Historical Memory and Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia: The effect of the memory of Japanese Occupation of Indonesia and the Philippines on Current International Relations

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Abstract

This paper examines the importance of the study of history and the impact of historical memory on current foreign relations between nations. In order to best perform this analysis, a constructivist framework was used to examine nations actions. This work will follow the guidelines set up by leading scholars Zheng Wang and Thomas Berger who define the best methods to analyze a nation’s official historical narrative and determine its affect upon foreign policy decisions. This researched uses the guidelines set up by previous scholars to examine the official narratives of two Southeast Asian nations, Indonesia and the Philippines, to determine if their historical memory and official narratives have any effect on their current relations with Japan. This work examines shared historical events focusing on the Japanese occupation of those nations during World War II to determine if their narratives have any effect on current conflicts and relations in the region.
Introduction

In late March of 2014, U.S. President Barack Obama facilitated the meeting of the current leaders of South Korea and Japan for the first time since the two came to power. The two U.S. allies have grown farther apart due to dramatic differences in historical interpretation. The deterioration of diplomatic relations between South Korea and Japan are a direct result of contestations over history. The representation of World War II in Asia has caused rifts in Japan’s relationship with its neighbors. Despite the fact that the Second World War is more than a half a century in the past, issues over remembering the war are still causing difficulties in foreign relations in the Asia Pacific.

Past scholars have heavily examined the diminishing relations between Japan and its two East Asian neighbors, China and South Korea, through a historical lens. However, the rise of revisionism in Japan, spear headed by current Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, has brought about a new wave of resentment towards the Japanese tendency for historical amnesia. A recent news article in the International Business Times describes tension between Japan and Australia. A new monument in Sydney, Australia dedicated to the ‘comfort women,’ forced sex slaves for the Japanese Army during the war, is receiving heavy objections from Japan. The issue of the ‘comfort women’ is one of the most sensitive in the region since Japan has for the most part refused to acknowledge the more than 200,000 women forced into servicing the Japanese Army. Representative Hiroshi Nawata of the Japanese Embassy in Australia is quoted in the article stating: “While the details of the statue or inscription are not yet clear, Japan believes that the movement is due to a lack of understanding of our position and efforts towards comfort women, and is not compatible with Japan's position.”

1 Iaccino, Ludovica. "Japan Furious at Sydney 'Comfort Women' Memorial to 200,000 Sex
acknowledge the plight of the comfort women due to its objection to Australia’s construction of the aforementioned statue, its penchant for historical revisionism is revealed.

This is a clear example of how the atrocities committed during World War II, which Japan has yet to apologize for officially, still have the very real possibility of upheaving the stability of the region. Yet, many scholars, journalists, and academics maintain that history is not a crucial player in foreign relations of the Asia Pacific. In a poll of public opinion committed by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), twenty percent of those polled in ASEAN nations indicated that the war atrocities committed during World War II, stated in the poll as “acts of Japan during the World War II,” cannot ever be forgotten. While the vast majority of those polled, sixty-eight percent, indicated that Japan did do “some bad things, but they are not an issue now.”

![Bar Chart](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/asean/survey/qa0803.pdf)


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Of course, this poll was paid for and published by the Japanese government, which has also been active in trying to avoid acknowledgment of any war atrocities in its imperialist period. But more than anything, this poll shows that the questions about World War II are still being asked, and therefore that the memory of World War II is still affecting current foreign relations.

This work examines the treatment of the Japanese Occupation in Indonesia and the Philippines official historical narratives and the subsequent effect the memory of the Japanese Occupation during World War II has on current foreign relations. In order to do this, the framework of several prominent scholars was used to judge the narratives and collective memory of both countries and how the Japanese Occupation is portrayed and treated. Next, this work shows that the historical memory of the Japanese Occupation does have an impact on current relations between Japan and Indonesia and Japan and the Philippines.

Theory

This paper examines the importance of the study of history and the impact of historical memory on current foreign relations between nations. In order to best perform this analysis, a constructivist framework must be the lens used to examine nations’ actions. Constructivist theory assumes that culture and identity are not inherent, but in fact are manufactured and socially constructed. Within but separate from the constructivist theory is the English School, a theoretical framework that shares many of Constructivism’s critiques of rationalist theories of

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international relations. The English School’s focus is placed on context and interpretive methods, including detailed observation and rich interpretation rather than general explanatory methods. By not discounting domestic politics, norms, and identities, the English School provides a good framework to the study of history and how it has impacted the international system of today. Therefore, this work will attempt to examine how historiography creates historical memory, which then manifests into foreign policy. The English School model allows for a comparative study between Southeast Asian nations’ historiography and their relations with Japan.

**Historical Memory and Foreign Relations**

The first important connection to establish is the relationship between historical memory and national identity. The manner in which historical memory shapes national identity can indeed have heavy impact on how a given nation conducts its foreign policy. Leading scholar Langenbacher notes that collective memory is a major influence on identities and values in a society. He ascertains “In sum, international relations scholars, especially constructivists, recently have begun to integrate the dynamics of memory into their theories and empirical studies.” Langenbacher’s work explores the effect of the memory of the Holocaust on Europe and Asia’s foreign policy. There is a strong tendency among scholars in this field to compare the experience of Germany and Japan after their respective defeats in World War II. Since both

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6 Ibid, 25.
nations committed unspeakable atrocities in their imperialist and expansionist periods during the War, it is logical to compare the two narratives. The consensus among scholars, however, is that Germany dealt with its history through contrition while Japan arguably did not. In this argument, Langenbacher makes a key distinction between the two nations, “As a result, Asian leaders, unlike their counterparts in Western Europe and West in general, had little incentive to face up to the thorny political problems posed by feelings of historical injustice.” His argument was that while both nations were subjected to a period of reconstruction involving complete shifts in government and society, Germany faced larger political pressure to apologize for its wrongdoings. Japan managed to avoid this pressure through several means. One of which was the American Occupation, which changed Japan’s fundamental ability to conduct war, resulting in the ability of Japanese politicians to claim that Japan already paid its debts by foregoing their military power. Langenbacher argues that memories do not solely exist on an individual or generational level, but can become institutionalized in the collective memory of any society. It is this that makes historical memory an agent for political action.

