

MA International Relations (International Studies)

**Hiroshima Genbaku Dome:
The Dynamics of Inscribing a Contested World Heritage Site**



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Introduction

This research concerns contested historical narratives in the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. The Convention was organized for the first time in 1972 to protect the world's heritage from war damage and deterioration. Nowadays, it is one of the most successful programs of UNESCO and almost a thousand sites have been inscribed. However, there are often starkly different interpretation of heritage between communities and even nations. This research thus proposes the following question: “To what extent is UNESCO World Heritage an effective platform for the contestation of divergent historical interpretations?”.

Though the World Heritage Centre strives for a List which represent the treasures for all of mankind, the conflicts over heritage can flare up and damage political relations significantly. In 2014, this issue became once again relevant when the Chinese government issued an application for the nomination of the Rape of Nanjing as World Heritage. That is, it submitted documents which depict war crimes by the Japanese army during WWII – a subject which is hotly debated among both countries and continuously strains their political relationship to this day.

The response from the Japanese government was therefore unsurprising. Chief Cabinet Secretary was quick to condemn the move. On behalf of the Japanese government, he filed an official complaint at the Chinese embassy, and stated it to be 'extremely regrettable that China uses UNESCO politically' during a time 'when we [Japan and China] need effort for the improvement on the bilateral relationship' (CNN 2014). The Japanese position is that the Chinese government exaggerates Japanese war crimes for political reasons.

Historical narratives and the formulation of heritage are vital to the construction of national and political identities. It is what binds communities together, provides legitimacy for governments and lies at the roots of any society. Consequently, negative history or collective trauma, such as a war, can disrupt the coherence of any society and fuel conflicts, even long after the event has taken place. Disagreements over history can have significant political implications.

Yet, it is very unclear what happens when these issues move towards a multilateral arena. The contested nature of history and heritage is undeniable and often provokes vehement emotions, so the nomination and admission of these sites pose significant challenges. There is little known about how these issues are resolved within UNESCO or in other multilateral platforms. As Pavone (2006) argues, UNESCO is 'one of the least studied organizations of the UN constellation' (2). This research aims to fill this gap.

The paper is structured as the following. In the introductory section, it elaborates upon the research question and methodology. Then, it provides an overview of current literature and highlights the gap which this research fills. The theoretical framework then highlights the tension between cosmopolitanism and realism, which is an important aspect of the dynamics within the World Heritage Convention.

The main body concerns the approach of the World Heritage Convention towards these issues. It reveals that UNESCO has no clear language to deal with contested narratives, and that the WH nomination process encourages the influence of states. The case study then investigates how this works out in practice.

Research question

The goal of this study is to investigate to what extent UNESCO World Heritage is an effective platform to address conflicts over heritage. The main research question is therefore the following: “To what extent is UNESCO World Heritage Convention an effective platform for the contestation of divergent historical interpretations?”.

Effectiveness is difficult to measure as it is subject to interpretation. What is effective for the one party may not be effective for the other. It is beyond the scope of this paper to see if the World Heritage List is effective in repairing damaged relations due to contested narratives. Instead, it investigates the dynamics between all bodies involved – State Parties, advisory bodies and UNESCO leadership – when confronted with these issues. This gives an insight in extent to which

the organization is capable of dealing with these issues.

Methodology

The methodology for this research is the process tracing of a case study. The nomination of the Nanjing documents which was mentioned in the introduction will not be discussed by the World Heritage Committee until October 2015, and thus cannot serve as a case study for this research. Instead, it will focus on a historical precedent – the nomination of Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome) in 1995. It is one of the few buildings which remained intact during the Hiroshima Bombing in 1945, and has been preserved in the same state ever since. According to UNESCO, 'Not only is it a stark and powerful symbol of the most destructive force ever created by humankind; it also expresses the hope for world peace and the ultimate elimination of all nuclear weapons.' (UNESCO 2015).

There are few sites on the World Heritage List that have been as controversial as the Hiroshima Genbaku Dome. In fact, the number of controversial sites on the List in general is strikingly small - a matter which will be discussed elsewhere in this paper. The controversy involved three important actors – Japan, who proposed the nomination, and China and the United States, who openly opposed its inscription.

The case study is particularly relevant for two reasons. First, it concerns memory of the Second World War, which to this day divides the region. Second, it involves similar actors – in the case of Hiroshima Genbaku Dome, China and the United States were the most vocal opposing parties. Conflicts over heritage are complex and varied, and arguably a single case study does not do it justice. However, it can provide a valuable insight on the role and effectiveness of UNESCO and the decision making process within.

Literature review

Dealing with 'difficult' heritage

Scholarly literature tells us surprisingly little about the inscription of contested heritage to the World Heritage List. Indeed, there are few examples of openly contested heritage sites that have been accepted. Rico (2008) identifies this gap and suggests that negotiations in WHC (World Heritage Committee) take place within the framework which UNESCO has put forward. The lack of contested sites, he suggests, could be explained by a post-positivist approach towards the creation of the criteria of inscription (Rico 2008). In other words, by looking how this framework has been developed (and by whom), how it has evolved and whether or not it maintains this imbalance.

