

**VICTIMS, MARTYRS AND HEROES: THE FORMATION AND MANIPULATION OF  
HISTORICAL MEMORY IN CHINA**

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Decades of spectacular economic growth and globalization have resulted in profound economic and social changes in China. These changes have been accompanied by a political and ideological transformation from Communism to Authoritarianism. Throughout its rule, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has deliberately controlled and altered historical narratives by means such as museum exhibition practices and the creation of national commemoration days. These means are now being used to advert a growing crisis of faith in Communist belief and, most importantly, bolster and justify the Party's continued rule over a rapidly changing nation. Historical memory, museums exhibitions and commemorative days are used to distract from the impact of profound social changes in today's China. The promotion of three separate identity formations (victim, martyr and hero) solidifies national identity and offers alternative identities based on carefully constructed history to such competing identities based on the capitalist economic transformation, such as consumer or millionaire. There are four main contemporary issues that have led the CCP to leverage the memory of the Anti-Japanese War of 1931/37-45 to promote state sanctioned nationalism: first, the need to provide a legitimating ideology in the face of a collapsing communist ideology and practice; second, the quest to bind the Chinese people together in the face of economic forces which are driving a gap in society and causing vast social inequalities; third the ongoing desire to unify the nation with Taiwan; and finally the ongoing historical debate and heightening territory disputes with Japan.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In December 2014 two ceremonies took place in Nanjing, China. The ceremonies epitomized the changes in today's China. One ceremony honored the delivery of 210 electric buses to the city of Nanjing and was attended by municipal government leaders.<sup>1</sup> The second, a symbolically and politically more important ceremony, was held at the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall on December 13, 2014. Outside the walls of the hall were many construction cranes, evidence of the construction boom in the city. On this day the cranes were silent in respect for the nearby ceremony. Before a crowd of 10,000 stood three people, who represented China's past, future and present. They were an elderly Nanjing Massacre survivor, the Chinese President Xi Jinping, and a young schoolboy. They stood together during the reading of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Day rites and jointly dedicated a *ding*, an ancient sacrificial vessel used for state rituals, which symbolizes state power and prosperity, to the victims of the 1937 Nanjing Massacre.<sup>2</sup> December 13, 2014 marked the first National Memorial Day for Nanjing Massacre Victims and signified China's first national commemoration of the memorial. The orchestrated ceremony was broadcast live on CCTV state television to an audience of potentially several hundred million Chinese viewers who watched as the Chinese flag flew at half-mast while the crowd sang a boisterous rendition of the Chinese national anthem. Next, a solemn moment of silence was observed for massacre victims as sirens howled over the city. Finally, Chinese People's Liberation Army honor guards marched in unison to lay wreaths and 3,000 doves were released as President Xi told the audience: "anyone who tries to deny the massacre will not be allowed by history, the souls of the 300,000 deceased victims, 1.3 billion Chinese

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<sup>1</sup> "210 Higer Buses Put Into Use In Nanjing," China Buses. December 23, 2014, [http://www.chinabuses.org/news/2014/1223/article\\_8624.html](http://www.chinabuses.org/news/2014/1223/article_8624.html) (accessed January 26, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> "Xinhua Insight: President Xi Attends China's First State Commemoration for Nanjing Massacre Victims," Xinhua. December 13, 2014 [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-12/13/c\\_133851995.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-12/13/c_133851995.htm) (accessed December 14, 2014).

people, and all people loving peace and justice in the world.”<sup>3</sup> This new national commemorative day, which was declared in February 2014, joins together with museums to shape Chinese historical memory and mold the Chinese people's national commemorative experience.

The official commemoration ceremony is only one manifestation, however important, of CCP control of the historical memory of Japanese imperialism and their Chinese conquests during the Century of Humiliation 百年国耻. The Century of Humiliation recounts how at the hands of foreign imperialists and corrupt Chinese regimes, territories were captured, national sovereignty was lost and the Chinese people were humiliated. The First Opium War (1839-1842), in which the British wrenched open the Chinese empire to foreign imperialism in 1842, is usually seen as the beginning of the century and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 is seen as the end.<sup>4</sup> Chinese heroes and martyrs from this 100-year period have long been glorified and commemorated for their contributions to the triumphant Chinese Communist state. This recently declared commemorative day officially recognizes the new national trend where Chinese victimhood is eulogized and adds a new identity of the victim to the existing duo of hero and martyr, thereby establishing a trio of officially recognized and sanctioned historical roles.

The Century of Humiliation is fading into the distant past as China enters into its fourth decade of spectacular economic growth and emergence as a hegemonic power. As profound economic and social changes take hold in China, they are accompanied by the political and ideological transformation of the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from Maoist Communism to Neoliberal Authoritarianism. Maoist Communism was a totalitarian regime under which Chinese citizens’ individual freedoms were severely restrained. The CCP, through the state, controlled all aspects of political, social, economic and intellectual behavior and actions. Neoliberal Authoritarianism has its roots in China’s 1978 economic reform, which vastly expanded peoples’ economic freedoms. Now, the regime can be characterized as authoritarian since economic freedoms have not been accompanied by a corresponding opening of other individual freedoms, which are still constrained. However, the economic and social changes over the past 40 years have presented the CCP with a potential threat. Throughout its rule, the CCP

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>4</sup> Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.)



has deliberately controlled and altered historical narratives by means such as museum exhibition practices and national commemoration days. Today these means of cultural and social governance are being used to stress national unity in order to avert a growing crisis of faith in Communist belief. Most importantly they are used to bolster and legitimize the party's continued rule over a rapidly changing nation.

Since the founding of the PRC, museums and commemorative days have been used as tools by the CCP to advocate a party and state sanctioned view of the nation's history.<sup>5</sup> Visiting the museums or participating in activities related to commemorative days still is a pedagogical tool to teach a constructed state narrative. As the official state narrative changes to adapt to contemporary economic and political demands, museum exhibitions and commemorative days are used to redirect attention away from the impact of profound social and economic changes in today's China and put forward representations of the past that compliment China's present ideology of market reform, commerce and free enterprise.<sup>6</sup> This essay will examine the promotion of three separate identity formations; victim, martyr and hero, through museums and commemorative days and question the influence of regime change on the historiography and historical interpretations of events from which these identities developed, many of which are crucial to and embody China's official state narrative. I argue that these identities are used to solidify national identity and distract from competing identities emerging from the capitalist economic transformation. Specifically, I will argue there are four main contemporary issues that have led the CCP to leverage the historical memory of the Anti-Japanese War (1931/37-1945) to promote state sanctioned nationalism: first, the need to provide a legitimating ideology in the face of a collapsing communist ideology and practice; second, the quest to bind the Chinese people together in the face of economic forces which are driving a gap in society and causing vast social inequalities; third, the ongoing desire to unify the nation with Taiwan; and finally the continuing historical debate and heightening territorial disputes with Japan.

To argue this, I will examine the effects of events that occurred during the Post Mao Era: the 1978 economic reforms and the 1989 government crackdown of a pro-democracy movement in Tian'anmen Square that depicts a fissure between the Chinese people and the Communist

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<sup>5</sup> William A. Callahan, "History, Identity, and Security: Producing and Consuming Nationalism in China," *Critical Asian Studies*, 38, no. 2 (2006): 179-208.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 5.

Party, forcing a change in CCP's historiographical practices. These events led to a crisis of faith in communism and necessitated an evolving Chinese state narrative. Furthermore, I will define the relationship between certain events of the Century of Humiliation, official state memory and nationalism in China and expound how these specific historical memories have been used and manipulated to ignite contemporary Chinese nationalism. This will include the paramount influence of regime change on historical interpretations of the events and its influence on the construction and renovation of museums and the establishment of new national commemorative days. Finally, I will examine the geopolitical situation of China and its neighboring nations of Japan and Taiwan and address how modern Chinese nationalism differentiates Chinese citizens from foreigners and why this nationalism not only has specific domestic targets but international ones as well.

The CCP rules over China in an age that has often proved fatal for single-party regimes. In attempts to surpass the "70-year itch," what Larry Diamond deems the typical life span of one-party regimes<sup>7</sup>; the CCP saturates the Chinese national identity with meaning, purpose and unity. Again, these efforts must be viewed in the light of the spectacular economic growth over the past forty years, virtually unprecedented in its scale, and bound to transform any society in its midst. By erecting national museums as officially sanctioned representations for citizens to relive their national narrative and establishing commemorative days to evoke nationalist sentiments, the CCP's strict practice of social governance manipulates historical memory and national identity to enhance the vitality of the regime. Specifically, these forms of social governance are mechanisms the Chinese elite deem fundamental and instrumental to party legitimacy and its continued success.

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<sup>7</sup> Larry, Diamond. "Chinese Communism and the 70-Year Itch." *The Atlantic*, October 29, 2013. <http://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/10/chinese-communism-and-the-70-year-itch/280960/> (accessed February 25, 2015).

## 2.0 CHINA'S NATIONALISM

Anthony D. Smith has defined modern nationalism as the sentiment of belonging to a nation, as well as social or political movements made on behalf of the nation. The goals of nationalist movements are national autonomy, unity and identity.<sup>8</sup> This is a useful definition because China's museums, national commemoration days and the three identity formations are evidence of how the legitimacy challenged CCP has used cultural governance as an instrument to consolidate national identity and unity for the justification of the CCP's continued one party rule in post-Tian'anmen China. Modern PRC nationalism embodies the people's will, and seeks to create a sense of nationhood among all its citizens within the sovereign state. Modern nationalism has attracted Chinese intellectuals since the mid-nineteenth century and truly emerged in the late nineteenth century in the wake of the assault by Western imperialist powers and decline of the Qing dynasty.

Modern Chinese nationalism consists of multiple layers rather than just one easily understood sentiment. Nationalism in China is comprised of state indoctrinated patriotic appeals that recognize membership to a large nation-state in order to effectively bind different ethnic groups together. It is intimately tied to China's national experience and profound historical and cultural consciousness.<sup>9</sup> The modern Chinese individual is a proud citizen of his country and revels in ancient China's glorious past. Yet at the same time, Chinese citizens also remember their people's experiences of national triumph and national humiliation while battling the foreign imperialist intruders or corrupt domestic regimes.

Imperial China is often considered the ancient construct that laid the historical foundation for the modern Chinese nation-state. The many archaeological findings that support ancient

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<sup>8</sup> In *Nationalism - Theory, Ideology, History*, Cambridge: Polity, 2010, 5-23 Smith provides five meanings for the term modern nationalism: the process of formation, or growth of a nation. A sentiment of belonging to the nation. A language and symbolism of a nation. A social and political movement on behalf of the nation. A doctrine and/or ideology of the nation.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

China's existence forge an unbreakable bond between the nation, its culture, its people and its territory. They also serve to legitimize the nation-state's undeniable claim to its land. This primordial approach fosters the modern Chinese citizen's identification with the glories of China's ancient and imperial past, and allows for historical figures like Confucius to become an integral part of the foundation for a unique Chinese identity. But this paper will not focus on China's pre-modern identity; rather it will focus on the different identity constructs have emerged from China's recent history. These identities often generate what Zheng Wang classifies as external oriented nationalism. This form of nationalism is without a domestic focus rather its focus shifts to an external entity and can create nationalist and xenophobic resentment against foreign pressures or controversies. A result of external oriented nationalism is an exacerbation of feelings of siege and persecution from a potential outside rival.<sup>10</sup> However to those who study East Asian international relations it doesn't come as a surprise that the idea of China as a victim state, the careful construction and manipulation of wartime memory, threatens harmonious relations between China and Japan. This is not to say that external oriented nationalism is the only type of nationalist belief in the PRC, rather there has been a pronounced rise in the use of it since the appearance of the victim identity.

