous. After organizing the shrines, the Meiji government then organized the public through the institution of the shrine registration system (*ujiko shirabe*), in which all living citizens were registered as parishioners of the shrines as well as anyone born after the system's institution.<sup>72</sup> Thus, the Meiji government utilized both the ideology and infrastructure of Shintō to craft a social system in which the public was united under the symbolic image of the emperor.

The use of Shintō for enhancing state power and legitimacy even extended to the dead. Helen Hardacre observes that “[a]nother important area of state initiative in shrine

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<sup>71</sup> Fumiko Fukase-Indergaard and Michael Indergaard, “Nationalism and the Making of the Modern Japanese State,” *Theory and Society* 37, no. 4 (2008): 351.

<sup>72</sup> Helen Hardacre, *Shintō and the State, 1868-1988* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 29.

life was a concerted and sustained effort to promote a cult of the war dead.”<sup>73</sup> One of the principle symbols around which this effort was organized was Yasukuni Shrine. Built in 1869, Yasukuni Shrine actually began as the Tokyo Shōkonsha, a non-Shintō shrine that existed to pacify the spirits of the soldiers who had died in the Boshin War. However, ten years later the shrine was renamed and designated as a Shintō shrine in order to continuously enshrine the souls of fallen imperial soldiers, beginning with the men who died in the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877.<sup>74</sup>

Thus began Yasukuni’s association with the state’s militarism. Part of the reasoning behind enshrining only those who had died fighting for the emperor was the glorification of the newly minted imperial army to further legitimize the Meiji government by “othering” potential threats. This selective memorialization emphasized a “might makes right” philosophy that helped legitimize the winners of the conflict as the true ruling body of Japan and established the precedent of military success as the backbone of Japanese national identity. This identity was soon manifested in the international realm as Japan engaged in armed conflicts with other parties in Asia, notably China and Russia. The success Japan realized during of those conflicts allowed the country to position itself in the international hierarchy vis-vis its defeated rivals. Victory over China allowed Japan to position itself as the strongest nation in Asia and victory over Russia, a “Western” power, offered Japan equal footing with the other major global powers at the time.

It was also in this context that the centrality of the emperor and the shrine truly coalesced. During this time that the Meiji government amplified its attempts to mobilize Yasukuni as a “powerful vehicle for the glorification of war in general and of death in battle

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>74</sup> Akiko Takenaka, *Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan’s Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2015), 24, 45, 47.

in particular,” which was only enhanced by Japanese victories over both of its aforementioned adversaries.<sup>75</sup> The international conflicts in which Japan had engaged generated more casualties than the internal conflicts for which Yasukuni had been redesignated, meaning that there were more souls to be enshrined. Gradually this process resulted in the creation of a narrative “encouraging death by attaching a particular value to it” by contending that dying for the emperor was the highest achievement a Japanese citizen could attain.<sup>76</sup>

In the light of this narrative, one reason that Yasukuni served as a prominent symbol of this militarism was not only because of the importance and support allotted to it through state Shintō, but also because, as Franziska Seraphim notes, “the cult of the war dead provided the opportunity for individual Japanese both to remember their lost relatives and friends as the people they knew *and* to give meaning to their deaths in the context of contemporary ideologies” (emphasis original).<sup>77</sup> By associating death in battle with service to the emperor, these deaths were validated, not only by the state, but also by the public, mutually reinforcing the narrative. In this way, Yasukuni Shrine functioned a medium through which political elites were able to manipulate and control memory of conflict in a way that legitimized the state.

By 1945, this transformation had reached its pinnacle, making the symbolism of Yasukuni Shrine and the state’s control over Shintō an obvious target for General MacArthur and the Allied Occupation, who believed that religion was a central pillar of popular support for Japanese militarism. On December 15, 1945, SCAP issued a directive that explicitly prohibited the “sponsorship, support, perpetuation, control, and dissemination

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<sup>75</sup> Hardacre, *Shintō and the State, 1868-1988*, 91.

<sup>76</sup> Takenaka, *Yasukuni Shrine*, 19.

<sup>77</sup> Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*, 231-232.

of Shinto by the Japanese national, prefectural, and local governments,” effectively severing the link between the state and Shintō.<sup>78</sup> As a result, the national hierarchy of Shintō shrines was discarded and all shrines were re-designated as private institutions, including Yasukuni. This separation undermined Japan’s wartime identity success in three important ways. First, the very fact that Japan had not only lost the war, but was now being governed by the victorious power offered a devastating blow to a national identity predicated on military strength. Second, the separation of Shintō from the government disassembled the state’s primary means of ideological control. Third, by overtly disassociating Shintō from the state, the Occupation directly targeted the symbolism of the both the emperor and Yasukuni Shrine.

This transition directly affected Yasukuni Shrine’s status as symbol of national identity. With the country’s rapid disarmament and the severing of the shrine’s direct connection to militarism, Yasukuni lost much of its political usefulness during the Occupation. Nevertheless, as the largest repository of souls of the war dead and a functioning Shintō shrine, Yasukuni still served as a legitimate religious site. Patronized by the public and politically marginalized by the Occupation, Yasukuni Shrine was restored to its primary purpose as a war memorial. However, although the rampant nationalism associated with the shrine at its height during the war dissipated, remnants of this sentiment remained and impacted how Yasukuni’s symbolism was conceptualized from the 1970s onwards.

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<sup>78</sup> General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, “Abolition of Governmental Sponsorship, Support, Perpetuation, Control, and Dissemination of State Shinto (*Kokka Shintō, Jinja Shintō*),” in *Documents Concerning the Allied Occupation and Control of Japan, Volume II: Political, Military, and Cultural*, compiled by Division of Special Records, Foreign Office, Japanese Government (Japan: Gaimusho Division of Special Records, 1949), 175.



The symbolism that the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, only completed three years after the end of the Occupation, would come to embody began to take shape in the immediate aftermath of the war and became a core facet of Japan's postwar identity. This identity was grounded in two key narratives: the myth of the military clique and the association of the bomb with peace, both predicated on Japanese victimization. The myth of the military clique blamed a handful of Japanese militarists in power during the war for leading the Japanese people astray. By scapegoating a small number of powerful individuals, this narrative exonerated the Japanese people as a whole and also distanced the nation from its wartime national identity of military success. The peace narrative, largely shaped by SCAP efforts to limit criticism and shape public opinion about the atomic bomb, associated the bomb with peace, allowing the city of Hiroshima to rebrand itself as a "city of peace." This movement was also adopted by the Japanese government, who utilized the city and the bomb to support the pursuit of a national identity as a "nation of peace."

The seeds of the "myth of the military clique" were sowed in the immediate aftermath of the war as a direct response to domestic political concerns. The postwar Japanese government was comprised primarily of conservative party elites that had served in a political capacity during the war. Accordingly, these officials sought to distance themselves from associations with wartime leadership and legitimize their postwar political positions. This resulted in the myth of the military clique, which, according to Yinan He, "blam[ed] a small group of military leaders for launching the war and assert[ed] that the Japanese people were peace-loving, innocent victims of the war."<sup>79</sup> This narrative thus constructed a national identity of victimization at the

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<sup>79</sup> Yinan He, *The Search for Reconciliation: Sino-Japanese and German-Polish Relations Since World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 125.

hand of militarists, who hijacked the government and deceived the Japanese people before leading them to destruction.

This myth was supported with the judgement of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (hereafter IMTFE) convened in early 1946 to try Japanese civilian and military leadership for war crimes committed during both the Pacific War and the war in China that preceded it. In 1948, the trials culminated in the convictions of twenty-eight defendants, later reduced to twenty-five, on multiple counts of war crimes and crimes against peace, resulting in the death penalty for Tojo Hideki and six others.<sup>80</sup> This verdict emphasized the culpability of these individuals in the Japanese perpetration of war crimes and crimes against peace by highlighting their failure to ensure that the laws of war were adequately observed, noting that “atrocities so widespread and following common patterns... must have been committed with the understanding of the central government that it was the general policy of the Japanese conduct of war and military occupation.”<sup>81</sup> The trial thus offered legitimacy to the myth of the military clique through its emphasis on the roles played by Japanese wartime leadership and the conclusion that their failings held them at least partly accountable for many of the crimes with which they were charged.

With the implementation of the “reverse course” policy in 1948, the United States sought to refashion Japan as a buffer against communism in Asia. Although SCAP had initially implemented a purge to remove the vestiges of wartime leadership from the Japanese government immediately following the war, the geopolitical realities of the postwar period as dictated by the American Cold War mentality demanded a change in policy, which in turn

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<sup>80</sup> International Military Tribunal for the Far East, “International Military Tribunal for the Far East: Judgment of 4 November 1948,” <http://werle.rewi.hu-berlin.de/tokio.pdf>.

<sup>81</sup> Yuma Totani, *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial: The Pursuit of Justice in the Wake of World War II* (Harvard: Harvard University Asia Center, University of Harvard Press, 2008), 184.

necessitated a functioning Japanese government with which it could coordinate. However, had the occupation forces had to dismantle the entire wartime political structure and rebuild it, their anti-communist policy objectives would have been significantly delayed. Thus, “prosecuting militarists and purging them from public office became less important than purging communists,” leading to a widespread reinstatement of experienced politicians and bureaucrats that had been previously purged.<sup>82</sup> Because of this, as stated by Philip Seaton, “cold war realpolitik made pursuing the issue of Japanese war responsibility counterproductive.”<sup>83</sup> To this end, the construction of a narrative that conveniently saddled a small group of wartime leaders with the responsibility for the war and exonerated the remainder of the Japanese people as victims allowed for a relatively smooth transition from war to peace that did not require the complete reconstruction of the Japanese political system. Essentially, the IMTFE judgement allowed the postwar Japanese government to side-step the issue of war responsibility and continue functioning with less drastic revisions designed to prevent the resurgence of militarism.

Without delving too deeply, it is useful here to briefly outline the history of SCAP propaganda and censorship as these laid the narrative foundation upon which postwar Prime Ministers would build. SCAP propaganda and censorship regarding the bomb was also instrumental in Japan’s transition from military state to peace state. After dropping the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, SCAP’s initial goal was to limit the blowback of anti-American sentiment associated with the bombings. Accordingly, the Occupation established a narrative associating the bomb with peace that went hand-in-hand with the myth of the military clique that framed the Americans as saviors that had utilized the bomb as a merciful way of ending the war before it claimed even more Japanese lives. In this narrative, the Americans

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<sup>82</sup> Philip A. Seaton, *Japan’s Contested War Memories: The ‘Memory Rifts’ in Historical Consciousness of World War II* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 41.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

became saviors that liberated the Japanese people from the misguidance of the military elite. Likewise, the bomb ceased to be an implement of destruction but instead became an instrument of pacification, forcing the militarists in charge into surrender and liberating the Japanese people. In essence, SCAP conceptualized the bomb as dually representing both the punishment for the nation's "having been deceived" (*damasareta*) by the militarists as well as its awakening from said deception.<sup>84</sup>

Occupation authorities supplemented this superimposed narrative with extensive censorship on the atomic bombs and the cities upon which they were dropped. By controlling the dissemination of negative sentiments about the bomb, Occupation authorities prevented the creation of any counter-narratives that could challenge the official Occupation line. Although SCAP nominally promoted freedom of the press as a key component of their social reforms, its "censorship program...extended its prying eye into every nook and cranny of the public information industry."<sup>85</sup> On September 21, 1945, SCAP issued a press code to the Japanese media that dictated what topics were permissible for discussion. Although the ten articles of the press code were vague, they prohibited anything which may "directly or indirectly, disturb the public tranquility," including "destructive criticism of the Allied Occupation...which might invite mistrust or resentment," meaning that in practice, any reference to the bomb with a negative connotation would be censored.<sup>86</sup>

This combination of propaganda and censorship seemingly entrenched the myth of the military clique and the association of the bomb with peace deep into the Japanese consciousness,

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<sup>84</sup> John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 490.

<sup>85</sup> Eiji Takemae, *Inside GHQ: The Allied Occupation of Japan and its Legacy* (New York; London: Continuum, 2002), 386.

<sup>86</sup> General Headquarters, United States Army Forces, Pacific, Assistant Chief of Staff, 0-2, Civil Censorship Detachment, "Code for Japanese Press," 21 September 1945, Gordon W. Prange Collection, University of Maryland Libraries, [http://www.lib.umd.edu/binaries/content/gallery/public/prange/about-us/censordocs\\_presscode.jpg](http://www.lib.umd.edu/binaries/content/gallery/public/prange/about-us/censordocs_presscode.jpg).

where it appeared to become a central pillar around which a new national identity envisioning Japan as a “peace nation” was generated. The key aspect in this transformation was the relationship between Hiroshima and the memories of the bombing. According to Ran Zwigenberg, because of the Occupation’s censorship, the “only safe way to mourn was by connecting Hiroshima’s destruction to peace,” making it “hard to separate mourning from forward-looking peace discourse.”<sup>87</sup> Future oriented peace discourse thus became the process through which the lives lost in the bombing were given meaning. This resulted in a shift away from the association of the bomb with peace towards a new association as representative of all the terrible aspects of war. In a similar way, Hiroshima was transformed into a selfless sacrifice that set Japan on the track to peace, restoring agency to the people who died there, validating them.<sup>88</sup> It also offered Japan moral impetus and legitimacy, as the pursuit of peace served as a way to prevent the deaths of the “martyrs” of Hiroshima from being in vain.

The city of Hiroshima was thus charged with various memories and sentiments that coalesced in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial built in 1954. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial was erected primarily as a monument to the memory of those that died in the atomic bombing. However, precisely because it was designed to elicit memories of these victims, the memorial also invoked the intrinsic desire to give their “sacrifice” meaning through the attainment of peace. Additionally, because the memorial was constructed in the center of the city and utilized untouched ruins from the bombing, most famously the A-bomb Dome, it served as a visceral image that gave form to the aforementioned aggregate memory and desire, effectively becoming a symbol of both Japan’s suffering and its need for peace.