This does not mean that there are no contested sites on the World Heritage List at all. In fact, there are many sites which deal with memories of death, shame and guilt (Logan and Reeves, 2009). As Logan and Reeves (2009) note, these places pose a whole separate challenge for scholars. Their book is a compilation of essays which deal with these sites, but these remain mostly anthropological. The focus is on the national politics rather than the international, and thus the international dimension remains under lighted. Instead, the framework of the World Heritage Committee is perceived as static and remains uncontested.

Two articles from the book, in fact, deal with the inscription of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial (Fenqi 2009) and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Utaka 2009) , both of which are precedents to the case on which this research focuses, due to the association with the Second World War. Fenqi (2009) focuses his analysis on China's policy towards the framing of the Nanjing Massacre from 1937 and the meaning the government applied, and still applies, to it. He then continues his argument by noting that sharing an event of humiliation is a large component of Chinese national identity. His focus is, in accordance with the aim of the book, the relationship between 'difficult' heritage and the public.

Similarly, Utaka (2009) provides a very detailed description of how the history and symbolism of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial was framed and from there on evolved. The angle of her analysis, however, focuses on how the Japanese government and other parties involved shaped the meaning of the monument towards the public. She only very briefly touches upon the actual

inscription process, which was one of the most controversial as both the United States and China distanced themselves from the final decision (Utaka 2009).

Beazley (2007) does give an account of how the inscription of Hiroshima Peace Memorial played out in the international arena of World Heritage. His work is one of the few that deal with this dimension and it becomes clear that in the case of contested sites, global and domestic politics clash and can have a significant influence on the eventual outcome of the nomination. Contested heritage is, because of UNESCO's World Heritage List, a matter worth investigating on an international level.

The scholarship surrounding difficult and contested heritage thus displays two characteristics. First, it has a rather positivist approach towards World Heritage and UNESCO, presenting it as a static unit and set of criteria, rather than taking the political context and agency of UNESCO into account. Instead, in these case studies, UNESCO is presented as a set and static platform whose standards and criteria are not subject to change or do not have an agency of their own.

Second, in case studies regarding the inscription process of contested heritage, the international dimension is underrepresented. As described above, scholars often focus on the national process and the dynamics between the local and national government. As will be described in the following section, there is a large amount of scholarship on the politics of UNESCO and World Heritage. Yet, at the same time, there remains a gap between the study of contested heritage sites and international politics.

UNESCO politics

Academic scholarship on the inner dynamics of UNESCO generally agree that World Heritage and the process of nomination and inscription are heavily politicized. The power of the World Heritage Committee, which exists of representatives of 21 member states, make the World Heritage Conventions an arena in which states can push their national agenda. Meskell (2014) even argues

that the inscription process has become increasingly politicized and often go against the recommendation of UNESCO's body of experts. Her data analysis suggest that the positions of the Advisory Bodies are divergent from the final decision making in the Committee. She stresses that this does not mean that these differences were not there in the past, but they have become more prominent (13).

The World Heritage List is very popular among states and many aim to achieve this status symbol. The reasons are multifold, and range from increase of soft power (Long and Labadi 2010) to economic reasons - attracting tourism and foreign investment (ibid, 7). It is thus not surprising that there is a political dimension in this decision-making process. So on the one hand, UNESCO presents a universal standard on which countries can draw to gain an advantage, while at the same time some argue it is a political arena in which the member states have the strongest decision-making power and are able to push their own agendas.

What this perspective does not take into account, however, is to what extent these states – despite pushing their own agendas – still operate within the framework put forward by UNESCO. One could thus argue that the standards which are handled to classify heritage as World Heritage still set the setting in which heritage discussions are held (Rico 2008).

On the other side of the spectrum there are scholars who maintain that UNESCO is a powerful actor in a complex international system (Askew 2010). Logan (2001) does not dwell on the political interests of the member states, only mentions them briefly (Askew 2010, 27). Instead, his analysis focuses on the power of UNESCO to set the agenda. His main argument is that the standards and definitions of heritage have become more inclusive and open to alternative interpretations of 'heritage'. His argument, however, does not take into account the political influence of member states, and 'remains technical' (ibid, 27).

Turtinen (2000) treats UNESCO as a powerful actor in setting the agenda for heritage as well. In fact, he perceives UNESCO as a 'political project' which creates an imagines human community, and criticizes the selectivity of the World Heritage List.

Brumann (2012), Hoggart (2011) and Nielsen (2011) provide an alternative perspective, and argue that UNESCO is a decentralized complex system which should not be treated as a 'central' entity. Instead, it consists of a constant interplay of different bodies which are often at odds with each other. From this perspective, there is no clear single decision maker.

Thus, though many scholars agree that the World Heritage Committee is a platform for individual member states to push a national agenda, a state-centric approach generally downplays the framework set by UNESCO and its advisory bodies. On the other spectrum, a UNESCO-centric approach generally brushes over the power of the individual nation-states to set an agenda.

The scholarship on the inner politics of UNESCO and what happens with the nominations tell us little about the specific cases of contested heritage. This research thus aims to bridge the gap between the national nomination process of contested heritage and the research on politics within UNESCO.

