Victims and Victimizers: Public Memory and Apology in Japan and the US on the 50th Anniversary of the Atomic Bombings

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Introduction

Public memory is the way that we as citizens collectively remember our country's past. This space is a highly controlled retelling of events, and is a frequent point of contention as different groups fight to define the narrative. This is especially true in the case of war, and even more so in the case of World War II, since it was a war of national ideology.

Almost universally, war is regarded as a terrible, but sometimes necessary event. To this extent, the way that citizens understand *why* their country is involved in a war is crucial to maintaining national stability and popular support for the government. While Japan is often criticized for its World War II narrative, it's not clear that America is any better. Japanese memory is one that is heavily shaped by the government and which skims over Japanese atrocities, focusing instead on Japanese experience as victims of the atomic bomb. American memory of the same war is sensitive, and not open to challenge or reinterpretation. It too was shaped heavily by government. These complex, and often conflicting narratives of war are forces that continue to cause international tensions and prevent reconciliation.

The 50th anniversary of the end of World War II in 1995 was a prime time for former enemies to reconcile. The Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union had just wrapped up a few years earlier, and the anniversary brought the war to public attention. Despite this, no reconciliations or apologies occurred between the US and Japan. In fact, in 1995, the two countries publicly supported opposing views on the bomb: President Clinton affirmed (to the relief of many US veterans) that there would be no

apology for Hiroshima, since wrongs had been done by their use.[1] On the other end, Motoshima, mayor of Nagasaki, said that the US was wrong to use the atomic bombs on Japan, and needed to apologize.[2]

Neither Japan nor the US was ready to reconcile over the atomic bombs in 1995, but polling data in both countries suggests trends towards a shared perspective on the atomic bomb. Japanese people are increasingly blaming the Americans for using the bombs, and likewise, an increasing proportion of Americans are coming to think that the bombs weren't justified.[3] As public opinion evolves, so does public memory, opening new opportunities for reconciliation.

Two polar opposite World War II narratives collided in 1995. Japan's victim consciousness matched up against America's Good War narrative. Both sides sought an apology from the other: Japan for Hiroshima and Nagasaki, America for Pearl Harbor. But no consensus was reached, since neither side had fully come to terms with the idea that they had simultaneously been both victimizers and victims. Next year will be the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombs. Will a reconciliation take place? And if so, what form will such a reconciliation have?

In this paper, I will explore public memory of the atomic bomb in Japan and America on the 50th anniversary of the bombs' use, in 1995. I will first consider the roots of Japanese narratives of the bombings through entertainment media, newspaper headlines, poll results, and textbooks. Then, I will explore the American perspectives of the war through the public reaction and aftermath of the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum's failed World War II exhibit featuring the *Enola Gay*. Using these two perspectives, I will explore why neither side apologized, and the impact public memories had on this result. Finally, I will turn to recent developments in both narratives and consider the possibilities of a 2020 (75th anniversary) reconciliation.

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[1] Reuters. "No Apology for Hiroshima." *The New York Times*, April 8, 1995, Section 1, Page 9.
[2] Goozner, Merrill. "U.S. was Wrong to Use the Atomic Bombs on Japan, Nagasaki Mayor Says." *Chicago Tribune*, March 16, 1995.
[3] Sadao Asada, "The Shock of the Atomic Bomb and Japan's Decision to Surrender---A Reconsideration," Pacific Historical Review (November 1998): 101, 105.

The Pacific War vs. The Greater East-Asian War

The world economy declined into the Great Depression following the crash of the American stock market in 1929. Japanese leaders felt that military driven expansion would solve domestic economic hardships.[4] Therefore, in September 1931, Japanese forces pushed into Manchuria, initiating the creation of the Japanese empire and the start of the Greater East Asia War. But to Americans, this war is remembered differently. American memory remembers this conflict as the Pacific War, which instead started with Pearl Harbor in 1941.

The term "Pacific War" used by American and Western historians centers the conflict as one primarily between America and Japan (across the Pacific Ocean), rather than a conflict primarily between Japan and its neighbors, which is what the "Greater East Asia War" or the "15-year war" connotes. While one can certainly argue that Americans were a victim of Japanese aggression in Pearl Harbor, restricting the timeframe of the war to the 1941-1945 window crops out the prior decade of Japanese aggression in Asia. This allows focus to be placed on Japanese experience as victims of atomic bombings in 1945 (inside the window) over Japanese experience has victimizers of other Asian countries (mostly outside the window).

