



FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS HUMANAS Y SOCIALES

# **The Rape of Nanking: a historical analysis of the aftershocks of wartime sexual violence in international relations.**

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Quinto Curso del Doble Grado de ADE y Relaciones Internacionales

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Madrid

Junio 2018



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## **1. Abstract**

This dissertation seeks to develop a comprehensive framework regarding the Rape of Nanking from a historical perspective, and evaluate the psychological, ethnical, and geopolitical consequences of the event in the present and future of international relations. With this aim, a contextualization of Japanese conditioning political factors, cultural norms and drivers of expansion is presented; as well as an analysis on the First and Second Sino-Japanese wars, as precursors of Nanking. The main historical analysis will cover the planning and intent of Japanese imperial forces when entering Manchuria, the advance of the imperial army, and finally the Rape of Nanking; recounting the mass executions, sexual violence, torture, and further crimes following the fall of the old capital. Lastly, a predictive analysis will be developed in order to understand the historical impact of Nanking on current international relations.

**Key words:** Rape of Nanking, Japan, China, foreign policy, war crimes.

## **2. Methodology**

The proposed methodology aims for an extensive qualitative data gathering. This is imperative given the historical nature of our research and its aims; hoping to provide a more granular understanding of the addressed issues. Qualitative research will consist of a review of previously existing literature on the subject, and analyze the research question from a variety of fields within humanities. Through this approach the aim is to acquire extensive information regarding historiography on the event, and interpret it from a historic, political, and sociological standpoint. The study of different historical interpretations will highlight the politicized and often polarizing nature of this event; as well as its impact in the creation of a broader framework of historical memory within East Asia. In turn, quantitative research design will focus on official estimates; considering both Chinese, Japanese, and international sources. Particular focus will be payed to creating an analysis that encompasses a wide range of historic archives, as to best engage the diverse views that surround the topic.

The study of the Nanking Massacre and the nation-state conceptions that have arisen regarding Japanese Imperialism will be addressed from a historiographic framework that encompasses oral and written testimonies, legal documents, academic research, and state declarations. However, this research will opt for a multidisciplinary approach in the understanding of the historical events of the Asia-Pacific war; attempting to critically analyze the role of both identity and national narratives regarding the Nanking Massacre. Particularly, psychological sources will be utilized to understand the broader implications of rape as a weapon of war, and the indoctrination in brutality within the Japanese military. As a result of these forces, collective memory will be understood as a complex interpretation of history, framed in relation to social remembrance, which comes to condition self-perception both at a communal and national level. This conception is tied into the realm of international politics and diplomacy when evaluating the impact historical tensions hold on current political structure and practice.

### **3. Introduction**

This research seeks to establish a historical framework to understand the impact of Japan and China's imperial past on their current foreign relations. With this aim, the entry of the Japanese Imperial Army in mainland China and the Sino-Japanese wars and World War II will be explored; focusing on the Rape of Nanking, in part due to its structural impact on China's history and sense of identity. Describing the war crimes committed, as well as analyzing the behavioral tendencies that led to these events, this study will then explore the theories of violence that have attempted to explain Japanese military actions during this period.

In order to establish the most complete analysis possible we will take into consideration the country's national history and the international sphere of the time, the precursors of the massacre, and the ideology that could set the base for such actions. The dramatic shift of Japanese treatment of prisoners of war during the interbellum period between the First World War and the Second Sino-Japanese war will be addressed in order to offer a better understanding of the circumstances that allowed the birth of the new ideology that served as the foundation for the war crimes that followed. Historic, psychological, political and social factors will be taken into account to explain the occurrence of this phenomenon; as

well as how these allowed the behavior of Japanese soldiers to escape the restraints that govern most human conduct at such a widespread scale, while addressing the debates that still surround the historic remembrance of this event.

As stated previously, the main body of historical research will delve into the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese war, the weeks leading towards the troops arrival to Nanking, and the massacre that followed. This basis will be contextualized within a broader East Asian remembrance of Japanese Imperialism; creating an understanding of the historical memory of the imperial period in Asia, and its ripple effect on current political relations in the region.

Nanking will be understood as the cornerstone of Chinese historical remembrance within the century of humiliation narrative, and a source of discord within Japanese politics. Building upon this reality, this research will evaluate the historical impact Nanking holds on current bilateral relations between China and Japan; considering the geopolitical implications of said relations, and the predictive impact and implications of historical memory with the rise of China.

The motivations that drive this study stem from the intersection of gender and conflict studies within a historical context. Given the particular remembrance the Nanking Massacre has held upon contemporary Asian relations and self-perception, the author explores it as a paradigmatic case in historical memory building. Furthermore, given the gendered dimension of the extensive rape that occurred in the city, issues of military masculinity in World War II tie into the dynamics of dominance so intrinsic to this event, prompting interest for historians in the study of both war practices and their social consequence. Ultimately, the Rape of Nanking provides a case study of the military, social, and state dynamics that have defined the conflict of the last century, as well as key reflections both on historical memory and oblivion. These conceptions shape current realities in the region, and become a subjacent driver in current and future Sino-Japanese relations.

#### **4. Historiography and debates on Nanking**

History, contrary to common assumption, is often a complex reality with varying and even opposing perspectives. The word itself holds a duality in meaning, referring to both “events of the past in and of themselves” and “a record of events of the past put into writing for the benefit of future generations” (Masaaki, 2000; ii). Recognizing the fact that history does not exist within a vacuum, and is inevitably molded and interpreted by governments with particular goals and political agendas, as well as citizens seeking to define themselves within their own society and a wider international spectrum, is fundamental to properly analyze historical events and their effects within a broader context (Heinzen, 2004; 148).

As stated by historian David Askew when referring to the events of Nanking, “no single author, nor even one position, can legitimately claim a monopoly to the truth” (Askew, 2004; 66). This standing is especially relevant to this case due to its controversial nature (Li, Sabella & Liu, 2001; 3), and its utilization both by China and Japan “as either an ideological tool or for nationalist mobilization (...) which have affected the historiographical approaches to the topic as well” (Buettner, 2016; 31).

Historical memory derived from political conflict, as is the case of Nanking, emerges as pluralistic expressions; often strongly divergent and reflecting interests of different power structures (Schwartz, 2012; 3). Thus, with the purpose of providing the most accurate account possible of the Nanking Massacre, this research draws both from Japanese and Chinese historiography, as well as international scholarship on the issue, and offers an overview of the different historical schools of thought regarding the massacre.

Three main schools have originated from the Nanking debate, and are waging parties in its “memory war”: maximalists, revisionists, and centrists (Ibid; 10).

Maximalists encompass a group of academics that see Nanking as a phase within a larger scale of atrocities committed under Japanese Imperial expansion; considering the circumstances leading to the entry into Nanking as insufficient to account for the brutality of the crimes that occurred within its walls (Ibid; 11). Katsuichi Honda, author of “The Nanjing Massacre: A Japanese Journalist Confronts Japan's National Shame” (Honda,



2015; 1), and Iris Chang, author of “The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II” (Chang, 1997; 1) can be considered the most prominent subscribers to the maximalist interpretation. While committed to humane narratives, Maximalist authors have been criticized for their estimates of the massacre and their lack of study regarding the underlying issues that defined Japanese military behavior (Askew, 2002; 5).

In contrast, revisionist scholars argue against the severity, or even existence, of a massacre in Nanking (Shudo, 2005; 7). The most extreme proponents of this narrative, led by Shudo Higashinakano, author of “The Nanking Massacre: Fact Versus Fiction” (Ibid; 1), consider the massacre a myth fabricated by left-wing authors (Schwartz, 2012; 15). While maximalists present narratives and personal victim profiles, revisionists consider Japanese troops committed debatable actions due to external circumstances, and thus are exempt of blame for such decisions (Ibid; 15). It is important to note that all revisionist victim estimates completely exclude the executions of prisoners of war, as these deaths are considered to occur within the rational of war (Masaaki, 2000; 11).

Some revisionist authors do recognize that a massacre occurred in the Chinese capital; with Tadao Takimoto and Yasuo Ohara, authors of “The Alleged Nanking Massacre: Japan's Rebuttal to China's Forged Claims” (Tadao & Yasuo, 2000; 1), and Masaaki Tanaka, author of “What really happened in Nanking” (Masaaki, 2000; 1), as the main supporters of this approach.

In a somewhat balancing position between maximalism and revisionism one can find the studies of the centrists, composed of both liberal and conservative thinkers (Schwartz, 2012; 20). However, centrist claims tend to align more closely with revisionists, while still defending the existence of atrocities in Nanking (Ibid; 20). Masahiro Yamamoto, author of “Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity” (Yamamoto, 2000; 1) and David Askew, author of a variety of studies of Nanking including “The Nanjing Incident: Recent Research and Trends” (Askew, 2002; 1) and “The Nanjing incident: An examination of the civilian population” (Askew, 2001; 1), can be considered the most prominent examples of the centrist school (Schwartz, 2012; 20).

Much of the disagreement between these schools of thought derives not only from political considerations, but from different conceptions of Nanking itself and the time

scale of the massacre, leading to different death tolls (Askew, 2004; 70). However, it is clear that in the Nanking debate conflicting historical accounts are reflective of a greater divide in terms of attribution and blame; which define antithesis, social resentment, and binary state relations (Schwartz, 2012; 29). In this manner, the Sino-Japanese memory debate “is a war about cause and blame alike, and our major problem is to distinguish between them” (Ibid; 29).