Contested heritage has been widely analyzed from multiple perspectives, but there is a significant gap. The first body of literature focuses on the local experience of heritage during the nomination process, but pays little attention to dynamics within UNESCO or between UNESCO and the state parties. In fact, the entire decision making process remains unclear. The other body of research fills this gap, but fails to address the issue of when it comes to contested heritage.

Theoretical Framework - Cosmopolitanism and Realism

In order to make sense of the argument in this paper, it is important to elaborate on the discrepancies between cosmopolitanism and realism (or even neoliberalism). In short terms, cosmopolitanism perceives that all humans belong to the same world, regardless of where they were born. Realism, or neoliberalism, approach the world as an order of unitary nation-states. From this perspective, politics and responsibilities are contained between the borders of the state.

The latter two theories – realism and neoliberalism- are dominant in scholarship on international institutions. They present opposing views. Realism envisions a world of anarchy of

nation states, with no overarching government, in which relative gains and balance of power dictate world politics. Neoliberalism proposes that nations cooperate to achieve stability and absolute gains. Much scholarly debate on the power and effectiveness of international institutions concern these two approaches.

Despite these opposing views, both approaches are on the same side in the argument of this paper. Both realism and neoliberalism adhere to the state as their unit of analysis. In the study of UN, or in particular its 'soft' institutions such as UNHRC and UNESCO, this does not suffice. Where realism and neoliberalism do not consider an overarching morality which transcends the nation-state borders, the UN does.

Cosmopolitanism

Instead, this paper discusses the dichotomy between the cosmopolitan world view of the World Heritage Convention and nation-based approaches. Cosmopolitanism is a philosophy which can be traced back to 5th century Greece (Appiah), and can be found in many influential modern philosophers – most notably Immanuel Kant, who discussed “the right to the earth's surface which belongs to the human race in common” (Kant, 1795).

There are many different approaches to cosmopolitanism and the academic debate on the topic is lively. As Vertovec and Cohen (2002) argue, some use it for idealistic and political purposes, where as others use it to describe social processes (1). However, though the purposes are different, the underlying philosophy is the same. As Pogge summarizes, there are three important notions to cosmopolitanism:

‘Three elements are shared by all cosmopolitan positions. First, individualism: the ultimate units of concern are human beings, or persons – rather than, say, family lines, tribes, ethnic, cultural, or religious communities, nations or states. The latter may be units of concern only indirectly, in virtue of their individual members or citizens. Second, universality: the status of ultimate unit of concern

attaches to every living human being equally – not merely to some subset such as men, aristocrats, Aryans, whites or Muslims. Third, generality: this special status has global force. Persons are ultimate units of concern for everyone – not only for their compatriots, fellow religionists or suchlike.’ (Pogge 2002, 169)

UNESCO is rooted in cosmopolitanism. Many scholars perceive the organization :as the axis of what was, in the post-Second World War, a newly-constituted and self-consciously international public sphere” (Sluga 2010). Its founding philosophy is specifically cosmopolitan – it approaches the world as a single place and perceives humans as being “World Citizens”. As Sluga (2010) argues, in the few years after WWII and the beginning of the United Nations, cosmopolitanism dominated political thought (1). It asserted that the world was, and should be, moving towards a single community to achieve lasting peace. The UN philosophy perceived it as the 'next step' in human evolution – from 'tribes, to nations, to a “World Community”’ (ibid). Clearly, this is a rather modernist perspective, and problematic. But within UNESCO a cosmopolitan perspective remains the anchor of its philosophy.

Realism

Realism is the oldest and one of the most references theories in international relations (Donnelly 2009). It is based on the idea that political behavior is driven by 'egotistical' interests of states (32). It assumes that states operate in an anarchical international environment, without an overarching government or other authority. It is therefore driven by competition and relative power. Egotistical imperatives thus lead to power play in international politics and poses limits to diplomacy (ibid).

Though (or because) it is one of the most conventional theories in international relations, critics have pointed out its problematic aspects as well. The structural approach skips over many factors which also influence behavior in international politics. For example, realists are skeptical of the power of international institutions and norms. Also, it does not account for identity in

international relations. Finally, it has failed to account for important changes in world politics, such as the end of the Cold War. To many theorists, in other words, the structural approach of realism is too limited and too reductionist to capture the complexity of international relations.

It is this approach which poses realism at the opposite spectrum of cosmopolitanism. Realism maintains a state-centered approach. This means that as a theory, it uses states as the main unit of analysis. States are thus approached as actors instead of political structures. Realists argue that the egotistical and competitive side of human behavior is reflected in their political structures and in the behavior of states on an international level. Cosmopolitanism sees states as less important than world citizenship. It thus approaches the world from a human perspective, whereas realism alleviates this towards the top of the political structure.

It is the dichotomy between realist state-centered politics and the cosmopolitan approach from which this paper departs. The question is to what extent these approaches are compatible – and if a cosmopolitan World Heritage Convention is able to cope with realist – and nationalist- politics.

Background

What is World Heritage?

World Heritage is the branding of heritage as being of universal value for humankind by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. National governments nominate cultural and natural heritage – be it artifacts, buildings, or landscapes – to be designated World Heritage. The nominations are then evaluated by advisory committees and other state parties before being admitted on the World Heritage List. If the site is admitted, it receives the UNESCO World Heritage title and funding in order to protect it from deterioration.

