

The Second Sino-Japanese War: Historiography and Commemoration

Chinese Wartime Collaboration with the Japanese: Lost in Oblivion?

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I. Introduction

Memories of a nation's history are of great importance to the identity of individuals and of states, which may seek to interpret the past for political purposes in the present. In the case of China, the Party-State has consistently shaped memories of the Second Sino-Japanese War¹ both to promote national unity and influence Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations. Since the 1980s, these memories have become increasingly important in shaping Chinese identity.²

Various authors point to the close connection between narratives, memories and commemoration (collective memory) in identity formation. Narratives of the past play a central role in cultural memory, for instance in myths, sagas, literature or film. They connect how the past is remembered in the present and give deeper meaning to memories. The way narratives shape identities, make it possible for individuals to belong to a common culture or community.³ Rousso asserts that narratives change with each new generation of observers, as new questions are asked and hitherto unavailable sources emerge.⁴

In Nora's view, memories are created by dynamic societies and are therefore in a process of permanent evolution. As such, memories are highly vulnerable to manipulation, and they may remain dormant long periods of time, before being suddenly revived.⁵ Like Nora and Rousso, He Yinan points to the practice of myth-making by nation-states through the manipulation of history and its memories to serve political ends in the present.⁶ Mao Zedong, for instance, downplayed Japanese war crimes for geostrategic reasons, while portraying Nationalists as 'traitors to the Chinese people' (*hanjian*).⁷ Commemoration in the form of anniversaries, but also the names of squares, monuments and war museums, usually projects an image of a people's heroic actions against an evil force.⁸

When members of a community are subjected to extreme trauma, such as war and violation, the scars left behind in this collective, i.e. the memories, serve as a binding force in

¹ Also called China's War of Resistance, from 1937 until 1945 against Japan. In 2017 the Chinese government announced that this war already started in 1931, when Japan started encroaching on Manchuria and North China. In this thesis the term *War* refers to this war.

² Mitter 2020, 15.

³ Brockmeier 2002, 26-27.

⁴ Rousso 2010, 1.

⁵ Nora 1989, 8.

⁶ He 2007, 55.

⁷ Reilly 2011, 469-470.

⁸ Brockmeier 2002, 15-17.

state formation.⁹ Rousso's concept of 'Vichy syndrome', a psychoanalytical model based on the study of Second World War memories, has four phases. The first is 'unfinished mourning' in which political groups vie for control of collective wartime memories. In turn, a heroic narrative of wartime resistance gradually becomes dominant and suppresses more controversial group memories. Then, in the 'broken mirror' phase, sensitive memories, such as collaboration, re-emerge to question the resistance narrative. The final phase is a period of 'obsession': a single memory dominates as the past is exploited to serve contemporary politics.¹⁰ Mitter argues that Rousso's concept applies to the way China deals with memories of the War.¹¹ The narrative of China's wartime victimization by Japan is a case in point.

Gries notes that in the Chinese deterministic approach, Chinese nationalism is closely linked to traumatic experiences in wars against Japan and the West in the 'Age of Humiliation'.¹² In its presentism, the Party-State utilizes these traumatic experiences to construct narratives of the past. These narratives fuel nationalism, arousing deep suppressed or visceral anger.¹³ Gries believes that both perspectives have value for a nation in processing historical traumas.¹⁴ In Chinese nationalism, both the 'National Victimization' and the 'Victor' narratives coexist. These narratives present a strong nation, which is of importance for China's identity.

Although the War and Japanese occupation happened eighty years ago, it has not been forgotten by the Chinese people. The Party-State continues to utilize the interpretation of War memories for political purposes at home and abroad. The notion of being among victorious world powers in such an important war is paramount to China's current identity-building and self-esteem.¹⁵ Sentiments aroused by the War among the Chinese public reflect Japan's failure ever to apologize appropriately for its war crimes. On the other hand, Japan claims that the ODA (Official Development Assistance) in the 1970s and 1980s, were effectively war reparations, with which it has discharged responsibility for China's sufferings in the War.¹⁶ The still ongoing Sino-Japanese stalemate in the interpretation of memories of

⁹ Gao Rui 2015, 111.

¹⁰ Gorrara, 2014, 8-9. Gorrara explains Rousso's 'Vichy Syndrome.'

¹¹ Mitter 2020, 19-20.

¹² Gries 2004, 45-47. The 'Age of Humiliation' started with the First Opium War and ended in 1945, when Japan was defeated at the end of the War. The Communists claimed its end in 1949.

¹³ Gries 2004, 92. Gries refers to sociologist Cooley: Intense rage, from which one does not want to get out of it.

¹⁴ Gries 2004, 45-50.

¹⁵ Mitter 2020, 5-6.

¹⁶ Mitter 2020, 242.

the War, despite their economic inter-dependence, would imply that reconciliation and the development of a shared narrative of the War are not yet possible.¹⁷

Deng Xiaoping's 'Four Modernizations' after 1976 allowed a more liberal atmosphere of word and speech. The introduction of the Archive Law in 1987, forty years after the end of the War allowed the opening of some of the national archives to the public, giving scholars access to bountiful War documents, autobiographies, and war experiences recorded in veterans' diaries.¹⁸ These documents, together with the opportunity to research under significantly less ideological constraints, have illuminated wider issues in modern Chinese history, bringing about a first wave of bottom-up collective remembrance of the War.¹⁹

Mitter calls this emergence of bottom-up War narratives since the 1980s the 'globalization and normalization' of war historiography.²⁰ Furthermore, the revival of academic interest in memories of the War, and the growing nationalism arising from the 1990s Patriotic Education Campaign can be seen as the stimulators of a 'new remembering' of the War.²¹ A consequence of bottom-up remembrance, however, has been that nationalist sentiments have created social forces with a potential impact on state control and Sino-Japanese diplomacy. Popular sentiments can be strong enough to escape full state control, and even threaten diplomatic relations.²²

However, the boom in academic research in the 1980s has hardly given rise to any discernible reconsideration of collaboration with the Japanese occupier.²³ This observation prompts this thesis to investigate the reasons why collaboration remains underexposed in Chinese historiography and commemoration of the War. The main focus is to explore how successive eras of Chinese leadership have interpreted the War and presented its legacies to the public. This thesis recognizes four eras of leadership: the Republican era from 1912 to 1949; the Maoist era from 1949 to 1976; the Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin era from 1976 to 2003; and the present-day Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping era from 2003.

The main question that this research is concerned with is why there is still so little space for reconsideration of Sino-Japanese wartime collaboration, despite more bottom-up

¹⁷ He 2013, 11-12.

¹⁸ Du 2007, 429.

¹⁹ Mitter and Moore 2011, 227.

²⁰ Mitter 2010, 85.

²¹ Coble 2007, 402-403.

²² Reilly 2011, 473-476. He 2013, 9-10.

²³ Mitter 2010, 91.

trends in Chinese historiography and commemoration of the Sino-Japanese War after the 1980s.

The subsidiary questions are:

1. How are the Sino-Japanese War and wartime collaboration considered within the interpretative framework that characterizes the four eras of Chinese leadership?
2. What space is there in these frameworks for the exploration and representation of wartime collaboration?

This thesis is organized as follows. Chapter II contains a literature review of historiography and the commemoration of the Second Sino-Japanese War, with an emphasis on Chinese Party-State influence on these topics, and points of criticism on the reviewed literature. Chapter III outlines the research design. Chapters IV and V analyse how historiography and commemoration of the war have been interpreted in the paradigms that characterize the four eras of Chinese leadership. With the help of Brook's 'four judgments to forget history', the space for collaboration in each paradigm, and whether there were opportunities for a more nuanced view on this concept, are exposed. Chapter VI concludes the thesis and seeks to answer the above research questions.

II. The Sino-Japanese War: historiography, commemoration and wartime collaboration

Most authors agree that the Chinese Party-State has persistently sought to utilize interpretations of the Second Sino-Japanese War to further political aims. Mitter argues that memories and legacies of the War have been crucial in reshaping China's internal political culture, and for its identity and presentation to the world as a rising power.²⁴ Reilly notes the political importance of commemoration of the War for the state and its people. He refers to Hobsbawn, who argues that a state can successfully implement the commemoration of a shared past only if there is a perceived need among the population.²⁵ He Yan argues that in state's mythmaking, historical facts are distorted to construct a shared past, to serve political aims in the present.²⁶

This literature review aims to explain the influence of the Party-State on memories of the War in the successive periods of Chinese leadership. The first section discusses two generally accepted paradigms of Chinese commemoration of the War: the paradigm of 'Benevolent Amnesia' and of 'National Victimization'. The second section discusses developments in the historiography and commemoration of the War: the revised historiography of the Republican era, and the Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping era. The third section focuses on the place of collaboration in Chinese historiography and commemoration. The conclusion sets out a critique of the literature and the resultant research needs.

II.1. Two paradigms of commemoration of the Sino-Japanese War

Many authors divide the historiography and commemoration of the Sino-Japanese War into two basic eras. The paradigm of 'Benevolent Amnesia' extends from 1945 to 1982 and encompasses the post-war years of the Republican era from 1945-1949, the Maoist era and its 'Revolutionary Heroism' paradigm from 1949 to 1976, and the first years of the Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin era from 1976 to 1982. The second is the subsequent period, characterized by a 'National Victimization' paradigm from 1982 onwards. This section illuminates the Maoist, and the Deng and Jiang eras.