It should be noted that the CCP officially endorses patriotism rather than nationalism because of its inherent contradictions. A nation is a community that has a proper name, lives in its territorial homeland and shares a history, common myths, distinct public culture, common laws and customs,<sup>11</sup> therefore nationalism can also relate to unity by way of a cultural or ethnic background, where as patriotism refers to loyalty to one's state. Thus, endorsement of nationalism poses a potential threat to the PRC and it could arouse nationalist fever among China's 55 ethnic minority groups, who could then move to appeal for their own identity. There is direct evidence of ethnic nationalism and conflict in the PRC; the repeated incidents between the state and the Tibetan and Uyghur minorities have shown the greatest potential for ethnic separatism in China.<sup>12</sup> The CCP endorses patriotism, because "it is a more acceptable non-political notion to the Chinese central government as it helps the people focus on commonly

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010.)

<sup>12</sup> Examples of conflict between the state and these ethnic groups include and are not limited to: for Tibetans: the March 1989 - May 1990 state imposing of martial law on Tibet, the 2008 Tibetan unrest in which burning, looting and killing, and ongoing religious persecution of Tibetans. For Uyghurs: The Ghuljia Demonstrations of 1997 that were cracked down by gunfire of PLA troops and resulted in the execution of 30 Uyghur independence activists and a series of riots in Urumqi in the summer of 2009 that resulted in the injury and death of both Uyghur and Han people.

shared problems and challenges.”<sup>13</sup> Belief in patriotism diminishes the potential for attaining or enhancing claims from ethnic minority groups, like the Tibetans or Uyghurs, for ethnic autonomy. Most importantly, patriotism is less threatening to the Party and the Han majority.

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<sup>13</sup> Kao, C. "Patriotism Different from Nations." *The Straits Times*, July 17, 1996, 11.

### 3.0 DOMESTIC EVENTS AND THEIR RELATION TO THE MANIPULATION OF HISTORY

The People's Republic of China was founded on the Chinese Communist Party's victory in China's War of Liberation 解放战争, at the end of its civil war from 1945 to 1949 and its deep belief in Marxist-Leninist principles of a classless society and international revolution. Upon ascension to power the party immediately began crafting its version of national history and memory. The CCP minimized China's 1911 Revolution, which overthrew thousands of years of dynastic rule, as nothing more than an elite nationalist movement that failed, and inevitably led to the real revolution during the War of Liberation. The Communist victory in the war meant that the Mandate of Heaven 天命 now belonged to them. On October 1, 1949 Mao Zedong stood on Beijing's Gate of Heavenly Peace and declared the victory of the Communist Party, proclaiming the establishment of the PRC. "Ours will no longer be a nation subject to insult and humiliation. We have stood up."<sup>14</sup> For the thousands of commoners who gathered around the gate to hear Mao speak, it meant that rival factions and foreign powers had been defeated but more importantly the power of the empire and the Guomindang 国民党 (the Nationalist Party) had been usurped and replaced by the revolutionary ideology and leaders of the PRC. Mao's declaration of the People's Republic of China proclaimed to the Chinese nation the legitimacy and victory of the Communist leadership and ideology. Along with the creation of a personality cult worshipping Mao, similar to the one surrounding Stalin in the USSR, the Communist Party would move to build legitimacy not from the agony of humiliating events and terrible suffering, but from their victories under Mao's leadership during the War of Resistance Against Japan 抗日战争 (1937-1945), also known as the Anti-Japanese War, and the War of Liberation.

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<sup>14</sup> "The Chinese Celebrate Their Roaring Economy, as They Struggle With its Costs: Near Universal Optimism about Beijing Olympics," Pew Global Attitudes Project (July 22, 2008).

The CCP's victories in these conflicts became a major part of Maoist doctrine. The CCP drew legitimacy from victory in both conflicts; victory over the corrupt Nationalist Party and victory over the brutal Japanese Imperialists became central to official post-revolutionary establishment historiography. The Communist official narrative was simple: without the Party and its leadership, Japan would never have been defeated and China would remain weak and divided. The praising and elevation of the Communist Party and Mao Zedong were quickly institutionalized as an important tenet of the new regime. As the CCP nationalized all cultural institutions, the state immediately and easily developed museums to project the new ideology of state socialism.<sup>15</sup> Projections of nationalism cloaked museum displays and national holidays in official state ideology. Chinese school textbooks in the 1950s and 60s commended the CCP as the vanguard of the "Great Chinese War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression." The CCP's totalitarian control over state and cultural institutions made it easy to institutionalize a hegemonic national memory.<sup>16</sup>

Mao used the Marxist-Leninist class struggle theory to explain how history inevitably progressed from foreign imperialism, to the 1911 Revolution, then finally to the War of Liberation. Class struggle, socialism and global liberation and revolution were the ideological framework of the PRC.<sup>17</sup> Through a focus on class struggle and the importance of class-consciousness, the CCP targeted China's vast rural population of peasants and farmers along with factory workers in Chinese cities who had suffered under oppressive governments who cared little for their welfare, be it either the imperial ruler's or Nationalist Party's policies, to boost its party membership. As peasants made up roughly eighty percent of China's population<sup>18</sup>, their revolutionary participation<sup>18</sup> was essential to the success of the party. In *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong* 毛主席语录, of which 6 billion copies were printed throughout its history, Mao spoke of a communist utopia where there was no corruption or suffering and everyone enjoyed justice and equality. Mao championed the revolutionary

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<sup>15</sup> Kirk Denton, "Exhibiting the Past: China's Nanjing Memorial Museum," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 12, no. 20 (2014)

<sup>16</sup> Yinan He, "Remembering and Forgetting the War: Elite Mythmaking, Mass Reaction and Sino-Japanese Relations, 1956-2006," *History and Memory*, 19, no. 2 (2007): 43-76.

<sup>17</sup> Tsetung Mao, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tsetung*. (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972).

<sup>18</sup> Gungwu Wang. "Openness and Nationalism: Outside the Chinese Revolution," in *Chinese Nationalism*, ed by Jonathan Unger. (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1996), 113-125.

capacity of the masses in China and throughout the world guided by the watchful hands and eyes of the CCP.<sup>19</sup>

As early as the 1950s the state began constructing museums, memorial halls or parks as educational sites dedicated to areas that had revolutionary significance.<sup>20</sup> Heroes and martyrs of the CCP displayed a strong Chinese national character. Historiographical priorities were in promoting CCP heroes and martyrs as those who protected the people from becoming victims and were utilized as moral guides for the supposed ongoing revolution. Heroes like Mao were to be revered for leading the Chinese people to victory and revolutionary martyrs were to be worshipped for their noble sacrifices. The party focused on the narratives of resistance, liberation and victory rather than on expressions of Chinese suffering, insuring that Chinese citizens identified themselves with a strong national identity associated with heroes and martyrs.

Under Mao's leadership there was actually very little research into the history of the Anti-Japanese War and Japanese wartime atrocities. Kirk Denton argues the historiography of Japanese aggression was intentionally suppressed during the Maoist or Post-Revolutionary period.<sup>21</sup> In 1962, scholars at Nanjing University's Department of History wrote "Japanese Imperialism and the Massacre in Nanjing" 日本帝国主义在南京的大屠杀. The book was based on extensive materials the scholars uncovered during a two-year investigation made about the 1937 Nanjing Massacre. Yet after completion it was labeled a classified document and could not be published openly.<sup>22</sup> Why, during the post-revolutionary period, did the CCP decide to consciously suppress Japanese aggression, the memory of the Nanjing Massacre and the victimization of the Chinese people?

At the center of its belief system the CCP recognized and advocated membership to the political identity of communism as the solution to all problems. Communism, rather than patriotism or nationalism, would effectively bind different ethnic or national groups together in harmony. In its early years and after the PRC was founded, the CCP was a revolutionary party that stood not for regional or national aspirations, but for the aspiration of a classless society in which workers and peasants ruled and all were equal. Why promote suffering at the hands of a

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<sup>19</sup> *Quotations of Chairman Mao: 50th Anniversary Exhibition, 1964-2014*, The Grolier Club, New York City, New York.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 15.

<sup>21</sup> Kirk Denton, "Heroic Resistance and the Victims of Atrocity: Negotiating the Memory of Japanese Imperialism in Chinese Museums," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* (2007), [http://japanfocus.org/~Kirk\\_A\\_-Denton/2547](http://japanfocus.org/~Kirk_A_-Denton/2547) (accessed November 4, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> *Japanese Imperialism and the Massacre in Nanjing*. Trans Robert Gray. (China News Digest, 1996.)



foreign nation if you advocate global revolution in which the workers and peasants throughout the world would be unified in class struggle against the ruling class? China was a new but extremely important participant in the international communist revolution, thus any nationalist claims that could possibly arise from a focus on Japanese aggression would contradict claims of communist internationalism and possible unity with Japanese people. In fact, the CCP even depicted Japanese workers and peasants as fellow victims of militant imperialists.<sup>23</sup>

Victimhood may have been off limits, but victory remained as the key word for CCP legitimacy and rule. The state sanction narrative claimed that it was under Mao's skillful military leadership that the Party was able to achieve victory against overwhelming odds and unite China. The CCP was praised as the sole leader against Japanese aggression during the war.

Any other narrative would inevitably include the discourse of national humiliation and victimization, which contradicted Mao's victor narrative, therefore the discourse about suffering at the hands of foreigners during China's Century of Humiliation was deliberately suppressed. Ian Buruma suggests that during the early stages of PRC historiography, the events in Nanjing in 1937 were consciously suppressed because no communist heroes emerged from them, since Nanjing was the Nationalist capital, the Nationalists forces did the bulk of the fighting.<sup>24</sup> Many scholars have even dismantled the CCP victor narrative, stating that the Communist forces made little contribution to war against Japan.<sup>25</sup> From 1938-1941, Japanese bombers attacked Yan'an, the capital of the CCP base area, 17 times, for a total death toll of 214.<sup>26</sup> How can this be compared with the suffering during the six-week occupation of then Nationalist capital, Nanjing where approximately 300,000 were killed or the 218 separate bombing raids on Chongqing, a temporary capital for the Nationalist government? It was during these bloody years as the Nationalist forces fought the Japanese and suffered an enormous number of casualties, that the Communists were able to build their forces to rival those of the Nationalists. The CCP's rapid development was due to "Mao's strategy of avoiding direct military engagement with the Japanese main force."<sup>27</sup> The Communist forces only launched one major conventional military offensive during the Anti-Japanese War: the Battle of the Hundred Regiments, which resulted in

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Ian Buruma. "The Joys and Perils of Victimhood." *The New York Review of Books*, April 8, 1999. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1999/apr/08/the-joys-and-perils-of-victimhood/> (accessed November 5, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Hans van de Ven, "The Military in the Republic," *The China Quarterly*, no. 150 (1997): 352-374.