Another work that contextualizes the Sino-Japanese relationship versus German-Polish relations for the purpose of this investigation is that of Yinan He in *The Search for Reconciliation*. He writes that “A close examination of the various aspects of the bilateral relationship during this period suggests that the emotional and psychological effects of these history disputes exacerbated mutual perceptions of threat, poisoned popular relations, and stimulated public opposition to diplomatic compromises during a period of bilateral sovereignty and economic friction.” She points out that the distrust rampant in the relationship between

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7 Ibid, 194.
China and Japan conjured from historical memory was too much despite the common goal of balancing the threat from the Soviet Union. This observation shows that historical memory can have a stronger impact than a current security threat. As a result of history, policy options were limited on such things as making allies and resolving bilateral disputes. He tackles the new internationalism set about by Nakasone to “restore national confidence and pride through a reinterpretation of history.”9 However, He explains that Japanese conservative leaders did not do much to change history policy through the 1980s and continued to discourage truth-telling about Japanese war atrocities and minimizing the payment of war reparations to foreign victims, opposite to the actions of their German counterpart.10

Similar to author Wang, He comes to the conclusion that China’s nationalistic identity became intertwined with its humiliation at the hands of the Japanese and a strong anti-Japanese sentiment, and only worsened by the “perceived historical amnesia” of the Japanese.11 She states:

Instead, this change in Sino-Japanese mutual popular feeling is better explained by the mechanism of emotion resulting from divergent historical memories. Whereas the Chinese public was increasingly bitter about its war suffering at the hands of Japanese aggressors, the Japanese people remembered the war as a miserable experience for the Japanese nation itself, and largely filtering out the memory of Japan’s wrongdoings to other Asian peoples.12

Whereas the German and Polish examples provided in her work are actually moving towards a possible joint history textbook venture, narrowing the gap in historiographies, Chinese and Japanese historical memories become more divergent. The main difference offered for the

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9 Ibid, 209.
11 Ibid, 214.
12 Ibid, 223.
situations of Germany versus Japan is that the authoritative narrative of national history is more forthcoming in Germany when it comes to the nation’s past war atrocities.

In his work *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, Zheng Wang examines Chinese historical memory and how it reflects the nation’s identity and its foreign policy decisions. Wang’s framework for classifying historical memory proves a helpful method for research in determining the role of historical memory in national identity. His framework is defined by this set of questions posed by the researcher:

When examining the role of historical memory in a given group’s identity construction, the following questions can help measure the content of historical memory as constitutive norms:

1. Does the content of historical memory specify rules that determine group membership and attributes? For example, who is a group member? What does it mean to be a group member?

2. Does the content of historical memory help to define the interests of groups?

3. Does the content of historical memory constitute the basis of the group’s self-esteem, pride, and dignity?

4. Does the content of historical memory provide actors socially appropriate roles to perform?¹³

Wang’s research asserts that historical memory forms identity and cements the ideas a group creates regarding its own members and outsiders.¹⁴ The author uses this set of guidelines to show how China formed historical memory that identified a particular set of group members, provided

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¹³ Wang, 31.
¹⁴ Ibid, 33.
appropriate interests, actions and roles for members to perform, as well as a basis for the group’s pride and self-worth. He also explains that historical memory provides the content for relationships and reference to other groups. One important argument that Wang makes is that “the cognitive content of historical memory provides a source of frames, lenses, and analogies to interpret the outside world.” Furthermore, Wang “…provided many examples of how policymakers in Beijing have used historical analogies to perform specific cognitive and information-processing tasks deemed essential to political decision-making.”\(^{15}\) Wang concludes his work by stating that in China, even today, the master national historical narrative is still based on official statements rather than public consensus. Additionally, he believes that the important characteristic of China’s history education is the idea that national history and collective historical memory are a group’s national “deep culture.”\(^{16}\)

Wang states that “Myths about past and present glories usually lie at the center of each country’s identity education, and China is not an exception.”\(^{17}\) Nor is Japan an exception to this construction. Wang also explains how trauma and “national humiliation” have long been institutionalized as a national identifier. In explaining how historical memory becomes a component for political action, Wang uses the case of China to describe the Chinese Communist Party’s goals by restructuring the education of history:

Through this nationwide educational campaign, Beijing has creatively used history education as an instrument for the glorification of the party, the consolidation of the PRC’s national identity, and the justification of the political system of one-party rule by the CCP. During the course of the campaign, the party

\(^{15}\) Ibid, 225.
\(^{16}\) Ibid, 230.
\(^{17}\) Ibid, 47.
skillful utilized China’s humiliating past to arouse its citizens’ historical consciousness and to promote social cohesion.\textsuperscript{18}

It is also acknowledged among the academic community that China’s history education may be the foundation of the rising grassroots nationalism in the country. This obviously leads into the topic of nationalism and how it can be created using historical memory. Wang’s final argument on this topic follows:

The manipulation of history and the rise of nationalism reinforce each other and together serve the regime’s domestic needs to increase its legitimacy and internal cohesion. As noted earlier, this is a feedback loop in China whereby nationalistic history education stimulates the rise of nationalism, and the rise of nationalism provides a bigger market for nationalistic messages.\textsuperscript{19}

Wang’s case study of China, however, is not isolated to the study of China. Many of the insights shared in his work can be replicated in case studies of other nations.

Thomas Berger is another known scholar on the study of history and memory. In the first chapter of his work \textit{War, Guilt, and World Politics after World War II}, Berger shows how the issues of history and memory have become contested by both domestic and international forces since the end of World War II. In earlier times, states were more freely able to establish complimentary narratives of their history while controlling the rise of dissident narratives.\textsuperscript{20} This is clearly a result of the growth of globalization and the pressure from the international community and constructivist norms. Berger explains that there is a growing minority that:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 115.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid, 233.
\end{itemize}
…Sees historical memory as having a decisive, even overwhelming, impact on politics. They maintain that the animosities generated by the past profoundly influence perceptions of whether a given nation or group of people is seen as reliable or not. Unless these past grievances are addressed, they argue that it will be impossible to construct stable relations between the perpetrators of atrocity and their former victims. Not only will the victims of abuse be unable to heal from the traumas of the past but the groups to which they belong will distrust and even despise the unrepentant perpetrators. Left unattended, these feelings and perceptions can generate new tensions and confrontations.\(^{21}\)

Berger is also able to define what an official historical narrative is comprised of: “rhetoric (i.e., how political leaders talk about the past), commemoration (museums, monuments, holidays, etc.), education (especially school textbooks), compensation (policies aiming to help victims of past injustices), and punishment (both of perpetrators of injustice as well as policies that restrict freedom of speech and organization).”\(^{22}\) Therefore, the official narrative can help initiate reconciliation, hinder the recovery process required for trauma, grow resentment, or even foster future conflict.\(^ {23}\) Berger identifies three different approaches, which are all necessary in order to accurately explain the formation of the official historical narrative: “Historical Determinism in which the narrative emerges from the actual facts of the particular history (‘what really happened’); Instrumentalism in which the outcome is determined by the political interests (domestic and/or international) of the narrators; and Cultural Determinism in which the outcome is to a considerable degree influenced by the general culture of the society to which the narrators

\(^{21}\) Berger, 11. 
\(^{22}\) Ibid, 12. 
\(^{23}\) Ibid, 19.
belong.”Interestingly enough, Berger sets out a list of steps for analysts to approach the official narrative, which this author relied on to complete the research:

1) The analyst should begin with the historical events themselves and recount how they were remembered on a societal level in the time period immediately after those events occurred. 