²⁴ Mitter 2020, 2-8.

²⁵ Reilly 2011, 465-467.

²⁶ He 2007, 44-45.

The Maoist era: 'Revolutionary Heroism' and 'Benevolent Amnesia'

There is a general consensus that this era's dominating War narrative focused on Communist heroism and resistance efforts against class enemies as a whole, rather than remembrance of the War against a Japanese enemy *per se*. The Communists regarded the establishment of the People's Republic of China as a revolutionary break with the feudal past. Mitter notes that Maoist China, being scientifically, educationally and culturally isolated from most of the global world, had to construct its own War narrative.²⁷ Coble and Gao point to the narrative's focusing on Communist class struggle and the defeat of class enemies, and in particular the Nationalists and the bourgeoisie class. It hails the military successes of the Eight Route and New Fourth Armies, while criticizing Chiang Kai-shek's policy of passive resistance.²⁸

Most authors agree that in their policy of 'benevolent amnesia' the Communists downplayed Japanese War atrocities, mindful of the need of Japan's support not only in the country's economic development, but also as an ally to counter threats from an increasingly hostile Soviet Union, following the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s. Coble, Reilly, and Rose and Sýkora mention the lenient treatment of Japanese prisoners of war in the 1950s post-war trials, which allowed the majority to return home.²⁹ He Yinan discerns a degree of alignment between China's mute War narrative and the effort of Japan's political conservatives to whitewash their country's war atrocities. At that time the State suppressed historical investigation of Japan's War atrocities, and China refrained from claiming war reparations.³⁰

Coble notes that in the *hanjian* purges writers and wartime reporters, who had supported the Communist resistance in the War, were regarded as class-enemies and prosecuted, if not immediately after the war, then in the 'One Hundred Flowers' movement (1956-1957) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). At the time, publication of academic works was not allowed, and outing un-official memories of the War could result in imprisonment or banishment.³¹

Some authors also note the scant references in textbooks to Japanese atrocities. As noted by He Yinan and Reilly, this gap in education and the prohibition of history-writing

²⁷ Mitter 2020, 57, 68.

²⁸ Coble 2015, 144, 163; Gao Rui 2015, 111-119.

²⁹ Coble 2015, 142-144; Reilly 2011, 468-470; Rose and Sýkora 2017, 109-110.

³⁰ He 2007, 47-49.

³¹ Coble 2015, 146-147.

resulted in ignorance of Chinese war experiences among the younger generation at the end of the Maoist era.³²

The Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin era: ‘National Victimization’

Two processes unfolded in the Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin era. First, Deng’s ‘Four Modernizations’, permitted scholars more freedom to research. After 1989, however, the paradigm of ‘National Victimization’ emerged, with the aim of diverting attention away from domestic political and social unrest, surrounding economic reforms, to Japanese War atrocities.

Most authors, such as Mitter, Goldman and Lary, agree that the more liberal atmosphere of the 1980s and access to hitherto classified archives after 1987 resulted in a more bottom-up historiography of the War. Lary believes that bottom-up memories depict events of the War that official narratives are unable to accommodate.³³ Barmé notes that many historians took this opportunity to explore the dilemmas faced by China in wartime, such as Chiang’s motives for withdrawing the Nationalist government to Chongqing.³⁴ According to Brook, Chinese historians, such as Huang Meizhen, even started to explore wartime collaboration.³⁵

For Mitter, China’s opening up sparked an interest in scientific research, free from the constraints of ideological beliefs.³⁶ He points to the role of historians, such as Huang Meizhen, Hu Qiaomu³⁷ and other historians, in the revised War narrative, which granted the Nationalists an inclusive role in the War.³⁸ Mitter and Wang Chaoguang remark that CASS historians, based on Chiang’s diaries, presented the Nationalist leader in a more favourable light than Maoist historiography did. A new narrative of joint Communist and Nationalist resistance since the 1980s rehabilitated Nationalist War efforts.³⁹

Most authors agree that the tide turned after the Tiananmen protests in 1989. He Yan, Reilly and Goldman note that the ‘National Victimization’ paradigm aligns with Deng’s political strategy of restoring domestic order following conflicts within the Party-top and

³² He 2007, 50; Reilly 2011, 468-470.

³³ Mitter 2020, 63-64, 73-74; Goldman 1996, 36-38; Lary 2019, 70.

³⁴ Barmé 1991, 12.

³⁵ Brook 2012, 106.

³⁶ Mitter 2010, 85-89.

³⁷ CASS, [http://casseng.cssn.cn/about/about history](http://casseng.cssn.cn/about/about%20history), Hu Qiaomu was CASS’ first President.

³⁸ Mitter 2020, 70-73, 78-80.

³⁹ Mitter 2011b, 1014; Wang Chaoguang 2010, 90-93.

popular unrest in the wake of the economic reforms.⁴⁰ Mitter, He Yinan and Coble argue that the 1982 Textbook Controversy⁴¹ and Japanese political leaders' visits to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine⁴² were utilized to corroborate Japan's role as the immoral 'other' and to turn public attention to the Sino-Japanese War.⁴³

Previous research outlined the success and the impact of the top-down Patriotic Education Campaigns after 1989. Wang Zheng and Perry note that by pointing to Japanese atrocities in the War narrative, these campaigns served as a binding factor and fuelled Chinese nationalism.⁴⁴ Reilly and He Yinan discuss the side-effects of the campaigns, in particular xenophobia and hatred towards Japan, and their negative consequences for Sino-Japanese relations.⁴⁵ Gries argues that China's economic growth and military modernization facilitated expression of previously suppressed anger.⁴⁶

Some authors note that the War narrative, as presented in museums from as early as 1985, invariably focuses on Japanese atrocities. Vickers points to the War narrative as a means of instilling nationalism.⁴⁷ He Yinan and Vickers both observe the exclusion of collaboration in the narrative of resistance and victory.⁴⁸

II.2. Trends in historiography and research agenda

Revisionist scholarship in the Deng Xiaoping era resulted in the acknowledgment of Nationalist War efforts. Mitter sees the reassessment of historiography as the beginning of the 'normalization and globalization' of the history of the War.⁴⁹

This section discusses the Republican era, and the present-day Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping era.

⁴⁰ He 2007, 52-55; Reilly 2011, 471-472; Goldman 1999, 700-702. Goldman discusses the political struggle in the party-top, and the social unrest brought about by Economic Reform, which led to the closing of state enterprises and massive unemployment.

⁴¹ Woods Masalski 2001, 'Examining the Japanese History Textbook Controversies', https://spice.fsi.stanford.edu/docs/examining_the_japanese_history_textbook_controversies.

⁴² Yasukuni Jinja, <https://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/about/history.html>. The burial place of Japanese military who died in service for the Emperor, including military leaders convicted in the post-war Tokyo War Crime Trials.

⁴³ Mitter 2020, 57-58; Coble 2007, 403; He 2007, 55.

⁴⁴ Wang Zheng 2008, 789-800; Perry 2017, 35-37.

⁴⁵ Reilly 2011, 474-476; He 2007, 59-64.

⁴⁶ Gries 2004, 53.

⁴⁷ Vickers 2013, 18.

⁴⁸ Vickers, 23; He 2007, 58-59.

⁴⁹ Mitter 2010, 85.

The Republican era: 'Heroic Sacrifice'⁵⁰

There is great consensus that in the first phase of the War Chiang Kai-shek's chosen strategy was passive resistance to the Japanese in order to concentrate on eliminating the Communists. Mitter notes that despite the Japanese occupation of Manchuria following the Manchurian incident on September 18, 1931, Chiang resorted to active resistance against the Japanese only after the Marco Polo incident on July 7, 1937.⁵¹ Van de Ven argues that the Nationalists initially underestimated the risk of war with Japan and preferred to focus on reunifying the country and the struggle against the Communists.⁵²

There is general consensus that the Nationalist government's retreat to Chongqing in 1937 was attributable to its military weakness. According to Van de Ven, Chiang's retreat was to trade territory for time in order to build up the army.⁵³ He also argues that having to contend with three internal parties at loggerheads (the Nationalists, Communists and the collaborating regimes) as well as fighting the Japanese, meant that China was entangling itself in a war within the War.⁵⁴ Mitter states that China, as one of the Allies received military assistance from the United States only after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941.⁵⁵

Notwithstanding Western scholars' criticism of Chiang's military policies,⁵⁶ the Nationalists did accomplish social changes under difficult circumstances and tried to raise national awareness of the Japanese enemy. Zanasi argues that the fragility of Chinese national identity before the War, caused by competing political ideologies and fragmentation within the Kuomintang itself, created chances for the Japanese to establish collaborationist regimes.⁵⁷ Mitter points to social institutions, such as top-down mass campaigns, the introduction of conscription, and the revival of the traditional *baojia*-system⁵⁸ to raise mutual responsibility between the state and its people.⁵⁹ He links these institutions with the Nationalists' strive to raise Chinese nationalism.⁶⁰

⁵⁰ Mitter and Moore 2011, 237. 'Heroic Sacrifice', the Nationalist rhetoric in mobilizing the people to join forces in the War.

⁵¹ Mitter 2020, 29-30.

⁵² Van de Ven 2018, 52, 60.

⁵³ Van de Ven, 76.

⁵⁴ Van de Ven, 16.