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<sup>87</sup> Zwigenberg, *Hiroshima*, 30.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

## The Prime Minister, Identity, and War Memorials

While much of the foundation for Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine's symbolism was crafted during the Occupation, it was not until the Occupation ended in 1952 that the Japanese Prime Minister became able to actively alter that symbolism to assist in legitimizing a national identity as a nation of peace that would remain relatively unchallenged for two decades. One of the key factors limiting the Prime Minister's ability to engage with Japanese identity previously was the control that SCAP exerted over Japanese politics from 1945-1952. In the first years of the Occupation, SCAP initiated a series of reforms and purges that restructured the Japanese political system. These purges, aimed at eliminating "for all time the influence of those who have deceived and misled the people of Japan," manifested as the removal of many experienced wartime politicians.<sup>89</sup> While many of those purged were later reinstated as the Occupation initiated its "reverse course" policy in 1948, SCAP's restructuring of the political system severely weakened it. As a result, numerous Prime Ministers were elected and cabinets formed during the Occupation, but most were weak, collapsing rapidly. The ones that did survive, including Yoshida Shigeru's, had the support of Occupation authorities. Therefore, the importance of SCAP support during the Occupation, the Prime Minister was limited to passive support of SCAP narratives regarding the war, the atomic bomb, and Japanese national identity.

After the Occupation ended, however, the Prime Minister gained the freedom necessary to actively engage these narratives and construct his own. Initially, Japanese Prime Ministers

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<sup>89</sup> General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, "Removal and Exclusion of Undesirable Personnel from Public Office," in *Documents Concerning the Allied Occupation and Control of Japan, Volume II: Political, Military, and Cultural*, compiled by Division of Special Records, Foreign Office, Japanese Government (Japan: Gaimusho Division of Special Records, 1949), 262.

sought to utilize Hiroshima as the core of a new national identity: Japan as a peace nation. However, most Prime Ministers did not directly reference the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, but reinforced the memorial's symbolic association with nuclear victimhood through annual visits on the anniversary of the bombing. Prime Minister's attempted to channel the existing anti-nuclear symbolism of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial by capitalizing on the sentiment that led to the "no more Hiroshima" movement of the late 1940s, which brought international attention to Hiroshima as a mistake that should never be repeated.<sup>90</sup>

The *Lucky Dragon Five* incident in 1954 served as the catalyst for a shift in social context conducive to this association. On March 1, 1954, the crew of a fishing trawler, the Lucky Dragon 5, was exposed to the nuclear fallout of the American hydrogen bomb test at the Bikini Atoll in the South Pacific. Without fear of American censorship, this incident raised immediate concern about nuclear weapons with a fervor that swept the nation in a marked contrast to the relative indifference seen during the previous two years. More importantly, the incident brought all of the tragedy and suffering embodied in the memories of Hiroshima back to the forefront of Japanese public consciousness. This was accomplished through the use of such symbolic imagery as "ashes of death" (*shi no hai*), which was strikingly reminiscent of the "black rain" (*kuroi ame*) imagery used in descriptions of the atomic bombings of 1945 and the Lucky Dragon Incident came to be identified as the third time that Japan had been victimized by American nuclear weapons. This acute awareness of nuclear weapons was only exacerbated by the pervasiveness of the Cold War mindset and Japan's precarious geo-strategic position between the United States and the USSR. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial, as a monument built at ground zero of the first nuclear weapon dropped in human history, was an obvious symbol of the

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<sup>90</sup> Zwigenberg, *Hiroshima*, 48.

Japanese experience with nuclear weapons and one that was readily inferred from references to nuclear weapons.

In this context, the oblique references to the symbolism of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial seen in speeches by the Prime Minister become more visible. In 1958, Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke made repeated reference to concern over the Cold War arms race, contending that the temporary peace achieved through strength is unrealistic and needed to be replaced by a more permanent peace devoid of nuclear weapons. He then asserted that the current environment offered “an opportunity for [him] to face the rest of the world and emphasize the prohibition of nuclear weapons testing.”<sup>91</sup> In this light, expression of Kishi’s desire to “emphasize” nuclear weapon prohibition implicitly invoked the unique Japanese atomic experience to position itself as the country best situated to address nuclear weapons, especially within the polarized framework of the Cold War.

Prime Minister Ikeda also capitalized on these fears, utilizing Japanese opposition to nuclear weapons within the Cold War framework as a means of underscoring Japan’s devotion to peace. In his first few addresses to the Diet, Ikeda expressed his growing concern for the increasing tension between the United States and the USSR, as well as his disappointment regarding nuclear tests conducted by the Soviets in a 1961 speech.<sup>92</sup> He then contrasted this image with that of a peaceful Japan through explicit reference to Japan’s nuclear opposition or the prospective of a nuclear test-ban treaty in six of his next seven speeches to the National Diet. The impact of this style of rhetorical engagement was empowered by the growing importance of

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<sup>91</sup> Nobusuke Kishi, “Dai nijūhakkai kokkai ni okeru kishinaikakusōridaijin shiseihoushin enzetsu (kaikō ni kansuru bubun),” in *Shōwa 32 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyo* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1957), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1958/s33-shiryō-007.htm>.

<sup>92</sup> Hayato Ikeda, “Dai sanjūkyūkai kokkai ni okeru naikakusōridaijin shiseihoushin enzetsu,” in *Shōwa 37 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyo* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1962), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1962/s37-shiryō-1.htm#1>.



the domestic anti-nuclear movement, which utilized Hiroshima a powerful image of Japan's nuclear suffering in order to promote an anti-nuclear pacifism.<sup>93</sup> In this way, Ikeda utilized the symbolism of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial as it was understood to legitimize Japan's anti-nuclear stance through the othering of nuclear powers.

Building on the groundwork laid by Ikeda, Prime Minister Satō further expounded on Japan's identity as a non-nuclear nation. In his speech to the 49<sup>th</sup> session of the Diet, Satō unequivocally stated that he was “convinced that [Japan] was a brilliant standard-bearer” for the goal of world peace.<sup>94</sup> In conjunction with this bold assertion, he adopted an anti-nuclear stance significantly stronger than his predecessors that culminated in his 1968 commitment to the “three non-nuclear principles,” which forbade Japanese possession or manufacture of nuclear weapons, as well as their import into the country.<sup>95</sup> Satō further moralized this position through a direct invocation of Hiroshima, contending that Japan was the best representative for peace through disarmament because it was the only country to suffer the tragic experience of the atomic bomb.<sup>96</sup> Satō's staunch anti-nuclear stance was apparently rewarded in the international community with the 1968 signing of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the United Nations, externally validating Japan's anti-nuclear peace identity.<sup>97</sup> This verbal commitment to such an absolutist position, along with widespread domestic support, marked the

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<sup>93</sup> James J. Orr, *The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 50.

<sup>94</sup> Eisaku Satō, “Dai yonjūkyūkai rinjikkokkai ni okeru satō naikakusōridaijin shoshinhyōmei enzetsu,” in *Shōwa 41 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyō* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1966), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1966/s41-shiryō-001.htm#a>.

<sup>95</sup> Klaus Schlichtmann, *Japan in the World*, vol. 2, *Shidehara Kijuro, Pacifism, and the Abolition of War*, co-trans. William Carter (Landham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 279.

<sup>96</sup> Eisaku Satō, “Dai gojūhakkai (tsūjō) kokkai ni okeru satō naikakusōridaijin shiseihōshin enzetsu,” in *Shōwa 43 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyō* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1968), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1968/s43-shiryō.htm#1-3>.

<sup>97</sup> “Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,” 1 July 1968, “The World and Japan” Database Project, *Database of Japanese Politics and International Relations*, Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, <http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/documents/texts/docs/19680701.T1E.html>.

high point of anti-nuclear rhetoric and adherence to the three non-nuclear principles became the new norm for all following Prime Ministers.

While the Hiroshima Peace Memorial was mobilized primarily as a means of supporting the construction of a national identity predicated on resistance to nuclear weapons, Prime Ministers also rhetorically engaged the narrative that those who died in Hiroshima were peace martyrs by contending that Japan's quest for peace was built atop the sacrifice of those who died in the atomic bombing. In 1963, Ikeda addressed Hiroshima's supposed sacrifice with his assertion that he was "truly aware" of the responsibility for world peace, alluding to the terrible suffering Japan endured in the war, with the atomic bombings the most recognizable image.<sup>98</sup> The implication of this statement is not only that Japan understands the price of war through experience, but also that other countries do not, allowing Ikeda to engage in an othering of the international community in a way that legitimizes the Japanese peace identity while obliquely invoking the narrative of Hiroshima's sacrifice. Ikeda further strengthened this narrative the following year, referencing Japanese wartime suffering briefly before discussing the wondrous recovery that accompanied it, including the emergence of Japan's burgeoning economic strength. Ikeda then follows with a promise to utilize Japan's new economic strength as a means of promoting peace in Asia, and by extension, the world.<sup>99</sup> Here Ikeda invokes the powerful symbolism of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial as a reminder of the Japanese war experience, as well as the future-looking pursuit of peace. In addition, he engages the heroic sacrifice narrative by proclaiming to harness Japanese (economic) strength in service of peace, a goal of a higher

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<sup>98</sup> Hayato Ikeda, "Dai yonjūnikai kokkai ni okeru ikeda naikakusōridaijin shoshinhyōmei enzetsu," in *Shōwa 38 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyo* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1963), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1963/s38-shiryō-001.htm#1>.

<sup>99</sup> Hayato Ikeda, "Dai yonjūyonkai kokkai ni okeru ikeda naikakusōridaijin shoshinhyōmei enzetsu," in *Shōwa 39 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyo* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1964), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1964/s39-shiryō-001.htm#a>.

magnitude, all the while reinforcing this rhetoric through his continued annual visits to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial.

The usage of the heroic sacrifice narrative is further enhanced under Prime Minister Satō, who explicitly ground Japan's desire for peace in the Pacific War, stating that the Japanese people "strongly desire freedom and peace" because of the "calamities of war."<sup>100</sup> This imagery immediately calls to mind the sheer destructive force of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, a "calamity" never seen before in the history of mankind. Furthermore, Satō directly states that Japan's desire for peace was born out of the ashes of the war, appealing to the heroic sacrifice narrative and firmly grounding the peace identity in the remembrance of Hiroshima. Satō reinforced this understanding in subsequent speeches to the Diet, asserting in 1968 that peace was Japan's "national policy" and the Japanese people's greatest desire<sup>101</sup> and that "devotion to peace" was a central pillar of Japanese foreign policy in 1971.<sup>102</sup> The Prime Minister's rhetorical appeals were bolstered by the outbreak of the American conflict in Vietnam and domestic Japanese fears of the resurgence of militarism. Given this context, Satō's strong affirmation of Japan's desire for peace again served to make the United States a pronounced foil that helped further distinguish Japan as a nation of peace.

By the 1970s, the peace identity and both of its constituent narratives had reached the peak of their popular acceptance but external pressure from the United States and domestic pressure caused by the specter of militarism began to strain them. Given that the Japanese

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<sup>100</sup> Eisaku Satō, "Dai gojūkai rinji kokkai ni okeru satō naikakusōridaijin shoshinhyōmei enzetsu," in *Shōwa 41 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyō* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1966), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1966/s41-shiryō-001.htm#b>.

<sup>101</sup> Eisaku Satō, "Dai gojūrokkai (rinji) kokkai ni okeru satō naikakusōridaijin shoshinhyōmei enzetsu," in *Shōwa 43 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyō* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1968), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1968/s43-shiryō.htm#1-1>.

<sup>102</sup> Eisaku Satō, "Dai 65 kai kokkai ni okeru satō naikakusōridaijin shiseihōshin enzetsu," in *Shōwa 46 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyō* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1971), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1971/s46-shiryō-1-2.htm>.

constitution had been rewritten in 1946, with the Article 9 stipulation that Japan was to “forever renounce war” and would retain no military capabilities, Japan was granted only a token self-defense force for use within the state’s geographical borders.<sup>103</sup> In addition to Article 9, the centrality of demilitarization to the democratization process established a deep preference to pacifism for the Japanese people which served as a check on any attempts at military mobilization or rearmament. These limitations in large part prevented Japan from deploying forces during the various conflagrations that erupted in the wake of the Pacific War, notably the Korean War and the conflict in Vietnam. As a result, in the 1970s, the United States began to increase pressure on Japan to assume a more active role in the security of Asia.<sup>104</sup>

As a result of this pressure from the United States, Prime Ministers Tanaka Kakuei and Miki Takeo began to push strongly for rearmament in their speeches to the Diet. Understanding the public aversion to anything resembling rearmament, both attempted to tie the expansion of the self-defense force’s powers to the established peace narrative. In his address to the 70th session of the Diet, Tanaka framed his proposed expansion of self-defense force powers as both minimal and necessary for securing global peace and further reaffirmed Japan’s commitment to peace as a means to bolster that assertion, a trend that continued in his following speeches.<sup>105</sup> Prime Minister Miki followed suit, expressing a belief that “the maintenance of national defense and public safety can be thought of as fundamentals of politics,” which attempts to tie the self-defense force to the “national policy” of peace that Satō had established a few years earlier.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> “Constitution of Japan, art. 9,” *Prime Minister and His Cabinet*, [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution\\_and\\_government\\_of\\_japan/constitution\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html).

<sup>104</sup> Schlichtmann, *Japan in the World*, 279.

<sup>105</sup> Kakuei Tanaka, “(1) Dai 70 kai kokkai ni okeru tanaka naikakusōridaijin shoshinhyōmei enzetsu,” in *Shōwa 48 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyō* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1973), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1973/s48-shiryō-1-1.htm#m449>.

<sup>106</sup> Takeo Miki, “Dai 75 kai kokkai ni okeru miki naikakusōridaijin shiseihōshin enzetsu,” in *Shōwa 50 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyō* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1975), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1975\\_2/s50-shiryō-1.htm#a2](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1975_2/s50-shiryō-1.htm#a2).

Also like Tanaka, Miki justified this new position by citing Japan's strict adherence to peace and strongly affirming Japan's anti-nuclear stance. This continuity continued into the leadership of the next Prime Minister, Fukuda Takeo. Like his immediate predecessors, Fukuda pushed the importance of expanding the capabilities of the self-defense force while affirming Japan's role as a nation of peace. He even made this notion explicit in his speech to the 84<sup>th</sup> session of the Diet, stating that it was necessary to enhance Japan's self-defense capabilities before claiming that Japan's attempt to tread down a path to peace without becoming a military power is "unparalleled in the history of the world."<sup>107</sup>

However, even with strong affirmations of the country's commitment to peace in almost every speech during the tenure of these three Prime Ministers, public opinion remained firmly against any expansion of self-defense capabilities, demonstrated by "strong popular support for relying on nonmilitary instruments for national defense."<sup>108</sup> The debate over Japan's military powers drew increasing attention to U.S. involvement in Vietnam, complete with the accompanying demonstrations and protests. However, although many Japanese were critical of American actions in Vietnam, Philip Seaton asserts that "by offering a comparison with Japanese aggression in Asia, the Vietnam War became a catalyst for more Japanese to consider the nature of Japanese war responsibility."<sup>109</sup> Accordingly, the 1970s saw a substantial increase in the number of published testimonies from former soldiers, describing atrocities they had committed in great detail, a trend which continued into the 1980s.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Takeo Fukuda, "Dai 84 kai kokkai ni okeru fukuda naikakusōridaijin shiseihōshin enzetsu," in *Shōwa 53 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyo* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1978), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1978/s53-shiryō-001.htm#6>.