2) With the next step the analyst should focus on the instrumental calculations that political elites make in choosing the kind of official narrative they adopted in the period immediately following when the events occurred. Of particular interest in this context is to show how conflicting pressures – between material calculations of interest and the different ways in which the recent past are regarded on a societal level – are resolved. The way in which specific versions of history are linked to other policy objectives – such as integration in the West, internal reconciliation and rebuilding, and so forth – deserve special attention because such linkages can have a lasting impact and may serve to anchor a particular historical narrative in the political system.

3) The analyst must then trace the development of the official narrative over time and look at the extent to which the views it espouses win – or fails to win – broader acceptance among elites and the society at large. Over time, certain views are likely to become embedded in the political culture – e.g., Germany’s culture of contrition or the trope of China’s century of humiliation.

4) Finally, the analyst must note and analyze the implications of changes in the international system and domestic politics – for instance, the rise of a new

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24 Ibid, 231.
generation, the coming to power of a new political party, the development of new issues (such as the pressures of reintegration of East Germany into the Federal Republic or adopting military missions going beyond territorial defense) – that have the potential to generate new pressures for change. Such critical junctures in a nation’s history allow the analyst to gauge the degree to which official narrative has become institutionalized in the political system and the broader collective memory of the society. At the same time, it is in such periods that the historical narrative evolves and changes in potentially new ways.\(^\text{26}\)

Specifically regarding Japan, Berger states: “Tensions over history are said to have heightened suspicions regarding Japan’s military intentions – increasing the risk of military conflict and a potentially destabilizing nuclear arms race – inflamed nationalist feeling in its East Asian neighbors, and all but wrecked efforts to create a strong network of international institutions in East Asia.”\(^\text{27}\) He explains that the case of Japan and South Korea is perhaps the perfect example of how the influence of historical memory and the use of the official narrative can cause difficulties and even conflict in international politics.\(^\text{28}\)

Another work, edited by Gerrit W. Gong, has a lasting impression on research in the field. A part of the CSIS Significant Issues Series, *Memory and History in East and Southeast Asia: Issues of Identity in International Relations*, examines “remembering and forgetting” issues that have impacts on a country’s strategic alignment and future direction.\(^\text{29}\) To explain the importance of “remembering and forgetting” Gong explains: “Remembering and forgetting

\(^{26}\) Ibid, 236.

\(^{27}\) Ibid, 123.

\(^{28}\) Ibid, 237.

issues and structures lie at the heart of national identity and national objectives. They do so in part because, in defining national self-perception, these national ‘mystic cords of memory’ – to recall Abraham Lincoln’s phrasing – form a creative nexus of past and future.” Another major factor in the remembering and forgetting framework is the reality that parts of Asian memory can be very long. However, quite antithetically, in America, the sense of history is maybe even too short. Therefore, Gong shows that “Where strategic alignments reflect historical memory, differences in American and Asian approaches to memory and history can highlight remembering and forgetting concerns.”

Since these structures for remembering and forgetting exist within all countries, they shape how issues of the past affect policy. They also reflect the way issues of history affect the definition of relations. Perhaps even more challenging will be perception management, since Asian nations take longer historical perspectives. In Southeast Asia, Gong identifies several potential strategic realignments expressed in historical terms: “Memories linger of the Asian financial crisis and of the leadership succession. These memories include questions of truth and reconciliation regarding Suharto and the Suharto family legacy. They also raise questions about the longer-term future of ASEAN (which some say has been destroyed by the financial crisis), including the domestic base (economic model, self-perception) of the varios ASEAN countries and their alignment with Japan, China and the United States.”

Thus, Gong shows that strategic alignments will increasingly turn on history, changing the past into a tool for negotiating and altering strategic alliances in international relations.

In his chapter in the aforementioned book, Volker Stanzel sets the stage for the importance of memory and history in international relations. He states: “Thus, we remember and

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31 Ibid, 30.
relive our past through our memories; we turn memory into an element of international relations, and if we are successful it may be harmless or even – like in Europe – it may be the basis for more productive relations between peoples, or it may still do harm."\(^{33}\) In specific regards to the specific way in which historical memory can enhance or detract from international relations, Gong highlights in his chapter that Asia in particular will face issues regarding remembering and forgetting. He lists several reasons as to why Asia’s strategic alignments will be affected by these issues. Firstly, Gong ascertains that fundamental Cold War problems have yet to be resolved in Asia. Secondly, he explains that, “Asia is rewriting its histories in ways that highlight ‘remembering and forgetting’ divergences. These divergences sometimes connect Asia’s past pride and future achievements – a natural desire to recast history as one’s improving position allows.”\(^{34}\) Therefore, Gong documents that given Asian countries often reconstruct an accepted historical narrative to bolster their own image, assuming that said nation has garnered enough prominence to do so.

On the topic of contested memory, Roxana Waterson and Kwok Kian-Woon explain that the Japanese Occupation features significantly in the Asian historical narrative, similarly to the fashion in which the Holocaust features in European history. But unlike the remembering of the Holocaust, the discourse on the Japanese Occupation has in recent years actually moved beyond the East Asian nations.\(^{35}\) The duo believes that, “If the Holocaust continues to figure prominently in wider European and American scholarly and public discourses, Japanese military aggression during the Second World War has emerged as a focus of international debate in Asia. It was in the changed context of the 1990s that surviving Comfort Women, benefiting from the progress of

\(^{33}\) Ibid, 14.  
\(^{34}\) Ibid, 27.  
women’s movements in their own countries, began to speak up for the first time about their experiences, and campaign for compensation.” It is undoubtedly necessary to examine the processes by which collective memories are built. This is so because memory is indeed both selective and often times unreliable. Their work involves examining the methods that ruling parties of newly independent nation-states utilize when constructing narrative of the nation’s history in order to create a new identity for the nation in its new role in the international system. Citizens must be convinced of this new identity and therefore ruling parties must use memory in written texts, but also in monuments and rituals of commemoration at all levels of society, national, international, or local. The need to create a strong national identity is highly related to nationalism and exists in more than just new nation-states. After losing the war in 1945, Japan took on a new identity as well and it focused much more on being the victim of the war rather than one of its main aggressors. Recent controversial shifts towards revising the national historical narrative in Japan have brought about a deeply rooted resistance to offering any written apology for any Japanese led war atrocities committed during World War II. The Japanese have also come to their definition for the nation’s narrative in Southeast Asia during the war. One reflection on this period that became a popular trend during the 1980s which Ken’ichi Gotō explains as: “A contradictory view was expressed by a former education minister, Okuno Seisuke, who said that ‘[The Pacific War] was not an aggressive war but a war for the liberation of East Asia, to free Asians from the whites who had kept Asia under colonial rule’.” Of course, this is only the official myth or narrative presented by the Japanese government as a

36 Ibid, 38.
37 Ibid, 3.
38 Ibid, 39.
pretext for the real goals of the Occupation of Southeast Asia, which were aimed at obtaining raw materials and labor.