<sup>26</sup> Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally, China's World War II, 1937-1945*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

a brutal Japanese counter assault and massive failure.<sup>28</sup> Since CCP state narratives claimed communist victory in the war and redemption for the Century of Humiliation, any detailed historiography surrounding Japanese aggression would eventually expose the true details of the actual extent of communist involvement. The control and shaping of history became a primary security issue for the CCP. This can certainly be the reason why the 1962 book “Japanese Imperialism and the Massacre in Nanjing” was classified. Moreover, this official silence can be tracked, according to the records of the National Library of China, no new textbooks regarding the nation’s humiliation were published in China between 1938 and 1989.<sup>29</sup> It would not be until the early Post Mao Era, in the 1980s, that Party historiography become less monolithic, and after the 1989 Protest Movement, that the victimization narrative would dramatically appear. China’s dynamic reform after 1978 and the crisis resulting from the Tian’anmen Incident (1989) forced the CCP to reform its stance on historical events of the Century of Humiliation and cease the suppression of certain aspects of Chinese history.

China’s era of reform begun in 1978 with the ascendancy of Deng Xiaoping, who restructured and modernized the Chinese economy by introducing capitalist development. Deng also brokered the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978, ending 33 years in which there had been no officially acknowledged communications between China and Japan.<sup>30</sup> However, economic reforms were by no means a CCP relinquishment of its stranglehold on political power, instead CCP policy reforms were intended to support the economic renewal in China and to strengthen wavering confidence in the Party. Following the reforms during the 1980s and 1990s, China experienced a period of rapid economic development where new industries were developed. Many cities grew rapidly, populated by a massive unprecedented migration from rural areas. The resulting economic miracle and the radical change in state ideology would be accompanied by social and political confusion. Starting in the mid 1980s, there was a nationwide upsurge of student demonstrations and a demise of official communist ideology, which eventually resulted in an extreme crisis of faith in the existing order among many Chinese. From a pro-democracy movement sparked by the three belief crises arose the crisis in faith of socialism 信心危机, crisis of belief in Marxism 信仰危机, and crisis of trust in

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, 26.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Kokubun Ryōsei, “The Shifting Nature of Japan-China Relations after the Cold War,” in *Japan's Relations with China: Facing a Rising Power*, ed. Peng Er Lam. (London: Routledge, 2006), 21-35.

the party 信任危机. Intellectual and youth calls for Western style democratic reform eventually led to the Tian'anmen Square Incident in June 1989, finally displaying the bankruptcy and insolvency of communist ideology. The rapid decline in socialist values and the need to fill the ideological void caused by the promotion of a market economy and the beginnings of consumerism brought a revision of the traditional PRC state narrative to one that included a renewed state emphasis on nationalism and national humiliation discourse.

The anger and protest aimed at the CCP posed an internal security crisis in which the ideological dominance, regime security, and cultural hegemony of the CCP was questioned. The CCP needed to create a system to rebuild party legitimacy in a way that allowed for the continued rule of the Communist Party on a basis of non-communist ideology. The security issue the Chinese leadership faced was to be combated with forms of cultural governance. Michael J. Shapiro argues that while early modern nation-state sovereignty relied on “military and fiscal initiatives,” by the nineteenth century these “coercive and economic aspects of control had been supplemented by a progressively intense cultural governance.”<sup>31</sup> Cultural governance is useful in understanding Chinese nationalism because the Chinese state, be it imperial or communist, has been a tremendous force in establishing cultural and moral standards for its populace.<sup>32</sup> The state promotion of nationalism via cultural governance can be considered one of the most significant factors behind the promotion of the Patriotic Education Campaign, museum construction and renovation and the establishment of national commemorative days in post-Tian'anmen China.

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<sup>31</sup> Michael Shapiro, *Methods and Nations: Cultural Governance and the Indigenous Subject*, (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, 5.

#### 4.0 EVOLVING STATE NARRATIVE

As exemplified by Eric Hobsbawm's and Terence Ranger's ideas on historical construction, many Chinese historians have invented traditions or historical narratives to serve contemporary needs.<sup>33</sup> Several of the recent policies passed in contemporary China have involved the revision, reorganization and rehabilitation of history and historical figures. Simply put, the CCP is using its vision of the past to serve the present.

The departure from the class struggle and focus on the social equality narrative has led many Chinese to become increasingly disillusioned in the promises of 60 years of Communist rule. The enormous discrepancies of wealth created during the economic transformation exacerbated social stratification and threatened to destabilize Chinese political order. The income gap between China's rich and poor is now among the largest in the world, surpassing that of the United States.<sup>34</sup> China's new affluent consumer based economy initiated a rapid decay of communist ideological beliefs, pressing the Chinese political system to search for an alternate source of legitimacy. Their solution was simple, revive nationalism as the new unifying ideology to foster loyalty to the regime. In order to do this, the CCP decided to use the nation's historians to orchestrate the construction of a new national victimization narrative. Nationalism would be inculcated not only in the identities of heroes and martyrs, but in victims as well. Through massive educational campaigns, museum construction and commemorative days, nationalism would be further embedded in the Chinese political and ideological consciousness. An evaluation of China's new national narrative helps in understanding the predominant role and value of history in current Chinese nationalist policy.

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<sup>33</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>34</sup> "Income Inequality Now Greater in China than in US," Michigan News, <http://ns.umich.edu/new/releases/22156-income-inequality-now-greater-in-china-than-in-us> (accessed February 23, 2015).

In government efforts to stabilize the nation and CCP leadership after the Tian'anmen Incident, nationalism was rediscovered in the form of historical memory. The CCP utilized education in an important maneuver to enact state sanctioned nationalism. In a March 1991 letter to education officials, Jiang Zemin launched the Patriotic Education Campaign 爱国主义教育, stating that China needed to enhance its education of "early modern and modern Chinese history and current events, with the goal of instilling in young people a sense of national pride, national confidence and preventing thoughts of glorifying the West and fawning of the foreign."<sup>35</sup> William Callahan suggests the CCP formulated the Patriotic Education Campaign not so much to reeducate youth but rather to redirect protests toward the foreigner as an enemy.<sup>36</sup> Determined to change the post- Tian'anmen generation's attitudes about foreign nations, the CCP revived narratives of Imperial China's former greatness and its eventual humiliation at the hands of Western and Japanese imperialists. The aim of this campaign was to educate Chinese people, especially the youth, about China's episodes of humiliation at the hands of foreign powers and further display the CCP and the Communist Revolution's essential role in redeeming China from its humiliation, changing China's fate to attain national independence in a period of merciless imperialism.<sup>37</sup> Instead of the class struggle narrative CCP leadership had championed in the past, emphasis was now placed on China's struggles with outside forces.

In August of 1991, China's National Education Council issued their General Outline on Strengthening Education on Chinese Modern and Contemporary History and National Conditions which stated "history education reform is China's fundamental strategy to defend against the "peaceful evolution" plot of international hostile powers... strengthening education on Chinese modern and contemporary history and national conditions is of strategic significance."<sup>38</sup> The 1994 Outline for the Implementation of Patriotic Education called for curriculums with particular emphasis on China's history of resisting foreign aggression, the Chinese people's collective experience of glory and suffering, CCP achievements in modernization, principles and policies of the CCP and its theories regarding issues such as peaceful reunification or "one country, two systems."<sup>39</sup> The emphasis on these specific subjects

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<sup>35</sup> See Renmin Ribao, June 1, 1991. Jiang Zemin "Two histories, one situation" (liang shi yi qing)

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Suisheng Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 31, no. 3 (1998): 287-302.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, 37.

was a method to counter China's internal issues and forces which threatened to tear the Chinese nation apart. The name of the campaign says it all: patriotic. The campaign was implemented to enhance loyalty to China, and played into the developing theme of new Chinese nationalism that overall promotes national unity and loyalty.

The directive's strategic significance focused on reinforcing CCP authority over its citizens. The Patriotic Education Campaign was used to draw people's anxieties or attention away from domestic discontent that really surfaced in China by the late 1980s over issues such as increased social stratification or corrupt government, toward a focus on foreign problems. By leveraging historical memories and promoting the identities of victims, martyrs and heroes, patriotic education strengthened the attachment of Chinese citizens to their historical triumphs and traumas, therefore hopefully fostering people's feelings of belonging to a larger group identity as a Chinese citizen. Through patriotic appeals the CCP coerced its citizens to identify with and rally around the Communist Party, which was portrayed through state education as the "paramount patriotic force and guardian of national pride."<sup>40</sup> By equating the CCP to the Chinese nation it was made possible, in the name of patriotism, to sway its people towards supporting its reform policies. This legitimized the CCP's continued rule on the basis of non-communist ideology as the government transformed from communist dictatorship to authoritarian rule.

China's evolving state narrative is also evident in museum construction. Kirk Denton has identified three separate waves of PRC museum construction, categorizing them into the following: the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962), the early post- Mao Era (1980s) and finally the post-Tiananmen Incident (1990s- present).<sup>41</sup> The Great Leap Forward Era museums were monolithic, exhibiting the official Maoist version of China's modern histories and omitting any material or events that did not fit the approved party narrative. Great Leap Forward era museums portray the war with Japan as a decisive period in which the Communist Party rightfully emerged to become China's legitimate ideological and political force. Japanese atrocities were downplayed in favor of the victor narrative, which instead focused on the role of the CCP in the

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<sup>40</sup> Suizheng Zhao, "We Are Patriots First and Democrats Second: The Rise of Chinese Nationalism in the 1990s," in *What if China Doesn't Democratize? Implications for War and Peace*, ed. Edward Friedman et al. (Armonk, NY, 2000), 21-43.

<sup>41</sup> Kirk Denton. "Museums, Memorial Sites and Exhibitionary Culture in the People's Republic of China." *The China Quarterly* 183 (2005): 565-86.

war years, its battles and communist led popular uprisings.<sup>42</sup> In these museums heroes and martyrs were distinguished and used for a standard representing the nation's moral, cultural and political values.

The early post-Mao Era museums were mainly committed to portraying revolutionary martyrs. This wave of museum construction was primarily a response to the Cultural Revolution, which had attacked most cultural institutions.<sup>43</sup> Museums constructed in the post-Mao phase aided in the restoration of party legitimacy after the country had been destabilized by the disorder of Mao's Cultural Revolution. The goal was clear, evoke the memory of the Communist Revolution and emphasize the importance of self-sacrifice for the success of the nation. It was during this period that the CCP realized the potential of museums as an intellectual business. Article 22 of the 1982 Constitution of the PRC reads: "The state promotes the development of literature and art, the press, broadcasting and television undertakings, publishing and distribution services, libraries, museums, cultural centers and other cultural undertakings, that serve the people and socialism, and sponsor mass cultural activities."<sup>44</sup> This article directly referred to museums' important role in the state directed dissemination of ideas.

Perhaps most important to this paper is the third wave of museum construction which began after the Tian'anmen Incident of 1989 and continues to this day. Museums and other cultural institutions were crucial agents in the Patriotic Education Campaign that swept through China in the 1990s. This boom in museum construction and renovation was initially a method of furthering regime security, but now serves as a redirection away from the domestic internal issues to foreign historical problems. Post-Tian'anmen museums utilize heroes and martyrs as a contemporary means of restoring the party's tainted image. The continuous flow of officially sanctioned historiography regarding the essential contributions of Communist heroes and martyrs displays the CCP's centrality in China's national narrative and more importantly equates the CCP with the existence of a Chinese nation, equating any resentment of the party with bitterness toward the nation itself. These museums suggest that CCP heroes and martyrs helped to build today's modern China. Ultimately it was their sacrifices that resulted in the emergence of a modern, successful and advanced Chinese nation. These museums' portrayal of CCP heroes is

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<sup>42</sup> Perhaps the most display of the victor narrative is in the Military Museum and the Museum of the Chinese Revolution in Beijing (Part of the Great Leap Forward wave, it was developed in the late 1950s and opened in 1961)

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>44</sup> Constitution of the People's Republic of China of 1982, Article 22. <http://en.people.cn/constitution/constitution.html>

similar to previous museum construction, in which the Party is portrayed as the leading force in China's victory. Martyrs' memorials focus their attention on the CCP's role in overcoming historical social and political injustices. The central theme is that today's prosperous and powerful China simply wouldn't exist if it weren't for CCP heroes and martyrs. Finally, the post-Tian'anmen wave of museum construction sees the victim identity's initial appearance. Its emergence after the Protest Movement of the late 1980s was intended to downplay the forces that threatened to splinter Chinese society and emphasize national unity through shared suffering.