This difference in the initial name used for the war reflected the temporal difference between American and Japanese memories of the war. Americans were only involved in the latter portion of the war, but Japan had been involved for 15 years. Immediately after the conclusion of World War II, most Japanese citizens agreed that "Japan has a moral responsibility towards the millions of people killed and wounded, and to their families, when the Imperial Army and Navy triggered a fire storm of war across Asia."[5] Polls taken by American Occupation forces reflected that for many citizens accepted Japanese

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[4] Jansen, Marius, and Fred Notehelfer. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. s.v. "The Rise of the Militarists."
[5] Ienaga, Saburō. *The Pacific War : World War II and the Japanese, 1931-1945*. First American ed. Pantheon Asia Library. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, p.239.

responsibility for the war, and furthermore that this responsibility wasn't just placed upon Japanese leadership — it was also a responsibility of Japanese citizens.[6]

But the important fact guiding this linguistic memory is that America was the victor over Japan in the conflict. Therefore, the American narrative prevails over that of the Japanese in the postwar period, influencing the memory of not only the Western world, but also memory within Japan. James Orr points this out, saying

> Viewed through the American prism, the "Greater East Asia War" became the "Pacific War" and was remembered primarily to have been a conflict between Japan and the United States. National contrition for war actions cam for a time to be directed mainly towards Americans. Contrition toward Asian peoples—by far the most numerous victims of the Japanese aggression...— could easily be neglected in popular remembrance in popular remembrance of a war that began with Pearl Harbor in 1941.[7]

The construction of American memory of World War II did not merely allow the development of a Japanese victim consciousness, it encouraged and created the consciousness where one did not previously exist.

SCAP Enforced Victimization

At the beginning of the American Occupation, Japanese citizens did not see themselves as innocent, nor did they see themselves as victims of the atomic bomb.[8] Japanese cities which had experienced incendiary bombings were had never been tragedies that Japan has collectively experienced as a nation, and initially, the atomic bombings were the same way. Tight censorship under the Americans ensured that the availability of information on the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings was sparse, so that the incidents remained very local in scope until the end of the 40s.[9]

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[6] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japanese Moral, Report on the Pacific War,* no. 14 (Washington, D.C., 1947), 3, 91-97.
[7] Orr, James Joseph. *The Victim as Hero : Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001, 16.
[8] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japanese Moral,* 91-97.
[9] Orr, James. *The Victim as Hero,* 2001, 39.

However, Americans were able to sow seeds of Japanese victim consciousness in other ways. This was done by separating the Japanese people into a distinct group from their leaders, and to place the blame on Japanese leadership. In this way, Japanese people were also victims of war, but of their leaders rather than of other countries. The Americans achieved this goal through their terming of the war as the "Pacific War" and by scapegoating the military clique for Japanese aggression and war responsibility.[10]

In the postwar period, Japan was subordinate to the U.S. politically and culturally, as per the surrender terms. As Japanese historian Saburo Ienaga puts it,

> In its post 1945 reincarnation Japan has virtually the same relationships with the United States that Manchukuo or the Wang Ching-wei regime used to have with Tokyo. Now Washington pulls the strings and Japan dances.[11]

This power relationship gave America the ability to shape the war narrative in Japan. In particular, to call the war the "Pacific War" rather than the "Greater East Asia War", and to push the American version of history. Because America only became involved in the war in 1941, after the Pearl Harbor incident, the memory of the war in Japan was focused primarily on the section of the war involving the US. This minimized focus on Japanese acts of aggression in the 1930s, putting greater focus on Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In this way, Americans created a space where Japanese atrocities were suppressed and "reinforced memories of Japanese suffering inflicted by the overwhelmingly more powerful U.S. forces during the war. And no single act of the war expressed Japan's defeat and suffering at the hands of the Americans better than the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki."[12] [Orr, 35]

During World War II, many Americans had a sense that the Germans were good people who had been misled by bad leaders. In contrast, the Japanese had been perceived as a race of savages through and through.[13] Truman expresses this sentiment when he justifies the atomic bombings in one of his letters, saying "when you have to deal with a beast you have to treat him as a beast. It is most regrettable but