Therefore, the work of Waterson and Woon clearly illuminates the reality that the Southeast Asian nations’ ability to manifest a new identity from the memory of the Second World War depended on the method each chose to present the Japanese Occupation in the historical narrative. They state:

Though their focus is on Southeast Asian nations, we can see that in different ways their particular struggles over memory and identity have been caught up in bigger historical movements that have reverberated through a larger Asian region. These include colonialism, and the different experiences of resistance to, or struggle for independence from, European domination; World War II and Japan’s former dream of dominance over what it once called the ‘Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere’; and further, the pursuit of socialism’s alternative grand narrative of modernity in some Southeast Asian countries and the demonization of communism that formed the sharp reaction to it in others. The latter trope is one that has strongly shaped the official narratives of nation and identity in countries like Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, leaving its marks on individual lives in the process.40

The rest of the work focuses on the particular definitions of the Japanese Occupation presented in Indonesia and the Philippines, which formed the collective and historical memory of the period. The last section answers the question of why there is still very little security and military cooperation between Japan and Southeast Asian nations, particularly the Philippines.

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40 Waterson, 43.
The Experience of the Philippines

Today, the Philippines are relatively friendly towards the nation of Japan. For a Southeast Asian nation which is home to individuals that were arguably wounded the worst by Japan during the Second World War, the good relations between Japan and the Philippines is baffling when compared to the growing anti-Japanese sentiment flaring in China and South Korea. Carlos Conde believes this relationship is a disingenuous façade and blames Filipino historians for not accurately reminding the people of their past. He cites the case of textbooks in the Philippines, in which many of the atrocities committed by the Japanese, among them the rape of Filipina women, are excluded from mention. In an article for The Diplomat, Mong Palatino explains: “The Japanese are no longer seen by today’s generation as war aggressors but investors, tourists, and allies. Japan’s war crimes are still mentioned in school textbooks but they have already ceased to be a divisive political issue that could substantially affect the relationship between the two countries.” It is thus that Conde documents the help Japan has had from the Philippines in erasing the atrocities it had committed in World War 2.

As a result of this revisionist history, the Philippines have never had a true official documentation of the war. Indeed, Ricardo Trota Jose, leading Filipino scholar on Philippine-Japan relations teaching at the University of the Philippines, echoes this sentiment by stating that, “few historians and research institutes have given serious thought or attention to the war and the Japanese Occupation, choosing to focus instead on the 1896 and 1898 revolutions and the Philippine-American war.” Indeed, Conde explains that the first book on the Japanese Occupation published by a Filipino was in 1994, while American veterans or Japanese scholars

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43 Waterson, 185.
wrote most of the other sources. As further evidence, Jose explains that the Philippine government has done its best to downplay the controversies related to the war. He states: “It has not stood by the Comfort Women in their struggle for recognition and compensation but has supported the holding of an annual Philippine-Japan festival. The Philippine-Japan Festival had to be altered because of war memories, though: when it was first held, it was designated a ‘Philippine-Japan Friendship Month’ and was held in February.” This clearly illustrates that the aspects of history which became institutionalized in the Filipino historical narrative did not support the growth of antagonistic feelings regarding the memory of war atrocities, but rather the focus was placed on the Japanese government’s current position as an economic aid. Therefore, it is clear that the Philippine’s revision of the aforementioned history is indeed due to its current economic relationship with Japan.

Conde quoted Filipino historian Tan who stated that: “Filipinos have a very short historical memory.” Indeed, research shows that the Filipino government has all but ignored the plight of the people who were victims of some of the more sensitive war atrocities. While a few, selected anniversaries of the war are celebrated, still few historians and research institutes have given serious thought or attention to the Japanese Occupation, showing preference for the national revolutions and the Philippine-American war. Jose explains in his work that: “Later studies, however, tended to show that, particularly in the Philippines, there were no long-term transformations, especially in the social and political fields. On the contrary, there was a remarkable continuity in the landed elites and the oppressed peasants; and between political

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44 Conde, 1
45 Waterson, 197.
46 Conde, 1.
47 Waterson, 185.
rivals and economic leaders, both local and regional." As opposed to right after the war, when the societies’ pain, courage, and sacrifice were directed into patriotism and anti-Japanese sentiment in books and articles, in later years scholars and politicians began to define the Occupation and the War as a small part of the larger war between America and Japan. Therefore, the Philippines was viewed as an unlucky party plunged into the war simply because it was already a colony of the United States. Eventually, this manifested into a mutual dislike toward both Japan and America, which Filipinos had before viewed as heroes and liberators.

In order to understand the importance to which the Philippines assigned to the Japanese Occupation, Jose compares Filipino remembrance of the Japanese Occupation to its current place in other Asian countries. He documents that, “In other Asian countries, the war was not as clear-cut a historical phenomenon as in the Philippines. In Indonesia and Vietnam, for example, the Japanese Occupation formed part of the struggle for independence, and the end of one war was simply the start of another, the war for independence. In Japan, the war takes on different meanings depending on the writers or the groups.” The significance between the viewpoints and treatments of the Japanese Occupation by different Southeast Asian nations is a crucial reflection of the international relations between Japan and the region.

Interestingly, after Washington shifted its attention during the Cold War, away from the Philippines, Japan increased its engagement with the country. Conde explains that: “While Tokyo had little success in repairing relations with Philippine presidents immediately after the war, things changed when Ferdinand Marcos took power in the 1960s. Marcos repaired relations with Japan, ingratiating himself with Tokyo, which was only too happy to pour in more loan

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48 Ibid, 186.
49 Ibid, 187.
50 Waterson, 188.
51 Conde, 1.
money.\textsuperscript{52} The research from multiple sources leads to the conclusion that a main factor in explaining the current friendly relations between the Philippines and Japan, can be attributed to economic factors. Conde’s argument is that Filipinos were able to forget the past because they are more focused on trying to survive the present. Conde quotes another specialist by stating, “But another factor in what Tan calls ‘national historical amnesia’ is a conscious effort by the Japanese to change the way Filipinos regard them and the creation by the ruling class of Filipinos of an ideology that, according to Tan, ‘convinces us that we have to be grateful to Japan.’”\textsuperscript{53} This is clearly illuminated through the fact that Japan is the Philippines’ top donor of official development assistance and is also the Philippines’ top foreign investor.