A drift of reinterpretations of Chinese history and changes in historiographical practices paralleled the third wave of museum construction. Rana Mitter points out that academic research and historiography in China are also a political issue. Not only does academic research involving politically sensitive topics face the threat of censorship, much of it is reliant on state funding. It is therefore relatively easy to trace the connections between certain topics and the party's relaxed stance on them. Topics that were allowed or restricted were in accordance with the party's research agenda.<sup>45</sup> Therefore the extensive study of historical events that were once deemed unimportant or formerly prohibited is a demonstration of the CCP's obsessive and compulsive manipulation of the past to serve present needs and explains the evolution of its state narrative. China's most important academic journal regarding the Anti-Japanese War: *Research on the War of Resistance to Japan* 抗日战争研究, published by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 中国社会科学院, only began publishing in 1991, two years after Tian'anmen and the same year the Patriotic Education Campaign was implemented. Now this journal is conveniently available to all Internet users free of charge as all the articles in this journal are also published online.<sup>46</sup> This demonstrates the CCP's skillful ability to use all types of media in its efforts to shape historical dialogue and memory.

Another previously off-limits topic that has been opened up for interpretation, marking yet another officially sanctioned reinterpretation of Chinese history, is the Nationalist Party forces' contributions in the war against Japan. In PRC historiography before the 1980s it would have been impossible to find depictions of Nationalist resistance against Japan.<sup>47</sup> The Nationalist

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<sup>45</sup> Rana Mitter. "Old Ghosts, New Memories: China's Changing War History in the Era of Post-Mao Politics." *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 1 (2003): 117-31.

<sup>46</sup> "Kangri Zhanzheng Yanjiu Quanwen Tiyaoyao." *Jindai Zhongguo Yanjiu*, [http://jds.cass.cn/Category\\_66/Index\\_5.aspx](http://jds.cass.cn/Category_66/Index_5.aspx) (accessed March 10, 2015).

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, 45.



Party was portrayed as a corrupt and an exploitative regime obsessed with fighting the opposing Communist Party rather than the invading Japanese. Any references to Japanese aggression during Anti-Japanese War made in the post-revolutionary period were attempts to make the Nationalist government in Taiwan look poorly trained and incompetent.<sup>48</sup> These portrayals were all part of a strategy to counterbalance the threat that the Nationalist regime in Taiwan, who maintained that they were the legitimate government of China and would eventually return to rule over the mainland, posed to China's national peace. But after the beginnings of economic reform on the mainland in 1978, ideological and economic differences decreased and cross-Strait relations developed positively as the two sides became increasingly dependent on each other. Since the 1990s the Nationalist Party has become increasingly economically tied to the mainland and is the CCP's potential ally, as it represents a Taiwanese anti-independence constituency. Now that the Nationalist Party no longer poses an imminent threat to national peace, the old CCP/Nationalist Party rift has diminished and Nationalist war contributions can be praised though within limits.

The trend to redefine the Nationalist's role in the war also prepares the nation for the possible unification with Taiwan. The shift to describing the equal experience of Chinese compatriots in Taiwan and the Nationalist Party under the Anti-Japanese National United Front, led of course by the CCP, stresses that the two had similar experiences during the war years. Modern references heap praise on the Nationalist's contributions to the Anti-Japanese War and their cooperation with CCP as a leading factor in the unification of the Chinese people and their ability to defeat the Japanese invaders. Modern museum or textbook references denote the Japanese as "aggressors" and use terms such as "unity and cooperation" when referring to the Chinese side to play up the historic mutual interests of Mainland China and Taiwan. This emphasis on shared experiences during the war years serves as a means of playing up the similarities between Taiwan and China, thus encouraging rapprochement between the two nations.

The downgrading of historical assaults made on the Nationalists has been recalled also due to the favor of a portrayal of a national united front against the Japanese. This presentation

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<sup>48</sup> Mark Eykholt. "Aggression, Victimization, and Chinese Historiography of the Nanjing Massacre," in *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography*, ed. Joshua A Fogel. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 11-59.

promotes the idea of China as multiethnic state. It ties together with the idea that membership in the Chinese nation-state effectively binds different groups together no matter what their ethnic or political beliefs. The introductory pamphlet from the Memorial Hall of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japan states that the exhibits from the museum "are focused on how the Chinese people of all ethnic groups, including the compatriots from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau and overseas, on the basis of the cooperation between the Chinese Communist Party and the Nationalist Party, were united under the banner of the National United Front of Resistance against Japan that was established thanks to the proposal of the Chinese Communist Party."<sup>49</sup> The museum introductory pamphlet is an excellent example of the changing emphasis on national reconciliation in the face of international conflict, rather than the post-revolutionary Mao era narrative that downplayed or ignored the Nationalist contributions to war efforts. Another example in the change to more favorable portrayals of Nationalist forces is the Battle of Taierzhuang. The story of the battle exemplifies how a formerly suppressed event that involved Nationalist participation in the war has now been studied and repackaged to Chinese society. The battle was a rare Chinese victory in the early months of the war in which a small group of Nationalist defenders overcame a large group of Japanese troops. In the post-revolutionary period Taierzhuang was rarely mentioned, yet now the historical memory of this battle is being revisited and even endorsed. The Memorial Hall of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japan, in Beijing even has a diorama displaying a reconstruction of the battlefield. The new attention drawn to the contributions of the Nationalist forces in fighting the Japanese is still overshadowed by the primary role the CCP played in the war but can be seen as an emphasis on patriotism. The love for the Chinese nation rises above political ideologies to unite all.

Most recently, in attempts to further strengthen CCP rule on a basis of non-communist ideology, national commemorative days have been established. These commemorative days are a political performance put on by the state that aims to produce its version of what the proper Chinese nation is. These national commemorative days are chosen by the state to signify the importance of a certain date and draw special attention to the nation's history as a people. The selection of which days to commemorate reveals what the nation wants represented in their national story, and how the nation should perceive itself. National commemorative days signify

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<sup>49</sup> *Zhongguo renmin kangRi zhanzheng jinianguan:jianjie Introduction of the Museum of the War of Chinese People's Resistance Against Japanese Aggression* (Beijing:Zhongguo renmin Kangri zhanzheng jinianguan, 2014)

an overriding concern for national cohesion. Three national memorial days were passed in 2014. In February 2014, almost eighty years after the massacre, China's legislature ratified a new national day to commemorate victims in the Nanjing Massacre. At the same time they also ratified Victory Day, in which China would remember its victory in the War of Resistance against Japan. Finally in August 2014 the National People's Congress approved the establishment of a national day to commemorate martyrs, Martyrs' Day.

As the Chinese nation changes, its official state narrative and historiographical practices have changed with it. The intellectual control existing in today's Neoliberal Authoritarian state allows its rulers to quickly change history. Just like Deng Xiaoping's reform policies of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the CCP's Patriotic Education Campaign, museum construction and the establishment of commemorative days are intended to strengthen the Party and make it more capable of retaining its position over Chinese society. All three are forms of cultural governance aimed at stressing national unity, filling the ideological void left by the promotion of a market economy with nationalism and legitimizing the party's continued rule over a rapidly changing nation.

## 5.0 THE HERO IDENTITY

Although the official party narrative has changed substantially, there have always been some thematic constants. These constants include the central heroic and leadership role of the CCP in the Anti-Japanese War and victory in China's War of Liberation, the final part of China's Civil War. The war years have been portrayed as the pivotal period in Chinese national history that allowed the CCP to grow in power and organization, thereby emerging as the legitimate ruler of China and able to impose its ideological beliefs over the Chinese people. Mao Era historiography included two basic stories and excluded two stories. It championed the class struggle narrative and victory narrative. It excluded the role of the Nationalists in the resistance against Japan and avoided discussion of the extent of the Japanese atrocities. After the PRC was established, in efforts to build a strong image of Chinese character and a unified nation, the country's new rulers fused Communist party historiography and the official state narrative into a simple and concrete message that has always emphasized the CCP's heroic victory over Japan and in the revolution against the Nationalist Party.

Under Mao the official state narrative sought to utilize the party's victories in the Anti-Japanese War and the War of Liberation to legitimize the party's right to rule. Mao utilized the hero or victor narrative to mobilize popular support for the party. Since the CCP's success in gaining national independence provided ultimate legitimacy to the CCP, their victories during the war years became the bulwark to all post revolutionary histories.<sup>50</sup> "The fundamental reason for the victory is that the Chinese Communist Party became the core power that united the nation."<sup>51</sup> By claiming all the credit for victory in the war years, the CCP announced that their heroic struggle provided China's redemption from the sufferings in the Century of Humiliation.

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<sup>50</sup> Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.)

<sup>51</sup> A Line from a Chinese textbook, see Howard W. French, "China's Textbooks Twist and Omit History," *The New York Times*, December 6, 2004.

The CCP's heroic narrative is a powerful example of how deeply the party has molded itself with China's nationhood. As contemporary China experiences a collapse of communist ideology, there has been a continued effort by the Party to bolster the victor narrative to provide an effective rationale for the continued rule of the Communist Party. The unceasing portrayal of CCP comrades as heroes during the war years is a covert way of legitimizing party rule.

The Memorial Hall of the Chinese People's Resistance Against Japan 中国人民抗日战争纪念馆 in Beijing prominently portrays the evolution of China's state narrative, combining the united heroic resistance of the Chinese people against the Japanese and the victimization narrative. One enters the memorial hall and is immediately confronted with a heroic image, a massive bronze relief of soldiers, workers, children and peasants, who together resisted the Japanese aggressors. The relief shows a commanding image of the determined figures almost emerging out of solid rock with guns or other weapons in hand. The relief is forcefully entitled: "Let Our Flesh and Blood Become Our New Great Wall" 让我们的血肉, 筑成我们新的长城, a lyric from the Chinese national anthem. The museum was first built in 1987 and renovated both in 1997 and again in 2005, in honor of the sixtieth anniversary of the Chinese victory of the war. The memorial hall highlights the history of the Chinese people of various ethnic groups; this includes Chinese compatriots in Hong Kong and Macao and overseas Chinese who fought jointly against the aggression of the Japanese, harping on the idea that membership to the Chinese nation effectively binds different ethnic groups together. The memorial hall also depicts the Nationalist-Communist cooperation "under the banner of National United Front of Resistance against Japan" which of course was initiated by the CCP. The memorial hall exhibits present CCP cadres as the backbone of the resistance in the war, but also shows the enormous sacrifices and contributions the entire Chinese nation made to achieve victory in the world's Anti-Fascist War or World War II. The memorial hall shows the atrocities and war crimes committed by Japanese during their invasion, but presents the atrocities as an attack against all Chinese people and not solely against the CCP. Moreover, the memorial hall's emphasis is on commemorating the heroic fighters against Japanese imperialists, it is not a veneration or eulogy for the victims of the war. The memorial hall concludes with the glorification of the heroic figures leading the national resistance, such as Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, this is a reminder that from the struggle of the Anti-Japanese War emerged the heroic victors who later became the rulers of Communist China. The memorial hall includes a comprehensive exhibit entitled "Great Victory"

伟大胜利, which emphasizes the pivotal role of China in the world wide Anti-Fascist War and China's Anti-Japanese War. Although the war is clearly represented as a critical part of China's national liberation, the memorial hall also depicts the war as a pivotal time in Chinese history when China began its transformation from a weak and ravished land to a flourishing and prosperous socialist world power, forged through enormous sacrifice and heroic leadership by the CCP. The introductory book to the "Great Victory" exhibit states: "during the war, the casualties of Chinese soldiers and civilians totaled more than 35 million; and the economic losses reached over US \$600 billion. China made a tremendous national sacrifice...China's Anti-Japanese War is an important part of the World Anti-Fascist War, and the Chinese people made tremendous sacrifices to the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War, and made important historic contribution to safeguarding world peace... It is a solemn historical mission for us to speed up modernization process, realize the reunification of the motherland, safeguard world peace and promote common development."<sup>52</sup> The portrayal of the war as the pivotal event in a shift from humiliation and weakness to national revitalization is clearly connected to China's new global economic status and its aspirations to global greatness. The portrayal of the heroes who risked their lives for the liberation and Chinese victory is also a reminder that heroes like Mao could rise from the CCP and protect the Chinese people in times of danger. They will never be victims to foreign aggression again. The memorial hall is a mighty symbol of how nationalism is used in China and is being reconfigured to legitimize the CCP in the face of a quickly changing political and ideological atmosphere.