⁵⁵ Mitter 2020, 31.

⁵⁶ Mitter 2011a, 246; Mitter 2020, 67, 77. Mitter refers to Tuchman, General Stilwell's biographer, who fiercely criticized the incompetence of Chiang's regime.

⁵⁷ Zanasi 2015, 525-530.

⁵⁸ Where an appointed head of a village or district bore responsibility for the behaviour of a fixed number of local households.

⁵⁹ Mitter 2011a, 264-269.

⁶⁰ Mitter 2011a, 245.

According to Xia, the top-down anti-*hanjian* campaigns, were most successful in raising nationalism and collective identity.⁶¹ Coble argues that wartime propaganda and articles about resistance written by members of the bottom-up National Salvation Movement⁶² put pressure on the Nationalist government to resist Japan. Narratives about heroes of resistance were intended to mobilize and unite the people.⁶³

Some authors agree that Chiang's post-war 'virtue over malice' policy was for geostrategic purposes. Mitter believes that this policy was made under pressure from the United States, and reflects Chiang's pursuit of an alliance with the United States and Japan in countering the Soviet Communist threat as well.⁶⁴ Reilly notes that for this reason Chiang declined to demand reparations.⁶⁵ The 'Benevolent Amnesia' paradigm was then started.

The Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping era: 'Victor'

Some authors note that during the Hu Jintao regime, both China and Japan were willing to downplay the issue of history in order to further practical and economic cooperation and the improvement of Sino-Japanese relations. Gries argues that the 2003-2004 "new thinking" debate, which advocated this approach, attracted fierce criticism from politicians and citizens alike. Those questioning 'hyper-nationalism' and promoting a more nuanced attitude towards Japan were dismissed as *hanjian*.⁶⁶

He Yinan points to an unsuccessful attempt to improve Sino-Japanese ties between 2006 and 2009.⁶⁷ Mitter mentions a joint Japan-China Historical Research Commission in 2006 whose efforts to produce a shared War narrative failed because of disagreements about interpretations of events in the War.⁶⁸ Gries and Xia discuss why films in the 2000s that provided a more diverse portrait of collaborators, such as *Devils on the Doorstep*⁶⁹ of Jiang Wen, and Ang Lee's *Lust, Caution*⁷⁰ did not lead to a reconsideration of collaboration.

⁶¹ Xia 2017, 173-174.

⁶² Coble 2015, 16-23. The National Salvation Movement, which existed from the 1930s supported the idea of joint fighting of Nationalist and Communist in an United Front. Members were intellectuals, reporters and writers, but also Sun Yat-sen's widow Song Qingling, and writers such as Ba Jin, Guo Morou and Mao Dun. Many of its leaders were Communists.

⁶³ Coble 2011, 383-386; Coble 2015, 41-45.

⁶⁴ Mitter 2020, 33.

⁶⁵ Reilly 2011, 468-469.

⁶⁶ Gries 2005, 832-842.

⁶⁷ He 2013, 8.

⁶⁸ Mitter 2020, 87.

⁶⁹ Gries 2004, 79. The film pictures the friendship between a Japanese prisoner and a group of Chinese villagers.

⁷⁰ Xia 2017, 182. In this film the protagonist, a collaborationist official, struggles with his conscience and will to survive.

There is general consensus that state control over research opportunities and historiography has intensified with the rise of Xi Jinping in 2012. According to Tiffert and Mitter, the increased restriction of academic freedom, and the restoration of the Party's ideological dominion over historiography, prohibits the questioning of past State policy, such as the Cultural Revolution and the response to the Tiananmen protests.⁷¹ Tiffert explains 'Document 9'⁷² of 22 April 2013, which instructs Party members to forestall seven 'false ideological trends', including 'historical nihilism'.⁷³

Tiezzi points to Xi's three demands of historiography of the War. Research on the War should endorse its importance, China's victory in the world's antifascist battle and the relevance of the War for China's 'Rejuvenation'.⁷⁴ De Brugh illuminates Xi's concept of 'Rejuvenation', which stresses the renaissance of China's past with its highly developed civilization and Confucian tradition, after a disruption by the 'Age of Humiliation'.⁷⁵

Consequently, Mitter's initial expectation of a more bottom-up trend in historiography has remained unfulfilled, both after the 1990s, and in Xi's current policy of commemoration of the War.

II.3. Collaboration and Brook's 'four judgements to forget history'

According to Brook, collaboration is an ambiguous concept and related research should focus on what actually happened in occupied areas in wartime. In 2008 he postulated the 'four judgments to forget history' that constrain research on wartime collaboration.⁷⁶

The first *nationalistic* judgement stresses patriotism and national pride: it holds that most people joined the resistance, and only a tiny minority collaborated with the enemy. Wartime reporters' stories of heroes in resistance reflect this judgment, and everyone had the duty to resist the enemy.⁷⁷ In the second *partisan-political* judgement political competitors are engaged in conflict. In an ideological struggle, resisters strive to recover the pre-existing political order, and anyone with other ideas is a collaborator. The Nationalists and Communists struggled on an ideological base, and each called the other *hanjian*. Wang

⁷¹ Tiffert 2019, 41-43; Mitter 2020, 25-26, 88-90.

⁷² Chinafile, 'Document 9', <https://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation>.

⁷³ Tiffert, 40-44.

⁷⁴ Tiezzi 2015, 'Correct view on WW2', <https://thedi diplomat.com/2015/08/what-china-means-by-a-correct-view-on-ww2-history>.

⁷⁵ De Brugh 2018, 105-107.

⁷⁶ Brook 2008, 11-14.

⁷⁷ Coble 2015, 26.

Jingwei, the leader of the collaborationist Reorganized Nationalist Government (the RNG), was labelled a collaborator, for submitting to the Japanese, but also for criticizing the Nationalists. The third *humanitarian* judgment disapproves of war as a crime against humanity, and collaborators are deemed to be complicit. A clear example is the 1937 Nanjing Massacre. Finally, the fourth *moral* judgement regards collaboration as immoral and condemnable. Wakeman states that collaborators were perceived as lacking morality, because they betrayed their Chinese-ness.⁷⁸

Brook argues that these judgements express strong moralistic attitudes, that are anchored in good-evil dichotomies and do no justice at all to the complex dynamics that shape collaboration in occupied territories. Historians should dispense with these judgments and explore the multi-faceted aspects of collaboration from a bottom-up perspective.⁷⁹

Mitter and Wakeman note that the existence of collaborationist regimes in central and eastern China notwithstanding, collaboration is very little discussed in China today.⁸⁰ Lary and Reilly note that whereas Chiang was rehabilitated, Wang Jingwei's position has never been re-evaluated.⁸¹ Brook mentions the cessation of research on wartime collaboration after 1989, when the Party-State reasserted control of memories of the War.⁸²

Except for the first decade of the Deng era, very little attempt seems to have been made in Chinese historiography to integrate Brook's suggestion to suspend judgments on collaboration.

II.4. Conclusion: state of the field

Three major shortcomings and gaps in the literature thus emerge.

First, the Republican era has been largely disregarded, and the present-day Xi Jinping era has yet to receive serious scholarly attention. Furthermore, the 'Benevolent Amnesia' paradigm stretches from 1945 to 1982, which includes only the post-war years of the Republican era, the 'Revolutionary Resistance' paradigm and the first years of the Deng Xiaoping era. Second, the more bottom-up historiography and commemoration, that started to develop in the 1980s does not seem to have a follow-up in today's China, contrary to some authors' initial expectations. Third, whereas Brook proposes a rethinking of wartime

⁷⁸ Wakeman 2000, 300-301.

⁷⁹ Brook 2008, 14.

⁸⁰ Mitter 2020, 19-20; Wakeman 2000, 323.

⁸¹ Lary 2019, 64; Taylor 2019, 157.

⁸² Brook 2012, 106.

collaboration beyond the good-evil-moralistic view, there is scant evidence that this has happened. These three points of critique expose a clear research need to be filled. The present thesis embarks on addressing these issues, at least in part.

III. Research design

The Sino-Japanese War and the Japanese Wartime occupation play a crucial role in contemporary Chinese historiography and present-day Sino-Japanese relations. The Party-State has prescribed what should and should not be remembered of the War across the different leadership periods. This approach has affected the discussion of the concept of collaboration, creating tensions, and deserves to be studied. My overall argument is that strong Party-State influence on memories of the War and a growing nationalism throughout all eras of leadership⁸³ under study here, have hindered and continue to hinder a rethinking of wartime collaboration.

Conceptual framework

This thesis analyses historiography and commemoration in four eras of Chinese leadership in accordance with Brook's 'four judgments to forget history', which were presented in Chapter II.3. The paradigms that characterize each of the four eras are:

1. 'Heroic Sacrifice' of the Republican era from 1912 to 1949
2. 'Revolutionary Heroism' from of the Mao era from 1949 to 1976
3. 'Normalization of Historiography' and 'National Victimization' of the Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin era from 1976 to 2003
4. 'Victor' of the Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping era from 2003 onwards

The discussion of each paradigm is in three parts. The first indicates China's place in the broader international political development and its main national development at the time. These political developments influence how the Party-State interprets memories of the War for political aims. The second applies Brook's 'four judgments to forget history' as a conceptual framework to analyse the Party-State's policy on historiography and commemoration of the War, and to evaluate the distortions of War memories that have occurred. The third part indicates if and when more serious consideration was given to nuanced views on collaboration. It also analyses how collaboration is viewed in the present time and its implications for views beyond the black-and-white dichotomy.