The idea behind World Heritage stems from a desire to preserve monuments and landscapes of universal value. Its conception comes from a time of crisis, when the global community had just seen the devastation of two world wars. This was an incentive for an international, overarching commission to oversee the condition of humankind's most treasured belongings. Since its

conception, the List has reached nearly a thousand inscriptions and is one of the most well-known projects of UNESCO.

The language of World Heritage

The designation of World Heritage is based on one overarching criteria of 'universal value'. This means that the site ought to transcend local and regional values and be recognized as important to humankind as a whole (Cleere 2001). Universality and cultural practices, however, are often at odds. It is difficult to imagine that the ruins of Aksum in Ethiopia hold similar value to a someone from Japan as the Horyuji Temple in Nara would (Cleere 1996).

This does not mean that both notions are incompatible. From an anthropological and archeological perspective, two disciplines who are generally associated with the subject, human achievement is universal, and diversity is a manifestation of this universality (Cleere 2001, 24). This means that regardless of location or background, all everybody is equally human. As Henry Cleere argues, both notions ought to be compatible.

Yet, UNESCO has been unable to convincingly combine diversity and universality in its ideology. Its publication *Our Creative Diversity* (UNESCO 1995), which is one of the main reference books of the organization's ideology (Eriksen 2001), expresses both the desire to maintain universal ethics based on common human values, while at the same time respecting cultural diversity and protecting indigenous people's right to their unique culture (UNESCO 1995). It thus combines (or confuses) cultural relativism with universalism, but does not provide policy guidelines or a clear operating framework. Also, it avoids addressing controversial topics, such as identity politics (Eriksen 2001). Instead, it “glosses over fundamental problems and fails to address politically volatile issues” (ibid, 130).

In reality, however, the World Heritage Committee does encounter those issues and they are (though not directly) reflected on the World Heritage List. Most visible is the -much critiqued- geographical imbalance. The vast majority of cultural sites are located in Europe and North

America. In 2004, 55% of cultural and natural sites were located there, despite the implementation of the Global Strategy in 1994 (Labadi 2005). The Global Strategy was an initiative by the World Heritage Center in collaboration with ICOMOS to find and correct imbalances on the World Heritage List and make it more representative. Despite these efforts, however, the percentage is the same as it was before the Global Strategy started (ibid, 90).

Another imbalance is the lack of sites which are associated with war and disaster. This imbalance has been less discussed by academics (Trinidad 2008) but does touch upon the politically problematic side of heritage. The lack of contested and negative sites reflects the tendency of UNESCO to gloss over these fundamental issues. Henry Cleere (1989) explains the relative absence of contested sites are due to the strongly positive language of the World Heritage Centre, though he does not discuss the matter in depth.

What is clear, however, is that the World Heritage Centre and UNESCO do not have a clear framework for dealing with this imbalance or politically sensitive sites. Its perspective on diversity and universalism are confusing and idealistic, but do not touch upon fundamental issues. With the Global Strategy, it has shown effort to correct imbalances but it has not had the political strength or ability to push this forward.

The politics of heritage

Heritage often is a reflection of a community's suffering and a sense of shared history. It is an important aspect of one's identity and can thus be a very sensitive issue. It is also a fluid concept - it plays a role on countless levels and is continuously subject to change (Rakic and Chambers 2008). A monument which has one meaning on a national level, might have a different one for a local community which lives around it. A war monument could be presented as a symbol of heroism by a national government, but could only represent very painful memories for someone who has lost dear friends and family.

Though heritage is rooted in the past, it is different from the study of history. History

ventures to find factual evidence in order to present the past as accurately as possible. Heritage, on the other hand, is much more selective and generally does not succumb to historical fact (Seaton 2007). Instead, it underlines the community's identity and becomes part of the common narrative. It is thus linked to memory and, as Gillis (1994) argues, we are “constantly revising our memories to suit our current identities” (4). This way, heritage serves a contemporary purpose.

For leaders – be it national governments, or local leaders – heritage can be a powerful political tool. It binds communities together and is vital to the building, strengthening and fostering of a national identity. Heritage appeals to the public's sense of belonging and it is thus a powerful tool to rally domestic support behind a government or administration.

It is this heritage – 'national' heritage' – which can be inscribed on the World Heritage List. The World Heritage Committee only recognizes heritage which was nominated by national governments. UNESCO gives the State Parties the responsibility to make an inventory of their potential WH sites and put them on a tentative list. From that list, the State Party chooses which sites to nominate. Those nominations are then reviewed by expert committees, which are ICOMOS in the case of cultural nominations and IUCN in the case of natural heritage. After that, the nominations are discussed during the biyearly World Heritage Convention (UNESCO 2011) – which is a meeting between the State Parties as well.

The structure of the World Heritage Committee thus assigns a lot of the decision-making process to the state parties. The framework and the language of World Heritage is universal, but it has increasingly turned into a platform for national politics. Many scholars such as Beazley (2010), Meskell (2013) argue that national interests surpass the recommendations of the expert bodies. In 1996, this led to the following addition to the Operational Guidelines, as recommended by the 'experts' (Thitthen 1996; World Heritage Committee 1996):

“Inscription on the World Heritage List is reserved for only a selection of the most outstanding properties from the international point of view. In accordance with Article 12 of the Convention,

States Parties should not assume that a site of national and/ or regional importance will automatically be included in the World Heritage List.”