In February 2014, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress decided to establish the Victory of the War of Resistance Against Japan Memorial Day 抗日战争胜利纪念日, a national day aimed to commemorate the Chinese people's victory against Japanese aggression. "The victory became a historical turning point in the Chinese nation's march toward rejuvenation and laid an important foundation for the independence and liberation of the Chinese people."<sup>53</sup> The central government designated September 3 as Victory Day. This choice is symbolic. It is the day after the Japanese government officially signed the surrender document on September 2, 1945. The ratification was also aimed at displaying the important role China

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<sup>52</sup> Qiang Chen, ed., *Weida Shengli- Jinian Zhongguo Renmin Kangri Zhanzheng Ji Shijie Fan Faxisi Zhanzheng Shengli Daxing Zhuti Zhanlan Jiangjie Ci*. (Beijing: Beijing Chubanshe, 2009.)

<sup>53</sup> Ningzhu Zhu, "China Ratifies Anti-Japanese War Victory Day," *Xinhua*, February 27, 2014, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-02/27/c\\_133148388.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-02/27/c_133148388.htm) (accessed November 14, 2014).

played in the Anti-Japanese War, which is a portion of the world's Anti-Fascist War. The day is meant to express "China's firm stance of safeguarding national sovereignty, territorial solidarity and world peace, while carrying forward national spirit with its core of patriotism and inspiring the joint drive to realize the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation."<sup>54</sup> Clearly the ideological drive behind the commemorative day is firmly connected to China's new prominence in the global economy, providing yet another basis for the ongoing reformation of the reasons why the Communist Party should continue to rule over China.

September 3, 2014 marked China's first national celebration of Victory Day. China's top leaders attended a ceremony that was held at the Memorial Hall of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japan. Among those present at the ceremony were Chinese President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang, and other important party members.. The importance leadership placed on the symbolism of an orchestrated and elaborate ceremony was evident. During the ceremony a salute of fourteen guns were fired, symbolizing China's fourteen years of struggle against the Japanese. Later on during the ceremony 3,500 doves were released as a reminder of the estimated 35 million Chinese soldiers and civilians who were killed or wounded by the invading Japanese troops and balloons were released of to symbolize the Chinese hope for a better future.<sup>55</sup> The ceremony, which was broadcast on national television, is a way of asserting a national identity. Victory Day is a political act using all the tools of an authoritarian regime to cultivate a Chinese national identity, national pride and security for the party.

The Memorial Hall of the Chinese People's Resistance Against Japan in Beijing is an outstanding example of the large-scale comprehensive memorial halls that are being built throughout today's China. Although located outside the center of China's capital and difficult to reach via public transportation, its significance to Chinese leadership cannot be denied. Paying tribute to the many heroes who arose from the Anti-Japanese War puts the hall at the pinnacle of the regime's efforts to control historical discourse.

China is filled with monuments and memorials to individual historical figures, which embody the past and serve the current economic and ideological direction. An important example is the memorialization that has emerged around President Xi Jinping's father, Xi Zhongxun. Xi

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid*, 53.

<sup>55</sup> "China Marks Victory Day against Japan's Aggression," *China Daily*, September 3, 2014, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-09/03/content\\_18538925.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-09/03/content_18538925.htm) (accessed November 17, 2014).

Zhongxun was one of the first generation of Chinese Communist leaders. He was a guerrilla fighter in the 1930s and became a deputy prime minister under Mao Zedong, but was purged in the 1960s. He spent years under house arrest until he was rehabilitated in 1978 when he helped to introduce the Shenzhen Economic Zone.<sup>56</sup> Xi Zhongxun is an example of a revolutionary hero, who in the post-Mao Era also helped to launch economic reforms. A granite statue of Xi was erected in 2005 in Fuping County in Shaanxi province, the burial site of Xi. Visitors are required to bow three times to the statue and are welcome to visit the nearby museum that tells his life story. In 2013, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, three books were published about Xi, a six-part documentary aired on TV, a seminar in Beijing was given about him and two commemorative stamps were issued. The memorialization of revolutionary heroes like Xi serves several purposes. They serve both as a symbol of the successful and practical ongoing economic and political reforms and also possibly as a part of an emerging personality cult surrounding the president.<sup>57</sup> One cannot deny President Xi Jinping's influence must have swayed the decision to memorialize his father, but Xi Zhongxun, a CCP guerilla fighter who helped launch economic reform is an excellent example of a heroic figure whose memory serves to counter contemporary China's collapsing communist ideology. He is yet another individual the party uses to bolster the victor narrative. Xi Zhongxun and other heroic Chinese CCP members have safeguarded the Chinese people from further victimization and have helped facilitate the advancement toward a modern and powerful Chinese nation. The celebration of CCP heroes and the memorialization of their hero narrative accredit China's modern successes to the Communist Party's heroic resistance, which again serves to legitimize the party as the one true ruler over China.

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<sup>56</sup> "Like Father, like Son? The Chinese President's Late Father Rises Again," *The Economist*, September 18, 2014.

<sup>57</sup> For evidence about the emerging personality quote see Andrew Jacobson and Chris Buckley. "Move Over Mao: Beloved 'Papa Xi' Awes China." *The New York Times*, March 7, 2015.



## 6.0 THE MARTYR IDENTITY

A martyr is someone who has willingly sacrificed his life for religious beliefs or a great cause. Perhaps the martyr died for the sake of virtue and righteousness, bravely in battle or defiantly at the hands of oppressors. Traditional or pre-modern martyrdom in China dates back thousands of years; the idea of sacrificing oneself for the sake of virtue and righteousness was ingrained in Confucian texts.<sup>58</sup> Women could also become martyrs, during the Ming and Qing there was an ongoing cult of female chastity martyrs.<sup>59</sup> Many pre-modern Chinese martyrs were celebrated for their dedication to morality or their ethical values, which were generally consistent with Confucian morals. The post-revolutionary era commemoration of martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the sake of revolution was a new manifestation in China. However, it was one built on the traditional foundations of martyrdom for ethical values. Yet it was not until the modern era in China that the government has used martyrdom to mobilize nationalist sentiments.

Not surprisingly, one naturally associates a Chinese Communist martyr with revolutionary principles and social change. This association is a valid assessment for martyrs represented during the post-revolutionary era. These martyrs' deaths were the result of fighting an unjust system that was eventually destroyed thanks to the sacrifice and struggle of the CCP. Martyrs of the revolution naturally served as part of the central legitimizing narrative and guide for socialist morality. After the founding of the state in 1949, the martyrs' sacrifice became a significant part of historiography and monuments. Martyrdom served a crucial ideological and political purpose by linking martyrs' deaths to the revolution. The eulogizing of martyrs therefore created a lasting and deep bond between the revolution that the martyrs represented and the Chinese people for whom they died. This profound emotional bond centers on their sacrifice

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<sup>58</sup> "The determined scholar and the man of virtue will not seek to live at the expense of injuring their virtue. They will even sacrifice their lives to preserve their virtue complete." The Analects of Confucius. Book XV CHAP. VIII. Wei Ling Kung.

<sup>59</sup> Janet M. Theiss, *Disgraceful Matters: The Politics of Chastity in Eighteenth-Century China*. (University of California Press, 2004.)

and allows them to serve as a guiding force for the continuing revolution and socialist morals.<sup>60</sup> The emotional bond that martyrs' deaths create is still present but has become yet another tool for the new non-communist ideology as the state promotes revolutionary martyrdom as a sacrifice for the modernization and glorious rise of China.

The CCP government has given a strict definition for the term martyr; martyrs are the “people who sacrificed their lives for national independence and prosperity, as well as the welfare of the people in modern times, or after the First Opium War (1839-1842.)”<sup>61</sup> This definition is vitally important and incriminating as it explicitly shows the association between martyrs' self sacrifice and the remarkable rise of modern China, which was made possible by the introduction of capitalism. The inclusion of “as well as the welfare of the people in modern times,” exemplifies the evolution of the traditional Communist martyr to a more generalized model of sacrifice for the material good of the modern Chinese capitalist nation. As such, these martyrs better serve today's interests of the Chinese nation and the CCP's evolving non-communist ideology.

The CCP continues to rely on the history of the revolution as a central legitimizing narrative, therefore the martyr identity serves in the same way the victor identity does. These heroes and martyrs secured the Chinese nation. They won the war against the Japanese imperialists and the corrupt Nationalist regime. These martyrs laid down their lives for the nation and paved the way for the current success of China. Many sites have been constructed in China that serves to bolster the memory of the revolution and the importance of martyrdom to the revolution's success and by implication, China's rapid successful modernization and rise to power. The expansion of the Yuhuatai Martyrs Memorial Park's Memorial Hall 雨花台烈士陵园 in Nanjing is an example of how revolutionary martyrs from the 1920s and 1930s are made to relate to contemporary society. The park, which was originally constructed in the early 1950s, has gone through several stages of development with additions of multiple statues, a large stele, a memorial pool, a pavilion and a memorial hall that is currently under construction. Upon entry to the memorial hall there is an inscription written by Jiang Zemin reading, “carry on the spirit of

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<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, 41.

<sup>61</sup> "Xinhua Insight: China Shapes Collective Memory on First Martyrs' Day," *Xinhua*, September 30, 2014, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2014-09/30/c\\_133685486.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2014-09/30/c_133685486.htm) (accessed October 5, 2014).

martyrs, devote yourself to the great cause of the Four Modernizations,”<sup>62</sup> 弘扬先烈精神，献身四化大业。<sup>63</sup> This inscription links the sacrifices made in China’s revolutionary past to present and future sacrifices made on behalf of modernization. The exhibits inside the memorial hall explain the history of Yuhuatai, which is a notorious site where the Nationalists executed leftists. At the end of the exhibits, after many displays eulogizing martyrs, memorial hall visitors are presented with a room that displays a giant computer-projection depicting a modern Nanjing and the photos of various dignitaries, school children and recently admitted Communist Party members paying tribute to Yuhuatai martyrs. The memorial hall exhibit eulogizing martyrs, the photos and the portrayal of a modern Nanjing are a display of the past, present and future, linking the sacrifices made in the 1920s-40s to China’s contemporary society and future development. Add Jiang Zemin’s inscription to the mix and the message is clear: the spirit of revolutionary self-sacrifice can help build a prosperous and powerful Chinese nation. The site makes an explicit link between the revolutionary martyrs sacrifice and a modern prosperous China.