⁸³ The Maoist era put less emphasis on nationalism, but heavy constraints on historiography.

This thesis initially follows Reilly's classification, which identifies four distinct periods: a first period of 'Benevolent Amnesia' from 1945 to 1982 and three successive periods of changing approaches to War commemoration and people's response to Japanese war atrocities.⁸⁴ Reilly's classification omits the Republican era, however, despite recent trends in historiography of the War. This thesis accordingly adds the 'Heroic Sacrifice' paradigm of Chiang Kai-shek's leadership from 1912 to 1949, in particular to better grasp the concept and treatment of *hanjian* during wartime. Moreover, this is the era in which Chinese nationalism can be considered to have arisen. I also expand on Reilly's work by reflecting on the definite shift towards a 'Victor' paradigm during the Hu Jintao and current Xi Jinping era. This new paradigm exposes how the Party-State regained strong influence and control over present-day historiography and commemoration of the War.

Sources

The collected literature can be divided into four categories. The first includes English language works by Western and Chinese scholars. The second are works of mainland Chinese historians that have been translated into English. The third are translated primary sources: Lin Biao's essay, 'Document 9', Xi Jinping's 2015 commemoration speech, and the 2015 National Security Act. Finally, some online sources are used to explain terms and concepts in the text, such as the Yasukuni website or Tiezzi's commentary on Xi's 'three demands' of historiography.

A thesis on historiography depends on secondary sources. According to Thies, despite secondary sources' dependence on translation and the interpretation of scholars, they need to be no more problematic than primary sources, for the latter too are interpretations of historians.⁸⁵ Secondary Western and Chinese sources written by scholars active in the field of the Sino-Japanese War and China's remembrance of the War constitute the corpus on which this study is based. Some works from mainland China, that have been translated into English, such as Lin Biao's work and essays from CASS historians, also serve as reference material. These works reflect the Party-State's influence and Chinese historians' view on historiography. All works expose China's interpretation of the Wartime past to serve contemporary historiography and commemoration.

⁸⁴ Reilly 2011, 465. Reilly's classification: 1. China's 'Benevolent Amnesia', 2. China's Patriotic Education Campaign, 3. History activism and 4. Reversal in official rhetoric.

⁸⁵ Thies 2002, 358.

In applying mainly secondary sources, I refer to Becker: ““We depend on our predecessors. We couldn’t do our work if we didn’t use their methods, results, and ideas. Few people would be interested in our results if we didn’t indicate some relationship between them and what others have said and done before us.””⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Becker 2020, 127.

IV. Four paradigms: historiography, commemoration and Sino-Japanese wartime collaboration

This analysis examines how the Chinese Party-State in the successive eras of leadership has influenced historiography and commemoration of the War for political purposes. Sections IV.1 to IV.4. present a more elaborate analysis of the four paradigms, that were mentioned in the research design. I try to unpack these paradigms with the help of Brooks "four judgments" and thereby determine whether and when these judgments have been suspended.

IV.1. The Republican era: 'Heroic Sacrifice'

International and national politics, and domestic interpretation of the War

A few months after the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War in September 1937, the Nationalist government retreated to Chongqing to buy time in order to build up its army.⁸⁷ Yet it left a power gap in China's eastern coastal area, which was filled up by the collaborationist regime headed by Wang Jingwei, who regarded the War as lost and adopted a tactic of resistance by negotiation to safeguard the eastern coastal area.⁸⁸

As mentioned in Chapter II.2, although China had joined the allied powers, it mainly acted alone in its conflict with the Japanese.⁸⁹ As the War progressed, the Nationalists succeeded in bringing the foreign concessions and their extraterritorial regimes to an end, and also regained control over customs revenues in 1943. In the same year, Chiang represented China at the Cairo Conference, out of which ensued the restitutions of all areas occupied by Japan since 1914 to their respective countries.⁹⁰ Chiang wished for China to be regarded as a world power, and among the Allies that had helped to defeat fascism and shape the modern world.⁹¹ However, the Nationalist defeat in the 1949 Civil War relegated this ambition to the background.

In their domestic policies, much evidence indicates that the Nationalist government was applying strategies they had started in the 1920s to retain sovereignty and promote national unity and nationalism in the population. A prominent feature of the 'Heroic

⁸⁷ See Chapter II.2.

⁸⁸ Taylor 2015, 679. Boyle 1972, 32.

⁸⁹ Mitter 2020, 33.

⁹⁰ US Department of State, 'The Cairo Conference', <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/wwii/107184.htm>.

⁹¹ Mitter 2020, 45.

Sacrifice' paradigm is the development of and the use of mass mobilisation and propaganda. Chapter II.2 has mentioned examples of Nationalists' efforts to raise people's awareness of the enemy, and a sense of responsibility to each other and the State.

Other projects of raising nationalism were the 1937 and 1938 '*Regulations on Punishing Hanjian*'⁹² and the Nationalist Secret Service *juntong*,⁹³ which became an integral part of the top-down mass campaigns to identify and hunt down '*hanjian*'. This could be seen as an imposition by the State of a good-evil dichotomy regarding collaborators. *Hanjian* became a collective term for the public to eliminate those, who did not fit in the concept of 'good people', from society. On the other hand, the 1945 anti-*hanjian* regulations provided an escape clause to elude punishment. Collaborators who could provide evidence of service to the country during the War, could receive absolution, which prompted widespread claims of membership of underground networks.⁹⁴

The activities of the Shanghai bottom-up National Salvation Movement⁹⁵ could also have contributed to the raise of nationalism. These leftist intellectuals, who favoured mass mobilization, urged the Nationalist government and the people to join forces to resist the Japanese. Their narratives about heroes in wartime resistance, as opposed to China's helplessness, was intended to uphold morale and mobilize the people to support the nation. I am led to conclude that wartime reporters' positive narratives about national resistance might have helped to distort history and probably encouraged China to uphold the resistance narrative. After the 1980s many of these wartime records were used as sources for the Patriotic Education Campaign, historiography and China's 'new remembering' of the War.⁹⁶

The post-war trials meted out severe penalties for collaborators. Secret agents and those who were ordered to infiltrate opposing camps were criminalized.⁹⁷ Many who collaborated with or worked for the Japanese destroyed their wartime records and concealed their wartime activities.⁹⁸ In stark contrast, Japanese prisoners of war were treated with leniency. This 'virtue over malice' policy garnered support from the United

⁹² Xia 2017, 22-23.

⁹³ Wakeman 2000, 314-316.

⁹⁴ Yick 2001, 80-81.

⁹⁵ See chapter II.2.

⁹⁶ Coble 2015, 7-8.

⁹⁷ Yick 2001, 84.

⁹⁸ Brook 2007, 14.

States and Japan. The alliance with Japan and economic aid from Japan's ODA facilitated a start to rebuilding the country after the War. I assume that with the repatriation of Japanese prisoners of war and Japanese civilians, Chiang would also have wanted to eradicate Japanese influence in China, in order to focus on the fight against the Communists, as is confirmed by Yuan.⁹⁹

I believe that if Chiang had remained in power, China would not have been isolated in the Cold War. On the other hand, Chiang would still have had to face the Communists, who were more efficient in mobilizing the people and in resistance.¹⁰⁰ This might be one of the main reasons that the Communists defeated the Nationalists in the Civil War to come.

Brook's judgments and the War: implications and distortions

The Nationalists' mass campaigns and the 'rules to punish *hanjian*', along with the pursuit of *hanjian* by *juntong* and the wider population, demonstrate a strong *nationalistic, moral* and *partisan-political* judgment, which continued in the post-war trials.

The *nationalistic* judgement considers *hanjian* as the worst traitors to the Chinese race and agents of a 'loss of Chinese-ness'.¹⁰¹ *Hanjian* were deemed void of national pride, because they failed to join the resistance. In the *moral* judgment, any action outside the scope of resistance is condemnable. Both collaborators and political opponents lack morale. Wang Jingwei topped the list, as a collaborator and a political opponent. The *partisan-political* judgement is concerned with the clash between political-ideological opponents, and factions inside the Kuomintang. Wang Jingwei was a *hanjian* because he was both a political opponent of Chiang Kai-shek and a collaborator with the Japanese. The Communists and the Nationalists were struggling ideologically and therefore regarded each other as *hanjian*.

The first distortion in this paradigm is that both the Nationalists and Communists arguably viewed themselves as patriots and resisted the Japanese. Even Wang Jingwei, who probably collaborated for patriotic reasons, also defied the Japanese.¹⁰² All three parties claimed to be patriotic, and accused each other of being *hanjian*, who should be eliminated. The second distortion is that arbitrary interpretations of the '*regulations*' led to excesses in which unwanted people in society and even one's personal enemies could be conveniently

⁹⁹ Yuan 2013, 39.

¹⁰⁰ Perry, 40.

¹⁰¹ Wakeman 2000, 300.

¹⁰² Taylor 2015, 676.

eliminated.¹⁰³ The third distortion is that eliminating *hanjian* could serve as a substitute for resisting the powerful Japanese enemy.