Pertaining the sources and data utilized within the study, one must make reference to a particular case within the scholarly debate of the Nanking Massacre. Iris Chang’s book “The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II” (Chang, 1997; 1) is the most impactful, comprehensive, and far-reaching historical study on this issue at an international level (Li, 2000; 1). However, Chang’s work has also stirred controversy (Askew, 2004; 1), and both positive than negative reactions among fellow historians (Yoshida, 2000; 116 & 161). Japanese politics and scholarship have adamantly rejected the book’s analysis of the event, mostly from the perspective of revisionist authors, who question much of the massacre itself (Masaaki, 2000; 1). However, most scholarship positions itself in a contrasting position to revisionist historiography, matter which brings these positions into question (Askew, 2004; 1). Meanwhile, in Chinese and Anglophone scholarship, Chang’s work has been widely accepted as the most revered standing on the event, based on eyewitness accounts and an extensive recompilation of primary sources on the topic (Li, 2000; 1 & Zagoria, 1998; 1). It is important to note that such an extensively debated work has still prompted a reaction of those who support her account, but reaffirm the continuous debatable nature of historic analysis, and argue for a more analytical and methodologically rigorous retelling; less directed to a broader public. While reaffirming the international impact of Chang’s work, in the endeavor of providing an objective account, extensive sources both agreeing and diverging from certain points in Chang’s narrative will be utilized to provide a complete analysis, and numerical data will be extracted from sources considered purely impartial to the topic.

Within the framework of this research, one must consider that Chang’s work and the claims of her critics are not mutually exclusive, but help to develop a broader framework of reference from which to understand such a contested historical event.

Ultimately, despite the debates surrounding numerical estimates of the massacre itself, we must consider that whether 100,000 or 200,000 people were killed does not truly alter the dimensions of the horror (Yang, 2006; 71), and that Nanking remains one of the darkest chapters of modern history. As Michael Schudson affirms “there are limits to the past that can be reconstructed, and there is an integrity to the past that deserves respect” (Schudson via Alexander, Jacobs, & Smith, 2010; 221).

## **5. Historical analysis and drivers of the Second Sino-Japanese war and interbellum change in protocols against foreign combatants and civilians**

To make sense of Japanese actions in Nanking, we must first locate the shift that would bring forth the manifestation of these violent practices. The shift in the treatment of both civilians and combatants alike will be the base upon which the events that followed were developed, and therefore represent important conditioning factors to understand the context in which they arose.

The First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), was the event that marked the emergence of Japan as a world power. The war arose as a result from the struggle of China and Japan over dominance in the Korean peninsula; which had been China’s primary client state until that moment. However, the peninsula’s strategic location and natural resources sparked Japan’s interest. With the modernization Japan started to undergo in 1875, it started to consolidate its influence in Korea, and press the country to open up to trade and state its independence from China in foreign policy issues. Ultimately, Japan attempted to extend its control to northern China, which led to a formal declaration of war on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1894. Despite predictions of a rapid Chinese victory, Japanese capacities overwhelmed China’s military and gained key wins on land and sea; forcing the Chinese to sue for peace. The Treaty of Shimonoseki, which would signal the end of the conflict, obligated China to recognize Korean independence and ceded Taiwan, adjunct territories, and the Liaodong Peninsula within Manchuria.

While Japanese authorities were meticulous in their adherence to International Humanitarian Law regarding the captured Russian combatants during the Russo-Japanese

War (1904-1905), as well as with German and Austrian combatants in the First World War; the dawn of the Second Sino-Japanese War and the following Second World War, brought an end to any consideration or notion of humanity held towards the captured. And with this stark shift came some of the most brutal instances in recent history regarding captured militants and civilians alike (Tanaka, 2017; 11). Yet the shift also bled towards the treatment of civilian populations, with the perpetration of massacres and crimes against humanity, such as the Rape of Nanking, the Comfort Women system or chemical and biological warfare testing and investigation on captive human subjects in Unit 731 (Li, 2017; 2).

The striking difference in the army's behavior and treatment of those under their power between the two periods is often discussed in relation to the debates of Japanese violations to international humanitarian law, yet the motives themselves behind this transition are not commonly explained (Hickman, 2009; 2). This shift was a consequence of the interaction of diverse established features, some of which shattered during the period after the First World War, forcing the development of a new order that would, paired with the beginning of the war against China, lead Japan to a new conception of humanity and lack thereof. While certain specific ideological and strategic changes were fundamental to the commitment of the atrocities, the following paragraphs aim to give an overview of the shift that would later enable these acts to take place.

#### **a. Conditioning Japanese political factors**

To properly establish a basis of Japanese identity in the twentieth century, it is imperative to understand the dominant ideological basis of the country during this period, as it was the primary pillar of a millenary system that survived the implosion of the Edo shogunate and the end of the Meiji Restoration (Perez, 2013; 280) where social hierarchy was achieved and sustained through martial virtues and loyalty to the state (Nitobe, 2002; 16). This system led to the birth of so-called "Way of the Warrior" (Wert, 2016; 839) and heavily influenced military indoctrination policies and ideology during the Japanese imperial expansion (Ibid, 2002; 15), becoming a central construct of Japanese masculinity (Perez, 2013; 280).

Appropriation of Bushido by Japanese military elites would come to reshape the ideology (Ibid, 2013; 280) with the intent of furthering imperial political agendas (Wert, 2016; 839) and imbue young Japanese soldiers with a conception of sacrifice and loyalty for the sake of the state (Perez, 2013; 280), accepting death over surrender (Straus, 2011; 70).

Ultimately, the concept of Bushido would come to suffer a corruption of its original precept; resulting in an interpretation of the bushido ethic that, when practiced to its extreme during the Pacific War, would lead to the suicidal tactics associated with kamikaze soldiers (Benesh, 2014; 109)

Furthermore, the perception of being surrounded by potentially hostile states favored the development of a Shintoist interpretation of bushido in the years before World War II (Cleary, 2009; 10); being exacerbated by the national euphoria that followed imperial expansion of Japan (Benesh, 2014; 104) and the military's growing domestic support (Wert, 2016; 839).

It is unquestionable that the bushido ethic played a defining role in the Imperial Japanese Army's behavior, yet it has been established that this ideology had been present in the Japanese system long before the shift occurred, and although its interaction with some of the other specific circumstances of this period will push the notion to the extreme, it cannot account for the shift alone. Thus, we must understand other ideological conditioning factors that could have influenced the shift in treatment of civilians and combatants.

When referring to Japanese political imperialism, it is necessary to analyze the basic notions that were utilized to justify expansionism. Japan's population is remarkably homogenous and has often been regarded as ethnocentric (Towle, Kosuge, & Kibata, 2000; 117); characteristic which will play a defining role in the development of the country's nationalistic brand of racism and derive in a sense of racial superiority that would become a dominant factor in Japanese society during the period (Nagashima, 2006; 112). Thus, "it was believed widely in Japan that the Japanese race was of a higher order than any other race or ethnic group" (Harris, 2003; 471); accepting a concept of a divine origin that set them apart as select people (Kshetry, 2008; 34). This became pervasive

enough that to the militarist elite, other Asian societies and Westerners became sub races (Harris, 2003; 471).

This ideology provided a justification for the inhumane treatment of prisoners of war and of civilians alike, as they were considered to be undeserving of basic human dignity (Ibid, 2003; 471). Japanese military elites would come to employ this concept of nationalistic racism to favor and undertake imperial expansion throughout East and Southeast Asia (Kshetry, 2008; 34).

In this context, the emperor played a fundamental role in the conception of racial superiority, being regarded as the direct descendant of the goddess who created their civilization (Ibid, 2008; 34), and was considered by many as a living god and the embodiment of the country's soul (Harris, 2003; 471). This conception of the emperor as god like necessarily links to his omnipotence and, paired with the concept of racial superiority, to the legitimacy of dominance over not only Japan but all other lands (Beasley, 1987; 35). In reality the emperor was often an instrument of the wishes of his advisors; which ultimately led militarists to exploit his status as the symbol of the nation to further their own personal gain through his dictates (Harris, 2003; 474). Taking into account the widespread nationalistic racism that defined the elite of this period, as well as the importance of the emperor in terms of influence over soldiers and civilians alike, and harsh Japanese military training (Zapotoczny, 2008; 3); the shift in regards to Japanese war practices would set forth another reason for brutality in imperial practice: to unite all lands under the name of the emperor (Beasley, 1987; 35).

## **b. Economic drivers**

One of the major changes that rearranged Japan's situation in the interbellum period was the dramatic economic decline the country suffered; driven by the Great Depression that had broken down the global economic system (Paine, 2017; 109).

The period spanning 1919 to 1930 was defined by a profound recession, with only a 2% increase in Japan's real gross national product (Lonien, 2003; 14). Indeed the 1920s marked the end of Japan's era of prosperity, with the backlash of excessive lending and the postwar inflation bubble strongly affecting the financial sector (Schiltz, 2017; 7), and the commercial balance declining due to the appearance of trade frictions that limited the country's access to its core international markets (Petri, 1993; 33). The 1927 Shōwa financial crisis, which collapsed thirty-seven banks, acted as a precursor for the impact the Great Depression would come to have on the island nation two years later (Schiltz, 2017; 7).

The global economic recession brought forth a stark reduction of American and European purchases, and Japan became increasingly dependent on its Asian exports; which in turn would come to favor military expansionism (Itō, 1992; 14). This downturn devastated the mass of the Japanese population, with businesses shutting down rapidly and skyrocketing unemployment; leading many Japanese peasants to sell their daughters into the prostitution sector as a means of survival (Roberts & Westad, 2013). Soaring inflation, growing amounts of labor strikes, and the disastrous earthquake of 1923 only served to worsen the already dismal economic conditions (Schiltz, 2017; 7).