In August 2014, the National People’s Congress (NPC) ratified yet another commemorative day, a day of remembrance for China’s martyrs. The commemorative day, entitled Martyr’s Day 烈士纪念日, is officially aimed at “publicizing martyrs' achievements and spirits, and cultivating patriotism, collectivism, and socialist moralities so as to consolidate the Chinese nation's cohesiveness.”<sup>64</sup> Martyrs’ Day works to further elevate those who made the ultimate self-sacrifice for the nation, but is also a CCP attempt to regain moral control over its population in a period of rapid economic development and individualism. The economic transformation creates a barrier to the reaching ideal “socialist morals.” The consumer society that is fast emerging in China focuses on the individual’s material wants and is contradictory to the ideals of socialism. Chuntao Xie, a professor of the Party School of the CCP Central Committee, expresses the concern of party elite when he argues “China’s growing wealth inequality may severely damage social stability...Tax evasion, fraud and corruption are among

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<sup>62</sup> Zhiwei Fu, "Guonei Zhu Lieshi Lingyuan Xunli Zhi Yuhuatai Lieshi Jinianguan," *Xinhua*, April 2, 2008, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2008-04/02/content\\_7905079.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2008-04/02/content_7905079.htm). (accessed February 18, 2015).

<sup>63</sup> 四个现代化 the Four Modernizations i.e. of industry, agriculture, defense and science and technology

<sup>64</sup> "Xinhua Insight: China Ratifies Martyrs' Day," *Xinhua*, August 31, 2014, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2014-08/31/c\\_133609466.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2014-08/31/c_133609466.htm) (accessed February 18, 2015).

the reasons for the widening wealth gap.”<sup>65</sup> Economic freedom is never blamed for the widening income gap; rather actions that are clearly associated with a lack of morality are blamed. The commemoration of martyrs’ sacrifices serve as a national reminder of the ideal socialist moralities and are aimed at helping to create a Chinese society where all may no longer be equal, but should be united, tolerant, and respectful in aims to help one another. In reference to Martyrs’ Day, Professor Xie stated that the nation commemoration day “shows everyone who and what deeds are valued and honored by this country.”<sup>66</sup>

The NPC marked September 30, the day before China’s National Day, as Martyrs’ Day and said it will be “marked with events across the country.”<sup>67</sup> Zou Ming, an official from the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA), said the setting of Martyr’s Day on September 30 “has great significance as people will take time for a more somber occasion before celebration... the central government will guide local governments to hold events on Martyrs’ Day. The MCA will encourage public participation.”<sup>68</sup> Elevating the commemoration of martyrs to a national level will allow for bigger and broader commemorative activities and serves as a reminder to all about socialist morals, and about why thousands willingly sacrificed their lives for China’s national independence.

The usual trio of people representing the past, present and future, stood at the podium and opened the first commemoration of Martyrs’ Day in Beijing’s Tian’anmen Square. There is a formulaic sameness between how the commemorations of all the national days are presented. Family and friends of martyrs, President Xi Jinping and school age children of China’s Young Pioneers organization all paid tribute to honor China’s martyrs. “Following a patriotic chorus song by the children and a period in which the whole crowd bowed their heads in silent tribute, a dozen baskets of lilies were laid in front of the monument [of the People’s Heroes].”<sup>69</sup> The elevation to national status of these commemoration days shows their vital importance to the future observation and construction of acceptable identities.

Government officials insist that China has about 20 million martyrs throughout its history, however only 1.93 million martyrs have been actually registered in the government’s

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<sup>65</sup> Nicholas Wadhams. "China’s Wealth Gap Threatens Social Stability, Researcher Says." *Bloomberg Business*, October 20, 2014. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-10-20/china-s-wealth-gap-threatens-social-stability-researcher-says> (accessed January 4, 2015).

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, 63.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, 63.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, 63.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, 60.

directory, both are still enormous amounts and show the importance of martyrdom. In September 2014 about 300 more people were identified as martyrs of the Anti-Japanese War.<sup>70</sup> The recently released official list of the 300 most famous martyrs who died fighting Japan is heavily skewed toward Communist Party members. The Nationalist troops, who suffered terrible casualties during the war, account for only 29 percent of the 300 martyrs.<sup>71</sup> The recognition of mostly CCP members further reinforces the Party as the inheritors of the Chinese nation. Professor Chang-tai Hung of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology state that “we should never underestimate that the Communists see themselves as the successors to all these people who have fought for China’s independence.” He also sees the commemorative day as clearly related to China’s recent tensions with Japan over the territory dispute over islands in the Pacific. “It’s a very interesting time to announce one more thing to make a strong stand about China’s position...it is related to what’s happening this year.” His response refers to the Japanese government’s purchase of an islet of the Diaoyu islands, an action that the Chinese government perceives as Japanese aggression.

China has a long tradition of commemorating and honoring martyrs and other heroes who contributed unselfishly to the nation's development. Martyrs of the revolution have been and continue to be commemorated throughout China with memorial sites and now a national commemorative day. Though these martyrs’ sacrifice may have been in the cause of revolution they have now evolved to become symbols of the importance of self-sacrifice and moral behavior for the good of the Chinese nation; as such they better serve contemporary China’s economic and ideological demands. Their spirit of self-sacrifice is a reminder that today’s Chinese may be called in the future to unselfishly serve the nation in any future war.

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<sup>70</sup> "Zhuming KangRi Yinglie," Zhonghua Yinglie Wang, 2014.. <http://www.chinamartyrs.gov.cn/KangRiYingLie/list.html> (accessed February 3, 2015).

<sup>71</sup> Ian Johnson, "In Creating 'Martyrs' Day,' China Promotes a Vision of the Past," *The New York Times*, September 29, 2014.

## 7.0 THE VICTIM IDENTITY

Contemporary China's rapidly growing market economy has shaped a nation that is at odds with the ideals and ideology of its founders. As the division between the rich and poor grows rapidly, the discredited class struggle narrative becomes potentially threatening to China's new state ideology. Opening up to foreign investment and China's participation in the global economic and political order has fragmented the nation, to where communism is no longer a unifying factor shared between the people. Besides emphasis on international conflict between China and Japan during the Anti-Japanese War and the growing trend that details Nationalist forces resisting the invading Japanese, there has been another major narrative change: the transition from victors or heroes to victims.

Victimization and suffering at the hands of a foreign nation did not appeal early on to the CCP. It was a political party that advocated revolution in which the workers and peasants globally are unified in class struggle. Communist internationalism and possible unity with Japanese people were more important. The victor narrative of post-revolutionary China excluded occurrences of Japanese aggression. So how did the memory of the Nanjing Massacre become the symbol of Chinese suffering during the Anti-Japanese War in modern China when it was consciously suppressed during the post-revolutionary era? Can the path of the Chinese victimization historiography be tracked?

The CCP transitioned from official silence about Japan's wartime aggression to intensely publicizing the events during the 1980s. Stories about Chinese victimization and the Nanjing Massacre would resurface in the early 1980s and by 1985 there was a mass of Chinese publications about the massacre.<sup>72</sup> The construction of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall in

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<sup>72</sup> Gao Xingzu, *Rijun qin-Hua baoxing: Nanjing datusha (Atrocities of the Invading Japanese Troops: The Nanjing Massacre)* (Shanghai, 1985); Committee for the Compilation of Sources Relating to the Materials on the Nanjing Massacre and the Library of Nanjing, *Qin-Hua Rijun Nanjing datusha shiliao (Historical Materials on the Nanjing Massacre by the Invading Japanese Troops)* (Nanjing, 1985); The Second Archives of

Nanjing was completed in 1985. There are several theories to explain China's sudden interest in the history of the Nanjing Massacre. The two most practicable theories are those of journalist Ian Buruma and historian Daqing Yang. Ian Buruma suggests that in response to China's new reliance on Japanese capital after the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping had the idea of a memorial for the Nanjing Massacre. Thereby, reliance on Japanese economic aid was counteracted with "stabs at the Japanese conscience."<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile Daqing Yang asserts the memorial was a direct response to the textbook debates of 1982.<sup>74</sup> In 1982, the Japanese Government and the Japanese Ministry of Education were allegedly part of a cover up wherein student textbooks minimized or ignored Japanese aggression during the Anti-Japanese War, forcing the Party to take a more aggressive stance on the historical memory of the Nanjing Massacre. The Party responded to Japan's apparent amnesia about its historical aggression toward China with a pronounced escalation of historical representations on the Nanjing Massacre. Eventually the state narrative was altered to replace the Nationalist Party with Japan as the main threat to national, or in this case international peace. Finally, with the decline of communism and faced with the unprecedented presence of democratic movements, the CCP used Chinese victimhood to instigate nationalist resentment against foreign pressures.<sup>75</sup>

The CCP's success in leveraging the historical memory of the Anti-Japanese War to foster state sanctioned nationalism shifted the historiographical practices from the former class struggle narrative to an emphasis on struggle with an outside force, namely the Japanese. The promotion and continual attention on Japanese aggression during the Anti-Japanese War performs three functions. First, it downplays the class struggle narrative that no longer fits China's new consumer economy. Secondly, it directs anger or anxiety about domestic internal issues toward an external entity. Finally, it promotes Chinese national unity through emphasis on shared suffering.

Quantifying Chinese victimhood during the Anti-Japanese War is an essential tool in accomplishing the aims of CCP leaders. Since the mid 1980s the victim identity has been apparent in the new textbooks associated with the Patriotic Education Campaign and Chinese

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China, *Qin-Hua Rijun Nanjing datusha dang'an*; Committee for the Compilation of Sources Relating to the Nanjing Massacre," *Qin-Hua Rijun Nanjing datusha shigao (A Draft History of the Nanjing Massacre by the Invading Japanese Troops)* (Nanjing, 1987)

<sup>73</sup> Ian Buruma, "The Nanking Massacre as a Historical Symbol," in *Nanking 1937: Memory and Healing*, ed. Feifei Li et al. (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2002.) 3-9.

<sup>74</sup> Daying Yang, "Mirror For the Future or the History Card," in *Chinese-Japanese Relations in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Marie Söderberg. (London: Routledge, 2002.) 10-28.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

publications about Japanese atrocities. These publications emphasize the international conflict between China and Japan and the brutal and inhumane acts of the Japanese imperial army. After the Tian'anmen Square Incident in 1989 and the exacerbation of social inequality and political corruption during the 1990s, the CCP's prestige plummeted. The CCP responded to this by manipulating the already notorious textbook and historical debate to facilitate a new state ideological framework, nationalism in the form of the victim identity, to strengthen their own legitimacy. The victim identity would give rise to national cohesion through external oriented nationalism, allowing for an easy shift of focus from domestic issues to foreign historical study, Japanese aggression during the Anti-Japanese War. Japanese aggression also emphasizes the Chinese people's struggle with an outside force, therefore minimizing the class struggle narrative that longer fits China's new consumer economy. The victim identity's rise is illustrated with brutal narrations of Japanese aggression. These horrible depictions serve to direct anger or anxiety about social inequality or political corruption toward an external entity thereby downplaying the decrepit class struggle narrative.