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[10] Orr, James. *The Victim as Hero*, 2001, 17.
[11] Ienaga, Saburō. *The Pacific War*, 1978, 244.
[12] Orr, James. *The Victim as Hero*, 2001, 35.
[13] Fortune survey. *Fortune* 32 (December 1945), 305.

nevertheless true."[14] Although during World War II, Japan had been publicly perceived as a homogenous nation of equally evil people, Allied Occupation planners seemed to already define a split between the people and leadership. In an April 1945 report by the U.S. Army, Japanese people were described as "honest, frugal, industrious, and patriotic", who had been falsely indoctrinated by their leaders. The report even went so far as to explicitly state that the Japanese were "not to blame for their suffering."[15] The U.S. planners aimed not to remind Japanese people of their war responsibility, but rather to relieve them for it, by shifting the blame onto the military clique, and using them as a scapegoat.

Thus, the way that America handled the Tokyo War Crimes trials (as well as other Occupation practices) encouraged the development of Japanese victim consciousness and military scapegoating, by separating the Japanese people from the Japanese state. James Orr notes this in his book, saying that "the war crimes trials and other Occupation policies had convinced [Japanese citizens] that their militarist leadership had victimized them as well as other peoples: their loyalty to the state had been betrayed."[16]

Even though American Occupation forces went to great lengths to distance Japanese people from their militarist leaders (and the blame placed on them), many Japanese citizens were still very aware of their role in perpetuating and supporting Japanese aggression. In the words of one soldier, "Although we [cooperated] without any awareness of it as such, we are all still war collaborators; and when I delve into my own self I sense that the problem is in the hearts and minds of each and every one of us."[17]

The Occupation's treatment of the Emperor was also analogous to its treatment of the people — in fact, the emperor's war responsibility was "emblematic of the people's". The Occupation forces and Japanese government pushed the narrative that the emperor was a kindly, family oriented man who had been manipulated by militarist government officials.[18] However, many Japanese disagreed with this

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[14] Michael B. Stoff et al., ed., *The Manhattan Project: a documentary introduction to the Atomic Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press: 1991), 162.
[15] Orr, James. *The Victim as Hero*, 2001, 16-17.
[16] Ibid, 65.
[17] Ibid, 23.
[18] Ibid, 15.

treatment, and saw this version of history as an attempt by the emperor to escape his responsibility for Japan's defeat.[19]

In the time after the Occupation, particularly after the 1954 Lucky Dragon incident, Japan embraced a new anti-nuclear stance in order to "regain some of their independence and sense of worth as individuals, as citizens, and as a nation."[20] Japan's two opposing political parties came together to embrace an anti-nuclear weapon national policy which became an unchallengeable core of Japanese national identity. Japan had a unique experience as the only nation to experience atomic bombings, which it was able to leverage in the construction of its anti-nuclear position. This caused the Japanese public to fully embrace and adopt the victim identity that the U.S. had been pushing on them throughout the Occupation, and this also helped create a bridge between Japanese wartime and postwar identities.

Japan as a Victimizer: Vietnam War

After the Occupation, through the 50s and for the first half of the 60s, Japanese atomic victimhood was in full focus. But by the 1970s, anti-Vietnam War movements, such as the Beihren movement, brought Japan's role as a victimizer back into the public mind. This movement continued through the 1980s and early 1990s, with the theme of Japan as an aggressor becoming increasingly incorporated into the Japanese narrative of the war. As one citizen put it, "we self-conscious victims realized that we were victimizers (*kagaisha*) as well."[21] Though Japan had been victims of atomic weapons, they were also responsible for committing atrocities all across Asia. While the victim narrative had previously been pushed by the American Occupation onto militarist scapegoats, the anti-Vietnam War movements of the 1970s encouraged individual Japanese citizens to begin to acknowledge and take responsibility for their role in the war.

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[19] Ibid, 26.
[20] Ibid, 50.
[21] Ibid, 4.

Although Japan came to have a larger awareness of their role as victimizers, they were still very conscious about their victim experiences. Japanese victim consciousness held a very public role in Japanese memory, and was deeply rooted into postwar Japanese identity. Textbooks still absolved individual Japanese citizens of responsibility, often by using language that lumped them in with other Asian peoples.[22] This added complexity to the Japanese memory of the war, where not only were they victims of the atomic bombs, but they were also starting to understand their role victimizers, who had committed countless atrocities in other Asian countries.