The fourth distortion is the post-war's prosecuting of those who had worked for the Nationalist government as secret agents or counter-camp infiltrators, thus being treated as *hanjian*.¹⁰⁴ The fifth distortion is the more severe punishment of *hanjian* than Japanese prisoners of war. Chiang's post-war 'virtue over malice policy' ties in seamlessly with Mao's downplaying of Japan's war atrocities in the 1950s. The sixth distortion is the legal loophole, through which opportunists and those who claimed to have assisted in underground networks, could escape punishment.

The distortions indicate the prevalence of Brook's judgments during the War, in their black-and-white view in the treatment of (suspected) collaborators and social outcasts.

Assessing collaboration beyond the scope of Brook's judgments

Hanjian were held in even more contempt than the Japanese, for betraying their Chinese-ness and aiding and abetting Japan's exploitation.¹⁰⁵ However, some cases exhibit a suspension of Brook's 'judgments'. Those accused of being *hanjian*, but claimed to have participated in underground networks, could escape punishment. Another example is the case of Zhou Fohai, an executive yuan in the RNG who ultimately supported Chiang, and was initially sentenced to death. Because, after the Japanese capitulation, Zhou collaborated with *juntong* and thus safeguarded the Nanjing-Shanghai area, his death sentence was commuted to lifelong imprisonment.¹⁰⁶

I can conclude that in this paradigm the Nationalists, the Communists, and the Salvationist movement proclaimed the resistance narrative. This narrative was a means to promote national unity and nationalism. The post-war trials with the severe punishment of *hanjian* helped to uphold the resistance narrative. Except for some cases in which Brook's 'judgments' were suspended, the overall attitude towards *hanjian* was defined by the good-evil dichotomy.

¹⁰³ Xia, 26-27.

¹⁰⁴ Yick, 84.

¹⁰⁵ Xia, 10.

¹⁰⁶ Yick, 82.

IV.2. The Maoist era: 'Revolutionary Heroism'

International and national politics, and domestic interpretation of the War

Chiang, having been defeated by the Communists at the end of the Civil War in 1949, fled to Taiwan, and on October 1st 1949 the People's Republic of China was established.

The subsequent Cold War left China largely isolated from the global world until the late 1970s, when the Reform era started.¹⁰⁷ Due to its isolation, the new republic had to construct its own War narrative. The new dominating narrative of Communist resistance and victory over class enemies, indicated a revolutionary break with the past,¹⁰⁸ and turned the War into a backdrop for class struggle.¹⁰⁹ This narrative also prevailed in the West during the Cold War, as has been confirmed by Western authors such as Chalmers Johnson, who in 1962 presented the Communist success story of the people's and peasant's resistance.¹¹⁰ The other side of the Maoist narrative is the dismissal of the sufferings and deaths of many victims of Japanese aggression in the War.

In their domestic policy the Communists adopted social institutions and regulations of the Nationalists, such as mass campaigns, political propaganda, the regulations to treat *hanjian* and *baojia (danwei)* system in order to control the population.¹¹¹ Collection and research of historical records and documents of the Republican era began after 1950, mainly to support the political purges in mass campaigns in the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1967).¹¹² Maoist era's elimination of *hanjian* and purge campaigns resemble the Republican era's hunt on *hanjian* and people who do not fit in society. The purging of intellectuals, as well as leftists who had supported the Communist cause or served the Communists, along with omission of the War in textbooks is tantamount to erasing memories of the War.

As mentioned in Chapter II.1, research of the War was not encouraged. The generation after 1976 thus was devoid of knowledge of the War. On the other hand, the preserved wartime records and documents, have served as sources for history-writing in subsequent era's.

¹⁰⁷ See Chapter II.1.

¹⁰⁸ Lin Biao 1967, 167, 210.

¹⁰⁹ Gao Rui 2015, 122-123.

¹¹⁰ Johnson 1962, 16-20.

¹¹¹ See Chapter II.2.

¹¹² Du 2007, 428.

The Communists banned the commemoration of the dead, as well as war victims because they considered it feudal.¹¹³ Maoist policy might suggest that the 'Heroic Resistance' paradigm was devoid of commemoration of the War. However, Chan Yang's 2016 research illustrates commemoration of the War during the 1960s visits by Japanese delegations to Nanjing and shows that memories of the War were certainly not eradicated. Museum exhibitions, which displayed the crimes of the War, and opera performances showed how the Chinese have experienced the War.¹¹⁴ This study might serve as evidence that commemoration of the War existed alongside the official narrative of Communist resistance in the first decades of the Maoist era.

Collaborators with the Japanese were punished more severely by the Communists than under the Nationalists. The black-and-white view in the treatment of *hanjian* is obvious in the case of secret agent Pan Hannian. Pan, who was a loyal Communist, whose encountering with Wang Jingwei, the Nationalist secret service *juntong*, and the Japanese, were all for the purpose of protecting Communists operating in enemy areas. However, having been condemned by Mao as a *da tewu da neijian* (a prominent secret agent and an internal traitor), he was executed.¹¹⁵ Those who wrote about the War and the members of the Salvationist Movement were also prosecuted, if not immediately after the war, then in the purges, particularly in the One Hundred Flowers movement (1956-1957) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).¹¹⁶

On the other hand, the Communists downplayed Japanese War atrocities with their narrative of Communist victory and in the lenient treatment of Japanese prisoner of War after 1950. I see reason to believe that downplaying the Japanese war atrocities could have served two purposes. First, it provided space to the Communist heroic resistance narrative, by which Communist rule was legitimized. Two contradicting narratives could not serve political goals properly. Second, the geopolitical strategy, in line with Chiang's 'virtue over malice' policy could be seen as a way to survive the Cold War, as collaborators did in wartime. China eventually needed Japan as an ally to counter the Soviet threat after the Sino-Soviet split in 1962, and for economic support to rebuild the country. This policy also

¹¹³ Lary 2019, 67-68.

¹¹⁴ Chan 2016, 1717-1721.

¹¹⁵ Yick 2001, 83.

¹¹⁶ Coble 2015, 175.

resulted in Japan's recognition of the PRC in 1972. Japan became a role model for China's technical and economic development.¹¹⁷

Brook's judgments and the War: implications and distortions

The Communist view of collaboration demonstrated strong '*partisan-political*' and '*humanitarian*' elements. Its staunch *partisan-political* judgement upholds the Communist resistance narrative. People whose support of Communist ideology was less than total were labelled *hanjian*, thus enabling the persecution and purging not only of Nationalists, and 'class enemies', but also comrades who had been in contact with or were engaged to infiltrate the Nationalist or Japanese camps. These infiltrators were considered unreliable. The Communist view of class enemies as exploiters of workers and peasants could be considered a *humanitarian* judgment, constituting a crime against the people.

The first distortion in this paradigm echoes the distorted view of the Communists as *hanjian* in the 'Heroic Sacrifice' paradigm. Although the Nationalists were patriots, but as the Communists' political opponents they were regarded as class enemies and *hanjian*. The second distortion is the repression of traumatic memories of the War by placing an alternative emphasis on class struggle. The War faded into the background in the fight against class enemies, thereby ignoring the suffering of millions of war victims.¹¹⁸ The extension of this policy in the third distortion is the downplaying of Japanese war atrocities in order to gain an ally in the Sino-Soviet conflict and financial aid from Japan.

The fourth distortion is that Japanese soldiers who had committed war crimes were viewed as 'proletarians', who had been forced to suffer under Japan's militarists.¹¹⁹ The fifth distortion is the revolutionary break with the past and forbidding of historiography of the War, which is comparable with erasing memories of a War that had great impact of the lives of many. The sixth distortion is the purging of intellectuals and those who supported the Communists in the War but were later classified as class enemies. The Communist purges could also be considered to be crimes against humanity. The seventh and not the least important distortion is disregard of the Nationalist contribution to warfare. Van de Ven

¹¹⁷ Reilly 2011, 470.

¹¹⁸ Gao Rui, 110.

¹¹⁹ Gao Rui, 123.

notes that while Mao was developing his 'Mao Zedong Thoughts' in Yan'an and purging class enemies, the Nationalist armies bore the burden of fighting the Japanese.¹²⁰

Assessing collaboration beyond the scope of Brook's judgments?

There were politically pragmatic reasons to regard the lenient treatment of some groups as a suspension of the black-and-white view in the comrade-*hanjian* dichotomy. While former Nationalist bureaucrats were treated as the most egregious class enemies, professionals, technicians and experts who were needed for rebuilding the country were treated with more leniency.¹²¹ However, these groups were later also purged. Notable is that Sun Yat-sen's widow, who had joined the National Salvation Movement was not prosecuted, while many members of this movement were purged. She could also have fit in the profile of a class enemy. Protecting her from prosecution might have been linked to Sun's political legacy, which was also respected by the Communists.¹²²

From this I conclude that the attitude to suspected *hanjian* at least reflects a great mistrust of anyone beyond the proletarian-class enemy dichotomy, and might have resulted in the unnecessary loss of life of many who in fact supported Communist ideology and could have been judged differently.

IV.3. The Deng Xiaoping-Jiang Zemin era: Normalisation of Historiography and 'National Victimization'

International and national politics, and domestic interpretation of the War

China's opening up to the world and its economic reforms from the end of the 1970s initiated another turbulent era. The end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union around 1990 were perceived as a threat to Chinese Communist ideology.