Another several reasons are provided by Jose as to why the more sensitive issues from the war are kept in the dark from the Filipino populace: “One reason (the issue of forced prostitution was not investigated) was that many of the women, still traumatized were afraid to talk about their experiences. A second reason would be the problem of social disorder in the immediate postwar period in the Philippines: towns and villages where Comfort Women had been held, or mass rape conducted, could not be reached because of the collapse of peace and order.”\textsuperscript{54} In an interview with a Filippino woman, Conde shows that the remarkable continuity of the Philippine state and society before and after the War is perhaps not an accurate analysis. He states that: “To a large extent, what is happening to the women and children of Mapanique [during the war] mirrors the reality of the Philippines 60 years after World War II ended. Unlike in other countries where the war’s end brought renewal and hope, there is a strong sense in this country that the war victimized Filipinos twice over, that its horrifying toll went beyond the

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, 1.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid, 1.
\textsuperscript{54} Waterson, 194.
destruction of its cities.”\textsuperscript{55} The woman interviewed had a daughter who, for financial reasons, was forced to work as an entertainer in the Tokyo red-light districts. Conde asks the question of whether there is any irony in the fact that “while Filipino ‘comfort women’ continued to lobby and demonstrate in search of justice and compensation from Tokyo, hundreds of young Filipino women held rallies in Manila protesting a move by the Japanese government to tighten rules in the hiring of Filipino entertainers.”\textsuperscript{56} In response to this question of whether the history of Japanese treatment of Filipino women makes her daughter’s work shameful in the eyes of the family and the society, the woman replies that it is irrelevant. In justification she says: “My grandchildren cannot eat the past.”\textsuperscript{57} This sentiment shows a popular belief among the wider public that memory is considered a luxury. Therefore, the Filipino government has pursued the rationalist argument, rationalizing the historical amnesia by expressing the needs of the country to focus on the present and the future instead of the past.

There is a noticeable disconnect between societal, individual and national views of history. It is clear however, that the more sensitive issues, such as forced labor or comfort women, are seen by both the Philippine and Japanese governments as more sideline issues rather than major roadblocks in their relationship. By not addressing these issues, both show a desire “to give precedence to friendly relations and the promotion of economic activities.” According to Jose, “to both governments, the issue of war reparations had ended with the San Francisco Peace Treaty, signed in 1951, and the Reparations Agreement, ratified in 1956…. Because the private claims were not addressed, the cause-oriented groups fight for justice; failing to find support

\textsuperscript{55} Conde, 1.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, 1.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid, 1.
from their respective governments, they have filed class suits in Japan and the United States.”

Therefore, both nations have seemingly decided to downplay or even ignore the past in hopes of perpetuating a mutually beneficial relationship.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Philippine government attempted to put the pain of the past behind it by establishing a Reunion for Peace, in which it invited veterans from Japan, the United States, Australia and other countries that had fought in the Philippines during the war for sentimental visits to old battlefields. Jose explains that: “The reunion of former warriors made for good press releases, but the tension was present: some Filipinos shook hands with the Japanese veterans but others kept their distance.” There have been many government attempts, similar to this reunion that focus on the improvement of relations on a societal level. Another example is the annual commemoration of the Fall of Bataan. The massive cross with an altar at its feet was erected on the 25th anniversary of the battle and was meant to commemorate all the war dead from the Second World War. During the 1960s, the monument was criticized by nationalist skeptics who did not want the nation to celebrate a defeat, a similar debate among the Japanese regarding admitting to war atrocities exists to this day in Japan revisionist circles. Jose explains that this monument is attributable to the furthering of myths surrounding the Japanese Occupation in which the Philippine loss and sacrifice was redefined in a nationalistic and patriotic fashion: “In writing war history, or in remembering it, many myths have been created, and are believed without question. For example, it is widely believed that the defense of Filipinos and Americans at Bataan and Corregidor disrupted Japan’s war timetable and saved Australia from invasion. This is good for national pride and finding meaning in the defeat in

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58 Waterson, 194.
59 Ibid, 190.
60 Ibid, 188.
Bataan, but it does not hold up under close historical examination.”\(^ {61}\) Therefore, it is clear that the historical memory of the Japanese Occupation became built into the nationalist rhetoric in a way that emphasized Filipino strength rather than Japanese crimes.

The Filipino government also sanctioned the celebration of the nation’s liberation from the Japanese Occupation. This commemoration involves the reenactment of the American landings at Leyte on 20 October 1944. Jose explains that the commemorations “have had their political uses: the US and the Philippine armed forces have always cooperated in these reenactments, which serve as a show of force and unity.”\(^ {62}\) However, these commemorations also have the affect of reducing the impact of the war to mere spectacle. Associations like the Memorare Manila 1945, work to sponsor the return of meaningful monuments and celebrations both nationally and locally since many local towns’ celebrations also tend to highlight the spectacle of the American return rather than any true meaning.\(^ {63}\)

What is unique about the Filipino commemoration of the Japanese Occupation is that it has been more balanced than most other nations in Southeast Asia. For example, “a group of Filipinos even organized the Kamikaze Memorial Society in the 1970s to keep alive the memory of the patriotic Japanese Kamikaze pilots.”\(^ {64}\) There are also many joint projects sponsored by the government, notable under Ferdinand Marcos, which built Japanese Memorials like the Japanese Memorial Garden in Caliraya, Batangas. This monument was the final in the set to complete a well-rounded remembrance of the war which includes monuments to honor Japanese, American, and Filipino war dead. This is the most diverse and multicultural representation of the war in Southeast Asian historical narrative. On this Jose explains:

\(^{61}\) Ibid, 196.  
\(^{62}\) Ibid, 189.  
\(^{63}\) Ibid, 189.  
\(^{64}\) Ibid, 190.
The active inclusion of Japan in the war commemorations and the establishment of their own markers could not have happened in the 1960s because of the strong anti-Japanese sentiment of the time. From the 1970s onward, however, it was possible not only because of the government’s open attitude towards Japan, but also due to the increasing role of Japan in the Philippine economy – a role which the Philippine government could not do without. Thus, despite criticism from other sectors of Philippine society that the Japanese were finally succeeding in establishing the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, the official response was not to offend the Japanese.65