This balance of conflicting identities became even more publicly debated after Hirohito's death in 1989, unleashing discussions of war responsibility on the scale of individual Japanese citizens. By the 1990s, "victim consciousness...became a commonly discussed issue. *Higaisha* (victim) and *kagaisha* (victimizer) became part of the vocabulary of the day...Confessions of individual responsibility, sometimes with specifics of the regretted its, flooded radio and television broadcasts, newspapers, journals, and other printed media."[23] Around the same time, Asian victims of Japanese atrocities, such as Korean comfort women, also began to bring their experiences to light. These new confessions and accusations made the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, in 1995, a prime time for Japan to discuss issues of war narratives and reconciliation.

Crossroads: The *Enola Gay* Exhibit

In 1993, the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum revealed a script for an exhibition set to open in May 1995. This exhibit would examine the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and their role in ending World War II and initiating the Cold War. Martin Harwit, the director of the museum at the time and one of the main forces behind the undertaking, wanted the exhibit to continue to help transform the role of the museum from a temple to a place where people would think critically about the

[22] Ibid, 74.
[23] Ibid, 6.

past.[24] Additionally, the Committee for the Restoration and Proud Display of the *Enola Gay* (a veteran's group), had been agitating for a fantastic display of the recently restored *Enola Gay*, and even went as far as "accus[ing] the museum of delaying exhibition plans for fear of offending the Japanese" in 1987.[25]

The exhibit, titled "The Crossroads: The End of World War II, the Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War," was intended to serve a dual purpose. On one hand, as a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, the exhibit would commemorate bravery and heroism American veterans who had served against Japan. This would have a particular focus on celebrating and remembering the 509th Composite Group, the ones who had been responsible for deploying atomic weapons against Japan. On the other hand, the exhibit would also be a space for Americans to question their memory of the war. The exhibit planned to extensively focus on the suffering experienced by Hiroshima and Nagasaki *hibakusha.* This would be extremely controversial, and Harwit knew this. However, the overall positive responses to his previous efforts to bring a critical lens exhibits on Japanese internment and World War I led him to believe that this idea would succeed as well.[26]

The script was divided into five different sections: the introduction, which set the stage; a section questioning the decision to use the bomb; one commemorating the members of Bomber Command 509; one focusing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki victims; and a short conclusion alluding to the Cold War. Immediately after the script was released, veteran and military interest groups (the Air Force Association in particular) ripped into it. Critics complained about a lack of balance in the script -- the Japanese had been the ones who started World War II, but this was not reflected by the script's treatments of the victim experiences in both countries.[27] By focusing in detail on the experiences of survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the museum gave them a human, victim dimension — diminishing the victim experiences of

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[24] Linenthal, Edward Tabor, and Engelhardt, Tom. *History Wars : The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American past.* 1st ed. New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996, 20.
[25] Ibid, 15.
[26] Ibid, 23.
[27] Correll, John. "The Smithsonian and the *Enola Gay,*" *Air Force* Magazine, 2004, 10.

American POWs and Pearl Harbor and raising questions about whether the atomic bombs should have been dropped or not.

Other than John Hersey's "Hiroshima", previous popular accounts of Hiroshima/Nagasaki history largely distanced themselves from the personal experiences of Japanese victims. The approved post-bomb photographs of Hiroshima were taken from a distance, and rarely had people in the frame. There was little written on the longer term impacts that the bomb had had on citizens. The Smithsonian's exhibit planned to use the pictures in a large scale, black and white format in order to make visitors feel like they were there on the site of the destruction. It also included a number of personal anecdotes, such as one from Mrs. Jirokichi Yoshida, who had been pregnant when the bombs were dropped:

> In April 1952, Yoshimasa entered T. Elementary School. When the name Yoshimasa Yoshida was called, he responded, but, unable to understand the teacher's order to rise, he remained seated blankly...The result of the [intelligence] test we requested was, after all, really quite low... We left the school gate just when the cherry blossoms were in full bloom. Haering the healthy children's voices singing behind us, I burst into tears. Yoshimasa, who was skipping ahead of me, looked back and smiled..."[28]

As a result of the radiation from the bombs, her child, Yoshimasa, had mental disabilities. These stories brought a new level of dimension to the suffering caused by the atomic bombs. Barton Bernstein aptly summarizes the concerns that the Air Force Association had:

> In their judgement the depiction in the "Ground Zero" display of the remains of the dead and injured could add to the likelihood that the World War II bombing of Japan's cities, as for the *Christian Century* and Catholic critics in 1945, might even be classified as "atrocities." Such conclusions were anathema to Correll and the Air Force historians, who wanted to emphasize, further, that Japan had started the war, that it had committed many atrocities, and thus, by implication, that enemy non-combatants could not be "victims." They were the only "legitimate" targets.[29]

In many of the "Historical Controversies" sections of the exhibit, the script strongly implied that the atomic bombs had not been necessary on multiple occasions. For example, one excerpt from one such section of the script reads

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[28] Nobile, Philip., and National Air Space Museum. *Judgment at the Smithsonian.* New York: Marlowe &, 1995, 113-4.
[29] Ibid, 233.

> Some historians have claimed that the Truman Administration ignored the signs of a Japanese readiness to negotiate because of a desire to drop the atomic bomb on Japan in order to intimidate the Soviet Union. Other scholars have argued that the Japanese initiative was far from clear in its intentions. It is nonetheless possible to assert, at least in hindsight, that the United States should have paid closer attention to these signals from Japan. Like so many aspects of the "decision to drop the bomb," this matter will remain forever speculative and controversial.[30]

This brings up the idea that the use of the atomic bombs were not necessary to force Japan to surrender, and that Japan was an unfortunate bystander caught in a conflict between the two rising superpowers. Later in the section, the same sentiment is brought up at least twice more, further reinforcing the idea that the U.S. was not dropping the bombs with human lives or ending the war as its first thought. This would clearly chafe against veterans, many of whom believed they owed their lives to the bombs.

Another major complaint lodged against the museum curators was concerning the estimated casualty figures for the planned Kyushu invasion of November 1945, and the Tokyo Honshu which had been set for the following spring. In the script of the exhibition, historians had cited that the invasions had an estimated casualty count of roughly 268,000 (of which 50,000 would be deaths).[31] This number was the largest pre-atomic bomb estimate that could be cited, and it came from Admiral Leahy. However, the veterans (particularly the AFA and American Legion), wanted the number to be changed to over a million American lives saved. They were going off postwar estimates that had been impressed into public memory by Stimson's 1947 *Harper's* article, and Truman's numerous postwar recollections. The debate over this figure was especially important, because it had implications for American morality in using the bombs. As Barton Bernstein puts it, "To the Legion, the Association, and many vets, the American casualty estimates were crucial. High numbers could justify the use of the bomb, and block both doubts and challenges. Low numbers, in turn, might open questions, provoking dialogue and doubt. In short, a million was useful, if not essential, in defining the "true" A-bomb history."[32]

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[30] Ibid, 36-7.
[31] Ibid, 49.
[32] Ibid, 236.

While polls taken in the 1990s showed that the American public was becoming increasingly divided over the decision to use the atomic bomb, the perspective presented by the media was overwhelmingly inflexible to challenges of this narrative. News headlines and magazine articles called out the National Air and Space Museum for being "unpatriotic", "anti-American", and "turning American youth against their own country."[33] Many high level politicians agreed, and the veterans were able to get Congress to send a letter to the museum in their favor--implicitly threatening the Smithsonian's share in the national budget (it was dependent on the government for over 70% of its funding each year). Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House and presidential hopeful, summed up the museum's opposition, saying "We want the Smithsonian to reflect real America and not something that a historian dreamed up."[34]

As a result of the overwhelmingly negative public press responses, threats from Congress, and a series of revisions that went nowhere, Harwit resigned as director of the National Air and Space Museum, and the exhibit was cancelled. Instead, the *Enola Gay* was put on display without the rich contextualization that the exhibit had planned. The veterans had won their battle: not only did they ensure that the *Enola Gay* was displayed in the way they wanted, but they also were able to perpetuate their account of the atomic narrative. The aftermath of the entire debacle reveals the memory and power gap between the historians and veterans.

For historians, Stimson's orthodox account of the war was largely dominant until the 1960s, when the Vietnam War raised a new revisionist perspective on the war, suggesting that the atomic bombs were used to intimidate the Soviets and initiate the Cold War, rather than to end the war with Japan. Afterwards, a host of new and conflicting interpretations on the events of the bombs emerged in academic discourse. Although there were also other anti-war, revisionist perspectives raised by historians and other minority populations in the following decades, none gathered much traction with the larger public.

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[33] Linenthal, Edward Tabor, and Engelhardt, Tom. *History Wars*, 1996, 59.
[34] Ibid.