The final turning point towards military expansionism was driven by a severe agricultural recession in the country; with the deflation of the price of rice impoverishing rural areas (Petri, 1993; 34). The country's heavy importation that had once been financed by Japan's textile exports could no longer absorb such expenditures due to intense competition, reductions in foreign demand, and discriminatory tariffs (Zapotoczny, 2008; 1).

Spurring from the misery, the argument that Japan needed to conquer new land to ward off mass starvation became increasingly attractive, and, military officials in Japan once again started to see China as their rightful claim (Paine, 2017; 110). An aggressively militaristic foreign policy approach to China was perceived as the only true manner in which the country could lessen the effects of the Great Depression, while serving to also counter Russian ideological and territorial expansionism (Ibid; 110).

### **c. The role of the international order**

The economic plunge Japan suffered can explain the national call for solutions and the desperation that would ensure these be reached no matter the cost, prompting Japanese imperialism and war declaration. Indeed, the transformation that would occur within Japan is inevitably tied to the erosion of liberalist trade practices as a consequence of the Great Depression (Pyle, 2009); however, this would still not serve to understand the shift of Japanese war practices to such an extent. Therefore, it is necessary to incorporate another level to the analysis, including the influence of the international community.

Firstly, it is important to note that there were certain treaties established to regulate war practices, and while the Japanese government signed and ratified the 1907 Second Hague Convention, it did not ratify the Geneva Convention of 1929 (Hickman, 2009; 10). Historians argue that Japanese elites had believed this compliance would contribute towards their aspirations of Japan being recognized as one of the great powers (Aydin, 2008; 3) and treated equally within the international system (Choucri, 2013; 70). At first, the Japanese Imperial Government sought to integrate into the Versailles system, within the 1920s universal order (Kamino, 2008; 32). Precisely, the decade of the 1930s saw a revival in the self-perception of Japan's identity both within the regional and global order; endorsing a pan-Asian vision that would later come to be highly politicized (Aydin, 2008; 3). However, as a result of the 1931 "Manchuria Incident", and Japan's subsequent League of Nations withdrawal (Pyle, 2007), the Imperial government would come to resent Western powers, and seek to generate a new conception of regional order, becoming a new revisionist power (Kamino, 2008; 32). This resentment would be strongly influenced by rising Chinese nationalism at the time, and the remaining colonial rule of Western nations such as Britain, France or The Netherlands in Southeast Asia (Pyle, 2007).

Thus, when integration into the Western power balance no longer seemed truly feasible, and with the rise of the revisionist fascist powers of Germany and Italy, Japanese elites and decision makers abandoned all pretense of following the status quo norms of international behavior (Hickman, 2009; 11). These of course included laws pertaining war practices and the treatment of captured militants. This refusal of the international



basic practices of war was a centerpiece of the shift experienced during the interbellum period, as the real change was the notion of Japanese elites of Japan's status in the world if they were to continue to act as a subordinate status quo power, and reflected subjacent cultural differences between Western Europe and East Asia (Ibid; 9). This change will establish the basis for the perpetration of Japanese war crimes during the Second Sino-Japanese war and World War II, as national leaders considered that if Japan was to be recognized as a great power it was, both in East Asia and within the global order (Pyle, 2007), it could not submit, nor would it yield, to the conditions established by the international community (Ibid; 11). Thus, it becomes evident that international politics reshaped Japanese domestic relations, and would contribute to the interbellum shift (Pyle, 2007).

## **6. The route to Nanking**

### **a. Introduction: planning and intent of Japanese imperial forces when entering Manchuria.**

The historical events that gave way to the Second Sino-Japanese War are complex; although the immediate precursor of the massacre came in the summer of 1937, when Japan finally succeeded in provoking a full-scale war with China (Brook, 1999; xi), leading the country to what would be a truly agonizing brand of torture under Japanese occupation. Previously, in 1931, the Japanese army had occupied small territories in northern China (Manchuria); and would in 1937 utilize a minor incident between Chinese and Japanese squadrons to start another wave of expansion into mainland China (Heinzen, 2004; 149).

By August 1937 the Japanese had invaded Shanghai, and the war could no longer be avoided, setting forth Japan's imperial ambition of taking control of the enormous country (Yamamoto, 2000; 43). Japanese officials had predicted a rapid victory, but conquering a giant like China proved to be a far more daunting task than had been anticipated (Fogel, 2000; 17). Chinese numbers and troop concentration, in tandem with an initial defensive Japanese strategy, created a lengthy stalemate (Yamamoto, 2000; 42). Japanese

expectations were shattered in Shanghai, were the struggles to overcome Chinese forces drew out for months, before the city's fall in November 1937 (Zapotoczny, 2008; 1).

This arduous resistance broke the idea held by Japanese leaders that the obviously superior Japanese military could, and would, conquer all of mainland China within months (Mitter, 2013). With the eventual fall of Shanghai, the mood of the imperial troops had turned sour, and with the frustration driven by arduous Chinese resistance (MacKenzie, 1994; 513) they marched towards Nanking with retribution as a goal (Zapotoczny, 2008; 3). The entry into the Chinese capital would come to be known as the most notorious Japanese atrocity in the entirety of the Asian-Pacific War (Yang, 1999; 1).

**b. Road to Nanking: the advance of the imperial army, Loot all, kill all, burn all imperative**

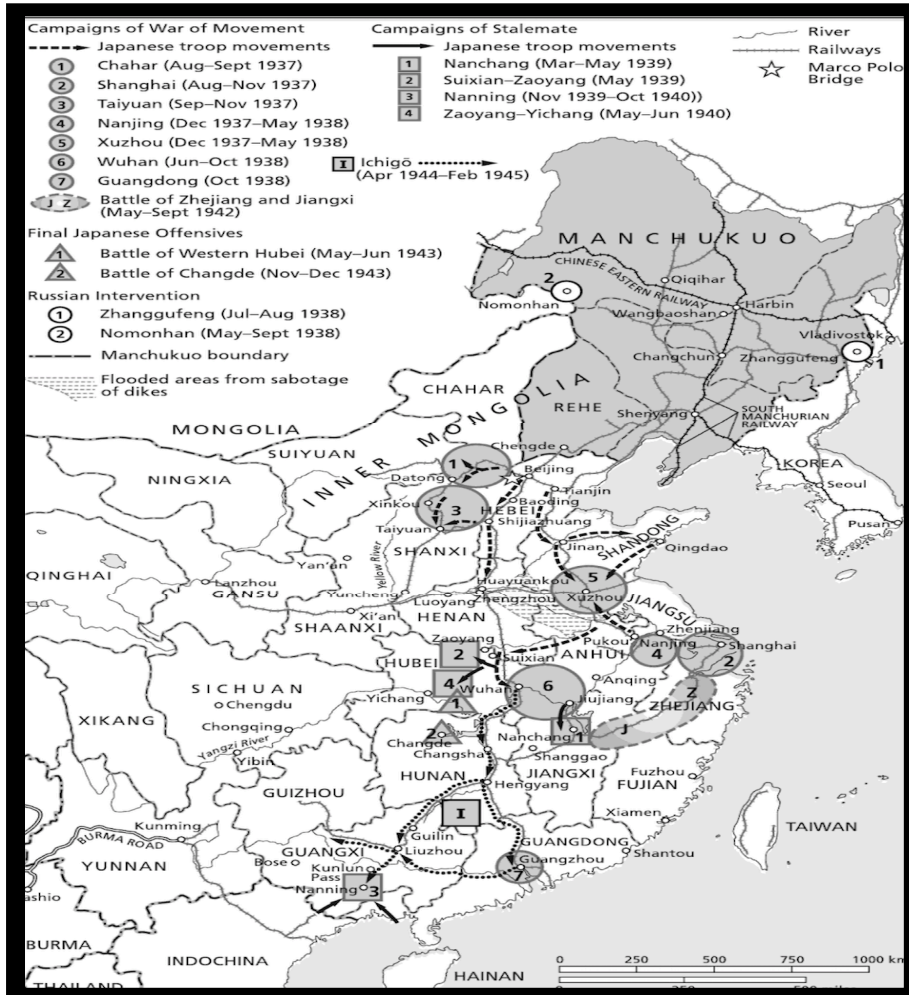
The Rape of Nanking was preceded by several incidents of similar nature, albeit lesser scale (Lary & MacKinnon, 2001; 76). However, these incidents paved the path for the atrocities to come, progressively breaking down internal discipline (Valentino, et al, 2004; 375). and fueling sentiments of resentment in the army (Wakabayashi, 2013; 155).

Little to none was spared on the Japanese imperial army's path towards the capital of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government; with the raiding of small farming communities that ended with everyone in sight clubbed or bayoneted, and even the burning of entire cities to the ground, as to minimize any threats of resistance (Zapotoczny, 2008; 3). The scarcity of supplies led the troops to become subsistence based, and that combined with logistics inadequacies in the preparation for the Nanking campaign heightened the army's aggression (Yamamoto, 2000; 31).

The imperial government set forth policies seeking to wipe out certain regions in China; applying a variety of methods such as the deadly "Three-all" policy ("Loot all, kill all, burn all") in northern China (Rosenman, 2000; 1); devastating the mainland. During this period, many cases of rape and other crimes were recorded, yet brutalities became a norm rather than an exception (Zapotoczny, 2008; 3 & Shen, 1998; 1). Japanese soldiers had a

strong culturally ingrained discontent with prisoners, and after attacks from Chinese plainclothes soldiers, the killings of both prisoners of war and civilians alike became a normalized practice (Yamamoto, 2000; 31).