Yet, this has not decreased the national interest. As the first selection is nation-based, national political incentives are inevitable. In order to increase their chances for subscription, however, State Parties avoid mentioning national value in the application, but ascribe to the World Heritage rhetoric. Rico (2008) suggests that this way, the nomination process discourages contestation – “through the decontextualization of specific sites, as they are required to fit a predefined language embodied in a set of criteria, and to define geographical boundaries that may isolate them from their spatial, and to some degree cultural, contexts.” (349). This decontextualization, however, does not eliminate national and international contestation and do not outweigh the national benefits of possessing a World Heritage Site.

Furthermore, it does not provide a voice to those who are marginalized within the selection process. Local or indigenous heritage which counter or do not benefit the national narrative are silenced (Lloyd 2007). The over-reliance on national representatives to provide the nominations ensure that the list is representative of nation-states, rather than humankind as a whole. This way, though “the rhetoric is global, the practice is national” (Ashworth and van der Aa 2006, 148).

So there are two assumptions on which to build: 1) UNESCO does not have either a rhetorical or policy framework to deal with international contestation, 2) the structure of World Heritage site selection assigns a lot of influence to individual state members. This paper theorizes that there is an power imbalance between the State Members and the management and expert committees in the World Heritage Centre.

Case Study

The Hiroshima Genbaku Dome nomination is one of the main examples of an internationally

contested site which dealt with politically sensitive issues. It drew significant attention from the press. Allegedly, "...journalists from the world's media networks thronged the corridors of the conference hall in Mérida (Mexico), hassling Committee members as they came and went from the closed-door session." (Cameron 2010, 115). Most likely, the interest in the case was fueled by the high profile of the actors involved – the two largest economies at the time (US and Japan), and China, Japan's main contender in the region and an upcoming super power.

Also, the possible inscription of a Second World War heritage site was controversial. Years earlier, in 1979, the Committee had decided to inscribe Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau on the World Heritage List. This was also surrounded by a lot of controversy, and ultimately it was inscribed as "the symbol of humanity's cruelty to its fellow human beings in the 20th century." (UNESCO 2015). The World Heritage Committee decided "to restrict the inscription of other sites of a similar nature" (World Heritage Centre 2012, 100) and ICOMOS member and French delegate Michael Parent warned that:

"In order to preserve its symbolic status as a monument to all the victims, Auschwitz should, it seems, remain in isolation. In other words, we (the Committee) recommend that it should stand alone among cultural properties as bearing witness to the depth of horror and of suffering, and the height of heroism, and that all other sites of the same nature be symbolised through it." (World Heritage Centre 2012, 100)

Yet, these calls went unheeded and Hiroshima Genbaku Dome was up for discussion in the Committee. Due to these controversies – the conflicts between important member states and its association with the Second World War – it arguably sets a precedence on how these kind of nominations are handled within the Convention.

The following section outlines the positions of the State Members against the UNESCO's advisory body, ICOMOS. The tension between these stakeholders defined the final outcome of the

Hiroshima inscription.

The State Parties

The Japanese nomination

Hiroshima is one of the first industrialized cities of Japan in the Meiji Period (1868-1912), a location for a lot of army facilities after the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 (Wu et al 2013) and was 'a center of military logistics' in WWII (Utaka 2009) until the US army dropped the atomic bomb on August 6, 1945. The bombing devastated everything in a 2-kilometer (Wu et al 2013) radius and killed over 140.000 citizens. Since then, the radiation has claimed even more victims. To this day, people are hospitalized due to its effects. Undeniably, it was one of the worst man-made disasters in history.

For purposes of this paper, it is important to highlight that the disaster and Hiroshima were reconstructed into a symbol of peace in post-war Japan. When the war was over, occupied Japan adopted a pacifist constitution which restricted the country of having and using an army, with the exception of self-defense. Overall, the discourse was focused on reconstruction. The devastated Hiroshima became a symbol of the damages the war had caused to Japan and the subsequent peace and rebuilding of Japan (Wu et al 2013).

This resulted in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Law, which laid the ground rules for reconstruction and remains a guideline for city planning in Hiroshima to this day (UNITAR 2015). The main purpose of the Law is stated in Article 1: "It shall be the object of the present law to provide for the construction of the city of Hiroshima as a peace memorial city to symbolize the human ideal of sincere pursuit of genuine and lasting peace." (ibid). In other words, the city's renewed purpose was (is) to serve as a symbol of Japan's 'renunciation of war' and a universal value of peace (ibid). As Siegenthaler (2002) analyzes, the framing and presentation of Hiroshima is only to highlight the prospect of rebuilding and the future, and tourist books do not emphasize Japanese suffering or mention the war. Instead, it has been rebuilt to accommodate the

post-war *akarui heiwa* (bright future) (Braw 2000).