In contrast, for veterans, the Vietnam War raised questions about American morality, innocence, and virtue. As a result, it became even more imperative to preserve and defend the traditional narrative of World War II as the "Good War" as proof of American righteousness. This meant rejecting any notion that the atomic bombs had been a wrong decision, since entertaining such ideas would mean confronting the possibility that Americans were victimizers, racists, or otherwise bad people. Edward Linenthal, a scholar specializing in American public memory, notes this in his book, saying that "[the] darker narrative—particularly when applied to the "Good War"—seems to tap into deeper fears about whether or not the United States was a righteous and innocent nation. For many [veterans], even to allow mention of the ambiguities and darknesses in our country's history appeared a dangerous activity."[35]

Furthermore, veterans had a much more sensitive and personal connection to the atomic bombs. Many of them believed that they owed their lives to the bomb, because without it, they would have been involved in the Kyushu or Tokyo invasions, and would very likely have been killed or severely injured. Because of this personal connection, there were some veterans who believed that they were uniquely posited to define the history and narrative of the bombings (i.e. Paul Fussel's "Thank God for the Atomic Bomb").

By delving into the aftermath of the Crossroads exhibit, we can better understand the development of American war memories. From the start, with press control after the bombs and Henry Stimson's 1947 *Harper's* article, the American narrative of World War II (and particularly the atomic bombs) had been tightly controlled by veterans and top level government officials. The Vietnam Wars presented a time and space for the longstanding narrative to be questioned and redefined. In academic historical circles, this did happen, initiating a slew of new perspectives on the war in each following decade. On the contrary, the veterans' stance (and the overarching public memory that they controlled) became less flexible than before. This was evident in the Alsop-Joravsky exchange in 1980, which

[35] Ibid, 61.

"unintentionally revealed how little the historical scholarship of 1965-80 on the use of the A-bomb had penetrated beyond history journals and monographs into the general intellectual forum by the thirty-fifth anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki."[36] The Crossroads exhibit and its aftermath, in the early 1990s, showed that by the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombs, public memory (and the control that veterans and political groups had over it) had not budged much either -- although public opinion continued to become more divided.

Apology in 1995

The fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war, 1995, brought memories and narratives of the war to people's minds. For the Japanese, a recent rise in confessions, apologies, and victims speaking out put discussions of war responsibility in everyday conversation. Japan was addressing its role as a victimizer, and beginning to owe up to some of the atrocities that were committed. At the same time, the Japanese were still very aware of their experience as victims of the atomic bomb, and hoped for Americans to do the same. For the Americans, poll statistics reflected that roughly half of the population agreed that the U.S. should have tried some way other than the atomic bombs to convince Japan to surrender, and that if Japan apologized for Pearl Harbor, then America should apologize for Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[37]

This suggests that the two countries were moving towards reaching consensus over their widely different narratives of the war. In fact, the Japanese Diet had raised a resolution to apologize for Pearl Harbor, so it seemed that some sort of reconciliation was very likely. But instead, Bill Clinton, American president at the time, reaffirmed that no apology would be given (nor was one needed), and so any notion of apology became impossible.

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[36] Linenthal, Edward. *Judgment at the Smithsonian*, 1995, 171.
[37] Lifton, Robert Jay, and Mitchell, Greg. *Hiroshima in America : Fifty Years of Denial*. New York: Putnam's Sons, 1995, 222.

In Japanese culture, an apology is a gesture of reconciliation, rather than of weakness or responsibility. In contrast, American culture views apology as an admission of guilt or wrongdoing. This difference was a key factor in preventing reconciliation in 1995. Americans refused to apologize, because after all, the Japanese had been the ones to start the war, and that they had yet to apologize for Pearl Harbor.[38] Furthermore, because of the war narrative, an apology would create a huge political controversy in the States -- it would overturn almost all of the "Good War" narrative, and be considered an admission that the decision to drop the bombs was wrong. Not only would this cause extreme political controversy (especially from the veterans), but it could also potentially encourage the re-emergence of Japanese militarism, since it would shift blame from the Japanese onto the Americans. Because it seemed clear that the Americans weren't willing to reconcile, Japan's intentions to apologize and reconcile (already tenuous to begin with) dissolved. Although public opinion in both countries seemed to be beginning to converge, the differing cultural implications of an apology and divergent public narratives of the war prevented any meaningful reconciliation between the two countries.