Jose also provides examples of these monuments, explaining that visits and commemorations reinforce images of the war and reflect war memory in ways that are supported by the government. Jose lists the major war memorials: “There are big war memorials at Mount Samat in Bataan; in Corregidor, an island fort at the mouth of Manila Bay where the sprawling Pacific War Memorial can be found; in Red Beach, at Tacloban, Leyte, where larger-than-life statues of MacArthur, President Sergio Osmeña and others of the landing party stand; in Kiangan, where General Tomoyuki Yamashita surrendered to the Americans in September 1945; and in Iloilo on the island of Panay, to commemorate the guerrilla resistance movement.”66 There is also the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, another official government source interpreting the national historical narrative of the war by preserving buildings and sites of importance during the Occupation. Another government body is the Philippine Veterans’ Affairs Office. However, until recently this organization had a reputation for corruption, which might

65 Ibid, 191.
66 Ibid, 192.
also account for why the more sensitive issues of war remained unheard of in government statements.\textsuperscript{67}

There are also local associations, which build memorials in towns all over the nation and document the respective histories of local provinces and towns. Jose notes one such organization in particular: “a local historical association in Tarlac Province that has built memorials in various towns relating to Second World War operations and battles. It is also unique in that it tries to solicit information from all sides – Filippino, American and Japanese.”\textsuperscript{68} Yet, these growing organizations do not hold strong political sway over the government and continue to fall on deaf ears.

The Interesting Case of Indonesia

Contradictory to the continuity associated with the experience of the Philippines during the Second World War and the Japanese Occupation, Indonesia experienced drastic changes in politics and society resulting from the Occupation. Indeed, Alfred McCoy states that:

\ldots there has been near universal agreement among Western and many national scholars that the war initiated a major social and political transformation in Southeast Asia. There has been considerable debate on ancillary questions such as the nature of Japanese policy or the implication of indigenous response, but no substantive dissent from a central thesis that the Japanese occupation period

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\textsuperscript{67} Ibid, 193. \\
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid, 193.
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fundamentally altered the structure of the region’s history and the quality of its political life. Yet, similarly to the Philippines, in Indonesia the Japanese Occupation “elicits ambivalent responses from local people today. There is none of the bitter hostility that has erupted in China’s or Korea’s relations with Japan – perhaps because of the benefit of geographic distance.”70 However, Greenlees’ ascertains that while geographic distance might be a factor in this friendly relationship, it is not a strong enough factor to support the two country’s interaction alone. Greenlees’ main argument is that the relationship between Indonesia and Japan today is dictated not by history, but by economics and commerce.71 Japanese development aid and investment has been a major contributor to Indonesia’s industrialization and remarkable economic growth, again similar to the Philippines. Even during the 1970s when the relationship between Indonesia and Japan was under stress, it was mostly the result of young Indonesian students who were angry over the direction of economic policy and the influence of Japanese investment in the Indonesian markets.72

For about 350 years, Indonesia was under the colonial rule of the Dutch. Scholars do indeed agree that the Japanese conquest of the aforementioned country hastened Indonesian independence. Therefore, Greenlees states that: The legacy of Japanese wartime rule is still present in ways both great and small: “Indonesia’s 1945 Constitution was written by committees of nationalists brought together by the Japanese, and a nationwide system of neighborhood chiefs

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71 Ibid, 1.
72 Greenlees, 1.
and committees was implemented during the Japanese occupation.”  

A military analyst at the Center for National Strategic Studies in Jakarta, Salim Said, has gone as far as to claim that the Occupation was “a blessing in disguise.” Greenlees concludes then, that the concerns about the war atrocities committed during the Occupation are in fact dying with the victims and during the subsequent generations is not in the forefront of political debates.

The traditional analysis of the legacy of the Occupation in Indonesia emphasizes the “powerful unifying effect that Japanese policy had on the formation of Indonesian national consciousness, and in so doing foreshadowed the work a later generation of scholars.” In a manner that defined the Occupation in a similar fashion as the Japanese did, the traditional analysis is founded on a transformation thesis, which has been verified by major historical figures such as Wilfred Elsbree and Henry Benda as a turning point in Southeast Asian history. The transformation thesis is defined as follows: “…the argument that the war was not simply a transition from colonialism to independence but did in fact constitute a fundamental transformation in the region’s political history…The image of the war’s uniform and lasting impact on the whole of Southeast Asia, presented by the transformation school, yields to a wide spectrum of effect ranging from the profound in Indonesia to the nearly insignificant in Thailand and the Philippines.”

As a result of being a Dutch colony for centuries, Indonesia never had its own national history. The Dutch installed a system of society that glorified Western tradition and enforcing Indonesian culture and history as inferior. Reid and Marr note that it was not “until the period of Japanese military rule did a substantial national history by an Indonesian appear in the form of

73 Ibid, 1.
74 Ibid, 1.
75 McCoy, 2.
76 McCoy, 5.
Sanusi Pane’s Sedjarah Indonesia, reprinted many times since as a standard textbook.”

The Japanese actually instituted a ban on Dutch historical books during the Occupation that further intensified the urgent need and opportunity for national Indonesian historical texts. They consciously encouraged the rewriting of history in anti-colonial methods, even going so far as to create historical commissions and contests for the creation of new historical texts. McCoy agrees with this phenomenon stating that: “The textbooks of national history written hurriedly by nationalists during the Japanese period have been reprinted many times since and adopted by the Republican school system.”

The Japanese also reintroduced the Indonesian language into the education system while banning the teaching of Dutch and other Western languages. The freeing of both language, history, and literature had a particularly stimulating affect for the Indonesian people and politics. According to Reid and Marr, the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia actually resulted in the sudden transformation of the nationalist perception “from one of several struggling counter-myths (colonial historiography still having an overwhelmingly dominant position) into a new orthodoxy.” Indeed, the Japanese contributed very little of their own national mythology while, instead encouraging the anti-colonial narrative that came easily to the Indonesian scholars. The Japanese went as far as to block both Marxists and Westernizers which left room for Indonesian nationalist politicians and journalists and focused on raising the

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78 Ibid, 252.
79 McCoy, 24.
80 Ibid, 25.
81 Reid and Marr, 297.
82 McCoy, 24.
national consciousness in areas like the media and propaganda. This is all echoed in Remco Raben’s work on *Representing the Japanese Occupation in Indonesia*:

Modernist-nationalist Indonesians could not help but notice a high degree of confluence between some Japanese reform policies and measures they themselves had espoused during the pergerakan, the pre-war independence movement. For example, the occupation government eliminated separate forms of government, administration, and law for Indonesian and European (and other ethnic) communities, as well as for urban and rural areas; created a single line of administrative responsibility in place of overlapping Dutch and native civil services; consolidated the educational system by removing dual schools tracks; changed the ‘feudal’ nature of the pangreh praja, or native civil service, by opening it to all on the basis of merit; promoted Indonesian language in education and public life; and began intensive recruitment and training of indigenous military.