<sup>108</sup> Thomas Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 115.

<sup>109</sup> Seaton, *Japan's Contested War Memories*, 49.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

The anti-nuclear peace ideal maintained by Japan from the mid-1950s through the 1960s was an extreme position. As such, Japan needed to remain an outlier in the Cold War dynamic in order to retain the “moral high ground” that justified this pacifism. However, the increasing American demands in the wake of Vietnam drew Japanese policymakers into a more moderate position, which undermined this essential “moral high ground” and contributed to a rapid decline in the pervasiveness of the victim identity. Furthermore, by directly challenging its own pacifism, the government engendered a domestic atmosphere conducive to challenging the other pillars upon which the victim identity was constructed, including the “sacrifice for peace” narrative symbolized by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. This combination of factors contributed to the weakening of Japan’s internally constructed national identity as victim and set the stage for the external debate over Japanese identity involving Yasukuni Shrine.

Following the war, Japanese Prime Ministers had a complex relationship with Yasukuni Shrine, given the shrine’s functions as a place of mourning for those who lost loved ones. At the same time, even though it appeared that the Occupation had ostensibly separated Yasukuni from its militaristic symbolism, many still identified the shrine with the militarism of Imperial Japan in the decades after Japanese surrender. This left the Prime Minister in a precarious position. On one hand, he could ill afford to openly interact with the shrine given the fierce pacifism sweeping the nation, but he could also not ignore the souls of the soldiers that had died in service to the state or their families and loved ones either. Therefore, Prime Ministers attempted to take the middle path, visiting Yasukuni Shrine in person to pay respects for the dead and generate political capital while verbally attacking the militarism that the shrine represented in an attempt to separate the shrine from its wartime symbolism and continuing to engage Japanese victimization by continuing to cite the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. Additionally, by attacking

the militarism that the shrine had come to be identified with while simultaneously reinforcing a postwar identity predicated on opposing values, Japanese Prime Ministers sought to legitimize the latter at the expense of the former.

Two incidents brought Japanese memory of the war under international scrutiny and led to the resurgence of Yasukuni Shrine as a symbol of Japanese identity. The first of these events was the 1982 textbook controversy, which arose after several of Japan's most prominent newspaper, including *Asahi Shimbun*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and *Mainichi Shimbun* all published accusations that the Ministry of Education had white-washed sections in Japanese history textbooks related to Imperial Japan's invasion of China.<sup>111</sup> While these accusations later turned out to be false, word had already reached China, whose press lambasted the purported Japanese revisions<sup>112</sup> while the government lodged official protests with the government of Japan.<sup>113</sup> Japanese politicians attempted to mitigate the damage, including a statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Miyazawa Kiichi that contended that the "Japanese Government and the Japanese people are deeply aware of the fact that acts by our country in the past caused tremendous suffering and damage to the peoples of Asian countries" in a way that "confirm[ed] Japan's remorse and determination."<sup>114</sup> This statement had a profound impact on Japanese national identity, as it unequivocally professed a knowledge of and remorse for Japanese aggression during the Pacific War that is fundamentally at odds with the peace narrative that only emphasized Japanese suffering. Furthermore, it is also significant that this statement is directly

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<sup>111</sup> Chalmers Johnson, "The Patterns of Japanese Relations with China, 1952-1982," *Pacific Affairs* 59, no. 3 (1986): 420.

<sup>112</sup> "Distortion of the History of Japan's Aggression on China Shall Not Be Allowed," *People's Daily*, 24 July 1982, quoted in Xuanli Liao, *Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks and China's Policy Towards Japan* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2006), 154.

<sup>113</sup> Yoshiko Nozaki, "Japanese Politics and the History Textbook Controversy, 1982-2001," *International Journal of Educational Research* 37 (2002): 606.

<sup>114</sup> "Statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Kiichi Miyazawa on History Textbooks," 26 August 1982, *Historical Issues*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/state8208.html>.

addressed to China, Korea, and the other countries that criticized Japan. Because Miyazawa essentially admitted to Japanese wrongdoing with regards to history, he implicitly validated the complaints lodged against Japan. In this way, Japan began to chip away at the foundation of its established national identity while simultaneously legitimizing the perception of Japan as the country that does not “correctly remember” history.

In response, Prime Minister Nakasone actively began to cultivate a narrative of anti-militarism designed to dove-tail with the peace narrative that he continued to push. In a 1982 speech, Nakasone professed that Japan would “use all due consideration so as not to present a military threat to neighboring countries.”<sup>115</sup> As opposed to more subtle deflections of fears of a resurgence of Japanese militarism seen in the oratory of previous Prime Ministers, this statement dismisses these concerns directly. In another speech three years later, he referenced the importance of the peace constitution, reiterated Japan’s steadfast dedication to anti-militarism, and further asserted that peace was the very foundation of not only Japanese policy, but the country’s entire postwar development.<sup>116</sup> While this rhetoric is still more overt than that of his predecessors, here Nakasone adopts a slightly more subtle tact than his earlier brash dismissal in order to mobilize the existing peace narrative in order to pacify concerns about militarism. In 1986, Nakasone’s attempts to combine the two narratives crystallizes in his proclamation of three core aspects of Japanese national policy: the pursuit of peace, dedication to anti-militarism, and

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<sup>115</sup> Yasuhiro Nakasone, “(5) Dai 97 kai kokkai ni okeru nakasone naikakusōridaijin shoshinhyōmei enzetsu,” in *Shōwa 58 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyō* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1983), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1983/s58-shiryō-105.htm>.

<sup>116</sup> Yasuhiro Nakasone, “(1) Dai 102 kai kokkai ni okeru nakasone naikakusōridaijin shiseihōshin enzetsu,” in *Shōwa 60 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyō* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1985), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1985/s60-shiryō-101.htm>.



adherence to the three non-nuclear principles, which will become a mantra of sorts during the remainder of his tenure as well as for subsequent Prime Ministers.<sup>117</sup>

Part and parcel of this strategy were references to the horrors of the war and the lessons that Japan learned from the conflict as a means of aligning Japan more closely with the earlier peace narrative. Nakasone had begun employing such rhetoric in his first year as Prime Minister. In his address to the 98<sup>th</sup> session of the Diet in 1983, he recalled the “dark memories of extreme nationalism that drove the people to war” before immediately contrasting them with the path that Japan had taken since the war’s end, implying that such nationalism was a thing of the past.<sup>118</sup> In the same year, he claimed that Japan “stood in harsh reflection of the past” in a speech in Kuala Lumpur<sup>119</sup> before categorically denying the revival of militarism in Japan during a 1984 lecture in Beijing.<sup>120</sup> These statements all assist in the establishment of a binary that the Prime Minister hoped to exploit as a means of powering through the criticism leveled at him and the government in the wake of the textbook controversy. On one hand, you have the peace narrative that paints Japan as an outlier in the international sphere, an idealist nation that strives for the noble goal of peace at all costs, a military-less state immune to the appeal of nuclear weapons. On the other, you have a narrative that highlights the war and its militarism as Japan’s original sin, an evil be reviled and contrasted with the peace ideal. The Prime Minister thus sought to engage the militarism of the past in order to reflect its human cost, represented by the souls enshrined at

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<sup>117</sup> Yasuhiro Nakasone, “(1) Dai 107 kai kokkai ni okeru nakasone naikakusōridaijin shoshinhyōmei enzetsu,” in *Shōwa 62 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyō* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1987), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1987/s62-shiryō-101.htm>.

<sup>118</sup> Yasuhiro Nakasone, “(6) Dai 98 kai kokkai ni okeru nakasone naikakusōridaijin shiseihōshin enzetsu,” in *Shōwa 58 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyō* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1983), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1983/s58-shiryō-106.htm>.

<sup>119</sup> Yasuhiro Nakasone, “(5) ASEAN rekihō no nakasone naikakusōridaijin no kuara runpūru supiichi,” in *Shōwa 59 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyō* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1984), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1984/s59-shiryō-205.htm>.

<sup>120</sup> Yasuhiro Nakasone, “(15) Nakasone naikakusōridaijin no pekin daigaku ni okeru kōen,” in *Shōwa 59 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyō* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1984), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1984/s59-shiryō-215.htm>.

Yasukuni, through rhetorical reference to the shrine in much the same way that Prime Ministers had engaged the Hiroshima Peace Memorial's symbolism to promote the peace narrative. Regardless of how effective this dichotomy might have been, it was undermined almost immediately by the second incident, which directly involved the Yasukuni Shrine.

The second incident occurred when Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro visited in his official capacity in 1985. While Prime Ministers had been visiting the shrine since the end of the war, sometimes in their official capacity, Nakasone's visit proved different, primarily because the head priest had enshrined without public knowledge fourteen Class-A war criminals in 1978. Given this apparent celebration of individuals seen as, in no small part thanks to Japan's own myth of the military clique, responsible for the aggression and colonialism of Imperial Japan, both Japan and Nakasone faced fierce accusations of glorifying militarism. While the private enshrinement of the war criminals certainly politicized Yasukuni, Nakasone's visit subsequently and publically validated that politicization. Additionally, given that the criticism of Japanese remembrances of history caused by the textbook controversy were still fresh in the minds of both domestic and international audiences, Nakasone's visit served as a direct challenge to calls to acknowledge Japanese war crimes and their victims, especially considering that the Prime Minister offered no apology. Given the lingering associations with wartime militarism, the incident galvanized many of the challenges to Japan's identity as a peace state around Yasukuni Shrine, reframing the shrine as a symbol not only of militarism, but of a general lack of willingness to reflect on Japanese wartime actions.

To address this issue, Nakasone utilized the dove-tailing narratives of peace and anti-militarism that he created several years earlier. He first used Hiroshima to foreground Japanese victimization in order to pivot away from domestic and international criticism of his perceived

glorification of militarism, explicitly referencing Japan's status as the only country to have ever experienced the atomic bomb in no less than four separate speeches in the two years following his visit to Yasukuni. Nakasone also continued to push Japanese dedication to peace and adherence to the three non-nuclear principles as appeals to the anti-nuclear aspect of the peace narrative, utilizing the oblique reference to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial's symbolism as a means of further entrenching his position. At the same time, he also cited Japan's steadfast resilience against the resurgence of militarism and the lessons of the war alongside his direct invocations of Hiroshima in three of those four speeches.

However, regardless of the narratives that Nakasone intended to establish, shifting political realities fundamentally problematized Japan's "peace nation" identity. In addition to much closer international and domestic scrutiny of the "history issue," the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s dealt a crippling blow to the peace identity that Japan had spent nearly half a century constructing. Through its pursuit of pacifism and its strong anti-nuclear stance in the midst of a global arms race, Japan had framed itself as a unique existence in the international community. However, when the climate of global fear of nuclear weapons dissipated, Japan's narrative was no longer as compelling as it had been and accordingly lost much of its international validation. Additionally, the anti-Japanese nationalism that had been growing in China since the 1970s finally came to a head, resulting in a strong stance on Japanese remembrances of history that forced Japan on the defensive and progressively weakened its victimization identity throughout the 1990s. Throughout the decade, Japan's internally constructed identity as victim was gradually gave way to the extrinsically formulated identity as victimizer juxtaposed upon Japan by China, evidenced by the numerous public acknowledgements of Japanese actions during the war. In fact, the 1990s contained more

apologies and acknowledgements of Japanese wartime actions from the Prime Minister than any other decade, including the 1992 apology to Korean comfort women.<sup>121</sup> Emperor Akihito also became a prominent figure in addressing Japanese culpability for the empire's actions during the war, expressing remorse for the subjugation of Korea in 1990<sup>122</sup> and professing that “my country inflicted great sufferings on the people of China” during a six day visit to China in 1992.<sup>123</sup> However, the point of no return was passed in 1995, when Prime Minister Murayama issued a statement in which he unequivocally recognized and personally apologized for all Japanese actions taken during the Pacific War:

“During a certain period in the not too distant past, Japan, following a mistaken national policy, advanced along the road to war, only to ensnare the Japanese people in a fateful crisis, and, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations. In the hope that no such mistake be made in the future, I regard, in a spirit of humility, these irrefutable facts of history, and express here once again my feelings of deep remorse and state my heartfelt apology. Allow me also to express my feelings of profound mourning for all victims, both at home and abroad, of that history.”<sup>124</sup>

This statement, known later as the “Murayama Communique” was the final nail in the coffin for the traditional Japanese victim identity and a mortal blow for the greater peace narrative. While the victim identity is predicated on emphasizing Japan's own suffering and minimizing responsibility for the war, Murayama's statement effectively reversed that dynamic, legitimizing the suffering of the rest of Asia and positioning Japan as the victimizer. Previous statements had utilized terms such as “remorse” and “regret,” which expressed sympathy, but could still exist within the narrative of the myth of the military clique. However, by claiming

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<sup>121</sup> Seaton, *Japan's Contested War Memories*, 89-91.

<sup>122</sup> Steven R. Weisman, “Japanese Express Remorse to Korea,” *New York Times*, 25 May 1990, <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/05/25/world/japanese-express-remorse-to-korea.html>.

<sup>123</sup> David E. Sanger, “Japan's Emperor Tells China Only of His ‘Sadness’ on War,” *New York Times*, 24 October 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/24/world/japan-s-emperor-tells-china-only-of-his-sadness-on-war.html>.

<sup>124</sup> “Statement by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama ‘On the Occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the War's End’ (15 August 1995),” *Speeches by the Former Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/pm/murayama/9508.html>.

overt responsibility, Murayama fundamentally discredited that narrative and served as the catalyst for the evolution of the debate regarding Japanese identity into a full-fledged schism. Through the internal debates about Japanese identity that had been mainstreamed in the 1970s and continued for the next two decades, by the mid-1990s, the majority of the Japanese public had accepted that Japan had fought a war of aggression.<sup>125</sup> This acknowledgement was a death knell for the peace narrative, as the lack of acceptance of Japan's past aggression and decidedly non-peaceful actions undermined any attempt to construe the nation as a champion of peace.