Reconciliation in 2020

Next year, 2020, will be the seventy-fifth anniversary of the atomic bombings. In the time since the fiftieth anniversary, public opinion in both countries has continued to converge, although this time around, it doesn't seem like the bombs are making the headlines in either country. Even though public opinion may be slowly coming to a consensus, the population in the U.S. that believes that the use of the bombs was wrong is primarily the newer, younger generation that does not hold political power. While apologies may not be exchanged between the two countries next year, it is likely that perhaps 10 or 25 years out, these apologies from both sides could be very likely.

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[38] Arthur Schlesinger, quoted in *Judgement at the Smithsonian*, 1995, lxxv.

But is that too late? Right now, many of the Japanese *hibakusha* and other victims of World War II are nearing the end of their lifespan. All they desire is a sincere apology of wrongdoing. Yet, given that the U.S. only just recently apologized for slavery, it seems that an apology for the atomic bombs withing the lifespan of these victims seems unlikely. Since the 1995 anniversary, many citizens from both countries have also shared the opinion that an apology isn't needed -- a number of American citizens have stated that they don't believe an apology is in order from either side, and similarly, it no longer seems that Japanese citizens call for an apology, either. Furthermore, the people in the government who would be making this decision are no longer people who have an extremely personal connection to the war: these people didn't participate in the decision making processes, nor did they participate as soldiers. This brings up another big question about apologies: if the people making the apology have no firsthand experiences or memories of the given event, are they able to offer a sincere apology that's being called for?

Although the chances of a timely, meaningful, and sincere apology from the U.S. or Japan may be slim, such an exchange may not be necessary, since it seems that there has already been a reconciliation of sorts. In 2016, President Barack Obama became the first sitting U.S. president to visit Hiroshima and pay his respects at the Peace Memorial museum there. While Obama did not offer any apologies for the bombings (and Japan declined any apologies from the U.S.)[39], he spoke of peace and cooperation between the two countries moving forward. This visit was viewed positively by both American and Japanese citizens, and the majority of public media and opinions in both countries represented this visit as an act of reconciliation.[40] Although we most likely will not see an apology from the U.S. for Hiroshima and Nagasaki or an apology from Japan for Pearl Harbor next year, the current trends in public opinion and the slowly changing narratives of war in the two countries suggest that reconciliation is possible, even without apologies.

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[39] Tapper, Jake. "Japanese Government Nixed the idea of Obama Visiting, Apologizing for Hiroshima." *ABC News*.
[40] Japanese citizens perspective drawn from the following site, which aggregates Japanese netizen comments: https://ceron.jp/url/www.huffingtonpost.jp/2016/05/27/obama-begins-visit-to-hiroshima_n_10160172

Bibliographic Essay

I stumbled upon this topic early on in the course, while doing the background readings that had been assigned. In one of the readings, it said "American politics have not permitted politicians to express regret,"[41] before going into a few examples of how politicians even hinting at regret or apology were treated in public media (including a short mention of the *Enola Gay* controversy). This intrigued me, since I started to wonder about any suppressed American guilt over the bombs. Some of the discussions that we had in class about Truman also seemed to suggest that he concealed some guilt over the bombs, despite what he said in public.

Additionally, just a few years earlier, I had visited the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum and got to see the fuselage of the Enola Gay on display. The plane had been absolutely beautiful, but it only had a couple of short blurbs and was also lacking a lot of the context behind the bombs, the plane, and the war. I later found out that this exhibit was the result of a second *Enola Gay* controversy in 2003, rather the one mentioned in 1995, but the connection I thought I drew was very interesting. After deciding on the *Enola Gay* as a part of my paper, I also wanted to tie in public memory from Japan as a part of my research. I had recently seen *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988), *Sayonara* (1959), as well as a few clips from American propaganda videos, which inspired me to think more critically about how American and Japanese publics are remembering the events of the war.

I intially planned to use the controversy surrounding the *Enola Gay* exhibit to understand American guilt over the bombs, which later transformed into a survey of the public perception of the atomic bombs by the American public in 1995. To this effect, I primarily turned to three different sources. I read *Judgement at the Smithsonian*, which was a book containing the full original exhibition script, as well as commentary from Barton Bernstein; *Hiroshima in America* by Robert Jay Lifton, which investigated the development of attitudes towards Hiroshima in America; and *History Wars*, which was a

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41 Pyle, Kenneth. Japan in the American century. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018, 74-5.

selection of different essays concerning the bomb, edited by Edward Linenthal. I found these sources to be extremely useful in providing context and a picture of the scholarly conversation surrounding the topic -- especially the essays in *History Wars*, and Bernstein's section in *Judgement*.