According to McCoy, “The mobilization of youth was without a doubt the most radical innovation wrought by the Japanese in wartime Southeast Asia. Where in colonial times upward social mobility had been limited to those of aristocratic birth or those with…education, the ranks of the new elite were open to young people with the right elan and daring, with organizational skills.” The focus of the Japanese actually seemed to be to rid the nation of its Western aggressor, as shown by Reid and Marr: “Public speeches constantly drove home the myth of

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83 Reid and Marr, 297.
85 McCoy, 3.
three and a half centuries of Dutch rule, often in order to draw the contrast with three and a half years of Japanese achievement.”

Alfred McCoy challenges this traditional transformation thesis in his work. He explains: “In opposition to the transformation school’s argument that the war created new elites, these essays, with the exception of those on Indonesia, provide evidence for what might be called an elite continuity thesis.” McCoy’s argument clearly focuses on the fact that throughout the different occupying periods, the Indonesians remained the most important actors who defined the shape of independent Indonesia by making the best of every political opportunity offered during each foreign ruling model. McCoy’s argument, then, is that the Japanese period may have provided the most appealing political opportunities for the birth of independent Indonesia, it was not done so purposely despite Japanese claims after the fact. He states: “The argument of this essay is that the Japanese Occupation brought such profound change that it is not inappropriate to regard 1942 as the beginning of the whole revolutionary upheaval which gave birth to modern Indonesia. Nevertheless, these changes were in very few cases the result of deliberate Japanese planning, but rather of Indonesian responses to a radically altered environment.” As evidence, McCoy explains that much of the national symbols and official orthodoxy for the new nation, including the institutionalization of the national flag and anthem, was greatly hastened by the Japanese war propaganda needs.

Another unique factor in the Indonesian experience was the peaceful entrance of the Japanese into Indonesian. Indeed, Japanese scholar Ken’ichi Gotō emphasizes that:

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86 Reid and Marr, 297.
87 McCoy, 5.
88 Ibid, 18.
89 McCoy, 25.
Before the war Indonesians generally had a positive image of Japan. A report drawn up by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the very eve of the outbreak of the Pacific War, with the forthcoming occupation of Indonesia in mind, stated that ‘the feelings of the peoples of the East Indies towards Japan… are generally favorable’, but then an important passage follows:

‘If the Japanese forces should someday advance unhindered into the East Indies and Japan treats the East Indies high-handedly or some ill-natured Japanese behaves in ways that ignore the traditional customs of the peoples of the East Indies, thereby offending them, then their feelings towards Japan will be even more filled with hatred than that felt towards the Netherlands, their former ruler.’

McCoy argues that the fact that Japan did not fight its way into Indonesian, and was in fact welcomed by the Indonesian people, may have been an important factor in today’s harmonious Japanese-Indonesian relations. McCoy’s work effectively showed that the Japanese Occupation had an impact on the shape of independent Indonesia but falls short of analyzing whether this impact is positive or negative as well as the meanings this impact has on current Japanese-Indonesian relations.

The unique situation in Indonesia resulted in the immediate view of the Japanese Occupation as an interruption to the centuries long colonial period it had endured under the Dutch. In his review of the work *Representing the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia: Personal Testimonies and Public Images in Indonesia, Japan, and the Netherlands*, Maurizio Peleggi

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91 McCoy, 18.
explains that: “In newly independent Indonesia, on the other hand, memory of the Japanese occupation (initially welcomed by Sukarno and the nationalist movement) was first subsumed ambiguously under the memory of the liberation struggle and then given iconic status, and thus neutralized, in the New Order’s narrative of nation-building.”\(^{92}\) Despite the positive role the Japanese Occupation played in giving independent Indonesia its own national identity, no one celebrates the date when the Japanese officially declared Indonesia independent, and “in Indonesia today, ‘socialization’ through school education, the mass media, and family education has made the Japanese Occupation period known among the people as ‘the darkest hour’ in their history. At the same time, the historical view that had nothing but condemnation for ‘fascist Japan,’ which predominated in the 1950s, has receded, giving way to nationalism-based historical interpretation founded on the thesis that Indonesians restored their own dignity and autonomy by enduring that dark hour.”\(^{93}\) Remco Raben explains that: “Historians like to blame the ideological pressure under Sukarno’s Guided Democracy or Suharto’s New Order for the simplified view of the events that took place during the Japanese Occupation. Alternative images were barely given a chance.”\(^{94}\) Raben puts a heavy emphasis on the difference between the Indonesian official narrative versus the different groups within Indonesia, which often harbor conflicting narratives. Raben provides an argument by first explaining that personal memory is the individual voice inside the larger choir that is collective memory, but cannot exist without it because personal memory is based on stereotypes and must be compared to the societal


\(^{93}\) Gotō, 548.

\(^{94}\) Raben, 11.
interpretation. He then continues to explain that one of the most important methods in which personal memories are translated into the larger societal voice is by reunion and interest groups. Relating this specifically to Indonesia, Raben states:

In Indonesia the interest groups are a relatively recent phenomenon. Until the early 1980s, there were hardly any platforms where individual experiences could meet and find expression. The immense variety of experiences that these associations and clubs express is remarkable. Besides the looser associations of reunion groups, there are organizations of ex-Peta military, ex-heiho, and an association of former students who have studied in Japan (They have even founded their own university)… The strong ritualization of the state-organized culture of commemoration made it difficult for these organizations to emerge.

But perhaps of even more importance is Raben’s conclusion that:

Debate over this memory – that is, over how the Occupation should be remembered or forgotten, and what consequences that might have for the nation – began at the identical moment the nation itself was born: 17 August 1945, the date on which Sukarno proclaimed Indonesian independence. This convergence assured that Indonesian interpretations of the war would be closely linked to and molded by attitudes toward both the revolution that followed it (1945-1949), and the political and social transformations of the nation in subsequent decades. Nationalism thus provided the dynamic behind this flow of historical remembering, but the results were not always easily predictable.

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95 Ibid, 10.
96 Ibid, 13.
97 Raben, 22.
And finally, Raben argues that: “Thus in the 1990s as in the late 1940s, a few large matters of nationalist principle lay at the heart of what the nation wished to remember about the war era. The rest, overshadowed both then and now by more recent concerns, continues to be allowed to slip away.”

Current Foreign Relations

In an effort to examine the state of security cooperation in the Pacific, Sandra Leavitt argues that the collective memory hypothesis does not accurately describe the current “lack of security cooperation between Southeast Asia and Japan.” Leavitt argues that there have since been too many important historical events that eclipse the legacy of the Japanese Occupation as the dominant shaper of Southeast Asia’s security with Japan. The question she poses is, “then what provides a better explanation as to why so little military collaboration takes place between Japan and the countries of Southeast Asia?”