Though in the reconstruction process many buildings were torn down, the Dome was preserved as a memorial. The Hiroshima City Hall requested for its World Heritage nomination in 1993 but was initially rejected by the Japanese government, since it was not listed under the Cultural Properties Act and was simply not old enough to be considered (Wu et al 2013). After pressure from a citizen's group and a large petition, however, the Japanese Diet changed the prerequisites and the nomination was a fact.

The Japanese government did not need to change their framing of Hiroshima much for the application to the World Heritage Committee. Much of the language reflects Japan's post-war sentiments and its desire for Hiroshima to be a universal symbol of peace, which also fits:

“Firstly, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, Atom Bomb Dome, stands as a permanent witness to the terrible disaster that occurred when the atomic bomb was used as a weapon for the first time in the history of mankind. Secondly, the Dome itself is the only building in existence that can convey directly a physical image of the tragic situation immediately after the bombing. Thirdly, the Dome has become a universal monument for all mankind, symbolising the hope for perpetual peace and the ultimate elimination of all nuclear weapons on earth.” (UNESCO 1995).

The United States

Two parties openly opposed the nomination of Hiroshima. The United States representation issued the following statement:

“The United States is dissociating itself from today’s decision to inscribe the Genbaku Dome on the World Heritage List. The United States and Japan are close friends and allies. We cooperate on security, diplomatic, international and economic affairs around the world. Our two countries are

tied by deep personal friendships between many Americans and Japanese. Even so, the United States cannot support its friend in this inscription.

The United States is concerned about the lack of historical perspective in the nomination of Genbaku Dome. The events antecedent to the United States' use of atomic weapons to end World War II are key to understanding the tragedy of Hiroshima. Any examination of the period leading up to 1945 should be placed in the appropriate historical context.

The United States believes the inscription of war sites outside the scope of the Convention. We urge the Committee to address the question of the suitability of war sites for the World Heritage List.”

(UNESCO 1996)

In this case, the United States were torn between maintaining good relations with Japan and responding to domestic pressure. The US delegation here protests the framing of the Hiroshima Genbaku Dome by the Japanese government. As Beazley (2010) argues, in the mind of the United States government, the Second World War is considered the 'Good War' – and the bombing of Hiroshima was a just act to stop the Japanese aggression in the Pacific. In order to maintain this framing, it was important to them that Hiroshima Genbaku Dome reflected the American narrative to avoid backlash. When their tactics failed to achieve this, the Delegation had no choice but to distance itself from the decision.

At the time, the United States administration dealt with domestic pressure and were set on avoiding any backfire. The Hiroshima nomination closely followed the Enola Gay exhibition controversy in 1994. The Smithsonian Institution in Washington had opened an exhibit about the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima called 'The Crossroads: The End of World War II, the Atomic Bomb, and the Origins of the Cold War' to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of WWII. However, the presentation of Enola Gay had offended US veterans and quickly escalated into

severe protests and fierce debates in Congress. The remains of the plane which had been used to bomb Hiroshima was accompanied by revisionist texts which expressed sympathy towards the Japanese victims. It was also fueled by the antinuclear opinions of the exhibition's staff (Leo 1997). However, according to visitors, veterans and several Congress members, the exhibition lacked historical context and misrepresented the Allied victory (Powell and Glick 1994; Hubbard and Hasian 1998). In January 1995, almost two years before the convention, the exhibition was cancelled (Thelen 1995).

With this in mind, the US representation was not able to support the nomination. The administration was mostly concerned that a lack of historical context would misrepresent the role of the United States in the dropping of the atomic bomb. In the United States, the bombing of Hiroshima is generally seen as the act which ended the Second World War and US victory over the Japanese (Beazley 2010). Without a description of events which led to the bombing, the US Administration worried that it would present the bombing as an isolated incident in which the US was the perpetrator – and would upset the American public. According to Beazley (2010) though, the administration and the delegation thought the dome ought to be inscribed as World Heritage either way – but they had to discuss how it would be framed not to upset the American public.

At the same time, they were not eager to upset relations with Japan over something as “mundane” (Beazley 2010, 59) as World Heritage. Japan and the US were entwined in a strong political and economic relationship. To preserve those ties, the US representation opted to limit upheaval about the Hiroshima nomination as much as possible (ibid). The statement of the US, therefore, was a careful balance between maintaining relations internationally and presenting a powerful image opposing the nomination within the UN to avoid domestic backlash. Instead of voting 'no', it disassociated itself.

China

The China representatives issued the following statement:

“During the Second World War, it was the other Asian countries and peoples who suffered the greatest loss in life and property. But today there are still few people trying to deny this fact of history. As such being the case, if Hiroshima nomination is approved to be included on the World Heritage List, even though on an exceptional basis, it may be utilized for harmful purpose by these few people. This will, of course, not be conducive to the safeguarding of world peace and security. For this reason China has reservations on the approval of this nomination.” (UNESCO 1996)

The Chinese criticism follows a familiar pattern of accusing Japan of misrepresenting WWII history. Since the 1980s, China and Japan have been entangled in a conflict over history, starting with a textbook controversy in 1982 (He 2007), closely followed by an official visit of Prime Minister Nakasone to the Yasukuni shrine, in which Class-A war criminals were enshrined (Asahi Shimbun, 2013). The conflict continues to this day and is a source of conflict between the two nations.