**Image 1: Map of Japanese military advance through Manchuria**



*Source: Paine, S. C. (2017). The Japanese Empire: Grand Strategy from the Meiji Restoration to the Pacific War. Cambridge University Press.*

The breakdown of discipline, lack of basic resources, and growing anger toward the Chinese people, built up within the Imperial Army in the route to Nanking (Wakabayashi, 2013; 64). As they approached the city’s walls “expectations of revenge, sex, and goods combined with the heightened desire to make an example of Nanking and prove Japan’s dominance” (Zapotoczny, 2008; 3).

Prior to the Nanking Massacre, Japan became notorious for being the first nation to use airpower on civilian populations (Peattie, 2013; 103); only gaining fame for their ruthless use of military power when it launched its campaign of slaughter through Shanghai and Nanking, proceeding to inland China (Lary & MacKinnon, 2001; 84). Other war crimes consisted of ruthless human experimentation and biological warfare inflicted upon both combatants and civilians alike (Keiichi, 1995; 65). Entire cities and even regions were targeted and infected with diseases such as cholera, dysentery, typhoid, plague, anthrax, paratyphoid; using vials they infected rivers, wells, reservoirs, and houses, even distributing infected food amongst the starving Chinese civilian and military population (Harris, 2002; 100 & 104).

The deaths resulting directly from the Japanese occupation amounted to 20 million, with an estimated 4 million being combatants, and the remaining 16 million civilians (The National WWII Museum, 2017). Most perished from starvation and illness originated from Japanese military attacks on basic resources and medical experimentation. Worldwide estimates, however, remain contested; and the 20 million figure can be considered conservative, to the point that The National WWII Museum, among other international sources, affirms that the total account of deaths within China alone might surpass 50 million until the end of the Second World War (The National WWII Museum, 2017).

### **c. The entry into the city and mass killings**

Residents feared what the Imperial army would do upon capturing the capital long before their arrival. Most western residents followed the wealthy Chinese with means to leave the city and Chiang Kai-shek's government, and departed for their home countries (Margolin, 2006). Immediately prior to the massacre, twenty-seven foreigners were reported to remain in the city: six Germans, two Russians, seventeen Americans, one Austrian and another British citizen (Brook, 1999; xiii). Ultimately, no one could have predicted the extent of the massacre that would occur. The atrocities would come to include: "the slaughter of Chinese soldiers and paramilitary personnel, civilians and refugees; outrages upon Chinese women; plundering of food, commodities, and

properties; and incendiarism and destruction of houses, buildings, and facilities” (Kasahara, 2016; 1).

When Japanese troops finally reached Nanking, the order to eliminate all Chinese combatant captives had been committed and distributed to the pertaining officers and top commanders of the Imperial Army (Yang, 2006; 61). The eradication of this collective would reduce the chance of Chinese guerilla warfare in response to the occupation, and diminished the possibility of future retaliation or reorganization in resistance forces (Zapotoczny, 2008; 3). However, it is also important to note that breakdowns in discipline led Japanese soldiers to massacre their captives on self-led initiative, even when attempts of restraint were taken by officials (Lary & MacKinnon, 2001; 84).

The real issue arose with the execution of the order itself, although the size of the remaining Chinese army is contested, Japanese forces were vastly outnumbered both in regards to civilian population and local Chinese troops (Askew, 2003; 155). Thus, the remaining Japanese soldiers were tasked with killing an estimate of sixty thousand Chinese captives as swiftly and efficiently as possible (Margolin, 2006). It is important to note that executions were never constrained to the Chinese army, and that the “organized and wholesale murder of male civilians was conducted with the apparent sanction of the commanders on the pretense that Chinese soldiers had removed their uniforms and were mingling with the population” (Tsen Shui-fang via UNESCO, 2014).

It was due to their limited manpower that the Japanese employed more complex methods for mass extermination, relying heavily on deception by promising fair treatment in return for surrender, then dividing the captured into groups of few hundreds and luring them to areas near the city where they would find death (Yang, 2006; 61). This coercion was easier than had been expected, with almost nonexistent resistance. Having abandoned their weapons in their attempt to flee the city before the Japanese charged, many Chinese soldiers simply surrendered and let themselves be bound, hoping for fair treatment, as dictated by the Geneva Convention (Margolin, 2006). The passivity displayed by Chinese soldiers when surrendering and their reluctance to fight back stunned Japanese officials, raised in a culture in which suicide was preferable to capture (Benesch, 2011; 186). Japanese contempt and pride in the face of mass surrender only grew when it was discovered that prisoners’ numbers exceeded those of their captors (Margolin, 2006).

After the surrender of Chinese combatants who had been unable to flee across the Yangtze River or reach the International Safety Zone came the mass killings, which proceeded in stages due to the sheer number of the prisoners to be executed (Yang, 2006; 61). When the order to terminate the prisoners was received Japanese forces announced the transportation of the Chinese prisoners to the edges of the city. The Japanese divided the vast number of prisoners into groups and marched them towards the west, crossing the hills until reaching the riverbank (Margolin, 2006). By the time the mass executions began, it was too late for the captured to escape. The captured were executed by gunfire; after which the Japanese bayoneted or shot the bodies repeatedly, ensuring there were no survivors (Lu, 2004; 24). In what is thought to be some of the largest mass executions of prisoners of war during the period, a few thousand civilians and former soldiers were executed in a single killing outside Nanking (Lu, 2004; 39).

The dimension of these executions posed another problem for the Japanese: body disposal. While burial was one of the methods of disposal used, it became increasingly hard to locate ditches extensive enough to harbor heaps of seven to eight thousand corpses, especially as the mass killings progressed; and the streets came to be covered in piles of bodies in need of removal (Lu, 2004; 24). After this thousands of bodies were dumped into the Yangtze River, floating downwards and leaving space for new incorporations, or left at the river's edge (Fogel, 2000; 13).

With the mass surrender of Chinese combatants virtually no one was left to protect the cities civilian population. With full knowledge of this condition Japanese forces flooded the city's streets, occupying governmental and civil buildings and engaging in random shootings; many of which reached their victims on their back as they attempted to run away from the indiscriminate rampage (Buettner, 2016; 33). Thus, thousands of civilians were massacred in this manner, as the city suffered the first days of occupation (Margolin, 2006).

While most international personnel had previously retreated from the capital, remaining foreign nationals created the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone. This Safety Zone was composed of "twenty refugee camps that accommodated from 200 to 12.000 people in each camp" (Buettner, 2016; 33). During the weeks following the fall

of the city, the leaders of these safe havens provided the refugees with necessities and medical care, while attempting to protect them from Japanese incursions (Wakabayashi, 2017; 241). This proved to be often futile, as F. Tillman, a New York Times correspondent, stated in his eyewitness account that “thousands of prisoners were executed by the Japanese. Most of the Chinese who had been interned in the safety zone were shot in masses” (Gordon, 2014; 5). Despite the broadcasts from the Safety Zone, the topic of entry’s and crimes within the Safety Zone remains highly controversial; as has become the norm in this analysis (Hu, 2000; 86).

#### **d. Rape in Nanking and beyond the capital**

After the first mass killings, and as the slaughter and torture continued, the Japanese army turned their attention to women. Takokoro Kozo, a former soldier of the Japanese army in Nanking stated: “women suffered most, no matter how young or old, they all could not escape the fate of being raped” (Hu, 2000; 84). The sheer scale and nature of the rapes in their brutality gave name to the massacre itself. This event is without a doubt one of the greatest mass rapes in modern history, even considered to be “the single worst instance of wartime rape inflicted on a civilian population, with the sole exception of the treatment of Bengali women by Pakistani soldiers in 1971” (Chang, 1997; 89); in which between 200.000 and 400.000 we victims of mass rape (Neill, 2000; 46).

While it is impossible to determine with certainty the exact number of women raped in Nanking, scholars have suggested an estimated 20.000 women were raped in the city (Yoshida, 2006; 71 & Hu, 2000; 86); ranging from girls under ten to elderly women over seventy (Guo, 2016), with numerous reports of pregnant women and nuns being brutally raped as well (Buettner, 2016; 32 & Yang, 2006; 60). It is important to note that these estimates don’t include the local women who were abducted into sexual slavery and sent to military brothels or “comfort stations” (Guo, 2016).

The frequency and indiscriminate pattern the rapes that followed the entry into the city is well known (Yang, 2001; 52); with cases recorded of women being raped as many as 40 times a night (Lu, 2010; 68). The Imperial army was ruthless and frighteningly systematic

in their recruitment of women; no condition, be it age, status or any other consideration, served to evade rape.

After being caught, little hope was left for Chinese women; most being killed almost immediately after rape. Robert Wilson, an American surgeon in Nanking, wrote in his diary on December 18: “Today marks the 6th day of modern Dante's Inferno, written in huge letters with blood and rape” (Wilson via Chapel, 2004). Rabe’s diary reports that Chinese women were raped across locations and at all hours (Hu, 2000; 84); with a third of these rapes occurring in broad daylight, some in the middle of the streets or front of crowds of witnesses. There was no space or presence sacred enough to stop the Japanese army. Adding to this, the military policy that theoretically forbade rape only served to encourage soldiers to kill their victims afterwards; with some high-ranking militants urging soldiers to dispose of the women they raped as to eliminate evidence of the act, and minimize exposure (Wakabayashi, 2013; 49 & Hu, 2000; 85). This was described by Azuma Shiro, a Japanese soldier who stated: “we took turns raping them. It would be all right if we only raped them. I shouldn't say all right. But we always stabbed and killed them. Because dead bodies don't talk” (Shiro via Chapel, 2004). Local officers at all levels indulged in the violence, with even Tani Hisao, the senior general and commander of the Japanese 6th Division, being later found guilty of war crimes in Nanking including killing of noncombatants and rape (Kitamura, 2007; 56).