Sandra Leavitt approaches this question from a realist standpoint. She argues that in other cases countries have overcome animosities when it is in their core interest to do so, therefore it is not evident that historic memories overcome more timely realist motivations. Leavitt states that: “Southeast Asia’s guarded development of military ties with Japan quite feasibly is influenced both by balance-of-power dynamics and concern over Japan’s credibility, trustworthiness, and intent.”

My argument however, is in agreement with this statement to a certain extent. This paper has shown that the way in which a nation defines important periods in their historical narrative can have an effect on the way they

98 Ibid, 34.
100 Ibid, 229.
101 Leavitt, 229.
102 Ibid, 233.
view another nation and consequently how they deal with that other nation in foreign policy. The trustworthiness, credibility and intent of Japan are all tied to the way that each Southeast Asian nation represents the Occupation period.

Leavitt comments also that even though Japan paid war reparations to Burma, Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, “the policy actually reinforced regional perceptions about Japan’s lack of remorse and dictated caution. Similarly, overseas development assistance from Tokyo has been tied to buying Japanese products and services on Japanese terms.”\(^\text{103}\) This also stands to prove the argument presented here. The Philippines and Indonesia both moved to define the Japanese Occupation as a smaller part of their larger fight for independence (each in their own capacity of continuity as described above), in order to cultivate strong economic ties with Japan. However, as even Leavitt states, the experiences of non-military interactions have been inconsistent or even negative, resulting in continued mistrust and uncertainty stemming from the mistrust that developed after the Occupation.\(^\text{104}\) Leavitt says, “Overall, increased interaction and interdependence between Japan and Southeast Asia over the past 30 years have not consistently contributed to mutual respect and trust. These dynamics and sentiments may limit states’ willingness to rely on Japan as a security partner.”\(^\text{105}\) She does state that any improvement in Japan-Southeast Asian military and security relations will be most successful if accomplished with the goal of regional balancing, mainly with China in mind.\(^\text{106}\) It is also crucial to understand the regional associations like ASEAN have created better opportunities for cooperation in military and strategic relations between Southeast Asian nations. Leavitt’s research supports this by claiming that: “Southeast Asian nations have developed a

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\(^\text{103}\) Ibid, 234.
\(^\text{104}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{105}\) Leavitt, 235.
\(^\text{106}\) Ibid, 234.
strategic culture shaped by historical factors such as colonialism, fights for independence and nation-building, internal struggles, disputed borders, and devastating involvement in Cold War proxy wars. Thus states there tend to value limited external interference in their internal affairs. While the shared historical events might keep Southeast Asian nations from cooperating militarily with Japan, it brings them together for closer regional cooperation instead. Southeast Asian nations have found a strong reliance on one another that diminishes the need to rely on any one large power, be it China, Japan, or the United States. Leavitt’s concluding argument follows:

What is certain is that common threats, mutual goals, and institutional linkages provide strong rationales for increased Japan-Southeast Asia security cooperation – Southeast Asian’s collective memory of World War Two atrocities and Japan’s legal constraints – are analytically unsustainable: as this article has demonstrated, offensive realism, defensive realism, ASEAN’s strategic culture, and definitional differences provide greater explanatory power for this state of affairs. Yet, this work has shown that Leavitt’s conclusion regarding the role of collective memory in current foreign relations in the Asia Pacific does not hold up with evidence.

Conclusion

This work has shown that the way in which the memory of the Japanese Occupation is represented or even the lack of representation in the official historical narratives of Indonesia and the Philippines has affected current security relations. The Japanese Occupation is clearly still present in the collective memory of both the Indonesian and Filipino people. Also revealed in

108 Ibid, 240.
this work was the tendency of the governments to downplay the atrocities committed during the War, choosing to focus instead on other historical events, like Indonesian Independence Day or the return of the American forces to the Philippines. This is of course a conscience effort made by governments in order to pursue certain policy patterns. Referring to the Indonesian government Raben states, “Clearly the government did have an interest in ignoring or even obscuring some aspects of the Japanese Occupation, and it was never innocent of the knowledge that history was a valuable tool to bend public opinion.” 109 Both governments have strong economic ties with Japan, which are growing as China grows as a threat, as well as functional diplomatic relations. However, the rise in interest groups, legal proceedings, and continued efforts to establish new national monuments remembering the victims of the Second World War demonstrates that the atrocities still exist in historical memory. Despite efforts to ignore the atrocities by both the Southeast Asian governments and the Japanese governments, does not fully absolve issues related to foreign relations. Issues such as trust over military cooperation in the conflict in the South China Sea, have clear ties with the unresolved issues of historical memory of the Occupation during World War II. Again Raben manages to capture this sentiment well: “The effect of the wartime past is persistent and seems to grow all the stronger as the years go by. Involved parties in every country struggle for recognition, war victims institute legal proceedings for compensation, reunion groups are more active than ever, and the literature of memoirs is flourishing more than ever before. As the past recedes, the demand grows to bear witness, to settle accounts, and to give meaning to that brief episode which has left its deep marks in personal memory.” 110

109 Raben, 28.
110 Raben, 7.
While there are strong activist groups present in South Korea, for instance, the government recently supported the voice of the people. The position of South Korea in the region is arguably a more stable one than the situation for Indonesia and the Philippines, even to this day. Another argument may exist that since South Korea is currently in a stable position, both economically and in the world order (as one of the top allies to the United States), this is the reason the country can afford to promote its own official historical narrative, which is in direct contrast to the Japanese, and let this be a driving force in bilateral relations. Since both Indonesia and the Philippines are still developing nations who rely heavily on Japanese trade and aid, neither are in a position to pursue controversial historical debates. However, this does not mean that the issues of memory have no effect on foreign relations. The official narrative of all countries is derived out of some version of the collective memory. A national history must reflect the nation to some extent and this is shown in monuments and museums. Raben explains “Governments and national institutions are the suppliers of national images and rituals of commemoration, but they are not the clever and all-powerful creators of commemorative images: they respond to a demand in society, and their historical ideology must be echoed in the nation.”\(^{111}\) Therefore, it stands to reason that if the collective memory still takes issue with the remembrance of the Japanese Occupation, eventually the official historical memory will reflect this.

Despite a growing number of scholars in the recent past claiming that history is not a major player in the conflict in the Asia-Pacific, there is evidence to the contrary. The governments themselves may have made peace, but the people have not. The hope of the governments is that by suppressing the issues for long enough, the next generations will forget

\(^{111}\) Raben, 10.
the atrocities, however, even seven decades later controversy over historical interpretations and trust are still affecting foreign relations between Japan and Southeast Asia. Until these issues are adequately addressed by both the Japanese governments and the respective governments of Indonesia and the Philippines, there is the potential for the perpetuation of current conflict between Japan and South Korea and China.

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