As He (2007) argues, animosity over history increased after the end of the Mao-era, when China entered a new regime under Deng Xiaoping. It was a period of political uncertainty in which the CCP encouraged national myths to both enhance national harmony and boost the CCP's legitimacy (51). It was a radical shift in policy, as until the 1980s, the Chinese government had avoided demonizing Japan (ibid). He (2007) attributes the shift to the period of transition, the democracy movement and internal rifts in the CCP which called for a strategy to encourage national harmony. Other scholars have also commented on the political advantage of rewriting WWII memory – such as reducing US and Japanese power in the East Asian region and the desire to unify with Japan (Mitter 2003).

This is a rather instrumentalist perspective – there had been anti-Japanese movements long before the end of the Mao-era. National myths are not only the invention of the elite – they are a result of a complex process of contestation in all levels of society (He 2007; Seaton 2007).

Even so, the strong shift towards Japanese rhetoric do indicate a conscious policy choice of the CCP to encourage anti-Japanese rhetoric as a national myth. Furthermore, the sudden outpour of new war history publications emerged without a 'lively internal debate' (Yang 1999). To this day, Beijing's "patriotic education campaigns" continue to place Japan in a 'villainous light' (Financial Times, 2005).

Yet, the Chinese representation remained relatively quiet on the nomination of Hiroshima Genbaku Dome. This research found no evidence of Chinese officials being involved in lobbying against the Japanese before the Convention, like their American counterparts did. Their protests were limited to the official statement. The mild language is also striking. It does not mention or accuse Japan directly, but covers it in an ambiguous 'these few people'. It is carefully worded to avoid any direct accusations towards Japan, or to express very strong language in particular.

Though it did not depart from the CCP's stance on war memory, it did adapt the language to the the multilateral environment of the Convention. After the Mao-era, China had adopted a new global policy which was more outward-looking than it had been in during the Communist era. This policy is what mainly influenced its reaction during the World Heritage Convention. At the time, its foreign policy had a strong focus on China emerging as a global power, but without military intentions. China had entered into an era of impressive economic growth, which was accompanied by suspicion in the international community of its intentions. The United States government in particular perceived China as a potential threat to its hegemonic status (Campbell 1998), and China's neighboring states were also cautious of the rising giant in their backyards (Ding 2008).

The CCPs strategy was to promote the idea China's 'peaceful rise'. One of the main elements is the CCP's statement that China's new economic development did (does) not mean the upsetting of the status quo – or the United States as super power. Furthermore, it maintained a 'good neighbour policy' (Ding 2008), which meant reaching out to its

neighbouring countries and joining in regional cooperation. This last element is especially visible in the text. The Chinese representation does not refer to itself (China) but specifically empathizes with the rest of the Asian region.

In conclusion, the Chinese statement was driven by domestic and foreign policy objectives, but in this case China's foreign policy were prioritized over its domestic policies. The CCP was concerned with managing its international image rather than battling with Japan over historical issues. The statement thus revealed more about its foreign and domestic political interests at the time, than its concern for historical justice.

The protests of the State Members was thus rooted in their domestic considerations. In the case of China, the CCP directed the speech to support its foreign policy goals. Though its domestic policy encourages anti-Japanese sentiments, it was careful not to let this case escalate due to its objectives within the global community – like being friendly with other Asian states in the UN. The United States' statement resulted from the domestic political climate and unfortunate timing. Had the Enola Gay incident not happened recently, the US Administration might have been more supportive of the nomination. Neither the US or Chinese representatives were intent on letting this issue escalate into something which could jeopardize their other policy objectives or (in the case of the US) bilateral relations.

The ICOMOS Perspective

Though Hiroshima was inscribed as World Heritage in 1996, Japanese government had expressed the desire to nominate it sooner. An ICOMOS expert team visited the monument already in 1993 for evaluation, which suggests that the Japanese government had wanted to present the nomination at the 1994 Convention in Phuket.

However, at the time, the Japanese ICOMOS division and the Japanese government had played with the idea of proposing a joint nomination with the Trinity Side in New Mexico, together with the US (Beazley 2010). The US division of ICOMOS distanced itself

from the idea.

“The Japanese showed considerable curiosity about the National Register status of the Trinity Site and its inclusion in the United States indicative list of potential World Heritage nominations. It was at this site that the US atomic bomb was tested prior to its military use in World War II. At this time, nothing is being done to nominate this site to the World Heritage List.” (ICOMOS 1995)

Around the same time, Japanese *Sankei Shimbun* journalist Shin'ichi Kojima had requested interviews with US/ICOMOS committee members Elliott Carroll and Gustavo Araoz to “explore the possible reaction of US/ICOMOS to a nomination of the Dome at Hiroshima to the World Heritage List” (ICOMOS 1995). None of these interviews actually took place, but in its reaction, US/ICOMOS specifically distanced itself from the decisions that took place within the World Heritage Committee.

“In response to the direct question by Mr. Kojima whether US/ICOMOS would oppose the nomination, it was made clear that the opinion of our national committee in no way affects the decisions of the World Heritage Committee concerning nominations. US/ICOMOS expressed confidence that such a nomination, if forthcoming, would reflect the usual meticulous scholarship and documentation evident in earlier Japanese nominations. The nomination will be evaluated by the World Heritage Committee, according to the Operational Guidelines, as an actual, physical cultural property, not on the basis of a symbol or idea inherent in the site.”