This was reflected in the first half of the 1990s, in speeches by Prime Ministers Kaifu, Hosokawa, and Murayama, with the latter being the most unabashed, citing the necessity of recognizing Japanese aggression during the war “without averting our eyes from the mistakes of the past.”<sup>126</sup> This prominent rhetoric of acknowledgement significantly impacted the symbolism of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. While the Hiroshima Peace Memorial had come to symbolize the Japanese suffering and the heroic sacrifice the city made for peace, much like the greater peace narrative, that symbolism was in large part built atop the marginalization of non-Japanese suffering. However, the Prime Minister's acknowledgment of non-Japanese suffering tore that foundation out from underneath those narratives and correspondingly diluted the symbolism of the memorial as a monument to peace. Additionally, the association with sacrifice for peace had always been implied to have been a Japanese one, but with the open and widespread acknowledgement of non-Japanese suffering, appropriate representation of the Korean victims of

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<sup>125</sup> Seaton, *Japan's Contested War Memories*, 58.

<sup>126</sup> Tomiichi Murayama, “(5) Dai 131 kai kokkai ni okeru murayama naikakusōridaijin shoshinhyōmei enzetsu,” in *Heisei 7 nenhan waga kaikō no kinkyo* (Nihon: Gaimushō, 1995), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1995\\_1/h07-shiryō-1-1.htm#a5](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/1995_1/h07-shiryō-1-1.htm#a5).

the atomic bomb at the memorial itself became a major public issue that further problematized the memorials association with the Japan's peace identity.<sup>127</sup>

In addition to this internal deconstruction of the peace identity, the external pressure on Japan from an increasingly nationalistic China and other former victims of Imperial Japanese colonialism and the overt support for Yasukuni Shrine seen in Nakasone's 1985 visit sponsored a neo-nationalist response in Japan that "took the debate over history and memory in Japan to a new level, particularly as a result of the strong involvement of politicians."<sup>128</sup> This meant that the apologetic tone and rhetoric seen in speeches by Prime Ministers Kaifu, Hosokawa, and Murayama was challenged by the rise of more hawkish rhetoric that catered to the revisionists, which offered substantial support to the conservative and long-reigning Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). For example, a recurrent theme in the speeches of Murayama's replacement, Prime Minister Hashimoto, was direct reference to the suffering experienced by Japan as a result of the atomic bomb, much in the same vein as Nakasone's earlier rhetoric. However, given the new political climate of awareness of Japanese wartime aggression in which these remarks were made, they served less to legitimate Japan as a nation of peace and more to prioritize Japanese suffering while delegitimizing the suffering of other nations in order to cultivate a pro-Japanese nationalism. In 1998, Hashimoto even highlights what he perceives to be an "excessive loss of self-confidence in Japan."<sup>129</sup> Although he frames this loss of confidence in terms of economics, it indicates a search for something in which Japan can be proud.

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<sup>127</sup> Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces*, 154.

<sup>128</sup> Sven Saaler, "Bad War or Good War?: History and Politics in Post-war Japan," in *Critical Issues in Contemporary Japan*, ed. Jeff Kingston (London; New York: Routledge, 2014), 141.

<sup>129</sup> Ryutaro Hashimoto, "Transcript of Press Conference by Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto at the Closing of the 142<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Diet," *Ryutaro Hashimoto Administration (The 82<sup>nd</sup> and 83<sup>rd</sup> Prime Minister)*, Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, <http://japan.kantei.go.jp/980709press142.html>.

For many in the revisionist camp, following Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō's election in 2001, that something revealed itself to be Yasukuni Shrine, which marked the final major shift in symbolism for the memorial. Although Nakasone's visit in 1985 marked the first major break with the previously dominant unwritten rule not to directly engage Yasukuni Shrine, it was Koizumi who proved instrumental in fundamentally altering the memorial's image through both action and words. Koizumi was adamant about paying visits to Yasukuni, which he did on six separate occasions, by far the most of any Prime Minister. According to Akiko Takenaka, these visits contributed greatly to a growing public interest in Yasukuni Shrine, with popular media referring to this newfound awareness the "Koizumi effect."<sup>130</sup> In addition to increased public attention, the Prime Minister's visits also garnered significant ire from neighboring countries, notably China, generating substantial tension in the Sino-Japanese relationship. Chinese sentiment coalesced into public demonstrations and a harsh policy stance towards Japan, which in turn fueled Japanese nationalism, as the "Japanese were fed up with the seemingly endless Chinese criticism."<sup>131</sup> In this way, public sentiment in Japan, aimed largely at opposing Chinese perceptions forcefully juxtaposed upon them through PRC criticism, forced Koizumi's hand in addressing the issue. As Xia Liping states, "it [was] nationalism that inspired these visits to Yasukuni, just as it [was] nationalism that motivated the angry responses on the part of Chinese demonstrators."<sup>132</sup>

While Koizumi's actions brought Yasukuni Shrine to the forefront of domestic and international consciousness, it was through his frank handling of the controversy over Yasukuni Shrine in speech that Koizumi truly transformed the shrine from a war memorial to a national

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<sup>130</sup> Takenaka, *Yasukuni Shrine*, 146.

<sup>131</sup> He, *The Search for Reconciliation*, 265.

<sup>132</sup> Xia Liping, "East Asian Multilateral Cooperation and the Prospects for China-Japan Relations," in *China-Japan Relations in the Twenty-first Century: Creating a Future Past?*, ed. Michael Heazle and Nick Knight (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2007), 37.

symbol of rising Japanese nationalism. In 2001, Koizumi issued a statement that summarized his position on Yasukuni Shrine that reframed the shrine as dedicated to those who sacrificed themselves for the greater good of Japan in a manner reminiscent the Hiroshima Peace Memorial's symbolic dedication to the "martyrs for peace."<sup>133</sup> Koizumi thus attempted to shift the focus of his visits to his reverence for the dead, not the glorification of the cause for which they fought. In addition, Koizumi inquired as to what could be done so that people could "pay memorial tribute without discomfort, while respecting the feelings of Japanese people toward Yasukuni Shrine," overtly addressing the complex position Yasukuni occupied as a religious site, a war memorial, and a national symbol.<sup>134</sup>

Koizumi issued several more statements during his tenure as Prime Minister that explained his later visits to Yasukuni Shrine in ways that continued to legitimize the sacrifice narrative, effectively consecrating the shrine as a symbol of revisionist nationalism. In 2002, he eloquently outlined the sacrifice narrative, stating:

"The purpose of my visit was to mourn sincerely all those who lost their lives for their country, leaving behind their families in spite of themselves, during the course of our country's history since the Meiji Restoration. I believe that the present peace and prosperity of Japan are founded on the priceless sacrifices made by many people who lost their lives in war. It is important that throughout the days to come we firmly adhere to the resolution to embrace peace and renounce war to ensure that we never resort to tragic war."<sup>135</sup>

In this statement, not only does he reiterate the heroism of the men who are enshrined at Yasukuni, he also specifically links their sacrifice to peace, reframing Yasukuni Shrine as a symbol of peace in exactly the same way earlier Prime Ministers mobilized the Hiroshima Peace

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<sup>133</sup> Junichirō Koizumi, "Statement of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi," *Speeches and Statement by Prime Minister*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/koizumi/state0108.html>.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Junichirō Koizumi, "Observation by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on the Visit to Yasukuni Shrine," *Speeches and Statement by Prime Minister*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/koizumi/observe0204.html>.



Memorial. For Koizumi, it is not merely the trauma of the atomic bomb and Japanese nuclear martyrdom that paved the way for peace, it is also the love of country displayed in the valor of the countless soldiers who died during Japanese wars. Furthermore, he elaborates on the nature of the conflicts in which these soldiers perished, referring not to the Pacific War, the conflict with which Yasukuni was most closely associated, but rather to Japanese wars in general. Painting the conflicts with such a broad brush dilutes the association with the Pacific War while simultaneously deepening the history of the memorial, making it a monument of which Japanese people can be proud instead of ashamed.

Koizumi's legitimation of Yasukuni Shrine in turn legitimized some of the older narratives associated with the memorial that would further entrench the shrine's position as a symbol of pro-Japanese nationalism. Foremost amongst these narratives was the belief that the only reason the Prime Minister's visits to Yasukuni Shrine was a problem was because of the imposition of Western values on Japan following the war.<sup>136</sup> This idea, further enhanced by long-standing notions of victor's justice in the verdicts of the Tokyo War Crimes Trials, spearheaded the movement to remember Japanese history more positively. In this narrative, instead of being deceived by military elites during the war, the Japanese people had instead been deceived by Occupation officials and the Japanese sycophants of the postwar government. This sentiment fed into the greater discourse of Yasukuni-centric nationalism and offered justification for the reconceptualization of the Pacific War as a "war of liberation" to free Asia from the Euro-American colonialism. The war of liberation narrative also seemed to find legitimacy in Koizumi's own words, as the act of casting the military actions of those enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine as heroic implicitly ennobles the cause for which they fought. While these narratives were not completely accepted by the Japanese public, they held enough sway, especially with the

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<sup>136</sup> Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*, 235.

conservative politicians who held the reigns of the country to allow Yasukuni Shrine to come full circle and once again become a symbol of Japanese nationalism and a heroic remembrance of the war in some circles.

### **Conclusion: The Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine in Recent Memory**

In the aftermath of Koizumi's tenure as Prime Minister, the symbolisms of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine have remained stable. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial had once served as the primary symbol of Japanese national identity, the physical manifestation of the memories and sentiments regarding the atomic bomb in the postwar. These memories and sentiments were channeled into narratives that reflected Japanese suffering in the wake of the nuclear experience as well as the desire to validate the lives lost in the bombings by remembering them as martyrs who were necessary sacrifices on the altar of peace. This symbolism resonated within Japan following the war, reaching its peak in the early 1970s. This symbolism exerted profound influence on Japanese policy, especially in regards to the state's strict anti-nuclear stance and its stringent pacifism. However, in the wake of the Vietnam War, external pressure from the United States prompted the Japanese government to push for an expansion of its self-defense capabilities in order to occupy a greater role in the security of Asia. However, any idea of rearmament conjured fears of the resurgence of militarism and generated widespread public resistance to the proposed change. Prime Ministers accordingly attempted to push the self-defense reform agenda while reiterating Japan's dedication to peace, but their insistence backfired, instead weakening the peace identity they had spent decades constructing.

This identity was further undermined in the 1980s with the internationalization of issues regarding Japan's official remembrance of history. The symbolic purity of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial was tarnished, as increasing recognition of non-Japanese suffering called the Japanese victimization and Hiroshima martyrdom into question.

In the years after Koizumi's reign, his successors have continued to mobilize the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, but not so much as a symbol of the country's pursuit of peace. The memorial is still offers symbolic justification to Japan's anti-nuclear stance, and is subsequently invoked as evidence of Japan's uniqueness as the "only country to have ever suffered the devastation of atomic bombings" are still made.<sup>137</sup> This shift to a strictly anti-nuclear focus is perhaps best embodied in the speech given by Prime Minister Kan at the annual Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony in 2011. Allusion to peace and its centrality to Japanese policy, which would have been plentiful in a speech given by Ikeda or Satō, were scant at best. Instead the entirety of the speech was dedicated to concrete policies designed to create a world in which the "horrors created by nuclear weapons are never repeated."<sup>138</sup>

Yasukuni Shrine followed a slightly more complex trajectory than did the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. Although it was fashioned as a private institution during the Occupation as a means of disassociating the shrine with militarism, Yasukuni never truly lost its relationship to the nationalism of the war period. Because of these lingering associations with militarism, most Prime Ministers chose to avoid engagement with Yasukuni Shrine in speech, desiring to distance themselves from the image of the wartime government. Yasukuni again emerged as a prominent

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<sup>137</sup> Yukio Hatoyama, "Policy Speech by Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama at the 173<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Diet," *Speeches and Statements by Prime Minister, Prime Minister of Japan and his Cabinet*, [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/hatoyama/statement/200910/26syosin\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/hatoyama/statement/200910/26syosin_e.html).

<sup>138</sup> Naoto Kan, "Address by Prime Minister Naoto Kan at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony," *Speeches and Statements by Prime Minister, Prime Minister of Japan and his Cabinet*, [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/kan/statement/201108/06hiroshima\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/kan/statement/201108/06hiroshima_e.html).

symbol of militarism following the textbook controversy in 1982 and Prime Minister Nakasone's visit in official capacity in 1985. However, this symbolism was primarily constructed externally by Japan's neighbors, which prompted a wave of anti-militarism rhetoric from the Prime Minister in an attempt to mitigate damage that the association with militarism might wreak. But foreign criticism of what was viewed primarily as a domestic Japanese affair engendered a pro-Japanese nationalist response that came into its own in the 1990s and began refashioning Yasukuni Shrine as a nationalist symbol disassociated with the militarism of Imperial Japan. This altered symbolism was subsequently legitimized by Koizumi's validation of it through the first half of the 2000s and wholly adopted by the nationalist movement.

In the ten years since the end of Koizumi's tenure as Prime Minister, the Yasukuni Shrine has remained a nationalistic symbol and is often the center of diplomatic controversies. Prime Ministers have nonetheless continued to invoke the shrine and its narrative of heroic sacrifice in speeches with the full understanding of the international criticism that will follow. However, in a 2013 explanation of his visit to Yasukuni Shrine, Abe Shinzō explicitly rebukes such criticism, citing his lack of desire to "hurt the feelings of the Chinese and Korean people" alongside his assertion that there is "no doubt that Japan will continue to pursue [the path of peace]."<sup>139</sup>

That is not to say that Yasukuni's symbolism is not without domestic criticism. Even when the shrine was reframed as a positive symbol of Japan by Koizumi, there was substantial backlash outside of the nationalist and revisionist camps due to its unshakable connections to militarism. In addition, many recognize that the heroic sacrifice narrative promulgated by Koizumi and Abe fails to recognize that many of the soldiers enshrined there, not to mention the war criminals, were active participants in Imperial Japanese aggression and the victimization of

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<sup>139</sup> Shinzō Abe, "Statement by Prime Minister Abe: Pledge for everlasting peace," *Issues Regarding*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/a\\_o/rp/page24e\\_000021.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page24e_000021.html).

Asia. Additionally, Koizumi's rhetoric inclusion of all soldiers that died in service to the nation since the Meiji era neglects that many of the wars in which these soldiers fought were wars of colonialism. However, the fact that the shrine is a war memorial that operates as legitimate place of mourning for those who lost loved ones during the aforementioned wars problematizes Yasukuni's role even more. Thus, Yasukuni Shrine remains in limbo, championed by revisionists and nationalists and criticized by much of the mainstream, all while remaining a necessary institution for bereaved families.