National unity and shared national identity also emerge from the demonization of Japan. The tragic Nanjing Massacre of 1937 is perhaps one of the most powerful emotional pieces of Sino-Japanese history. All humane people view the aggression and atrocities committed by the Japanese as morally wrong and reprehensible. Therefore when confronted with depictions of Japanese aggression, one becomes more emotionally upset and charged, connects more with their Chinese identity and feels a stronger sense of national unity. Japanese aggression or the Nanjing Massacre is what Vamik Volkan calls a chosen trauma. By not only transmitting, but also consciously emphasizing the memory of an injured version of itself, the CCP has chosen this trauma to define the nation, thus infusing the memory of their ancestors' trauma within modern society.<sup>76</sup> Japanese aggression is the painful memory behind the chosen trauma. By intending to intimately bind together Chinese citizens and foster national unity this chosen trauma is being utilized to realize the CCP's political goal of continued rule.

As victimhood and the memory of Japanese aggression are valuable tools to the CCP to foster Chinese national unity, the party also presents its people with a visual collective historical memory of the calamity. The Memorial Hall for the Victims in the Nanjing Massacre by

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<sup>76</sup> Vamik Volkan, *Bloodlines* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997.)



Japanese Invaders 侵华日军南京大屠杀遇难同胞纪念馆 is dedicated to the memory of atrocities committed by the Japanese during the War of Resistance. It is arguably the most commanding architectural representations of China's victimization narrative. The memorial hall provides many realistic representations of the event, which include gruesome pictures, figures of fatalities, human skeletons, names and images of many victims and videos of eyewitness testimony, allowing the visitors to generate intense feelings of victimization. The memorial hall's visual representations transmit the memory of their ancestors' trauma to a new generation by using new technologies. The memorial hall's attention to victimization and suffering are intended to evoke sentiments of profound anti-Japanese militarist hatred. The unrelenting display of suffering is a powerful visual aid in supporting the CCP's shaping of historical memory in today's media age.

The memorial hall displays elements of both Japanese militarism and peaceful coexistence with the Japanese people, but these exhibits are generally separated and disconnected, signifying the difficulty museum curators faced when incorporating displays of peaceful coexistence into the memorial hall. "It was the brutal nature of militarism combined with the inveterate tendency for bullying, machismo and bloodiness in Japanese culture that made the Japanese soldiers burn, slaughter, rape and loot with compunction...Whilst the Japanese right wing tries every means to deny the historical existence of the Nanjing Massacre, many Japanese people are sincerely remorseful and apologetic. Their efforts to collect historical facts and spread the truth about the Nanjing Massacre have touched the hearts of the Chinese people."<sup>77</sup> These quotes show that the CCP is fundamentally divided between a socially acceptable emphasis on the depiction of the friendship between the Chinese and Japanese people and attention to Japanese militarism.

What is the significance of this decision to ratify the National Memorial Day for Nanjing Massacre Victims 南京大屠杀死难者国家公祭日? Urban massacres like the Nanjing Massacre usually only affect a limited geographical region and China is a very large nation. As such its national awareness and impact may have been limited, especially considering how memory is controlled in an authoritarian regime. The elevation of the Nanjing Massacre from a regional event to a national commemorative day was intended to spread feelings of national trauma

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<sup>77</sup> Hao Ye. *The Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre and the Sino-Japanese Relations*. Edited by Weifeng Li. (Beijing: Wuzhou Chuanbo Chubanshe, 2010.)

throughout the nation and denounce historical foreign aggression. The curator of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall wrote that survivors and scholars had proposed, “that the commemorative activities at the provincial level or city level are not enough to mourn the victims. Such activities demand the attendance of China's state leadership to show respect for the loss of life of the victims and fulfill their responsibility to history.” The first two efforts in 2005 and 2012 to elevate Nanjing Massacre commemorative activities to a national level failed. After two years passed and a new Chinese president was chosen, the time was right for a new national commemoration day and on February 27, 2014 the NPC ratified a new national day to commemorate victims in the Nanjing Massacre. The day links the Chinese leadership with its people, as the curator of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall, Chengshan Zhu stated, “the setting of the national commemorative day meets the people's will and, when all is said and done, it is the people's will that matters the most.”<sup>78</sup>

The CCP's elevation of the Nanjing Massacre to a national commemorative day is yet another example of how an authoritarian regime uses all its available resources to institutionalize a national collective memory. The annual commemoration of the Nanjing Massacre and its many victims preserves the identity of a timeless Chinese victim and make this memory impervious to future factual attacks. The national commemorative day for the victims of the Nanjing Massacre brings together members of the Chinese nation for societal mourning; together as a group they use their collective historical memory to share and transmit memories of their ancestors' trauma. This event is yet another effort to draw the citizens' anxieties away from pressing domestic issues toward feelings of national unity and kinship. The selection of which days to remember reveals what a nation wants represented in its national narrative, clearly the CCP wants its people to remember Japanese aggression during the war. Both Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall and the national commemoration day are examples of the CCP's use of the victim identity and museums as a tool for national cohesion through recollections of collective memory.

Education of youth is a critical component of the construction of memory. In conjunction with the expansion of the museum and commemoration day, the Nanjing provincial government decided to adopt textbooks focusing on atrocities. These textbooks are required for primary, middle and high school age children. The primary school edition is titled “Memory of Blood and

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<sup>78</sup> Chengshan Zhu, "Why Has China Set a Memorial Day for the Nanjing Massacre?" *Beijing Review*, March 20, 2014.

Fire.” The junior middle school edition is called “Historical Truth”. The high school edition is titled “Warning and Thinking”. A history teacher who worked on editing the textbooks, Jianping Tao, stated, “by giving such lessons, we are not implanting hatred. We hope students can take history as a mirror for the future. We hope they can help seek peace in East Asia and the rest of the world.”<sup>79</sup> The message Tao says they are meant to communicate peaceful coexistence with the Japanese people, is disconnected from their titles, again signifying the difficulty between a socially acceptable emphasis on the depiction of the friendship between the Chinese and Japanese people and attention to Japanese aggression and militarism. Their titles reveal what historical lessons Chinese leadership wants taught to its children.

The victimization narrative is not only present in museums and commemorative days, but in political dialogue as well. The historical debate that began between China and rightwing Japanese historians in the 1982 textbook controversy continues. In 2005, the Japanese Education Ministry approved a new junior high school textbook that completely omitted the events of the Nanjing Massacre.<sup>80</sup> This debate challenges Chinese victimhood during the Anti-Japanese War. When revisionist Japanese historians factually deny Chinese victimization, they undermine Chinese victim identity. A reinforced sense of national community and identity in China is then created. This allows the CCP to further profit politically from the victim identity conflict.

The CCP’s manipulation of the historical memories regarding Chinese victimization is to tell a certain story, one that promotes the current version of history that reflects well on the Party. What is absolutely vital and essential to today’s victim identity is its focus on victimization that occurred when the CCP was not in power. This focus is intended to show the people that the party will protect them from further harm, therefore strengthening CCP support, ideological unity and legitimacy.

There is still absolutely no mention of the victims of famine that occurred during the Great Leap Forward and victims of the Cultural Revolution. Many mistakes and crimes that happened during the years of famine and upheaval may never be revealed. Important documents on the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution are kept under tight official control. Who knows what they would tell about the involvement of CCP leaders and cadres? In 2014 Chuntao Xie, the professor of the Party School of the CCP Central Committee stated that in regards to the

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<sup>79</sup>Guoxiu Wu, “Nanjing Adopts Textbooks on the 1937 Atrocity,” CCTV, <http://english.cntv.cn/2014/12/11/VIDE1418275684345129.shtml>.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

files on the Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward “I believe this summation is still, to this day, authoritative and has withstood the test of time...some involve the state's core interests, and some are not convenient to be released... from a historical research it is to be hoped that it would be best if they are all opened. But I fear this cannot happen, and may never happen,”<sup>81</sup> Clearly, historical events that are portrayed in textbooks and museums are specifically selected and often provide a deeply distorted view of China’s past.

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<sup>81</sup> In a *Reuters* article on official files regarding China’s history (October 20, 2014) Chuntao Xie discusses the issue.

## 8.0 WHY USE JAPAN AS THE TARGET?

Chinese historiography has always drawn a clear line between Japanese militarists and ordinary Japanese people. Why has Chinese nationalist rhetoric reverted to attacking Japan? There are many other possible external enemy choices. Why not target the United States? Anti-American sentiments have often been exploited by the CCP. They were used during China's Civil War and China's confrontation with the United States during the Korean War. Years later they were resurrected in 1982 when Sino-American relations worsened over differences over US arms sales to Taiwan<sup>82</sup> and once again in 1999 when the US accidentally bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. Why not target Russia, with whom China has a history of border disputes or target the British, who humiliated the Chinese when they ruled Hong Kong for over 150 years?

For centuries China regarded Japan as culturally inferior and as a tributary state. China was the center of a high culture of superior morality. The Chinese were the chosen people, living in the Central Kingdom 中国, which was the center of the world under heaven 天下, referring to the extended Chinese world, this includes a flux of people who were organized into a grade system. Whoever controlled or ruled over China was the legitimate ruler under heaven. The emperor of China had the responsibility of maintaining proper order in the world. Due to China's huge size and cultural and historical prestige, the traditional Chinese worldview was one in which China was the dominant power. China placed itself at the center of an East Asian international order. This is referred to as the Sinocentric order.<sup>83</sup> However this order was overturned in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Japanese successfully and quickly defeated the Chinese in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-95). The war not only obliterated Chinese claims

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<sup>82</sup> Assertive Nationalism in Chinese Foreign Policy, Allen S. Whiting, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 23 no. 8 august 1983, pg. 913-933

<sup>83</sup> Q. Edward Wang, "History, Space, and Ethnicity: The Chinese Worldview," *Journal of World History* 10, no. 2 (1999): 285-305.

to dominance, but it unearthed Chinese national trauma, this time at the hands of an East Asian power thought to be culturally inferior. The Chinese defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War was a part of a series of defeats it had suffered since the 1840s, but due to China and Japan's historic and geographic relationship, many Chinese intellectuals and nationalists consider the Chinese defeat by Japan to be China's greatest humiliation during the Century of Humiliation. The expanding Japanese empire did not share a Chinese view of the world, nor of China's central place within it. Instead, Japan planned to exploit and conquer China.

Japan's attack on Nanjing was an attack on a city that held immense cultural and historical resonance for all Chinese. Nanjing was China's capital under the Ming Dynasty until 1421 and rose to prominence again in 1928 as the Nationalist capital. It was a city celebrated for both its modern architecture and its historic imperial past. The obsessive attention paid to the Nanjing Massacre proves that any Japanese claims to moral and cultural superiority are ill founded. Many Chinese critics believe that there may be a deeply rooted strain of militarism that remains in Japanese culture. As journalist Ian Buruma said: "despite their second-rank intellectual status, the Nanjing Massacre revisionists cannot be dismissed as unsavory crackpots, for unlike those who argue that the Holocaust never happened, they are not confined to an extreme fringe. They have a large audience and are supported by powerful right-wing politicians."<sup>84</sup>

The Chinese and Japanese people are always depicted as friends, even as China continues to warn against Japan's right-wing militarists, who, from time to time deny and cover up Japan's history of aggression. These actions create a disturbance between China and Japan and potentially pose a threat to peace between the nations. China constantly pleads with the Japanese government to distance itself from acts of militarism.<sup>85</sup> China deems visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, (the resting place of many of Japan's war criminals) and historical debates as celebrations of Japanese aggression.