According to Beazley (2010), however, these talks never made it past NGO-level. Officially there had been no state talks about a joint nomination though some US representatives might

have been aware of the idea (Beazley 2010). Either way, the US Administration had instructed their representatives to oppose the nomination during the convention. Thus, they expressed the hope that something which was associated with warfare and political conflicts, would be converted into the opposite – namely, that it is a sign of progress and peace instead of war. Political conflicts, in this sense, are temporary – they 'have yet to be resolved'. Instead, it ought to embody something 'universal'.

“It is hoped that the nomination will assign significance of the site in the context of the long historic evolution of human warfare rather than the specific military conflict of which it was part. While accepting the enormous symbolic value of the Hiroshima Dome, US/ICOMOS reiterated its hopes that the World Heritage Convention always be used to emphasize international harmony rather than underlining differences that have yet to be resolved and wounds that are not completely healed.”

This is consistent with the recommendation of the expert committee that visited Hiroshima Genbaku Dome in 1993.

“The overriding significance of the dome lies in what it represents: the building has no aesthetic or architectural significance per se. Its mute remains symbolize on the one hand the ultimate in human destruction but on the other they communicate a message of hope for a continuation in perpetuity of the worldwide peace that the atomic bomb blasts of August 1945 ushered in.” (UNESCO 1993)

What is striking – and consistent with the points presented earlier in this paper- is that international conflicts are marginalized in the face of cosmopolitanism. ICOMOS considers them less important than the universal objective of peace. However, at the same time, between

the lines it acknowledges that they have little to no influence in the final decision-making process and that the final responsibility lies in the hands of the State Members.

Conclusion

This research set out to assess to what extent the World Heritage Convention is an effective platform to deal with contested heritage and disagreements over historical interpretation. In order to do so, it highlighted the different approaches of UNESCO and the Member States, which it interpreted as a cosmopolitan approach and realism. It is a complex problem, however the main conclusions are the following.

First, and most importantly, the decision process is shaped by a give-and-take between the state parties and UNESCO. There a constant tension between the UNESCO perspective and ideals, and the perspective and interests of individual states. This tension is what shapes the inscription process of contested sites. In the case study, the interests of the member states dominated the decision process. Yet, the rhetoric adapted to the multilateral environment and the UN rhetoric. Though UNESCO does not appear to be a strong and vocal stakeholder, the State Members respond to its ideas and values.

This means that the initial research question, which perceived the World Heritage Centre as a platform, is perhaps not correct. It is a body which holds a degree of agency which extends beyond providing a platform for intergovernmental politics. Though state politics hold significant influence in the process, as this research pointed out, the influence of the World Heritage Centre and the advisory bodies on the outcome of the List ought not to be discarded.

Nonetheless, the World Heritage Convention, with its cosmopolitan approach, lacks a strong policy framework to deal with contested heritage. Its language combines diversity and universalism but fails to address the most problematic side of creating a World Heritage List – namely, that heritage is often rooted in local and national experiences and also serves a

political purpose. World Heritage is therefore bound to be contested at times, yet the Convention glosses over these issues. Consequently, there are not many examples of contested heritage on the List, and in times there are UNESCO has little political strength to mediate in these issues.

This is also evident in the case study. The advisory body ICOMOS distanced themselves from the political issues associated with Hiroshima. They recommended the nomination solely on the basis of its universal symbolic value. Yet, besides expressing hope that political differences do not stand in the way of the universal symbolism of Hiroshima (even though this interpretation was proposed by the Japanese government and thus arguably served a national political purpose as well, though the scope of this paper did not allow to investigate this further), it does not have the political means or policy to deal with these issues effectively or negotiate on an equal basis with the Member States.

This brings us to the final issue. The structure of the WHC relies to a great extent on the State Parties. This is evident in the selection process, in which all nominations go through national governments before being reviewed by the Convention or the advisory bodies. Afterwards, the final decision lies with the State Parties as well. This means that these Parties' priorities and bi- and multilateral relations strongly influence the final outcome of the List.

In the case of Hiroshima, it was most fiercely contested by the United States and China, who were cautious about the framing of Hiroshima as a peace symbol. As was argued, China's tone was relatively mild in order to protect its other foreign policy goals. The United States lobbying techniques were unsuccessful, though the case study reveals that the US representation and administration were not willing to let the situation escalate – also with eyes on their relationship with Japan. Instead, they opted for the most diplomatic approach.

On the basis of this case study, one can argue that World Heritage as a platform can be effective to cool tensions because within a multilateral environment, parties opt for a more diplomatic approach than they do, for example, on a bilateral level. The structure of the

decision process is in favor of national governments and attributes them a great deal of influence. At the same time, the tension between UNESCO's cosmopolitan perspective and realist politics shape the final rhetoric. However, the UN sticks to its cosmopolitan rhetoric while international conflicts remain a significant issue, and without a stronger policy framework, legal or financial tools it remains predominantly reliant on the interests of the State Members.

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