Since 1945, Japan has constantly tried to define itself in relation to the Pacific War and as a result, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine have been shaped by and mobilized in pursuit of a suitable national identity. First it was the peace state, supported by narratives of anti-nuclear exceptionalism and staunch anti-militarism. Then rose a pro-Japan nationalism bolstered by the narrative of the heroic sacrifice of Japanese soldiers. The peace identity was not replaced, but continued to coexist with nationalism as Japan struggled to determine how it would define itself in relation to the past. However, recently Japan appears to have discovered a way to move forward, embracing a more nationalist view of itself and accepting the past but refusing to be bound by it.

The key to this new identity is the revision of Article 9 of the postwar constitution as a means of becoming a "normal nation" not shackled by the legacies of Imperial Japan. 2015 saw perhaps the most noticeable and substantial change to Japanese military policy, one indicative of Japan's return to "normal nation" status and an unequivocal departure from pacifism. On September 19, the diet passed two security bills designed to remove some of the "key legal restrictions that the war-renouncing Constitution imposes on the Self-Defense Forces during

overseas missions,” including the ban on collective self-defense.<sup>140</sup> While clearly designed as a means to strengthen the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance by accepting greater responsibility in regional security, the news laws also represent a complete departure from the emphasis on utilizing the past as a means of creating the present that has characterized Japanese identity construction since 1945 towards a future-oriented policy stance predicated on an identity of pride and nationalism that is no longer bound by history. Of course, this identity has yet to be fully constructed and legitimized, as there are vast portions of the Japanese public that oppose the revision.<sup>141</sup> However, it seems that Japan is making steady progress towards a legitimate national identity after two decades of ambiguity and confusion.

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<sup>140</sup> Reiji Yoshida and Mizuho Aoki, “Diet Enacts Security Laws, Marking Japan’s Departure from Pacifism,” *Japan Times*, 19 September 2015, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/19/national/politics-diplomacy/diet-enacts-security-laws-marking-japans-departure-from-pacifism-2/#.VnPmB0orLIV>.

<sup>141</sup> Reiji Yoshida and Mizuho Aoki, “Policy Hurdles Remain Despite Passage of New Security Laws,” *Japan Times*, 19 September 2015, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/19/national/politics-diplomacy/nation-blurs-pacifist-outlook-with-passage-of-security-laws/>.

### Chapter 3

#### Expanding Memory: The Hiroshima Peace Memorial, Yasukuni Shrine, and International Representation

The era of globalization has seen a massive diffusion of ideas that has dramatically impacted the way the rest of the world views notions of “correctly remembering the past.” As such, national memory narratives have also shifted from primarily domestic constructs to those that exert real influence on the international landscape. This is especially true when these narratives deal with global events that impacted the world at large, such as World War II, because each country involved in the event has constructed specific narratives regarding how it is to be remembered and these narratives clash with one another on the international stage. Japan is perhaps one of the foremost examples of this, as contestations over how it remembers the Pacific War have shaped its international relations, especially in Asia, as well as its national identity.

As these narratives of remembrance are given closer international scrutiny, so too are the memorials associated with them. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine are no exception. Since domestic political mobilization of these two memorials and major controversies or international events help inform the global audience to a small extent, each memorial has power to influence over how that image takes shape. This chapter will thus investigate the approaches taken by each memorial in the cultivation of their respective narratives and the ways in which this cultivation has shaped their images internationally.

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial utilizes a very proactive approach to intentional image cultivation, organizing large international events in both Hiroshima and abroad, sponsoring traveling exhibits across the globe, and promoting the testimony of *hibakusha*

throughout the world. This is made possible through several affiliated organizations, including the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Foundation and Mayors for Peace, as well as a global outreach program that has resulted in globe-spanning networks and thousands of international connections.<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial has embraced the internet and has a massive online presence, including a website complete with an interactive virtual museum.<sup>143</sup> This expansive network allows the memorial to conduct aggressive outreach both domestically and internationally in order to proselytize its gospel of peace and the abolition of nuclear weapons without relying on the exposure granted by the occasional coverage of the media.

In comparison, Yasukuni Shrine has no such international networks. Rather than actively engaging with an international audience in order to cultivate its image on its own terms, Yasukuni Shrine has its international image crafted for it as a result of international criticism founded in opposition to the shrine's narrative, especially from China and South Korea. However, even though Yasukuni is not necessarily as forward as the Hiroshima Peace Memorial in promoting its goals, it still provides a clear outline of its beliefs, including the assertion that the "only purpose of the shrine is to commemorate those who sacrificed their lives for the nation."<sup>144</sup> Thus, the shrine recognizes its importance as the repository of the souls of Japan's war dead, but also attempts to minimize the political accountability that stems from that through the assertion of normalcy. This marginalization of responsibility in turn structures Yasukuni Shrine's public image as a political Rorschach

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<sup>142</sup> "Map Showing Member Cities," *Mayors for Peace*, <http://www.mayorsforpeace.org/english/membercity/map.html>.

<sup>143</sup> Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, *Hiroshima Peace Site: Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum WebSite*, [http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/index\\_e2.html](http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/index_e2.html).

<sup>144</sup> Yasukuni Shrine, "Deities," *About Yasukuni Shrine*, <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/about/deities.html>.



test of sorts, allowing outside parties to juxtapose their own interpretations of the shrine's actions onto it.

This chapter contends that both the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine's responses to developing their respective images are attempts to project the "Japanese experience" of the Pacific War, albeit in very different ways and with very different outcomes. In order to illustrate this point, this chapter will examine the "Japanese nuclear experience package" based on the successful poster exhibition in the United States sponsored from 2007-2009 by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. This was meant to expose the American public to the Japanese perspective of August 7, 1945 and to traverse the chasm between the Japanese and American war experiences and promote the "nuclear universalism" championed by the Memorial. On the other hand, Yasukuni Shrine's interpretation of the war experience is intrinsically divisive, dismissing the external narratives of the war experience that run counter to its own. Accordingly, as Yasukuni promotes this narrative domestically, Asian countries with national identities grounded in the experience of the Pacific War such as China and South Korea advance their own counter-narrative regarding the shrine. As a result, this chapter will examine how these two conflicting narratives were developed and how they have come to define the Yasukuni Shrine as a symbol of the war.

### **The U.S. Poster Exhibits of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial**

In September of 2007, a poster exhibit detailing the aftermath of the atomic bombings opened in Rochester, New York. The exhibition was sponsored by the Hiroshima

Peace Culture Foundation, an outreach organization built around the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, and was the first in a series of similar exhibitions held in over one hundred different cities across the United States. The aim of this exhibition series was to “giv[e] American citizens an opportunity to comprehend the true effects of the nuclear bombing of Japan” and, according to Steven Leeper, the chairman of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation at the time, was much more successful than anticipated.<sup>145</sup>

The exhibitions were in fact an incredibly successful exercise in international image building. Leeper made his aforementioned comment about halfway through the exhibition series run, which by that point had a total attendance near 10,000 American citizens. Given the size of America’s population, that might not seem like an impressive number for a year-long exhibit, but it can be considered a major success for a single foreign non-governmental organization to achieve within American borders. However, the truly impressive aspect of the exhibition series lies not in the total attendance, but rather the reach displayed by the event. Rather than being focused in one city or region in the United States, by the end of the exhibition series, exhibits had been held in 48 different states, illustrating an ability to reach relatively isolated groups of people that might otherwise be unable to experience a similar event.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, the exhibition series received additional coverage by the American media, with the exhibits having been “reported by local newspapers and television stations in many cities” while select panels were “displayed in local schools and churches,” allowing the exhibit to reach still more individuals.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Hiromi Morita, “A-bomb exhibitions in U.S. wrap up their first year,” *News*, Hiroshima Peace Media Center, September 26, 2008, <http://www.hiroshimapeacemedia.jp/?p=13844>.

<sup>146</sup> Seana K. Magee, “Hiroshima survivor speaks out at photo poster exhibit in N.Y.,” *News*, Hiroshima Peace Media Center, October 28, 2009, <http://www.hiroshimapeacemedia.jp/?p=14695>.

<sup>147</sup> Morita, “A-bomb exhibitions in U.S. wrap up their first year,” <http://www.hiroshimapeacemedia.jp/?p=13844>.

While the exhibition series was certainly successful in reaching a wide number of American citizens, it is important to consider how the Hiroshima Peace Memorial was attempting to represent itself. The purpose of the exhibit was two-fold. The first, and most obvious, purpose of exhibition series was to promote an anti-nuclear stance in the year preceding the 2008 American presidential election. This position was standard for the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, which, upon opening in 1955, immediately became the symbolic core of the anti-nuclear movement incited by the fear of American deployment of atomic weapons in the Korean War and the fallout of the *Lucky Dragon Five* incident of 1954.<sup>148</sup> The movement eventually dissipated amidst factionalism but the memorial embraced its role as a champion of anti-nuclear activism, choosing to focus primarily on the abolition of nuclear weapons. This commitment is outlined by the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation charter's opening lines:

“To create a peaceful world without war by totally banning nuclear tests and abolishing nuclear weapons is an urgent wish of Hiroshima's citizens, based on their experiences of the first A-bombing in human history.”<sup>149</sup>

One aspect of the exhibits that makes their stance noticeably more potent is the fact that these exhibits were hosted all across the United States, the world's foremost nuclear power and the only country to have ever dropped atomic bombs on another sovereign state. It is one thing to denounce the dropping of the atomic bombs from within Japan, where the audience is receptive to and supportive of this narrative. It is quite another thing to denounce the dropping of the atomic bombs in upwards of one hundred cities across the

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<sup>148</sup> John W. Dower, “The Bombed: Hiroshimas and Nagasakis in Japanese Memory,” in *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, ed. Michael J. Hogan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 136-137.

<sup>149</sup> Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, “Prospectus for Establishing the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation,” *About HPCF*, <http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/hpcf/english/about/index.html>. (Direct link to the charter) <http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/hpcf/english/about/setsuritsu.pdf>.

United States of America, where currents of belief that the bombs were necessary and morally justified was strong enough to force the Smithsonian Institution to completely restructure a single proposed exhibit on the Enola Gay just thirteen years earlier.<sup>150</sup>

The legacy of Hiroshima is one jointly constructed by Japan and the United States. Both countries were instrumental in the events of August 7, 1945 and both were essential in laying the foundation for the subsequent construction of the peace narrative associated with the bombing. Following the end of the occupation, the relative political realities of the United States and Japan, specifically the inclusion of Article 9 in the postwar Japanese constitution and Japan's inclusion under the American nuclear umbrella, resulted in the necessary political conditions for the rise of pacifism, anti-nuclear sentiment, and the "nation of peace" narrative Japan adopted in the decades following the war. By fate or otherwise, it was also American involvement in the Korean War and American testing of hydrogen bombs at the Bikini Atoll that provided the spark necessary to ignite the preexisting anti-nuclear sentiments in Japan. Accordingly, the United States of America is, and has always been, the foil against which the Hiroshima Peace Memorial's, and by extension Japan's, ideology non-nuclear world peace has been directed. As such, it only makes sense that the Hiroshima Peace Memorial's largest international exhibition to that point was held in the United States.

That being said, there is a gap between the Hiroshima narrative espoused by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and the narrative that forced alterations to the Enola Gay exhibit. This gap stems in part from differences in perception between the winner and loser of the Pacific War. Japan, the loser, chose to emphasize the suffering of the Japanese people to

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<sup>150</sup> Richard H. Cohn, "History and the Culture Wars: The Case of the Smithsonian Institution's Enola Gay Exhibition," *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 3 (1995).

the point of constructing a national identity predicated on victimization in order to make sense of defeat. On the other hand, various parties in the United States, notably the Truman administration, chose and reinforced a narrative of “necessity” and “moral justification” for the dropping of the atomic bombs in order to make sense of the cost of victory. As Laura Hein and Mark Selden state, “the carefully crafted image of a mushroom cloud...has represented to most Americans the bomb as the ultimate symbol of victory in a “Good War” that carried the United States to the peak of its power and prosperity.”<sup>151</sup> As a result, the human cost of the weapon was reduced to a series of abstract statistics resulting in, as one physicist who worked on the bomb contended, Hiroshima being “taken out of the American conscience—eviscerated, extirpated.”<sup>152</sup> How then does one traverse this disconnect between the two narratives, especially when both are so entrenched?

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial’s solution to this problem was to promote a dualistic narrative that simultaneously promoted the Japanese experience with the atomic bombs and an anti-nuclear weapons stance. Because of its status as the official memorial of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and its extensive collection of artifacts and photographs displayed through the poster exhibit, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial was able to speak to American viewers as an authoritative voice, offering them the “facts of the atomic bombings, the *hibakusha*’s messages of peace, and a deeper understanding of the rising nuclear peril.”<sup>153</sup> To further promote itself as the authentic purveyor of the nuclear

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<sup>151</sup> Laura Hein and Mark Selden, “Commemoration and Silence: Fifty Years of Remembering the Bomb in American and Japan,” in *Living with the Bomb: American and Japanese Cultural Conflicts in the Nuclear Age*, ed. Laura Hein and Mark Selden (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 3.

<sup>152</sup> Greg Mitchell, “A War Anniversary Hard to Celebrate: The A-Bomb: The valor of U.S. troops in Europe and the Pacific is an awkward backdrop for the nuclear holocaust we inflicted on civilian Hiroshima,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 3, 1994, [http://articles.latimes.com/1994-08-03/local/me-22889\\_1\\_atomic-bomb](http://articles.latimes.com/1994-08-03/local/me-22889_1_atomic-bomb).

<sup>153</sup> Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, “From US A-bomb Exhibitions to the Future,” *Chairperson’s Message*, December 24, 2010, [http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/hpcf/english/about/chairpersonsE\\_SL/article008.html](http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/hpcf/english/about/chairpersonsE_SL/article008.html).

experience and to build upon the successful dynamic of the exhibitions, the Hiroshima Peace memorial created what can be described as a “Japanese atomic experience package” consisting of poster sets and *hibakusha* testimony espousing the narrative of the nuclear experience that could be rented through the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum.