Notwithstanding these changes, Deng Xiaoping was of the opinion that China should catch up with the modern world. Furthermore, this era was characterized by the increasing influence of bottom-up public opinion and popular nationalism on State policy and Sino-Japanese relations.¹²³

¹²⁰ Van de Ven 2018, 15.

¹²¹ Xia 2017, 175.

¹²² Britannica Academic, 'Song Qingling', <https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/levels/collegiate/article/Song-Qingling/68720>.

¹²³ Gries et al. 2016, 266.

In the 1980s many *hanjian* and intellectuals, who were purged in the Maoist era, were rehabilitated.¹²⁴ Deng's 'Four Modernizations' created a more liberal atmosphere, and led to the availability of wartime records for both Chinese and Western historians. This allowed the production of alternative historiography, which included bottom-up history-writing, and the rehabilitation of Chiang's efforts during the War. I assume that the accessibility of wartime records gave those who could not express their thoughts during the Maoist era, to now take the opportunity to research more sensitive aspects of the War. Family members of those accused of being *hanjian* would also have been able to explore local archives in search of evidence to exculpate their parents or grandparents, which is confirmed by Du.¹²⁵

The economic reforms, however, caused internal political conflict among the Party top, as well as social inequality and unrest,¹²⁶ which culminated in the 1989 Tiananmen protest. The handling of this event drew global criticism, bolstering the population to call for greater freedom and democracy. By pointing to Japanese war atrocities, the leaders attempted to redirect social and political unrest towards remembrance of the War and Japan's war atrocities, and to turn the tide of people's disenchantment with Communist ideology.

As mentioned in Chapter II.1, museums already started in 1985 to present the official War narrative, which suggests that the Party-State had started to instil nationalism even before the Patriotic Education Campaign. The success of Jiang Zemin's top-down institutionalized Patriotic Education Campaign after 1991,¹²⁷ was attributable to having a theme that captured the imagination of the population. Memoirs of wartime reporters, among other narratives, served for patriotic education in the campaign.¹²⁸ Young people in the 1990s recognized the stories of war sufferings handed down by their parents and grandparents, and could identify themselves with war sufferings. This confirms Hobsbawn's observation that the success of commemoration depends on popular demand for it.¹²⁹ China's humiliation by the Japanese served as a binding factor and aroused nationalism.¹³⁰

¹²⁴ Goldman 1996, 38.

¹²⁵ Du 2007, 428.

¹²⁶ See Chapter II.1.

¹²⁷ Perry, 31. The Campaign points to the greatness of China's past, and CCP's sacrifices in rebuilding the nation.

¹²⁸ Coble 2015, 179.

¹²⁹ See Chapter II.

¹³⁰ Wang Zheng 2008, 787.

This analysis distils some side effects evoked by the Patriotic Education Campaigns. One is the deep anger about China's humiliation, aroused by the bottom-up War narratives, with clear references to war crimes. Another is that the repeated mention of war trauma leads Japan to accuse China of playing the history card.¹³¹ This could lead to the strengthening of Japan's right wing in highlighting its competing version of the War narrative. A third side effect is xenophobia and hatred against Japan and its culture. Those with a more nuanced view on Sino-Japanese relations and those urging restraint on the history issue in the interest of normalizing Sino-Japanese relations are most likely to find themselves labelled *hanjian*.

Brook's judgments and the War: implications and distortions

The patriotism evoked by the education campaigns involves strong *nationalistic*, *moral* and *partisan-political* judgements towards Japan. It is particularly *nationalistic* because it points to Japan as 'the other' who insulted China. The rise of War museums around the country and their exhibits epitomize this *nationalistic* judgment. According to the *moral* judgement it is reprehensible to sympathize with Japan. The act of drawing attention to Japan's crimes in the Nanjing Massacre reflects a *humanitarian* judgement. However, in this respect the Party-State has used Japanese war atrocities, which were an insult of China, as a tool to support the *nationalistic* judgment.

The first distortion in this paradigm is that the rehabilitation of many prosecuted *hanjian* in the 1980s, has failed to lead the Party-State to a more profound reconsideration of collaboration. Wang Jingwei, who may well have collaborated for patriotic motives, remained a 'traitor', while Chiang Kai-shek was given, at least in part, an opportunity to shed his equally long-held *hanjian* label.¹³² One reason of this selective rehabilitation of *hanjian* is the legacy of the War that Chiang left and legitimizes China's claim to a prominent position in the world, whereas the same cannot be said of Wang. Another reason is mainland China's wish to reunify with Taiwan. The changed historiography of the War, mentioning the joint Nationalist and Communist opposition to the Japanese, can be seen as part of this agenda.

The second distortion is that, despite the relatively liberal climate in the early 1980s, Chinese historians hesitated to reconsider the historiography of wartime collaboration. This

¹³¹ Reilly 2011, 472.

¹³² See Chapter II.1.

may be related to the small interest of the Party-State in reconsidering cooperation. It can also prove the connection of historiography and commemoration with the political agenda of the Party-State. This is in line with the third distortion, that museums all over mainland China present the War narrative with a focus on resistance, while failing to mention collaboration.¹³³ The fourth distortion is the threat of nationalism to Sino-Japanese relations and the ignoring of Japan's aid to China. China did receive technical and economic support from Japan to rebuild after the War.

The fifth distortion is that the emphasis on China's 'National Victimization' turned a more nuanced assessment of the War that started in the 1980s into a black-and-white position regarding Japan. This fits in the sixth distortion of the rapid change in climate from relatively liberal in thought and expression, to more restrictive and nationalistic. The seventh distortion is that the top-down Patriotic Education Campaign induced a powerful bottom-up public opinion and patriotism, which might be unexpected by the State, and challenging Party-State's control and Sino-Japanese policy.

In the ninth distortion, Japanese War atrocities were fiercely criticized, whereas Chinese historians viewed Nationalist acts in the War as justifiable. By re-assessment of the humanitarian and natural disaster caused by the Nationalist army's breaching of the Yellow River dike in 1938,¹³⁴ this act was viewed as tactics of war, and the loss of life and property as collateral damage.¹³⁵

Assessing collaboration beyond the scope of Brook's judgments

Because Deng strived to suspend ideological constraints, many people, purged during the Maoist era, and *hanjian* were rehabilitated.¹³⁶ In 1980, Pan Hannian was posthumously exonerated from all charges. He was praised as a loyal and outstanding Communist whose efforts had served the Party and the people.¹³⁷

The first decade of the Deng Xiaoping era can be regarded as a period in which China suspended Brook's judgments to allow research and a more nuanced view of the War. As mentioned in Chapter II.1, many scholars took the opportunity to write alternative views on

¹³³ See chapter II.1.

¹³⁴ Lary 2001. The dike was breached as a strategy to prevent Japanese progress to Wuhan in 1938. Maoist historians criticized this act as an aim to eliminate the Communists.

¹³⁵ Lary 2001, 202; Coble 2007, 407-408.

¹³⁶ Yick 2001, 83.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

the War. Western and Chinese historians as well, such as Brook¹³⁸ and Huang Meizhen, started exploring Chinese sources to investigate Sino-Japanese wartime interaction. This seems to have been the only period in which more sensitive topics could be freely explored. After 1989, the Party-State ended the research on collaboration by labelling it unpatriotic.

The re-evaluation of the breaching of the Yellow River dike by the Nationalists in 1938 might be regarded as a suspension of Brook's judgments. Except for revising historiography, this could be part of the reappraisal of Chiang's war efforts and a way of seeking rapprochement with Taiwan. The other side is that this great disaster and its consequences were downplayed.

However, bottom-up narratives exposing Japan's War atrocities and the subsequent successful patriotic education campaigns boosted nationalism and adherence to the official narrative.

IV.4. The Hu Jintao-Xi Jinping era: 'Victor'

International and national politics, and domestic interpretation of the War

The Reform era has elevated China from a developing country in the 1980s to a country of strong economic growth and development. Encouraged by its success, China is now rethinking its position in the world, and it has gradually stepped away from Deng's advice to keep a low profile. The 'Victor' paradigm turns the 'National Victimization' narrative to one of China's active resistance leading to victory in the War, with a major role for the Chinese Communist Party.

As mentioned in Chapter II.2, during Hu Jintao's regime, the 2003-2004 'new thinking' debate, and an attempt to create a shared narrative of the War, failed to garner popular support. A proposal of some scholars to consider the apology issue resolved and look ahead to improve Sino-Japanese relations has been fiercely criticized by public opinion as well as fellow scientists.¹³⁹ The 2012 Diaoyu protests¹⁴⁰ were next clear evidence the vulnerability of Sino-Japanese relations, and that anti-Japanese protests can be sparked by seemingly minor events.

¹³⁸ Brook 2007, 'Collaboration', Brook explored local archives in Shanghai to investigate wartime interactions between collaborators and occupiers.

¹³⁹ Gries 2005, 837.

¹⁴⁰ Gries et al. 2016, 265-266. The Diaoyu disputes led to a cascade of sentiments, expressed on the cyberspace and demonstrations, and military interference. The Diaoyu Islands were ceded to Japan according the 1895 Shimonoseki Treaty, whereas the Cairo Conference stipulated Japan to return areas it occupied from 1914 onwards.