As has been stated, in the eyes of the Japanese soldiers, no consideration excused rape; and so age was no deterrent or concern to squadrons. Miner Bates, a history professor at Nanking University, testified in his letters that “girls as young as 11 and women as old as 53 have been raped on University property alone” (Bates via Chapel, 2004). Minors and elderly women endured repeated sexual assault, and were treated with equal cruelty (Hu, 2000; 84). Age or status were not the only conditions ignored by soldiers when choosing targets, as even advanced pregnancy did not render women immune to assault (Lu, 2010; 58).

The rapes often brought forth the death of children and infants if they in any manner disturbed soldiers; reports describe children and even babies being suffocated to stop their weeping as their mothers were raped (Kaiyuan & MacInnis, 2015; 91). Furthermore, the rape of women was frequently accompanied by the slaughter of entire families, as



witnesses report countless men found death after trying by any means possible to protect their spouses (Lu, 2010; 45).

Such a level of human degradation ultimately led squadrons to the creation of “games of recreational rape and torture” (Chang, 1997; 94). One of the most brutal forms of this concept was the impalement of vaginas; a practice that flooded the streets of Nanking with female corpses. Some of these forms of impalement included, but were not limited to: the use of bottles, the forcible insertion of objects of such lengths as a golf stick (Kaiyuan & MacInnis, 2015; 321).

Although women were the principal victims of rape or other forms of sexual torture; men were sodomized as well, often being forced to take part in various sexual acts for the amusement of Japanese soldiers. Cases were reported of fathers forced to rape their daughters and sons their mothers (Zapotoczny, 2008; 2 & Neill, 2000; 46), in the army’s attempts to undermine the social fabric of Nanking’s citizens.

These knowledge abuses did not remain inside the city’s walls alone, and soon reports on the massacres occurring in Nanking reached the ears of the international community, with headlines such as “All Captives Slain” in *The New York Times* (Lary & MacKinnon, 2001; 76). In order to prevent this information from leaking any further, the Japanese impeded the return of foreign diplomats to the city and pursued those covering the details of daily life in Nanking, intercepting content both from national and foreign reporters and witnesses (Yang, 2006; 246). While they proved unsuccessful in their endeavor, the international community did not engage in the action necessary to spare the suffering of the broken-down city. Yet due to the knowledge of the abuse and brutality of the Rape of Nanking the Japanese received intense public backlash. Despite the fact Nanking was no longer an unknown hell, the Japanese did not discipline their forces in the city, instead opting to launch a wave of propaganda and censorship (Yoshida, 2006; 11).

Precisely after the sheer brutality and uncontrolled rape that took place during the Rape of Nanking, the Japanese government was forced to respond the outcry of Western nations (Wakabayashi, 2013; 250). Japanese military leadership, concerned by the reputation their army was developing, opted for the implementation of a system through which they could have a stricter control of their soldiers. Rather than enforce order within their ranks,

or punish the soldiers responsible, Japanese high command established the infamous comfort houses, creating a huge system of military prostitution (Hayashi, 2008; 124), established in gross violation of international law (Argibay, 2003; 375). This intricate system of sexual slavery would victimize hundreds of thousands of Asian women, and would come to be known as the Comfort Women system (Stetz & Oh, 2001; 3). Following the fall of the capital, the “first official comfort house was established near Nanking in 1938” (Buettner, 2016; 32).

The proposed narrative of the solution was a chain of “comfort” stations where soldiers could be attended by comfort women; establishing a systematic system of sexual enslavement (Henry, 2013; 1). The stations consisted of the legalized military rape of subject women on a scale- and over a period of time- previously unknown in history (Hicks, 1997; 16). The system itself was quite direct: by luring, purchasing, or kidnapping an estimate of two hundred thousand women in Asia (Morris-Suzuki, 2007; 3) and turning them into sex slaves; Japanese military officials aimed to reduce widespread rape, thereby reducing international criticism, and contain the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (Soh, 2008; 135). By 1939 comfort stations were such a defined part of the system of occupation that the methods necessary for their establishment and maintenance were taught within Japanese military accounting schools (Qui, 2013; 36). The Japanese government has long denied the scale of the comfort woman system, as well as official involvement in such a practice (Hicks, 1997; 7). However, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights declared in 1996 their conclusion of direct Japanese governmental control of this system, and its significance as a breach of international law (Morris-Suzuki, 2007; 4).

Ultimately, a history of sexual violence and enslavement followed the Japanese Imperial Army’s troops as they advanced through the Chinese mainland, and established patterns that would later be utilized in other invaded territories of East Asia (Hicks, 1997; 107).

#### **e. Torture inflicted upon combatants and civilians**

The torture inflicted upon the native population at Nanking at the hands of the Japanese Imperial army has been a source of heated debate, and even prompted numerous psychological studies, due to the particular cruelty implied in such actions. While records vary, there is an international acceptance of the following forms of torture being inflicted on Nanking's combatant and civilian population due to eyewitness reports and historic diary entries from city residents.

One of the most common practices was live burials (Kaiyuan & MacInnis, 2015; 328), executed with the precision and coordination of production chains; some prisoners were only buried partially, and then hacked to pieces or ripped apart by German shepherds (Zapotoczny, 2008; 2). Another recurring form of terror the Japanese Imperial army inflicted upon Nanking's inhabitants was mutilation; not only disemboweling, decapitating, and dismembering the captives, but also engaging in even more excruciating varieties of torture (Yang, 2006; 61). Prisoners and civilians were reportedly nailed to boards and run over with tanks, flayed, and used for bayonet practice (Zapotoczny, 2008; 2). Infants were impaled with bayonets, and women gang raped before being murdered (Lu, 2004;118). Hundreds were set on fire (Xu & Spillman, 2010, 101; & Yang, 2006; 61); others were stripped, bound to columns, and then stabbed with needles in sensitive points, including their mouths, throats, and eyes (Buettner, 2016; 33). The Japanese also subjected large crowds to mass incineration (Lu, 2004;108), or were intentionally frozen to death during the assault to the city.

### **Images 2, 3 & 4: Photographic evidence of Japanese war crimes in Nanking**



*Source: Evans, G. (2013). The Nanking Atrocity: Still and Moving Images 1937-1944. Media and Communication, 1(1), 51.*

The analysis of that testimonies of victims and eyewitnesses has been the source of much discord among historians (Gordon, 2014; 4). Nevertheless, there is disturbing photographic evidence, as well as confessions from Japanese soldiers during this period, which support these claims; and as hard it is to accept their reality, even more daunting is to understand the actions described above were not limited to the city of Nanking, and echoes of such acts would later come to define much of the war crimes of World War II (Wakabayashi, 2013; 64).

#### **f. The weeks following the fall of Nanking.**

The massacre known as The Rape of Nanking continued for months, yet the worst of the horrors the city's citizens suffered were concentrated in the first six to eight weeks (Wakabayashi, 2013; xxi & Nguyen, 2016; 1). By the time spring had befallen the city, the Japanese began to establish their rule more formally, implementing measures that would maintain the city's population subdued (Kaiyuan & MacInnis, 2015; 67). While the senseless mass killings were over, luck or mercy did not befall Nanking's people, as Japanese consideration of their worth had not changed in the slightest. Arbitrary executions, sexual violence, and labor exploitation persisted, albeit in a lesser scale (Fogel, 2000; 13). The invaders went as far as conducting medical experiments on Nanking's people, opening a facility named Unit Ei 1644 inside the city itself (Harris,

2002; 146). Despite its secrecy, the “facility was discovered when a small group of scientists confessed after being interrogated at the International Military Tribunal of the Far East” (Chapel, 2004).

The scale of the massacre itself would later become one of the biggest controversies in the historical analysis of this event. Nanking’s occupation came to an end in the summer 1945, when on August 14<sup>th</sup> the Japanese surrendered after the havoc caused by the nuclear bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Straus, 2011; 221). And thus, the closure of one of history’s bloodiest massacres came at the cost of another civilian mass killing.

## **7. Radicalization of the Japanese imperial army: understanding historical warfare practices and theories of violence**

Having established the horrendous acts committed by the Japanese Imperial Army in mainland China, it becomes important to understand what historical warfare practices gave way to them; as well as contextualize them within a framework that can make sense of such practices. Far too often, discussions of Nanking’s history gloss over the socialization processes that defined military culture, and led soldiers to commit the crimes we have previously discussed. In order not to simplify the narrative, and fall into the trap of the “ultimate evil” categorical, we will analyze the Japanese military system in depth, and present a series of sociological and psychological interpretations of what circumstances conditioned and drove the Imperial Army’s actions.

Barbarism such as that portrayed in the Rape of Nanking remains shocking when studied today (Tohmatsu & Willmott, 2004; 255). To understand what particular conditions enabled the Japanese army to perpetrate such massacres we must observe various aspects of Japan’s society at the time, taking into account the previously exposed historical background upon which these events were brought forth.

Preparing for the forthcoming war with China, Japan spent decades molding its young for combat (Ienaga, 2010; 28). Thus, education was carefully devoted to this objective from infancy (Tsurumi, 2015; 109), with schools operating as premature nationalistic military

units (Humphreys, 1995; 107), becoming the “schools of the nation” (Tohmatsu & Willmott, 2004; 255). This pressure and preparation would be later intensified in the military, where Japanese soldiers were prepared for arduous battle in China.