The package itself is divided into two primary components, both of which are designed to encourage American participants to emotionally engage with the Japanese lives impacted by the bomb. The first of these components is a poster set. Although the original posters utilized in the 2007-2009 exhibition series were revised in 2013, the current set of posters follow closely the structure of the originals, illustrating Hiroshima and Nagasaki “as they were before the atomic bombings, the immense devastation after the atomic bombings, the long-term aftereffects, how the bombs worked, and how the rebuilt cities appear today.”<sup>154</sup> The posters themselves are designed to make relatable the human cost of the bomb that has in large part been relegated to abstract statistics by the “narrowly strategic terms” in which American’s contemplated Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the decades after the war.<sup>155</sup>

Accordingly, the thirty posters are broken into thirds, each setting the stage for the next as a means of constructing a cohesive narrative about the Japanese civilian experience of the atomic bombings. The first poster displays the infamous mushroom clouds above each destroyed city as a powerful opening that sets the tone for the remainder of the exhibit. The next four posters are composed of photographs viewed together as a panorama of the

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<sup>154</sup> Henry M. Stoeber, “Hiroshima Delegation Visits Kansas City,” *Rainbow Peace and Justice*, September 1, 2008, <http://rainbowpeacejustice.blogspot.com/2008/09/hiroshima-delegation-visits-kansas-city.html>.

<sup>155</sup> Sadao Asada, “The Mushroom Cloud and National Psyches: Japanese and American Perceptions of the Atomic-Bomb Decision, 1945-1995,” in *Living with the Bomb: American and Japanese Cultural Conflicts in the Nuclear Age*, ed. Laura Hein and Mark Selden (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 173.

aftermath of the bombings designed to provide the viewer with a sense of scale with regard to destruction wrought by the atomic bombs.

The sixth poster is a collection of six captioned photographs, three from each city that illustrates different facets of civilian life in each city prior to the bombings while the next poster in the series directly acknowledges the military aspects of the two cities in a similar series of captioned photos. These two posters are essential to the structure of the exhibit. By placing them back-to-back, the exhibit acknowledges the military activities that took place in both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but tempers that acknowledgement with a humanization of both cities through an emphasis on the daily lives of the civilian population. It is also important to note that chronologically, the depiction of civilian life is presented *before* the depiction of military activity, subtly emphasizing the civilian cost of the atomic bombings by foregrounding them in the mind of the viewer.<sup>156</sup>

The last three posters in the first section transition away from the cities and to the bomb itself. One of them provides a timeline for the dropping of the bombs, another examines the physical structure of the two weapons, and the last one illustrates how the blasts spread outward from the initial point of detonation. Unlike the previous posters, these posters are dominated by depersonalized graphs, charts, and illustrations that represent the logistics of the bombs in figures and statistics. This makes sense, given that their goal is to fill in the remaining context to set the stage for the middle third of the exhibit, which is explicitly devised to be the most emotionally powerful.

While the first third of posters introduces the cities and provides the technical and logistical context for the dropping of the atomic bombs, the second section of the poster

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<sup>156</sup> Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, "Hiroshima Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Poster Set," [http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/virtual/VirtualMuseum\\_e/tour\\_e/poster1\\_e.html](http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/virtual/VirtualMuseum_e/tour_e/poster1_e.html).

exhibit illustrates the aftermath of the bombings and is emotionally charged from start to finish. This third of the exhibit opens with two posters, the first detailing the destruction experienced in Hiroshima and the second detailing the destruction experienced in Nagasaki. The photographs that comprise both posters are intense, offering the viewer nothing but rubble and corpses as far as the eye could see in an overt attempt to translate the aforementioned statistics into real-world costs. The exhibit remains unrelenting as the viewer progressed to the next poster, comprised entirely of horrific artworks composed by survivors depicting the aftermath. In a play on perspective, gazing upon the drawings of the atomic bomb survivors allows the viewer to momentarily occupy the survivors' position and see the events through the traumatic events through their eyes.

To further emphasize the suffering experienced by the victims of the atomic bombs, the next six posters each detail the negative impact of the bomb. The first four explain the immediate negative impact, with each addressing a different type of damage dealt by the weapons, progressing in scale from the human body to the environment. The first of these posters focuses on heat damage, with four photographs illustrating the physical injury people suffered as a result of the immense heat of the explosions, with two photographs depicting the infamous keloid burns suffered by many bombing victims and two showcasing the infamous "shadows" left on the sides of buildings or stairs after individuals were vaporized.<sup>157</sup> The second and third posters, rife with photographs of rubble and ruined buildings, illustrate the physical damage done to the city by means of the concussive blast wave resulting from the nuclear detonations and the destruction by fire that accompanied it. The fourth poster is dedicated to damage caused by radiation and utilized three diagrams to illustrate the toxic "black rain" that fell on Hiroshima in the wake of the bombings.

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid.



The final two posters of the section explain the more persistent effects of radiation. One of these posters addresses acute diseases brought on through exposure to nuclear radiation and one discusses the lingering physical aftereffects bomb survivors suffered. Again, the placement of these two posters is strategic, mirroring the actual experience of the survivors. The poster set's narration transitions away from the rubble and destruction indicative of the immediate aftermath of the bombing, leading the viewer to the conclusion that the worst is over. However, this is not the case, as these two posters demonstrate the lingering effects of radiation, taking the viewer by surprise in much the same way that the actual discovery of these effects surprised those depicted in the photographs the viewer looks upon. Additionally, these final two posters in this section are perhaps the most personal of the entire exhibition, an effect augmented by the fact that unlike previous posters rife with death and destruction, the photographs presented are of individuals, forcing the viewer to contemplate the life of a single person, a much more personal task than attempting to empathize with an entire population. In essence, these final two posters serve as the culmination of the first two sections of the poster set, which transitioned slowly from a generalized understanding of the Japanese bomb victims' experience to a deeply intimate one.

After unflinchingly presenting the experience of the atomic bombs from the perspective of the victims, the poster set strikes a notably more optimistic note, pivoting towards reconstruction and the future in the final third. In accordance with this shift, the first four posters of the final section function as the transition between the second section and the third, detailing various stages of recovery, including the immediate relief activities that took place in the wake of the bombings, the search for missing people amongst the

wreckage of the two cities, and the efforts to clear the rubble and rebuild the destroyed infrastructure. While the previous section's posters were specifically designed to elicit a deep empathy with the survivors, the posters of this final section are meant to trigger admiration as the viewer considers the reconstruction efforts of the Japanese people who, in prior posters, had been subjected to abject misery. These posters thus recast the survivors of the atomic bombs as tragic heroes, providing a sense of moral legitimacy that informs the remainder of the poster set and its anti-nuclear weapons message.

Transitioning from the rebuilding of the previous posters, the poster set transitions to a series of posters designed to emphasize the success of Japanese attempts to rebuild Hiroshima and Nagasaki following the events of August, 1945. The initial poster in this series is primarily photographic and depicts both cities as vibrant and lively, informing the viewer of their full recovery. Tellingly, photographs of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Peace Parks are notably foregrounded in this poster, indicating the centrality of the atomic bombings to both cities and providing a smooth segue to the following posters. The three subsequent posters focus on different aspects of remembering the atomic bombings: survivor testimony, children's belongings collected from the wreckage of Hiroshima, and prayers offered in light of the Nagasaki bombing. All three of these aspects of remembering serve to further humanize the bomb victims and force the viewer to confront the legacy of the bombings. That being said, the most overtly powerful of these posters is the one showcasing the children's belongings. Not only is the viewer forced to grapple with the reality of the child mortality wrought by the bombs, the very notion of lost children as portrayed in the poster serves as a metaphor of a lost "future." Thus the deceased children

are martyred, a sacrifice that warns the viewer of exactly what can be lost if nuclear weapons are deployed.

Dedicated to the anti-nuclear weapon message of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, the final three posters are designed to serve as the culmination of the entire viewing experience. The first of these three posters outlines the postwar development of nuclear weapons and associated nuclear tests while the second one discusses the necessity of eliminating nuclear weapons, the obvious narrative climax of the poster set. The very last poster contains one somber photograph each from contemporary Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a reminder to the viewer to remember both cities and brings the set full circle from the mushroom clouds that opened the set. This final poster is powerful, as the association with and similarity to the opening poster's photographs simultaneously highlight ability of the Japanese to overcome the effects of the atomic bombs while indicating that the entire cycle could repeat itself, lending a sense of foreboding to the poster set and enhancing the strength of the anti-nuclear weapon message.

When taken as a whole, the poster set accomplishes several things in terms of the cultivation of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial's international image. First, it establishes the fundamental structure of the narrative that the Hiroshima Peace Memorial seeks to promote. From start to finish, the poster set outlines the essential elements of its arguments against nuclear weapons and for peace, the narrative of which the memorial has become the core in the half-century since the dropping of the atomic bombs. Additionally, the fundamentally visual nature of the medium adds an air of legitimacy, as viewers are able to physically see the evidence upon which the narrative is based. Furthermore, this association of particular

images with the atomic bombs, such as the child's recovered tricycle, is also illustrative of an attempt to further legitimize the narrative by imbuing it with a certain moral authority.<sup>158</sup>

Transitioning, the second component of the "Japanese experience package" is *hibakusha* testimony, meant to supplement the poster exhibitions. In addition to the poster exhibits on display in 113 cities during the exhibition series from 2007-2009, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial also sponsored the travel of twelve *hibakusha* to 66 different cities, resulting in upwards of 100 individual presentations delivered to American audiences during the initial run. According to the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, the *hibakusha* testimony was so popular in the United States that it prompted the organization to implement video conferencing as a means of delivering *hibakusha* testimony from Japan to 28 further cities through 2010.<sup>159</sup>

*Hibakusha* testimony builds on the narrative foundation laid by the poster exhibit, distinctly focusing on further humanizing the Japanese atomic bomb experience for the American audience. *Hibakusha* are distinctly suited for this role because of their unique position as witnesses. As explained by Gregory Mason, the act of witnessing "encompasses the meanings both of seeing and experiencing an event, and also of giving it the authority of one's personal presence."<sup>160</sup> Atomic bomb survivors are thus presented as living windows into the past and their recollections as representative of the truest depictions of the nuclear experience. Furthermore, the transmission of lived experience facilitates an intimate connection between the speaker and the listener that encourages the latter to recognize the humanity of the former. This recognition in turn correlates to empathy for the speaker and

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, "From US A-bomb Exhibitions to the Future," [http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/hpcf/english/about/chairpersonsE\\_SL/article008.html](http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/hpcf/english/about/chairpersonsE_SL/article008.html).

<sup>160</sup> Gregory Mason, "Witness and Appropriation in Hibakusha Stories," *Peace Review* 17, no. 4 (2005): 411.

an increased awareness of the reality of their experience. In terms of *hibakusha* testimony, this translates into an increased empathy with the individual *hibakusha*'s personal experience and with the experience of the Japanese victims of the bomb as a whole.

The use of *hibakusha* testimony as a core aspect of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial's international narrative promotion is not surprising. As noted by Lisa Yoneyama, since the mid-1960s, "survivors' authoritative accounts were instrumental in promoting the antinuclear campaign," leading to the individual experiences of the *hibakusha* becoming conflated with the political ends the movement has been trying to achieve.<sup>161</sup> Because of this, although the meaning of each survivor's individual story has been diluted through its politicization, the *hibakusha* have in exchange become potent symbols of Japan's nuclear experience. One important caveat to this symbolism is that the number of *hibakusha* willing or able to share their experiences is exceedingly slim.<sup>162</sup> This dynamic makes the Hiroshima Peace Memorial's promotion of *hibakusha* testimony all the more impressive. Due to the relative scarcity of survivors willing to share their experiences, the memorial's ability to send a dozen survivors overseas to "convey the reality of the atomic bombings" or utilize video conferencing to connect *hibakusha* in Japan to audiences in the United States provides a strong indication of its dedication to narrative cultivation outside of Japan.<sup>163</sup>

The narrative that Hiroshima Peace Memorial's presents is thus inherently dualistic. On one hand, the exhibit is explicitly designed to promote a universalism formulated around an ideological opposition to nuclear weapons. However, that universalism is born of experience, inherently predicated on Japan's unique relationship to the atomic bombs. The

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<sup>161</sup> Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces*, 96.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>163</sup> "Atomic Bomb Exhibitions held nationwide in the U.S.: Exhibitions in 101 cities in run-up to the U.S. presidential race," *News*, Hiroshima Peace Media Center, January 3, 2008, <http://www.hiroshimapeacemedia.jp/?p=13588>.

narrative advanced by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial through the poster set and *hibakusha* testimony positions Japan as “first among equals,” with the martyrs of Hiroshima ordained to lead the world toward peace. This dualistic narrative also simultaneously endorses and undermines American attempts to mitigate the “effects of the bomb in terms such as ‘man’s inhumanity to man,’” as it accepts as truth that the very existence of nuclear weapons imperils all of humanity, but still acknowledges that individual people or countries are ultimately responsible for their use.<sup>164</sup>

### **The Competing Representations of the Yasukuni Shrine**

Whereas the Hiroshima Peace Memorial has proactively attempted to cultivate its narrative of the Japanese war experience abroad as a means to establish an inclusive “nuclear universalism,” Yasukuni Shrine’s international image has emerged largely as a result of prolonged conflict with Japan’s Asian neighbors. Given that Yasukuni lacks the extensive networks available to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, it would be difficult for the shrine to proactively engage with the larger global audience. In fact, the promotion of Yasukuni’s narrative of the Japanese war experience outside of Japan’s borders has been advanced by the shrine and its supporters mostly as a response to criticism leveled by the international community, specifically China and South Korea. The resulting attention has allowed “the historical interpretation advocated by the Yasukuni Shrine [to] become a part of the international national discussions around the politics of history in contemporary Japan.”<sup>165</sup> However, these discussions tend to be mostly critical of the Yasukuni

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<sup>164</sup> Hein and Selden, “Commemoration and Silence,” 15.

<sup>165</sup> Saaler, “Bad War or Good War?” 144.

interpretation and function to construct a negative image of Yasukuni as “living testament to Japan’s past militarism.”<sup>166</sup> This image is fundamentally at odds with how the shrine views itself and its narrative, which contends that the Pacific War and the preceding military conflicts in Asia were a noble endeavor. International criticism over the previous three decades has thus given birth to an ouroboros of sorts, with Yasukuni Shrine doubling-down on its narrative, resulting in more controversies and a deeper entrenching of its oppositional international image. Thus, Yasukuni’s domestic dissemination of its narrative of the Japanese war experience resulted in the creation of an externally formulated image of the shrine predicated on deconstructing that very narrative and these two conflicting narratives continue to define one another.