Other issues divide China and Japan, especially a territorial dispute over an East China Sea island chain between Taiwan and Okinawa, called Diaoyu in Chinese and Senkaku in

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<sup>84</sup> Ian Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1994), 122.

<sup>85</sup> In several Xinhua articles on Japanese Aggression, (from October 2014- January 2015) Japanese militarism is discussed [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-01/12/c\\_133913927.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-01/12/c_133913927.htm), [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-10/15/c\\_133719118.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-10/15/c_133719118.htm), [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-01/26/c\\_133948368.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-01/26/c_133948368.htm).

Japanese.<sup>86</sup> The Diaoyu islands, along with Taiwan, were ceded to Japan in 1945, after China's humiliating loss in the First Sino-Japanese War. US occupation authorities in Okinawa administered the Diaoyu islands from 1945 until they returned Okinawa to Japan in 1971; this included the return of the Diaoyu islands.<sup>87</sup> In February 1992, China's NPC passed a law asserting China's ownership over the islands. More recently, the dispute escalated in April 2012, when the Japanese government nationalized the disputed islands in the East China Sea. China reacted to what it considered to be a threat to regional security and a challenge to China's regional superiority by repeatedly dispatching paramilitary ships to the waters near the islands. In November 2013 China also declared an "air defense zone" above the islands, giving it the right to identify and possibly take military action against aircraft near the islands. This demanded that all aircraft entering the area submit flight plans to China first.<sup>88</sup> Since then there has been a growing number of Chinese aircraft flying over the East China Sea. In a nine-month period from April to December 2014, Japanese pilots intercepted 379 foreign aircraft in the region, mostly from China, a six-fold increase from those same months in 2010.<sup>89</sup> The elevation and ratification of the three separate national commemorative days in February and August 2014 may be a direct response to the Japanese government's purchase of some of the Diaoyu islands, an action that the Chinese government perceives as Japanese aggression. The commemorative days "should help people remember their history,"<sup>90</sup> and could therefore make Chinese citizens link Japan's historical war time aggression to their perceived current territorial aspirations.

Under Japan's nationalist Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, rising political forces that wish to amend Article Nine (the no war clause) of Japan's pacifist constitution have steadily emerged. This includes the right for Japan to engage in collective security, international peacekeeping and enforcement without the restriction on Japanese troops to exclusively provide logistical support. Many Chinese critics have reacted negatively, harping on right-wing Japanese militarism and declaring the possible amendment a preemptive preventive action against China's regional hegemony and its modernizing military. Just as it did through the textbook book debates, the

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<sup>86</sup> Suisheng Zhao, "China's Periphery Policy and Its Asian Neighbors," *Security Dialogue* 30, no. 3 (1999): 335-346.

<sup>87</sup> Jean-Marc Blanchard, "The U.S. Role in the Sino-Japanese Dispute Over the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands, 1945-1971," *China Quarterly* 161, (2000): 95- 123

<sup>88</sup> "How Uninhabited Islands Soured China-Japan Ties," *BBC*, November 10, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11341139>. (accessed March 9, 2015).

<sup>89</sup> Martin Fackler, "In a Test of Wills, Japanese Fighter Pilots Confront Chinese," *The New York Times*, March 8, 2015, (accessed March 8, 2015).

<sup>90</sup> Said by Zongyuan Li, Vice Curator of the Museum of the War of Chinese People's Resistance Against Japanese Aggression at commemoration of the first martyrs day in September 2014

CCP is profits politically from these “displays of Japanese militarism.” The party appears to be able to mobilize popular support and further its claims to legitimacy by appealing to Chinese nationalism as against Japanese militarism.

The targeting of an external entity is intended to foster nationalism and redirect anger toward the foreigner as the enemy, but the targeting of Japan in particular can also be seen in regards to China’s reemergence as a regional hegemon and emergence as a super power. Along with enhancing the glory of China’s imperial past, the CCP aims to enhance its regional status, the idea here is the Chinese need to keep Japan subordinate. The more powerful China becomes, the more likely the Japanese will be forced to face up to and repent for their atrocities committed during World War II, just as the Germans have done, leaving Japanese claims to moral and cultural superiority in the dust. China continues to demonstrate its reemergence as regional hegemon and now a world super power. As Japan is historically and geographically a rival, China would like to make sure they put Japan in their proper historical place in relationship to the Chinese nation.



## 9.0 SOCIETAL AND ECONOMIC REPERCUSSIONS?

The two nations have had a continual spat over textbook issues since the early 1980s, since then the historical and territorial disputes have also taken a populist turn. In the 1980s there was an outpouring of student demonstrations over Japanese actions such as visiting the Yasukuni Shrine and demonstrations against “Japanese economic aggression.”<sup>91</sup> In November of 2014 a fourteen-year-old Chongqing girl reportedly ran away from her home as a protest to her parents’ purchase of a Japanese car. According to a report published in China’s Southern Weekend, the girl did not return home until her parents agreed to return the Japanese car and admit that they were wrong. “I cannot have parents who lack a moral backbone,” she told reporters, “I firmly refuse to condone my parents’ decision. If they buy a car, they should buy a Chinese car. This kind of behavior shows that they have no dignity.”<sup>92</sup> The girl’s reactions are an example of external oriented nationalism and though they only caused temporary strife for family members these actions represent a larger populist trend seen recently in China. An incident in Xi’an became an example of what can go horribly wrong when nationalist hysteria spins out of control. In October 2012, after the eruption of a large-scale protests, an owner of a Japanese vehicle was nearly beaten to death by a mob simply because he was driving a Toyota. Events like these belie China’s claim to a “peaceful rise.” The institutionalization of animosity towards Japan has apparently been deeply ingrained in many citizens’ psyche and does have the potential to erupt violently.

Yet meanwhile the Chinese and Japanese have enormous and close economic ties. The Chinese government continues to court Japanese companies to expand their operations in China.

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<sup>91</sup> Although Japanese investment was the catalyst for the protests, the protestors also had issue with domestic issues such as inflation which China had not experienced since the 1950s and party corruption see China, see Michael Dillion, *China, A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 361.

<sup>92</sup> Adam Century, "Running Away From Japanese Cars in Chongqing," *The New York Times*, November 22, 2013, (accessed November 10, 2014).

In February 2013, the city of Chongqing hired the Mitsui Group, a Japanese corporation, to develop an industrial park aimed at attracting foreign investment. At the March 2013 Japan-China Economic Association 日中经济协会 conference in Beijing, China's Vice President, Li Yuanchao, insisted that the Chinese media not photograph him shaking hands with Japanese business leaders, but nonetheless he pursued business agreements with them.<sup>93</sup> Most Chinese consumers aren't interested in facing the consumer consequences of boycotting Japanese goods. The products that have taken the brunt of nationalist sentiments are Japanese cars, as many were vandalized during the protests. But Japanese companies are adapting to Chinese consumers needs; in the fall of 2012, in response to the outpouring of large-scale protests, Nissan, a Japanese car manufacturer, offered its Chinese customers a new "Promise for Car Security" program, a guarantee of free repairs for vehicles damaged in anti-Japanese riots. In 2012, a year in which global foreign direct investment in China fell by 3.7%, Japanese investment continued to rise by 6%.<sup>94</sup> The volume of total trade shows clearly how integrated the two rivals are economically. Trade between the two nations in 2014 was US\$343.7 billion.<sup>95</sup> The CCP is aware that yielding to nationalist sentiments and boycotting Japanese goods could potentially injure their own investments and industries, reduce exports and reduce employment thereby damaging the Chinese economy. Therefore the nationalist rhetoric that the party spews is potentially dangerous to their own economy and must be monitored carefully.

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<sup>93</sup> Richard Katz, "Mutual Assured Production, Why Trade Will Limit Conflict Between China and Japan," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 4 (July/August 2013): 18-24.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, 92.

<sup>95</sup> Japan External Trade Organization, "JETRO survey: Analysis of Japan-China Trade in 2014 (Based on imports of both countries)." <http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/news/2015/20150225183-news> (accessed March 4, 2015).

## 10.0 CONCLUSION

National identity is both contingent on foreign interaction and comprised in part of national historical memory and national myths. National identity does not arise in isolation; rather it develops from encounters with other national groups.<sup>96</sup> The phenomenon of modern Chinese nationalism must be understood as continuously evolving both to fit domestic political and economic demands and as a reaction to China's interactions with other nations. Chinese national identity is all about remembering and forgetting. For three decades during the post-revolutionary era, historical memories of China's suffering during the Japanese invasion were forgotten in order to construct the new heroic Chinese identity. However, contemporary China constantly remembers and confronts its historical victimization at the hands of foreign invaders. The remembering, forgetting, formulation and manipulation of historical memory is done in a quest to re-legitimize the Chinese Communist Party and redirect attention away from the impact of profound social and economic changes in today's China. The CCP has employed nationalism to become the unifying ideological framework to keep its leadership over the Chinese nation intact.

In today's China, nationalism manifests itself in the form of three identity formations, museums and commemorative days. At their core, the three identity formations always represent the Chinese Communist Party as the great hope and the one legitimate ruler of the nation. The party and its members are heroic protectors over China. The party will be the people's savior in case of attack. By draping itself in the mantel of the nation's protector, its continued rule is ensured. The martyrs' self-sacrifice demonstrates to the people that the CCP won the war against the Japanese and the Nationalist Party because they willing laid down their lives for the success of the nation and will continue to lay down their lives for the nation. The identity of the victim,

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<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, 50.

which is associated with wartime atrocities promotes national unity and reminds the Chinese people that the spirit or legacy of deceased CCP heroes like Mao Zedong are still embodied in the person of the current president Xi Jinping, who will insure that the people will never be victims again. The three identity formations are also inclusive of all Chinese, regardless of their ethnic background or social status. Therefore, not only do they legitimize CCP leadership, these identities have the power to override the other competing identities that have emerged from the capitalist transformation. The trio of national commemorative days ratified in 2014, were chosen by China's current rulers to signify the importance of what these dates represent: victory, martyrdom and victimization. They call special attention to the people of their history. The careful selection of which days to remember reveals what China wants represented in its national narrative. The days are also a perception of how the nation sees itself. The museums serve as vital visual and pedagogical aids and architectural embodiments of the state narrative.<sup>97</sup>

In a period of transition from Communism to Neoliberal Authoritarianism, spectacular economic growth and globalization, the CCP has successfully altered historical narratives and museum exhibition practices and created commemoration days to avert a crisis of faith and legitimize its continued rule. The party and the nation are inexorably combined together. Control of how history is practiced in today's China is an example of how an authoritarian government formulates and manipulates the past to bolster its rule and provide itself with legitimacy.

The transformation of the identities of victim, martyr and hero and the establishment or renovations of museums and national commemorative days make it clear that nationalism is being reconfigured in the PRC to reflect the Communist Party's changing role and affirm its right to rule in the face of a rapidly changing political and social environment. The current rise of Chinese nationalism is primarily a result of a brewing internal domestic crisis rather than immediate threats from foreign entities. However nationalism occasionally proves to be a double-edged sword, with the possibility to trigger more serious unforeseen consequences in the future. Future mobilization of popular support could place the CCP in a tricky spot. History has shown how unwieldy nationalism and patriotism can often be. How successful will these tools be in accomplishing the party's aims of social cohesion and continued CCP rule in the future is

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<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, 15.

yet to be known. The significant financial, bureaucratic and ideological investment in creating these identities, museums and commemorative days displays the ever evolving way in which China sees its past, present and future position in the global world order.

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