Japanese military training instilled the normalization of violence; creating a context where engaging in violence lost all meaning in the heart of the mass force that was the imperial Japanese army (Gilmore, 1998; 39). As a basis to this training, often considered a key element of war socialization (Brænder, 2013; 1) and a central tool for military propaganda (Stollznow, 2008; 1), was the concept of dehumanization; which ultimately serves to remove the natural psychological constraint of killing or torturing another human (Smith, 2016; 1). Therefore, it is vital to understand exactly what allows human beings to overcome these deeply imbedded inhibitions.

David Livingstone establishes that “when people dehumanize others, they actually conceive of them as subhuman creatures” (Livingstone, 2011; 1), therefore enabling the attacker to freely liberate aggression by excluding the target of said attack from the constraints of the established moral code associated to human beings (Ibid, 2011; 1). Thus, dehumanization has inevitably paved the way for disturbing atrocities to take place.

To understand the conditions that enable a group of people to regard others subhuman, we must resort to a more abstract approach. “Thinking sets the agenda for action, and thinking of humans as less than human paves the way for atrocity” (Ibid, 2011;1). Ideas define reality, and the establishment of an idea, a system of belief, that relays another collective to an inhuman status has been a repeated trend throughout history (Ibid, 2011;1). Indeed, a complete analysis of the phenomenon of dehumanization must take into account its political drivers and the psychological conditions that allow for it (Smith, 2016; 1).

This research will outline some of the mayor psychological and ideological explanations that have been used to make sense of Japanese war crimes during their imperial period, and what internalized precepts ultimately led ordinary citizens to commit monstrous acts in the context of war (Zimbardo, 2004; 5).

Firstly, when considering the Imperial Army's treatment of prisoners of war, authors rely both on the indoctrination in brutality thesis and the belief of the shamefulness of surrender instilled upon soldiers. Ruth Benedict utilizes the latter to account for the extrajudicial executions and abuse conducted against POW's during both the Pacific and Second World War (Benedict, 1967; 36). The logic indicates that if honor implied individual expendability in the face of national triumph, fight to the death was the only honorable alternative for conscripted servicemen (Ibid, 1967; 36), tied to the capitalization of Japanese tradition in service of the emperor (Drea, 2003; 76). Thus, the surrender of Allied soldiers and other captured devalued their worth to nothingness, and paved the way for ruthless abuse, as "the humanity of the captured was (...) devalued to such a degree that they might be summarily executed or abused without compunction" (Hickman, 2009; 4).

In this line of thought, Bushido can also be utilized to account for POW abuse; as Russell does in his paradigmatic work "The Knights of Bushido" (Russell, 2005; 1), and Roland in his "Long Night's Journey into Day" (Roland, 2006; 1). This approach references the Bushido ethic as the basis for Japanese abuses, as it enshrines the shame of surrender to be absolute; rendering enemy soldiers who had submitted unworthy of any moral judgement or treatment (Russell, 2005; 55 & 56). Furthermore, Yuki Tanaka highlights the corruption of the code of Bushido specifically in terms of blind loyalty (Tanaka, 2017; 206), and Roland extends this notion to also account for a higher acceptance of cruelty within spheres of Japanese culture (Roland, 2006; 313).

The indoctrination in brutality thesis offers one of the most compelling narratives when accounting for Japanese military behavior. It establishes that the normalization of violence, the notion of blind obedience to authority, the abuse suffered during military training, and the exploitation of a new social status in occupied territories, paired with a toxic ideological basis; become conditioning factors that shaped the Japanese military into such an atrociously destructive force (Brown, 1998; 9).

However, while the indoctrination in brutality thesis can explain much of the acts committed by the Imperial Army, it also brings forth a paradox when attributing blame. This contradiction is reflected in Tanaka's attempt at moral attribution, stating that "In

literal terms, Japanese soldiers were obviously the physical perpetrators of such atrocities. In psychological and ideological terms, they were the victims of an emperor system that legitimized such atrocities in the name of serving the emperor” (Tanaka, 2017; 204). Thus, it becomes important to consider supplementary explanations.

Constructivist theory is often utilized as an alternative explanation for Japanese war practice, assuming state behavior to be a dynamic result of changing norms and practices accepted or denied by political elites through interaction with other actors in the international system (Hickman, 2009; 9). Thus, the acceptance of violation of system norms can enter a supplanting or supplementing dynamic, through which states reflect their power vis-à-vis other states by redefining norms, becoming a status-quo or revisionist power (Ibid, 2009; 9). This same logic can be applied to a state’s military forces; which adapt warfare practices through battles with other armies, changing their tactics, weaponry, and strategies in response (Ibid, 2009; 11). Indeed, history shows co-evolution in war tactics are common (Ibid, 2009; 12).

As becomes evident, this interpretation of constructivism can be applied to the Japanese imperial Army’s tactical evolution in China. Some of the main inflection points that would account for the war practices during this period would be the growing autonomy of the Japanese Kwantung Army (field army in Manchuria) (Perkins, 1997; 105), commonplace violence against prisoners, political fragmentation, frustration at the resilience of the Chinese battlefield, and the need to manage vast territory as expansionism continued (Hickman, 2009; 13).

Another supplementary explanation highlights a phenomenon called the “transfer of oppression” (Reilly, 2003; 303), often referenced in conjunction with the indoctrination in brutality thesis. According to this theory, the Japanese army’s capacity for brutality stemmed from two points: “the arbitrary and cruel treatment that the military inflicted on its own officers and soldiers, and the hierarchical nature of Japanese society, in which status was dictated by proximity to the emperor” (Tanaka, 2017; 246).

Prior to their release in the battlefield, Japanese soldiers had been victims of constant humiliation on every level, being routinely slapped and beaten by their superiors (Ibid, 2017; 44). Violence within the barracks was executed through group sanctions and forced



marches for the acts of an individual (Drea, 1989; 1). Thus, this theory remarks that Japanese soldiers would later seek to release upon the Chinese population that which their superiors had forced them to endure (Hickman, 2009; 5). This view is also supported by Tanaka's work, which recognizes that the systematic mistreatment Japanese servicemen suffered at the hands of their superiors could build up and come to be redirected against POW's or occupied populations (Tanaka, 2017; 197-215).

Meanwhile, Ben Kiernan affirms that the war crimes Japan committed during the Second Sino-Japanese War can be attributed to "the ideological fusion of Japanese nationalism, agrarianism, racism and militarism promoted by rightist and nationalist secret societies of Japanese junior military officers" (Hickman, 2009; 7). This posture effectively redirects the focus of analysis from blind obedience to military authority to the specific content of Japan's dominant ideology at the time (Kiernan, 2007; 482-85).

Subsidiary explanations have also been offered when considering conditionants for massacres in China, including: "desperation leading to exploitation of prisoners of war conscripted for labour, logistical collapse leading to food shortages, inability to communicate with the captured, and Japanese anger at the experienced racial discrimination by whites" (Hickman, 2009; 5). It is important to note that the Japanese occupied territories that combined held a population of 269 million, more than doubling that of the territories occupied by Nazi Germany (Spector, 2008; 78); thus favoring the reliance of the military on violent coercion as a means to maintain control. Lamont-Brown adds another layer to the collective psychological stresses of the Japanese military by stating that abuses against enemy combatants and civilians increased as defeat became more evident and soldiers found psychological relief through acts of sadism (Brown, 1998; 11).

Ultimately, no single integrating explanation can account for the reality that was the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the crimes that defined it. Indeed, "complex and multi-causal explanations are conventionally accepted by scholars for large scale social phenomena" (Hickman, 2009; 18). General consensus is reached in accepting the indoctrination in brutality thesis and dehumanization of Chinese citizens as necessary conditions for Japanese war crimes like the Nanking Massacre; however, it fails to adequately account for all the conditioning elements previously exposed. Thus,

subsidiary explanations are offered to assess the impact and interaction of historical context, dominant ideology, and international interaction, among others. Subsequent to all explanations lies the fundamental influence of concentrated power, both at a state, military, and individual level; evidencing that only situations of unchecked power can derive in events such as the Rape of Nanking. As stated by R. J. Rummel, “power kills, and absolute power kills absolutely.” (Rummel, 1999, 23).

## **8. Rape as a weapon of war**

In order to understand the significance the Rape of Nanking has in Chinese collective memory, one must first delve into the psychological, ethnic, and social implications of rape itself. Rape can be utilized as a weapon of war (Kirby, 2013; 1 & Skjelsbaek, 2001, 1), for a myriad of purposes. Indeed, wartime sexual violence is a socially constructed act marked by gendered power (Kirby, 2013; 1). Both historians and psychologists have attempted to shed light on the motivations behind such a behavior; among which we find battlefield psychology, sexual starvation, and lack of effective discipline.

Social discussions of rape and its causes are engulfed in a worryingly prevailing narrative which states this act as a consequence of an “irrepressible male sexual drive which, if not restrained, will regrettably but inevitably have its way” (Seifert, 1991; 1). This perception has long been discredited, especially by scholars in the field of feminist studies (Anderson & Swainson, 2001; 2). Rape itself has little to do with natural impulses, or sex in itself for that matter; and is interpreted as an act motivated by power and violence (Ibid; 2). Rape can be defined as “an extreme act of violence perpetrated by sexual means”; thus, we consider rape as an act not primarily motivated by sexuality, but determined by a sexual expression of aggression (Seifert, 1993; 1). This concept is imperative, as it effectively shifts the motivations of the aggressor; from the fulfillment of sexual desire, to the physical manifestation of violence, anger, and domination upon its victim.