It is necessary to begin with a brief examination of the narrative that Yasukuni Shrine perpetuates regarding the Japanese war experience. Serving as the repository of souls for Japan’s war dead, the shrine first and foremost presents itself as a place to “commemorate and honor the achievement of those who dedicated their precious lives for their country.”<sup>167</sup> While Yasukuni shrine legitimately operates as a place of mourning where individuals may come to remember and grieve for fallen family and friends, the added emphasis on “honoring the achievement” of the war dead adds a celebratory aspect to their commemoration. A key aspect of the celebration of the war dead seen at Yasukuni is the assertion that all of the war dead sacrificed their lives for the good of the state. This asserted martyrdom gives the deaths of those enshrined at Yasukuni meaning, as well as associating their “sacrifice” with the foundation of the modern Japanese state, linking

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<sup>166</sup> Shaohui Tian, ed., “Spotlight: Abe’s cabinet members, senior lawmakers visit Yasukuni Shrine, likely to upset Japan’s neighbors,” *Xinhua*, October 18, 2016, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-10/18/c\\_135762937.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-10/18/c_135762937.htm).

<sup>167</sup> Yasukuni Shrine, “History,” *About Yasukuni Shrine*, <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/about/index.html>.

Japan's wartime past to its present. This veneration has the additional effect of glorifying the Pacific War as the vehicle responsible for allowing the enshrined soldiers to make their sacrifice and pave the way for Japanese postwar success.

The ennobling of the war continues in the the Yūshūkan, the war museum housed within the shrine complex, which advances the view that the war was “justified and fought to liberate Asians from western colonialism.”<sup>168</sup> While this narrative is reinforced throughout the museum with positive pictorial and textual depictions of Japanese soldiers, it is founded largely in the distinct absence of any acknowledgement of Japanese war crimes, atrocities, or colonialism. In fact, the only reference to the legacy of Japanese aggression in Asia is a statue located outside of the museum dedicated to one of three dissenting judges of the IMTFE, Radhabinad Pal, who decried the verdict condemning Japan as victor's justice and categorically disagreed with the conclusions reached by the majority judges.<sup>169</sup> The narrative promoted by Yasukuni Shrine thus seeks to reframe the Japanese war experience as one of tragic heroism, in which soldiers heroically fell as Japan fought against the tyranny of western imperialism.

While it presents itself as the Japanese war experience, as observed by Shaun O'Dwyer, this narrative is “not historical, as it aspires to be, but... is a distinct type of patriotic narrative of the past.”<sup>170</sup> As such, this interpretation of the war experience resonates with the shrine's most ardent supporters, the Japanese nationalist right, a vocal domestic minority group that exerts a disproportionate influence in Japanese politics. They endorse the narrative as a means of identity construction for Japan, which they view as

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<sup>168</sup> Jeff Kingston, “Awkward Talisman: War Memory, Reconciliation and Yasukuni,” *East Asia* 24 (2007): 301.

<sup>169</sup> Totani, *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial*, 218.

<sup>170</sup> O'Dwyer, “The Yasukuni Shrine and the Competing Patriotic Pasts of East Asia,” 148.



having largely been built on the patriotism and loyalty of those enshrined at Yasukuni. Accordingly, for the far right to acknowledge the aggression of the Japanese military during the Pacific War would only serve to taint the reputation of the war dead and undermine the foundation of modern Japan.<sup>171</sup> Therefore, not only do right-wing groups promote the Yasukuni narrative, they also pressure Japanese politicians, especially those of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), to publically acknowledge the shrine.

One form of public acknowledgement is the visiting of Yasukuni Shrine by politicians, notably the Prime Minister, in their official capacity. Accordingly, this has become one of the most prominent sources of international controversy around the shrine, with China alone “officially pressuring” the Japanese government on four separate occasions in the wake of a sitting Prime Minister’s visit to Yasukuni.<sup>172</sup> This criticism originated with Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro’s visit to the shrine in 1985, just six years after the public revelation that the souls of fourteen Class-A war criminals had been enshrined at Yasukuni. The problem arose when the Ministry of Health and Welfare decided that fourteen of the Japanese officials who had been convicted of war crimes (seven having been sentenced to death and the remainder dying while still in prison) by the IMTFE were to be considered equivalent to any other Japanese soldier that had died in service to Japan. In 1955, the Military Pension Law that had been introduced two years prior made the families of those convicted of war crimes eligible for war-bereaved pension payments as part of the government’s postwar relief efforts.<sup>173</sup> Yasukuni capitalized on this distinction in 1978, with the head priest secretly enshrining the fourteen aforementioned individuals,

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<sup>171</sup> Daiki Shibuichi, “The Yasukuni Shrine Dispute and the Politics of Identity in Japan: Why all the Fuss?” *Asian Survey* 45, no. 2 (2005): 199-200.

<sup>172</sup> Mong Cheung, “Political Survival and the Yasukuni Controversy in Sino-Japanese Relations,” *The Pacific Review* 23, no. 4 (2010): 527.

<sup>173</sup> Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*, 79.

including former Prime Minister Tōjō. When the enshrinement came to light the following year, the decision generated substantial controversy, but it remained primarily a domestic issue until Nakasone's visit.

This incident marked the beginning of the construction of an anti-Yasukuni narrative designed to refute the shrine's interpretation of the war. Although the Yasukuni narrative had never been accepted by vast swathes of the Japanese population, Nakasone's visit as the leader of Japan was perceived as endorsing the narrative as Japan's official position, including the denial of Japanese expansionism and war crimes. As the *Korea Herald* phrased it, "a Japanese head of state's official visit to the shrine could be viewed as national approval of the country's right-wingers' nationalistic tendencies."<sup>174</sup> Nakasone's administration released a statement clarifying his intentions to "mourn for the people in general who became victims of the war...and to renew Japan's determination for peace," but China and South Korea had already adopted a strong anti-Yasukuni stance that set the tone for future incidents involving the shrine.<sup>175</sup> While the Prime Minister stopped publically visiting the shrine for some time following Nakasone's original visit, certain state officials and cabinet members continued to visit, keeping international concerns with the Yasukuni narrative from dying down even as Prime Ministers attempted to reassure the international community of Japan's recognition of its actions during the war. A prominent instance of this occurred when Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi delivered the Murayama Communique, a "heartfelt apology" to the victims of Japan's wartime aggression, in 1995.

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<sup>174</sup> "A Symbol of Pride and Pain: Understanding the Yasukuni Shrine," *The Korea Herald*, August 4, 2001, LexusNexus Academic, [http://www.lexisnexis.com.eres.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/hottopics/lnacademic/?verb=sr&csi=158208&sr=HEADLINE\(A%20symbol%20of%20pride%20and%20pain\)%20AND%20DATE%20IS%202001](http://www.lexisnexis.com.eres.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/hottopics/lnacademic/?verb=sr&csi=158208&sr=HEADLINE(A%20symbol%20of%20pride%20and%20pain)%20AND%20DATE%20IS%202001).

<sup>175</sup> Masaharu Gotoda, "Statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Masaharu Gotoda on Official Visits to Yasukuni Shrine by the Prime Minister and Other State Ministers on August 15 of this Year," *Historical Issues*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, August 14, 1986, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/state8608.html>.

Although the apology was one of the most overt Japanese acknowledgements of Japanese aggression and subsequently became the official position of the Japanese government, its impact was effectively undermined when eight cabinet members worshiped at Yasukuni Shrine.<sup>176</sup>

The anti-Yasukuni sentiment effectively coalesced into a counter-narrative that positioned Yasukuni Shrine as a symbol of all that was wrong with Japanese remembrances of the war during Koizumi Junichiro's tenure as Prime Minister from 2001-2006. In order to leverage the significant voting power of the Japan Association of Bereaved Families, Koizumi campaigned with the promise to visit Yasukuni Shrine on August 15 of every year if he were elected.<sup>177</sup> After winning the election, Koizumi mostly followed through on his promise, visiting Yasukuni Shrine a total of six times, although he only visited the shrine on August 15 once. While this allowed Koizumi to consolidate the domestic support that he desired for his administration, it also galvanized international opposition to the shrine in China and South Korea. A 2001 statement released by the South Korean foreign ministry stated that "We cannot but express regret over the fact the Japanese prime minister paid respect to war criminals who obstructed world peace and caused unspeakable damage to neighbouring countries" while China also characterized Koizumi's visit as honoring war criminals and decried the visit.<sup>178</sup> The characterization of Yasukuni Shrine in this way continued for the entirety of Koizumi's tenure as Prime Minister and, building on existing sentiment that had been simmering for over a decade, functioned to construct an international image of Yasukuni not so much as a memorial for the war dead as for the

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<sup>176</sup> Seaton, *Japan's Contested War Memories*, 90.

<sup>177</sup> Cheung, "Political Survival and the Yasukuni Controversy in Sino-Japanese Relations," 534.

<sup>178</sup> "Anger over Japan PM's Shrine Visit," *BBC News*, August 13, 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1488305.stm>.

militarism characteristic of the Pacific War itself, casting the shrine as symbolic of the legacy of Japanese imperialism.

While the contentious nature of Yasukuni Shrine has been “typically narrowed down to the question of the enshrinement and worship of Class A war criminals,” the war criminal issue is in effect symbolic of more a more fundamental issue.<sup>179</sup> As victims of Japanese aggression during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Chinese and Korean postwar identities are in large part predicated on their status as victims of Japanese imperialism, national identities unequivocally denied by the Yasukuni Shrine’s refusal to acknowledge Imperial Japan’s wartime actions. South Korea, for example, protested vigorously against Koizumi’s proposed August 15 visit in 2006, as August 15 is a “highly symbolic date” marking the country’s independence from Japanese colonial rule in 1945.<sup>180</sup> On the other hand, China decries Yasukuni as representative of Japan’s inability to “correctly” remember history, often referencing of Japanese aggression in response to visits to the shrine including the citing of statistics, such as the number of Chinese citizens killed during Japanese occupation and the number of Chinese women forced into sexual slavery.<sup>181</sup>

Also representative of the centrality of identity in the conflicting narratives concerning Yasukuni Shrine is Yasukuni’s enshrinement of Korean and Taiwanese nationals. The Yasukuni narrative justifies this enshrinement by asserting that because these “Taiwanese and Korean people died as Japanese” their souls cannot and should not be removed from the shrine.<sup>182</sup> Emphasizing the “Japaneseness” of Japan’s colonial subjects

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<sup>179</sup> Tetsuya Takahashi, “Legacies of Empire: The Yasukuni Shrine Controversy,” in *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan’s Past*, ed. John Breen (New York; Columbia University Press, 2008), 111.

<sup>180</sup> “South Korea Warns Japan against War Shrine Visits,” *China Daily*, August 13, 2006, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2006-08/13/content\\_663657.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2006-08/13/content_663657.htm).

<sup>181</sup> “Koizumi Urged not to Visit War Shrine,” *China Daily*, August 11, 2006, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-08/11/content\\_663077\\_2.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-08/11/content_663077_2.htm).

<sup>182</sup> Yasukuni Shrine, “Deities,” <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/about/deities.html>.

reinforces the shrine's conceptualization of the war as a noble effort for the betterment of Asia. Focusing on their deaths allows the shrine to recast the conscription of Korean and Taiwanese subjects in an egalitarian light, asserting that "these people, regardless of their rank or social standing, are considered to be subject of completely equal respect and worshipping because the only purpose of the shrine is to commemorate those who sacrificed their lives for their nation."<sup>183</sup> As with the remainder of the Yasukuni narrative, this positive meaning is assigned primarily by ignoring the coercion inherent in Korean and Taiwanese participation in the Japanese military, as well as the aggressive nature of the imperial expansion that made Korean and Taiwanese conscription possible in the first place. Thus Yasukuni Shrine's position on the enshrinement of non-Japanese nationals serves functions as a means of prioritizing the Japanese war experience over the experiences of the rest of East Asia by stripping those experiences of their greater historical context and including them into the greater Japanese whole.

Accordingly, the Taiwanese and Korean families of these individuals have directly challenged the enshrinements in court throughout the postwar period. In 1978, a Taiwanese family initiated the opposition to the Yasukuni interpretation of the war experience in a court challenge that was grounded in a direct challenge to the Yasukuni narrative itself. The argument advanced by the plaintiffs asserted that Yasukuni was a "shrine that symbolizes more than anything the militarism of the perpetrator nation" and felt that the existence of their relatives' souls in the shrine added insult to injury with regard to Japanese colonialism.<sup>184</sup> In response, Yasukuni proved immovable, asserting that those who died "as

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> *Asahi Shinbun*, April 18, 1978, quoted in Tetsuya Takahashi, "Legacies of Empire: The Yasukuni Shrine Controversy," in *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past*, ed. John Breen (New York; Columbia University Press, 2008), 117.

Japanese” continued to be Japanese after death and as such, should not be removed from the shrine.<sup>185</sup> Another prominent series of lawsuits occurred in the early 2000s, with the families and friends of Taiwanese and Korean individuals enshrined at Yasukuni again challenging the shrine’s narrative through the legal system. In a 2001 case, a Korean plaintiff argued that the shrine was not merely a legacy of Japanese colonialism, but a continuation of it as it was exerting control over Koreans through their dead. Furthermore, a case from 2003, the Taiwanese plaintiffs contended that the inclusion of their dead relatives at Yasukuni Shrine implied that they had supported Japan’s military aggression.<sup>186</sup> In 2007, an additional case were brought against the shrine, with one plaintiff echoing the sentiments on display in the earlier court cases, stating that “Japan invaded and occupied Korea, killed many families, and now they have enshrined some of our people without notice.”<sup>187</sup>

Just as the shrine visits performed by Koizumi served as the catalyst for the promotion of a contradictory narrative to Yasukuni’s, the court cases fought over the issue from 2001-2007 serve as a microcosm of the conflicting narratives of the war experience centered on Yasukuni Shrine. On one side is Yasukuni, which reinforces its own narrative of a glorious and patriotic war by celebrating the “Japaneseness” and “patriotism” of its conscripted colonial subjects, thoroughly ignoring the historical context in which both conscription and death occurred. On the other side are the plaintiffs, arguing that the “presence of relatives on the Yasukuni register perpetuates Japan’s colonial legacy,” echoing the international counter-narrative asserting that Yasukuni is a symbol and

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 117-118.

<sup>186</sup> Takenaka, *Yasukuni Shrine, History, Memory, and Japan’s Unending Postwar*, 148.

<sup>187</sup> Jun Hongo, “Koreans sue Yasukuni to get names delisted,” *The Japan Times*, February 27, 2007, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2007/02/27/national/koreans-sue-yasukuni-to-get-names-delisted/#.WL0TDPkrK00>.

continuation of Japan's imperialist past.<sup>188</sup> These two types of controversy highlight the fundamental nature of Yasukuni's representation and the way in which the narrative and counter-narrative define each other. The shrine's narrative asserts its interpretation of the Japanese war experience by denying the war experience found in China, Korea, and Taiwan, while the narratives of these countries are equally antithetical to the Yasukuni interpretation but united in their opposition. With neither narrative ceding ground to the other, they remain locked in a battle to define the true nature of Yasukuni Shrine and determine the nature of Japanese war experience.