Reading articles from a variety of different authors, even if some of them shared perspectives, helped smooth out some of the potential biases in the contextual information and scholarly arguments that I was getting. I found Philip Nobile's preface in *Judgement* particularly excellent, since historians tend to avoid presenting large amounts of evidence contrary to their argument, but Nobile included a good amount of quotes and evidence from the opposing sides of the argument. Oftentimes, it may seem like the majority of Americans opposing apologies to Japan are uneducated veterans or political players, but as shown by Nobile, this perspective also belonged to historians and academics as well. In the words of Arthur Schlesinger Jr, an American history professor quoted by Nobile, "Someone must be kidding if they expect we should apologize to Japan, for Christ's sake...Even if the Japanese apologized for Pearl Harbor, I would not alter my position."[42]

Additionally, I found that *Hiroshima in America* (Lifton) had a much more detailed treatment on the psychological effects of the atomic bombs on American citizens. While other researchers would often make sweeping generalizations about the population as a whole, Lifton went in and analyzed the effects in greater detail. His background in psychology also helped bring a different type of understanding to how people were reacting. I initially wanted to investigate the guilt (if any) that Americans felt over using the atomic bombs. In the end, I didn't end up pursuing this direction, but Lifton's book would serve as an excellent starting point for this type of work. Although I didn't read the whole book, I also thought that

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[42] It should be noted that Schelsinger also served in World War II -- not as a veteran, but in the Office of War Information and Office of Strategic Services. This probably gave him extra sensitivities around the topic, but it's valuable to note that not all of the historians discussing the war were totally disconnected from the events. Furthermore, Japan has apologized for Pearl Harbor, but only to its citizens for the dishonorable reputation gained by committing a diplomatic blunder, rather than to the U.S.

This quote was taken from Judgement at the Smithsonian, 1995, lxxv.

Philip Seaton's *Japan's Contested War Memories* also approached Japanese memory from a more scientific angle, although Seaton brings in much more theory than Lifton does.

I also read a few of the articles that John Correll, editor of the Air Force Association Magazine, wrote in response to the exhibit script. These were some of the earliest criticisms about the *Enola Gay* exhibit, and the following blowup reflected the impact that veterans had in constructing American public memory. Beyond this, I also read Paul Fussel's "Thank God for the Atomic Bomb," which I felt had tie-ins to the responses that many veterans gave to the exhibit -- that they had experienced both the atomic bomb and Japanese atrocities, which therefore gave them a deeper understanding of the value of the bombs.

With regards to understanding the Japanese side of things, it was quite hard to find accessible, English-translated resources. However, I found Orr's work, *The Victim as Hero*, to be an extremely valuable and well researched secondary source. Orr was able to lay out an understandable progression of Japanese postwar war narratives that connected all the fragments that I had gathered from looking at other sources. Additionally, Ienaga's work, *The Pacific War*, provided a similarly excellent perspective from the Japanese point of view. Saburo Ienaga was a Japanese historian whose textbook was one of those censored by the Japanese government, for being too explicit when covering Japanese atrocities. His book was fully translated from Japanese into English, which made it valuable to me, since I wasn't able to find many translated works. While Ienaga holds what might be considered a minority opinion in Japan, the justifications and counterarguments that he provides for his opinions gave hints about the majority (or government enforced) opinions and narratives.

Additionally, the two essays from Sadao Asada we read were also useful, along with the discussions that we had in class about his essays. From Asada's piece, I was able to build a ground framework for my argument. Asada talked about the difference in the way that US and Japanese postwar

textbooks approached the war, which was where I started from when I was initially doing research on the paper (although I later decided to not use that research in my paper).

Overall, when working on this paper, I found it quite difficult to find quality sources that were able to give me a good perspective on Japanese war memories. I was surprised by this, since given all the reading that we had done in class, I knew there was a huge repository of sources and secondary works on American war memories, so I had been expecting there to be something on a similar scale for Japanese war memories. Despite this, Orr's book was truly excellent, not only as a work of research, but also as a book that I would read for "fun" as well.

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