In the words of Cecilia Yang: “Rape is an excruciating, searing violation of the mind and the body. No one can survive a rape” (Yang, 2006; 29). This act is committed with the purpose of degrading, humiliating, and subjugating the victim (Zawati, 2007; 27). Forcible entry into the body is a practice used in severe forms of torture, compromising

the individual's intimate self and dignity (Seifert, 1994; 1). This act in turn reports long term effects that are equal to torture (Duran, 2000; 191); including psychological responses of PTSD, terror, hypervigilance, sleep disorders, and depression (Yang, 2006; 29). Rape is classified as a form of torture by Former Special Rapporteur on Torture, Kooijmans, (Gaer, 2011; 293); with wartime rape being identified as a tool of genocide (Russell-Brown, 2003; 350 & Hansen, 2000; 55), due to its ties to ethnic identity. In fact, historical accounts of rape in wartime evidence that the sheer amount of violence perpetrated often grossly exceeds the violence that would have been necessary for carrying out the rape itself (Seifert, 1991; 1).

The "function" attributed to rape inevitably varies depending on both the era and the social context it occurs within; however, certain factors of wartime rape can be addressed in a consistent manner. Rape is utilized as a strategy of asymmetric warfare (Diken & Laustsen, 2005; 111), intended to inflict trauma, terrorize the population, and through this to destroy family and community ties within the perceived enemy group (Peltola, 2017; 2). Wartime rape must also be understood as an intersection of gender issues, patriarchy, militarism, and identity (ethnic, religious, or political) (Farwell, 2004; 389). Thus, rape has come to be defined as a part of military strategy (Bos, 2006; 995); with sexual subjugation even being seen as a perceived right of the conquering military (Lerner, 1986). In this expression, rape is utilized as a means to discipline local populations and evidence their powerlessness (Branche & Virgili, 2012; 40).

Sociological interpretations also ascribe this act as the ultimate symbolic humiliation of the male enemy (Joshua, 2001). In this view, the rape of women would be committed as an act aiming to destroy the enemy's "manly pride", by implying that they are unable to protect their women, seeking to undermine their masculinity (Weiss, 2016; 433); thus, degrading the victims simultaneously degrades the men socially connected to them (Card, 1996; 5).

Wartime sexual violence has become instrumental in strategies aiming for devastation of enemy territories; holding an especially vicious power in the knowledge that "the intimate damage done to the actual rape victim will reverberate through the larger social context" (Pearce, 2002; 534). Rape in war is often held as a result of the construction of masculinity that armies ingrain in their soldiers, and can be interpreted as one of the worse

manifestations of patriarchy (Neill, 2000; 47). In that conception of masculinity race is also a determining factor; therefore, rape becomes a weapon of war in the way the perpetrators gender identity and ethnic identity become masculinized and dominant, thus powerful, through sexual abuse. Thus, the ethnicity identity of the perpetrator is utilized to impose a power structure where the both the victim and her ethnicity become inferior (Russell-Brown, 2003; 350). Mass wartime rapes are also carried out with the intent of changing the ethnic makeup of the following generation, thus achieving the aim of “ethnic pollution” (Brownmiller, 2013; 1) or “ethnic cleansing” (Snyder. et al, 2006; 184).

The complexity of the significance attributed to the act of rape leads Timothy Brook, referring to many of the atrocities committed in China, to offer the following: “men of fighting age were shot or conscripted for labor because they were, or stood for, the soldiers of the nation. Women of childbearing age were raped or forced into prostitution because they were, or stood for, the body of the nation” (Brook via Qui, 2013; 23). Thus, rape was widely performed as a gesture of conquest and humiliation; acting as a doubly dehumanizing practice (as a woman and an enemy), and seeking to break both the victims and the nations spirit in a single act. Furthermore, rape leaves physical and psychological scars even after the troops depart (Rejali, 1996; 365); fomenting the exclusion of the victims within their own society, defining them as a symbol of the nation’s defeat and attributing to the survivors a loss of purity or a dishonor, of particular social importance in Asian nations (Faraj & Rajkumar, 2015; 50 & 53). Likewise, wartime rape was meant to destroy the enemy’s identity and culture, targeting women due to their cultural position and role within the family structure.

Of course, such an act is also inevitably linked to a culturally ingrained hatred of women that is brought forth in extreme situations. Rape remains an extreme act of male violence against women which could not be possible, and much definitely not at this scale, were it not for preexisting feelings of hostility towards women (Seifert, 1991; 7). There are certain expressions of violence against women that could not be explained otherwise; in particular, those acts aimed at the femininity of the body, such as cutting off women's breasts or slashing open their wombs open after rape (Ibid; 7).

Consequently, we can affirm the Rape of Nanking was an expression of brutality harbored by sentiments of racial hatred, misogyny, and a will to decimate the enemy’s spirit; which

claimed 80.000 women and girls as victims (Khatun, 2015; 17). Rape is still not widely understood as the brutal form of physical and physiological torture it indeed is, nor has it been prosecuted with the same intensity as other war crimes (Askin, 2003; 288). Thus, only with the true recognition and understanding of this crime as what it is, as well as a change in the value traditionally associated to women; will massacres like this have the echo they deserve, reflecting the struggle and suffering of women who are silenced by history.

## **9. Other war crimes and implications of Japanese Imperialism**

The different trials that followed the end of World War II brought forth diverse accusations of war crimes committed by Japan; including, but not limited to: mass killings of civilians and combatants, human experimentation and biological warfare, use of chemical weapons, torture of prisoners of war, forced labor, wide scale forced sexual slavery (Röling & Rüter, 1977), and even cannibalism (Tanaka, 2017; 141).

Some of the most prominent Imperial Japanese war crimes are the following:

- Unit 731: a human experimentation center (Tanaka, 2017; 151) that conducted grotesque experiments on unwilling human subjects, generally civilians and prisoners of war, employing extensive biomedical research to perfect biological warfare weapons and utilizing means such as vivisections (Kristof, 1995). Unit 731 was notorious for actually applying these weapons in biological warfare (Williams, & Wallace, 1989; 1).
- Japanese hell ships: the Imperial Army used 56 “hell-ships” in order to move 62.000 prisoners of war (POWs) by sea during WWII (Cheah, 2010; 1). The system transferred POWs in inhumane conditions, with many dying under the strenuous circumstances, and even “succumbing to madness, committing suicide and killing other POWs” (Ibid, 2010;1).

- Burma Railway: utilized POW forced labor in its construction. The dismal conditions of work and the abuse the prisoners were subjected to would come to cause over 12.000 deaths (Michno, 2016; 282).
- Bataan Death March: forcible transfer of combatants captured by the Japanese army over vast distances; defined by continuous physical abuse, starvation, beatings and executions (Maga, 2001; 21).
- Massacres: such as the Akikaze Executions, the Palawan massacre (Tanaka, 2017; 49) and the Manila massacre, which left tens of thousands dead (Kasahara & Nakano 2010; 1); among others.
- The Comfort Woman System, a system of sexual slavery that victimized over 200.000 Asian women during the Pacific War (Chung. et al, 1997; 1).

Each of these instances represents a pattern that defines regional perceptions of Japan based on historic memory; further extending the reach of contentious acts beyond a Sino-Japanese framework. While the Asia-pacific War saw many atrocities, these instances reflect the significance of perceived Japanese militarist threats in the region, and how this notion interacts with the China-Japan security-identity nexus.

## **10. Historical memory of Nanking**

### **a. Significance of diverging historical memory in politics**

In David Askew's words: "the importance of the Nanjing Incident to contemporary Sino-Japanese relations can hardly be overstated" (Askew, 2004; 1). Social remembrance of key historical confrontations defines the nations mutual strategic perceptions, and in turn condition foreign policy and bilateral relations; in coherence with constructivist theory (Teo, 2007; 1). History is at the core of current political struggles; and not only a resource for mobilization (Seo, 2008; 369). Indeed, China and Japan are a case study of this

influence; presenting the juxtaposition of interdependent economic relations, yet tense, even estranged, political affairs (Teo, 2007; 1).

The reemergence of historical memories regarding the Nanjing Massacre is more so a function of identity formation in China and Japan, than a natural result of new unearthed historical sources (Seo, 2008; 369). Precisely, objective historical narration is complicated in this case due to the highly politicized and emotional environment within which it is constructed (Wei, 2008; 242).

In order to understand the ripples Nanking has left on the current geopolitical environment in Asia, one must analyze exactly how this event is constructed within Chinese and Japanese historical remembrance, society, and identity.

#### **b. China: the century of humiliation narrative**

Nanjing has become a cornerstone in the construction of Chinese identity (Askew, 2004; 1). Thus, no denial or doubt is tolerated when remembering the Nanjing Massacre (Kasahara, 2007; 1), as to even discuss the event is to threaten Chinese self-identity (Askew, 2004; 1).

It can be affirmed that, within contemporary Chinese society, Nanjing is a symbol of nationalist pride (Holbrook, 2009; 1). However, this importance is not necessarily a reflection of a natural historical development. Nanking's history has been altered to compliment the needs of evolving social identities and changing sociopolitical contexts in China (Zapotoczny, 2008; 4). Spanning the twentieth century, China "experienced the dislocations associated with its transition from a dynastic political system to a socialist society led by an oppressive communist regime" (Holbrook, 2009; 1). These social cracks led the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to employ nationalism to forge a historically based sense of national unity and identity; resorting to the so called "humiliation narrative" (Purvis, 2015); utilizing national memory of Chinese victimhood to legitimize political power, and project opposition outwards (Holbrook, 2009; 1). This use of collective memory serves to reinforce the idea of the party as a protector of national stability and prosperity (Zhang, 2013; 455), reconstructing painful events of the nation's

past to further a political agenda (Purvis, 2015).