Xi Jinping, Hu Jintao's successor in 2012, has combined the achievements of previous paradigms in profiling China in foreign and domestic politics. The 'Heroic Sacrifice' paradigm provided Chiang's legacy of the War and his idea of China as a major force in the fight against fascism. The 'Revolutionary Heroism' paradigm provided Maoist ideology of Chinese socialism, but also the Communists' claim to have ended the 'Age of Humiliation'. Deng's 'Four Modernizations' principle of looking forward and the strive for economic progress has resulted in the country's economic growth. China's victory in the War and its economic growth has restored China's ancient grandeur of a country with thousands of years of history and an impressive cultural heritage. 'China's Rejuvenation' also promotes the restoration of Confucian philosophy and moral values,¹⁴¹ which were rejected by nationalist reformers at the beginning of the twentieth century. Linking present-day China with the greatness of its past, Xi prefers the continuity of history to a Maoist revolutionary break with the past.

In contrast to his predecessors, Xi Jinping has taken a more anticipatory and assertive approach to controlling domestic stability and historiography. As mentioned in Chapter II.2, Document 9's attack on 'historical nihilism' was intended to prohibit the questioning of historical events and CCP policies in the past, such as the Cultural Revolution or the ending of the Tiananmen protest. Many archives were duly closed to the public, and collaboration with Western scholars in researching history of the War strongly discouraged. China is now expected to produce historiography of the War without 'polluting influences from the West'. Furthermore, article 15 of the 2015 National Security Act¹⁴² is intended to entrench patriotic education, perpetuate the 'inherited Chinese traditional culture' and the 'core values of socialism'. Lecturers of higher education are acquired to adhere to this precept and refrain from introducing Western democratic values.¹⁴³

Xi's and Abe's 2015 commemoration speeches¹⁴⁴ on the seventieth anniversary of the Second Sino-Japanese War illustrate the wide gap between Chinese and Japanese interpretations of the War. Xi urged the people to look back at history, pointing to Japan's aggression in the War. He believes that the War has determined China's present, and is of importance to its future as a great world power. Xi makes 'three demands' of historiography

¹⁴¹ De Burgh 2018, 105-106.

¹⁴² Ministry of Defense, 'National security Law of the People's Republic of China (2015)', http://eng.mod.gov.cn/publications/2017-03/03/content_4774229.htm.

¹⁴³ Tiffert 2019, 41.

¹⁴⁴ China.org.cn. 2015, 'Xi's Commemoration Speech', http://www.china.org.cn/china/2015-09/03/content_36489889.htm. Kawashima 2015, 'How to read Abe's statement', <https://thediplomat.com/2015/08/how-to-read-the-abe-statement/>.

of the War: to convey the significance of the War, China's important status in the global anti-fascist war, and the CCP's central role in winning the War.¹⁴⁵ He believes that historiography of the War is in progress, and more research is claimed to be needed in the quest to produce correct historiography. In contrast, Abe Shinzo's speech urged the Japanese people to look forward rather than backward, and said it was time for Japan to stop apologizing for the War. Sino-Japanese political friction concerning the War thus lingers unresolved.

In Xi's policies I recognize two distinct aspects concerned with State control on historiography. First, the emphasis on the research into 'true history' of the War and the 'three demands' of historiography reflect increasing state control over and constraints on research on the War. Historiography is required to be 'accurate' and confirm the CCP's view of the War. Second, the revival of the achievements and greatness of China's millennia-long history. Both aspects reflect a strong sense of Chinese nationalism. Xi's measures may have thrown cold water on research and education, particularly in the social sciences and humanities,¹⁴⁶ and hinder Chinese scholars in expressing views depart from the official line, as is confirmed by Tiffert and Lo.¹⁴⁷

Xi's policies show some parallels with those in the 'revolutionary heroism' paradigm. Mao, too, imposed restrictions on the historiography of the War: the Communist narrative was the official version. At the time, historiography of the War could be dangerous, as could alternative views on the official narrative.

Brook's judgments and the War: implications and distortions

The 'Victor' paradigm of the Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping era, and the rejuvenation of China's culture and history, might exacerbate China's nationalism, that started in the 'National Victimization' paradigm.

Except for Hu Jintao's policy to soften the history issue and to improve Sino-Japanese relations, the present era reflects strong *nationalistic*, *partisan-political* and *moralistic* judgements. The fierce renunciation of alternative and nuanced views on Japan in the 2003-2004 'new thinking' debate can be regarded as *nationalistic* and *partisan-political*

¹⁴⁵ Tiezzi 2015, 'What China means by a Correct View', <https://thedi diplomat.com/2015/08/what-china-means-by-a-correct-view-on-ww2-history>.

¹⁴⁶ Zhao, 90.

¹⁴⁷ Tiffert 2019, 41; Lo Kinling 2020, 'Academics need freedom', <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3113040/academics-need-freedom-speak-china-become-ideological>.

judgements. Nuanced views on Japan can be interpreted as criticism of the nationalistic view. The *moralistic* judgment regards a nuanced view on Japan condemnable.

The focus on the achievements in China's long history, and to learn from history, reflects a strong *nationalistic* judgement, because of its stress on national pride. The restoration of the Party-State's control of history and the closure of archives to the public are in line with this *nationalistic* judgement: the people should support the state and its official narrative of the War. Xi Jinping's policy of dismissing historical 'nihilism' reflects a *partisan-political* judgement: the Party-State decides what constitutes history, and alternative narratives and the discussion of sensitive issues of Communist history are regarded as reactionary.

The first distortion in this paradigm is that, despite Hu Jintao's efforts to improve Sino-Japanese relations, Chinese nationalism decided otherwise, and continued to stress that Japan's lack of remorse and its downplaying of responsibility for the War cannot be forgiven. The second distortion is the radical transformation of China as 'victim' to China as 'victor', which resembles the Maoist era's emphasis on victory over the counterparty. However, the 'Victor' paradigm does not downplay Japanese war atrocities, but employs these to underscore China's strength and resilience in recovering from the devastation caused by the War. The War turned from backdrop to a prominent event in China's long history.

The third distortion is the transition from a relatively liberal interpretation of the War, with alternative and bottom-up narratives in the 1980s and 1990s, to a controlled historiography and commemoration. The fourth distortion is the limits placed on foreign resources to interpret the War and on foreign influence on academic thinking. This seems to contradict Xi Jinping's call to increase the international interchange of research on the War.¹⁴⁸ The fifth distortion is China's claim to Chiang's War legacy to raise the profile of its position as a world power, while the CCP presents the Communists as the main victors in the War.

Assessing collaboration beyond the scope of Brook's judgments

The beginning of the first decade of the 2000s might be regarded as a short-lived period of suspension of the Brook's 'judgments', that was halted by popular nationalism.

¹⁴⁸ Mitter 2020, 89. Although this statement also includes Xi's wish of international recognition of China's role in the War.

Unfortunately, films that provided a more nuanced portrait of *hanjian*, did not appear to have changed attitudes towards collaboration and the Japanese.¹⁴⁹ I believe that these films were released one or two decades too late. Before the Patriotic Education campaigns, they might have been better received by the public. Chinese nationalism has prevented them from gaining a foothold.

Although Brook believes that research on collaboration stopped after 1989, CASS historian Gao Yingying presents a literature review of twenty-first century studies on collaboration in the Japanese-occupied areas. However, its main thrust was to prove the aggression and exploitation perpetrated by the Japanese and collaborationist governments.¹⁵⁰ By focusing on these aspects the ambiguity of collaboration has been ignored in these studies, and therefore they fit into Brook's 'judgments'.

Today, collaboration and the epithet of *hanjian* is applied to those who do not support 'The China Dream' that is embodied in various concepts in the 'Victor' paradigm. An example is Yu Maochun, who was raised in Chongqing and is now an adviser to US Secretary of State Pompeo. For serving the United States government, and his questioning of Chinese policy, Yu is regarded as a *hanjian* and his name was chiselled from a school monument that celebrates its most distinguished alumni.¹⁵¹

The 'three demands of historiography' and State's control on it, together with the disregard of 'historical nihilism' could hinder alternative versions of the official War narrative and allow no scope for reconsidering collaboration.

¹⁴⁹ See Chapter II.2.

¹⁵⁰ Gao Yingying 2015, 135-138.

¹⁵¹ Ho 2020, 'Mike Pompeo's China adviser has name chiselled off school monument', <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3095230/us-china-relations-mike-pompeos-china-adviser-has-name>.

V. Discussion and analysis

The Second Sino-Japanese War was and remains one of the most important events in contemporary Chinese historiography and commemoration. The War ended China's status as a semi-colony, ending occupation of part of its territory by various European countries and of Japan. It also contributed to the collapse of the Nationalists' regime and the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

During the War, collaboration was widespread in occupied areas as a way to survive the difficult circumstances in wartime. Occupation could in fact not have succeeded without some form of collaboration,¹⁵² yet it is rarely discussed in Chinese historiography. The development of Chinese nationalism, which started in the Republican era, includes a definition of what is pro and contra Chinese, and no blurring of this boundary is tolerated. The unhappy fate of political opponents, infiltrators and secret agents testify that they were no longer to be trusted, after they crossed the boundaries and thus labelled *hanjian*.