### **Understanding Presentation: Towards the Japanese War Experience**

As evidenced above, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine have utilized very different approaches to presenting their narratives of the Japanese war experience abroad. Utilizing disparate strategies, the narratives promoted by the memorials received very different responses from the international audience with which they engaged. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial received positive feedback from its 2007-2009 poster exhibit, inspiring it to construct a rentable poster set and *hibakusha* testimony package that succinctly encapsulates the memorial's narrative of the Japanese nuclear experience that has seen use in the United States and elsewhere. Meanwhile, the Yasukuni Shrine's concerted efforts to disseminate its narrative to the Japanese public has resulted in the shrine courting controversy in the international sphere, particularly East Asia. These controversies have in turn engendered an international counter-narrative that directly conflicts with Yasukuni's own, elevating the shrine to a symbolic position "epitomiz[ing] the dilemma of how to

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<sup>188</sup> Takenaka, *Yasukuni Shrine*, 148.

remember those who fell” during the conflagrations in Asia during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>189</sup>

The difference between the two memorials is more than just approach. Rather, there is more fundamental difference that is responsible for shaping their narratives, their primary audiences, and the manner in which they present them. Although the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine both function as war memorials and seek to promote the Japanese war experience, the aspects of the war that they embody are inherently different. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial is intrinsically tied to the atomic bomb and, by extension, the end of the war and its aftermath. There is very little focus on the earlier war, except as context for the dropping of the atomic bombs, and even then, it is presented as abstract justification, not as an “experience” the way that the atomic bombings are presented. In essence, by dint of their unprecedented nature and Japan’s position as the only country to have ever experienced their power in combat, the atomic bombs engender a unique sense of victimization that overshadows Japanese wartime aggression. This mnemonic focus on a singular moment(s) in which the war ended, as well as questions of American motivations for the dropping of nuclear weapons on Japan, allows the Hiroshima Peace Memorial to isolate the suffering of the Japanese people *after* the war. Although this narrative foregrounds the role of the United States in the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the rhetoric of its narrative prioritizes the frightening nature of the bombs themselves rather than the decision to drop them. The emphasis to blame the bomb for the destruction of the two cities provides a common enemy that both presenter and audience can rally against, making the narrative more easily identifiable and increasing its resonance with international audiences, including the United States.

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 3.



On the other hand, as the repository of all of the souls of Japan's war dead, the Yasukuni Shrine must negotiate the war in its entirety, a task complicated not only by Japanese aggression but also by Japan's status as the "loser" of the war. Whereas the Hiroshima Peace Memorial is able to utilize Japan's status as loser in order to construct a heroic narrative predicated on overcoming that very loss represented by the accompanying destruction, Yasukuni Shrine attempts to connect Japanese military actions with Japan's postwar success by utilizing the war dead as the sacrificial bridge. This approach requires that Yasukuni reframe Japan as the "true" victors of the Pacific War, which it does by shrugging off the country's negative characterization by the IMTFE following the war, ignoring Japanese aggression and colonialism, and emphasizing the heroism of all soldiers that died for the empire. In attempting to make present the war experience in a way that would resonate with many of the defeated, the narrative alienates other audiences, notably the countries that suffered as victims of Japanese colonialism. This isolation creates a zero-sum situation in which the shrine courts domestic support (in the form of the Japanese right-wing) while rejecting foreign interpretations of the Japanese war experience. The result is the formation of two distinct and opposing images of the shrine that function differently for the two audiences.

Remembering the war is difficult, for all countries, not just Japan. It is a complicated process, fraught with conflict over how to assign meaning to a conflict and connect a country's past to its present and eventual future. For all their differences, the two war memorials examined here are nevertheless two interpretations of the same war and reflect the complex feelings and memories held by the Japanese public. While the narratives of the war experience in which these sentiments are encapsulated are often

disputed by members of the international community, for better or worse, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine have consistently offered to the world a glimpse of the Japanese struggle to come to terms with the war and its legacies.

## Chapter 4

### Conclusion

World War II was a defining moment in history. It fundamentally altered the subsequent development of the countries involved in ways that continue to affect the world today. One prominent legacy of the war lies in how it is remembered by these countries, especially in Asia. Many countries in Asia have national identities predicated on their experience in the war, Japan foremost among them. As the most prominent military actor in Asia from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through 1945, Japanese modernity is largely tied to its militarism and colonial expansion during this period. However, the Japanese surrender in 1945 and subsequent disarmament stripped Japan of its identity as a military power almost overnight. Furthermore, although Japan had been the victimizer in Asia during the war, the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki recast Japan as the victim of a unique form of devastation. From victimizer to victim and from occupier to occupied, the legacy of the war is intricate and complex. Japanese collective memory of the war is equally intricate and complex, often manifesting itself in seemingly contradictory ways. As this paper has illustrated, it manifested in the narratives of the Japanese war experience embodied and promoted by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine. Although these narratives seem diametrically opposed, in truth, the two memorials are designed to remember fundamentally different aspects of the Pacific War, both of which must be acknowledged for Japan to come to terms with the war.

Because of the rapidity of the shift in identity between wartime and postwar Japan, the country had little time to transition, resulting in a cognitive disconnect between the

Japanese past and the Japanese future. The result is that Japan is stuck with two identities, the wartime military state and the postwar peace state, that reside on either side of a timeline rendered inert by means of the trauma of the atomic bombs and Japanese surrender. It is in this light that the narratives of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine must be considered. The memories of the war that each memorial is designed to elicit are different but when viewed together as opposed to against one another, their temporal orientations become clear and their respective memory narratives function as a bridge that attempts to link the past to present and future.

The physical space in which the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and the contents of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum are designed to elicit memories of the past as a reminder of the trauma of the atomic bombs as Japan looks to the future. The loss of life memorialized at the site serves as a reminder of the horrors of atomic weapons and orients the Hiroshima Peace Memorial towards the future, as the pursuit of peace gives meaning to the deaths of those who perished in the atomic bombings, a sentiment continually echoed in the rituals observed there. Additionally, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial is representative of Japan's postwar struggle to redefine itself, serving as a singular reminder of the trauma of the atomic bomb, encircled by the rebuilt city the bomb once destroyed.

While the Hiroshima Peace Memorial is future-oriented, Yasukuni Shrine serves as the Japanese connection to its imperial past. Whereas the former deals only with the end of the war and its aftermath, Yasukuni Shrine's memorialization process attempts to make sense of the war itself. As the loser of the Pacific War, the shrine seeks to justify the war in such a way that provides meaning for all of those who lost their lives in the conflict. The approach taken by Yasukuni is to channel a reverence for both the military and the past,

glorifying the imperial values for which the military fought and reframing the war as a noble struggle against western imperialism. Accordingly, all of the rituals taken to pacify the souls of those enshrined at Yasukuni, as well as the content its museum and the physical layout of the memorial celebrate the war in an attempt to reclaim Japan's historical legacy.

Given the types of memories that these two memorials are designed to elicit and their intimate relationship to the war, Japanese Prime Ministers have mobilized both the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine to assist in the construction of Japanese national identity in the postwar period. Through political speeches, Prime Ministers have both courted and cultivated symbolisms associated with the memorials, tying the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine to Japanese national identity vis-à-vis the Pacific War. In the two decades immediately following the end of the Occupation, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial became a cornerstone of the Japanese victimization narrative promoted by the Occupation and Japanese officials. In the wake of the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Occupation advanced an interpretation of the bombings that associated the bomb ending the war and preventing further loss of life due to the deception of the militaristic officials that had led Japan into war. This narrative was endorsed by the Japanese leadership and established key components of the victim identity that Japan promoted until the 1970s. The 1950s saw a surge of Japanese nuclear awareness, culminating in a vigorous anti-nuclear movement that stretched into the 1960s. The newly constructed Hiroshima Peace Memorial became intertwined with this movement as a symbol of the lives "sacrificed" that the world may understand the horror of nuclear weapons. Japanese Prime Ministers rhetorically engaged this symbolism and utilized it to shape Japan's identity as not only nuclear victims, but also as champions of anti-nuclearism

and world peace. Japanese policy goals as elucidated by the Prime Minister were thus intrinsically linked to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Japan's unique nuclear experience.

The Vietnam War and other rapidly changing political conditions in Asia instigated a shift in Japanese policy orientation in the 1970s. Under increasing American pressure, the Japanese Prime Ministers of the period began to transition away from a total embrace of the peace narrative and the pacifism that it necessitated and towards a more hawkish stance.

Although Prime Ministers continued to promote peace and anti-nuclearism as Japanese ideals, the textbook controversy of 1982 and the Prime Minister Nakasone's official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine in 1985 brought questions of Japanese war responsibility to the fore, further undermining the peace identity. While Prime Ministers continued to mobilize the symbolism of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, the victimization narrative was in large part overshadowed by the image of Yasukuni Shrine, seen from many within and without as representative of Japanese colonialism. Although Prime Ministers attempted to engage the shrine as symbolic of the terrible cost of war similar to the way in which earlier leaders had mobilized the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, references and visits to Yasukuni were perceived more as a glorification of Japanese wartime militarism. The end of the Cold War, the revelation of the comfort women issue, the Murayama Communique, and rising Asian nationalism in the first half of the 1990s helped undermine the peace narrative still further while simultaneously foregrounding Yasukuni Shrine as an important symbol of Japanese identity. In response, Prime Minister Koizumi attempted to reconcile the symbolisms of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine. He embraced the Yasukuni Shrine as a symbol of Japanese nationalism, associating the deaths of those enshrined at Yasukuni as

sacrifices for peace in much the same way those remembered at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial.

While Japanese Prime Ministers have mobilized and influenced the symbolism of both memorials, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine have also been involved in the cultivation of their respective images abroad. Through the use of a “Japanese nuclear experience package” based on the successful exhibits hosted in the United States from 2007-2009, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial has advanced a dualistic narrative that promotes a nuclear universalism grounded in Japan’s unique atomic experience. The core of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial’s international narrative promotion lies in a combination of poster sets and *hibakusha* testimony designed to humanize the victims of the atomic bombing and horrors of nuclear weapons. The poster set utilizes the visual medium to outline the fundamental anti-nuclear narrative promoted by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial while simultaneously encouraging the viewer to empathize with the victims of the atomic bombings. Pictures of the aftermath of the bombs and the struggles faced by survivors dominate the posters, forcing the viewer to confront the suffering experienced by the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The posters also offer vivid depictions of the lingering consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, highlighting the various diseases that plague survivors and the environmental damage caused by radiation. The *hibakusha* testimony component of the package is designed to build upon the foundation laid by the poster exhibit and further humanize the victims of the atomic bombs. These personal testimonies add an authenticity to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial’s narrative and allow to the memorial to mobilize the symbolism of the *hibakusha* as a means of furthering their interpretation of the Japanese nuclear experience.

Unlike the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, which has played an active role in the international cultivation of its narrative, the international image of Yasukuni Shrine has been driven by the conflict between its own narrative of the Japanese war experience and those of China and South Korea. The Yasukuni narrative not only remembers the war dead enshrined at the memorial, but celebrates them as heroes and the Pacific War as a noble crusade against western imperialism. This interpretation of the war is inherently dismissive of the national narratives of war experience in the rest of East Asia, as it ignores Japanese wartime aggression and colonial expansion against which China and South Korea largely define themselves. As a result of the reoccurring visits to the shrine by sitting Prime Ministers and the ongoing legal battles being fought over Yasukuni's enshrinement of foreign nationals is the creation of an international narrative born of criticism designed to counter Yasukuni's glorification of the war and the Japanese military. This conflict is an ideological deadlock, with Yasukuni Shrine entrenching itself further into its narrative in response to international criticism which in turn results in China and South Korea leveling even more criticism. Consequently, the international image of Yasukuni is one of uncertainty, an institution caught between two competing narratives of the war experience that define each other, each valid only if the other is invalid.

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine thus play equally important roles in remembering the Japanese experience of the Pacific War. The different temporal focus held by each memorial helps to bridge the gap between Japan's wartime history and its subsequent postwar development. Additionally, both the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine are associated with a number of different symbolisms essential to understanding the way in which Japan remembers the war. Furthermore, the two memorials



serve as mediums by which the Japanese understandings of their experiences in the Pacific War may be projected into the global arena where they are able to interact with the competing narratives of other countries who experienced the war differently.

Lastly, both memorials represent Japanese attempts to grapple with or avoid notions of accountability for the war itself. Both the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine are predicated on notions of victimization that either downplay or directly challenge notions of war responsibility. While the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum contains a section that addresses Japanese aggression and war crimes in Asia, any admission of accountability is drowned out in the narrative promoted by the remainder of the museum and memorial as a whole, with overwhelming emphasis given to the horrors of the atomic bombing. The issue of responsibility is thus acknowledged but only insofar as it is able to provide the necessary context for the dropping of the atomic bomb as opposed to a legitimate introspection designed to directly confront the issue of accountability. Yasukuni Shrine does not avoid addressing accountability for the war so much as it simply rejects the notion that Japan could possibly be held responsible. The shrine's portrayal of the war implies that Japanese wartime colonialism was done to liberate Asia from the yoke of western imperialist oppression. As opposed to acknowledging the fact that Japanese colonial expansion brought suffering and exploitation to Asia, the Yasukuni narrative attempts to absolve Japan on any responsibility for the war by placing the blame squarely on the shoulders of the Allied Powers. In all of these ways, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine are essential to understanding the Japanese experience of the Pacific War and will certainly retain this importance in the future.

That is not to say that Japanese remembering of the Pacific War will not change as time passes, however. One of the most important factors that will influence Japanese collective war memory as the conflict recedes farther into the past is the effect that the “aging out” of individuals who directly experienced the war will exert on the manner in which the war is remembered. As Japan moves into the future, less and less people will have first-hand experience of the war and its immediate aftermath until such a time as there are no individuals left who were directly impacted by the war. With many of these people already gone, the time is rapidly approaching when the “memories” of the Pacific War will have lost most, if not all, of their personal relevance. When this shift happens, it is likely that the formative roles played by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Yasukuni Shrine will shift as well, but how the two continue to shape and be shaped by Japanese war memory remains to be seen.

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