The Maoist era continued this dichotomy, then also regarding all 'non-proletarians' as *hanjian*. Deng Xiaoping's 'Four Modernizations' allowed more freedom of research and speech, which resulted in the temporary suspension of Brook's 'judgments', with the rehabilitation of those labelled *hanjian* in the Maoist era. Freedom of research also provided alternative historiography of the War. In alternative narratives Japanese atrocities and Chinese humiliation by the Japanese in the War were highlighted. However, when more freedom of speech led to the call for more democracy and to social unrest, Jiang Zemin eventually re-introduced mass campaigns, stressing remembrance of the War revolving around Japanese War atrocities, hoping to restore social cohesion. The effects of these campaigns under the new 'National Victimization' paradigm prove Hobsbawn and Nora's theories that commemoration is indeed most effective when the people can identify with the topic concerned.

The opening of War commemoration museums all over the country since 1985 (which predates the Tiananmen protests) are evidence of the Party-State's continuous efforts to push for its own narrative of the Sino-Japanese War. The narrative presented in those museums, simplify War events, focusing on Chinese resistance on the one side, facing Japanese War crimes on the other. Largely ignored are collaboration or humanitarian

¹⁵² Brook 2008, 9. Zanasi 2015, 525-526.

disasters inflicted by actions from Chinese side, such as the breaching of the Yellow River dike in 1938 by the Nationalists.¹⁵³ The public success of museums reflects the need of the people to commemorate the War. The simplistic good-evil war narrative presented seems to confirm Brockmeier's idea that remembering heroism (i.e. resistance) is preferable to the dark sides of war (i.e. collaboration). It also confirms Nora's view of manipulation of memories.¹⁵⁴

The raise of nationalism over the past decades indicates the apparent success of State's policy, but growing anti-Japanese sentiments hinder the normalization of Sino-Japanese relationship. It could be questioned whether the leadership under Deng had foreseen the effects of more freedom of speech. It could also be questioned whether Deng and Jiang had foreseen the effects of aroused nationalism and public opinion on Sino-Japanese relationship.

Had the 2002-2003 'new thinking' debate been given enough room, there could have been opportunity for a more nuanced historiography and discussion of collaboration. However, this debate took place too late and could not gain a foothold under nationalism. The aforementioned could be seen as a prologue of Xi Jinping's policy after 2012. In my view, Xi and his ideology came at the right time. His measures, expressed in the 'three demands on historiography' might constrain academic research and thinking, and demand historiography to fit in the atmosphere of patriotism and nationalism, while China's 2003-2004 'new thinking' debate does not.

In foreign policy China strives to be recognized as a world power. Xi's concepts of the 'China Dream' and 'China's Rejuvenation' stress China's millennium-long history and its victory over fascism, claiming the country's rightful position as one of the powers shaping the modern world. With these concepts Xi also intends to remind the people of their cultural heritage, which is superior to Western civilization.¹⁵⁵ These concepts and regulations give out some clues regarding Xi's agenda for shaping China's future. Xi's striving to promote nationalism and unity can be seen as cultivating a strong foundation for a strong nation. They might also reflect his concerns about domestic chaos and social diversity, perceived as a threat to the 'China Dream'. An example of this concern might be his fear for the

¹⁵³ See chapter IV.3.

¹⁵⁴ See Chapter I. Brockmeier, 15.

¹⁵⁵ Winberg and Chai 2017, 30.

introducing of 'polluting ideas', such as democracy, but also of Western views on the War, which may be different from CCP's War narrative.

Xi's strive for 'true', 'fact-based' historiography might emphasize and legalize Communist victory over the Japanese and fascism. Although Chiang's War legacies have been recognized, nevertheless they might shift again to the background. Another consequence of this policy might be the continued presentation of what He Yinan calls 'a distorted narrative'¹⁵⁶ to the people. This narrative, presented in museum exhibitions, school textbooks and commemoration of the War, might at last serve as what Wertsch calls another 'specific narrative' of the War.¹⁵⁷ For future generations this narrative might be 'true history'. In this historiography there will be no fair place for collaboration. It will still be remembered as evil and China's weakness, or it might be mentioned as footnote.

Chinese nationalism rejects collaboration fiercely. Yet I believe that nationalism is closely connected to collaboration, as the latter seems to fuel the former. Nationalism's attitude towards collaboration targets anyone who appears not to support nationalist claims. As Brook states: "'Treason being a pre-national concept, nationalism demanded a new concept redolent of improper liaisons and denied parentage, and collaboration became nationalism's evil twin"'.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ See chapter I.

¹⁵⁷ Wertsch 2008, 140-142. The War serves as a general, schematic narrative. Random events in the War can be used to construct specific narratives.

¹⁵⁸ Brook 2012, 105.

VI. Conclusion

This thesis has analysed the place of wartime collaboration in Chinese historiography and commemoration. With Brook's 'four judgments to forget history' as a theoretical framework, four paradigms of Chinese leadership have been examined to understand how in each paradigm memories of the War and wartime collaboration have been treated. With Brook's proposal to suspend the 'judgments' and to study what really happened in collaboration, I have sought evidence of this suspension in historiography.

This thesis' analysis distils three major points. First, in each paradigm the Party-State applied memories of the War (i.e. the past) to create a narrative that resonates with the people, in order to support its political goals in the present (presentism). In all the paradigms the Party-state could not have succeeded in its policy without the people's support. Second, the War marked the beginning of the development of China's nationalism and identity, which started in the 'Heroic Sacrifice' paradigm, reintroduced in the 'National Victimization' paradigm and is paramount in present-day's 'Victor' paradigm. Third, except in the Deng Xiaoping era, there had been hardly any room for the discussion of wartime collaboration.

To quote Hu Qiaomu, "historiography is intended to illustrate the truth and to serve the Party and the people".¹⁵⁹ All paradigms show that historiography has served the Party. All four paradigms mainly show the dominance of Brook's 'judgments to forget history' over a suspension of these. A glimpse of a suspension of the 'judgments' appeared in the 1980s with a more bottom-up historiography of the War, promising what Mitter calls the 'normalization and globalization' of world historiography. However, political and social unrest brought about by the economic reforms, urged Jiang Zemin to use the old political tool of mass campaigns to turn public's attention to Japan's atrocities in the War.

The mutual influence between the party state and the public is reflected in the success of the Patriotic Education Campaign, but also in the fierce public protests against Hu Jintao's efforts to mitigate the War issue with the aim of improving Sino-Japanese relations. This situation could have the potential to undermine the authority of the Party-State. However, apart from signs of local aggression toward Japanese objects, such as buildings and flags and insults directed to Japanese people,¹⁶⁰ there have been no events which could

¹⁵⁹ Barmé 1991, 14.

¹⁶⁰ Gries 2005, 844-845.

have clearly undermined State authority. Perry believes that the Party-State is aware of this phenomenon and is careful to direct signs of unrest that can be evoked by public opinion into orbits that it has mapped out.¹⁶¹

Rousseau's concept of 'Vichy syndrome'¹⁶² is mentioned by authors, such as Mitter and Reilly, in their explanation of China's persistently pointing to Japanese war crimes. In processing its trauma of the War, China consistently skipped step three of Rousseau's concept, by precluding alternative views of the War. By ignoring the reconsideration of collaboration, the resistance narrative cannot be questioned. Furthermore, by holding on to the resistance narrative China refuses to move away from step four, which is reinforced by its nationalism. This attitude bears some resemblance to China's reluctance to part with its deep-seated anger towards Japan.¹⁶³ This process prevents the Chinese public from giving up its black-and-white judgment of Japan. A contradiction is that the majority of present-day China has no personal experiences of the War.

Chinese historians have never fully researched the issue of wartime collaboration. In that case the political agendas of the three parties (Nationalists, Communists and the RNC) for China's future, after the War should be explored.¹⁶⁴ He Yan acknowledges the difficulties for Chinese historians to undertake critical scholarship in modern Chinese history. She believes that a non-political intellectual dialogue of both Chinese and Japanese historians could transform myth-making into shared memories of the War, in a way that states cannot.¹⁶⁵ In this regard, Chinese historians should be able to distance themselves from Hu Qiaomu's statement on historiography. Realizing that these suggestions are far from reality in the present era, I support her opinion. Research not bound by political agendas, will serve the interest of historiography and could provide a less flattened and more complete narrative of the War, and promote a shared understanding of the past.

With this thesis I hope to have added some preliminary work to the research on wartime collaboration and how the Party-State's influence and Chinese nationalism affect alternative views on wartime occupation. This thesis' exploration of the historiography of the War has largely answered my research questions. Research into collaboration in the four

¹⁶¹ Perry 2017, 43-44.

¹⁶² See Chapter I.

¹⁶³ Gries 2004, 93. He 2013, 12.

¹⁶⁴ Wakeman 2000, 323.

¹⁶⁵ He 2013, 14-16.

paradigms has uncovered the powerful voice of the Chinese Party-State in handling memories of the war in historiography and commemoration, and the power of invoked Chinese nationalism.

One limitation of the thesis is that, except for a few translated works of mainland China historians, it relies mainly on secondary literature in the English language written by Western and Chinese scholars based outside China. As a result, the Western view of China's political culture dominates in this thesis. The use of more sources of mainland Chinese historians might have enabled a more balanced assessment. Other limitations are that public's influence on Party-State's policy has been mentioned only incidentally. Neither the dissent from the official nationalist War narrative, nor the public's attitude to this dissent have been researched. What also remains to be researched is how alternative historiography of the War survives in an atmosphere of constraints imposed on history-writing in the Xi-Jinping era.

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