The “century of humiliation” refers to the period between 1839 and 1949 during which China suffered the loss of large portions of territory to foreign powers, and was subjected to crimes of war by Imperial Japan (Kaufman, 2011; 2). This victimization has become a master narrative within Chinese history and society (Wang, 2014; 47); establishing itself as a central construction of the nation’s past and, therefore, a defining feature in its self at present (Purvis, 2015). The Comfort Women System and the Rape of Nanking are viewed within the narrative of Chinese nationalism as the ultimate examples of foreign imposition and humiliation; and represent the three kinds of losses China faced during this period: “a loss of territory; a loss of control over its internal and external environment; and a loss of international standing and dignity” (Kaufman, 2011; 4). Each of these factors are considered injustices that must be rectified, leading to an internal perception of a quest for compensatory revenge (Harkavy, 2000; 345). Thus, these events play a powerful role in Chinese foreign relations, domestic politics, and national psyche (Wang, 2012; 47).

Biased Chinese media, nationalist sub-elites, and governmental action have contributed to the strengthening of anti-Japanese nationalism; unable to be mediated by economic relations (He, 2007; 1). The mistrust and mutual threat perception implied in this narrative has exacerbated popular nationalism, and could very well act as a catalyst for Sino–Japanese conflict over a variety of foreign affairs issues (Ibid; 1). Thus, one cannot understand China’s rise without the prime role of its historical consciousness (Wang, 2012; 241), and within it the paradigmatic role of The Rape of Nanking.

### **c. Japan: the historical aggressor-victim dilemma**

Nanjing is a key element in the understanding of current Japanese domestic politics and self-identity (Askew, 2004; 73). In the period between 1895 and 1945, Japan managed to become one of the “largest empires in modern world history” (Conrad, 2014; 4). During this period, the Imperial Army raided East Asia, committing numerous war crimes (Tanaka, 2017; 2). However, Japan also suffered great civilian losses as a result of the United States atomic bomb attacks. This has defined Japan in a dual historical dilemma as both aggressor and victim (Nagashima, 2006; 112). Historians have largely agreed on



the character of postwar Japan as a nation focused on the erasure of its imperial past (Conrad, 2014; 4). Nevertheless, this erasure has often passed by a denial or lack of recognition of the crimes it committed.

The hesitance within Japan to engage in critical aggressor narratives is in part due to the broader implications it holds towards the emperor's heritage and the legitimacy of the pre-war and wartime Japan narrative derived from the post-war military tribunals (Askew, 2004; 1).

Despite Emperor Hirohito being considered the "supreme leader of the country, commander of the armed forces, and absolute executive power" (Nagashima, 2006; 112), he was never indicted at the Tokyo Tribunals (Maga, 2001; 37). Until his death, any discussions of Japan's wartime crimes were considered highly taboo, as it would implicitly be regarded as an attack on the emperor; thus, not only disrespecting Japan's national and cultural symbol but jeopardizing the validity of modern Japanese history since the Meiji era (Nagashima, 2006; 112).

As a result, one of the world's most important political and economic actors lacks a coherent national consciousness (Tamamoto, 1994; 89); with Japan's internal politics defined by contradictory interpretations of its recent history. Thus, politicians in Japan are faced with a difficult duality to overcome (Heinzen, 2004; 151). Japanese rightists, concerned with the nation's historical and personal identity, affirm that the war atrocities have been exaggerated and already compensated (Shibuichi, 2005; 200). The reemergence of neonationalism suggests the rising adherence to this interpretation of wartime Japan (Nagashima, 2006; 112). However, challenging this perception, leftists advocate for a Japanese national identity sustained on the 1945 war defeat and its historical aftermath; based on the interiorized pacifist, democratic, and human rights ideals introduced after the war and absorbed by the nation (Shibuichi, 2005; 203).

Despite internal discordance, from the 1990's onwards, with the end of the Cold War, there has been a key shift in Japanese security policy. This shift encompasses a change in Japanese political establishment from a peace state to an international state; with an active role in regional and international security affairs and a renewed conception of a remilitarized Japan (Singh, 2012; 2). The rise of a potentially hegemonic China has

prompted an exponential sense of insecurity that is also being reflected in Japan's current historical memory (Nagashima, 2006; 112).

One can affirm that Japan's post-war identity is evolving from a position of domestic antimilitarism, to a more militarily engaged power structure in the region (Hagström & Gustafsson, 2015; 1). With Prime Minister Shinzō Abe's ambitious regional projection, it is evident that Japan seeks to redefine itself as a world power, and at the core of this contentious identity is its imperial past.

## **11. Historical impact of Nanking on current international relations.**

### **a. Current Sino-Japanese relations**

The Asia-Pacific region is the most dynamic center of economic power in the world (Ross, & Tunsjo, 2017; 285). Sino-Japanese relations are of crucial importance in this context, as the pattern of these country's interaction has come to set the structure and pace of Asia-Pacific regional cooperation (Deng, 1997; 373).

The strained relationship between both nations has been the subject of much reflection. A paradox is present in the antagonism that has come to define China and Japan's interaction, despite their increasing economic interdependence (Er, 2017; 1). This antagonism has manifested in increases of nationalist ideals within both nations, and the escalation of political disagreements into periodic crisis situations.

The Senkaku/Diaoyu islands confrontation is maybe the clearest example of deteriorating Sino-Japanese relations; having become a symbol of a wider geopolitical framework and unresolved historical tensions (Graham, 2015; 1). Both Japanese and Chinese responses in this crisis have been perceived as diplomatic confrontation (Watanabe, 2016; 7), and have become highly contentious nationalistic issues in domestic politics (Suganuma, 2000; ix).

Many scholars have argued that, in the face of these increased security tensions, economic interdependence can soften state interaction and reduce conflict (Koo, 2009; 205). However, as globalization has integrated Sino-Japanese operations further, nationalist backlash has arisen from both sides (Wan, 2014; 30). Thus, it becomes important to consider the potential impact of nationalist ideology and interstate tensions in international economic relations (Fisman, Hamao, & Wang, 2014; 2626).

The phenomenon of “cold politics and hot economics” is now a seemingly fixed feature of China and Japan’s political and economic relations (Koo, 2009: 205). Nevertheless, these areas are not without overlap, and the economic relations between China and Japan have fluctuated according to political tensions, with bilateral trade figures now providing a “barometric record of an unpredictable political climate” (Newby, 2018; 5); and incidents like the Japanese nationalization of the Senkaku Islands negatively affecting trade between both nations (Li & Liu, 2017; 1). This threatens the notion of Sino-Japanese economic complementarity as a means for peace, and reaffirms notions that politics still govern the nations bilateral relations, despite economic alignment (Newby, 2018; 95); and so politicized historical events like Nanking still reverberate in current state interaction.

#### **b. Sources of tension**

Sino-Japanese relations can be said to have five major straining points (Smith, 2009; 230):

1. Territorial disputes and resource driven competition:
  - a. The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute is a high-profile tension driver in Sino–Japanese relations (Fravel, 2010; 1); which has come to represent a crisis in continuing escalation since 2012, with no end in sight. This crisis has highlighted the mutual suspicion and threat perception both nations hold regarding each other, and has reverberated at both bilateral and multilateral levels (Nakano, 2016; 165). Considering that, in the current system of

dominant state sovereignty, territorial disputes have become undisputable drivers of violent conflict and tend to elicit nationalism, and that the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute involves the United States as well; it is no wonder this issue remains one of the most prominent disagreements in Sino-Japanese politics (Fravel, 2010; 2).

- b. Energetic resource competition: while both nations have a global economic outreach, they depend mainly on local energetic supplies to drive their economic activity, thus defining the regions energy security regime complex, often with competing goals that drive competition and worsen mutual perception (Vivoda, 2017; 2).
2. Nationalism and issues of mutual antipathy: mutually vilifying nationalism is currently on the rise both in Japan (Kingston, 2015; 160) and China (He, 2007; 1). Japan has seen a rise in neo-nationalist ideals within a more conservative political climate, a developing fear of China's rise as a world power, and growing political attempts to contain it (Brown, 2000; 121). In the Chinese case, much of the nationalist revival builds on the history of state propaganda that has exacerbated collective memory (He, 2007; 1); utilizing Nanking as a cornerstone narrative. However, it is important to note that while nationalism in both countries at one point derived directly from political elites, it has now become a popular phenomenon amongst citizens, and is in turn commencing to affect political decision making (Zhao, 2005; 131 & Zhao, 2013; 535). This reality has led to a direct correlation between popular perceptions of collective memory, and the nation's foreign policy; even influencing military escalation (Gries, Steiger, & Wang, 2016; 264). Indeed, Chinese nationalism, both popular and state driven, has been credited for influencing its assertive and even confrontational foreign policy developments; supported by growing military and economic capabilities, as well as a sense of international empowerment (Zhao, 2013; 535). Thus, contemporary Chinese nationalism may directly affect its international policy approach in coming years (Carlson, 2009; 20). Similarly, nationalism in Japan has also driven reactive and incremental policy changes (Kingston, 2015; 161); with the conception of China as an aggressive and overbearing state gaining traction and conditioning bilateral relations (Suzuki, 2015; 95).

3. Taiwan's political status: There is little consensus on the impact of the Taiwan problem in Sino-Japanese relations, and whether it is a purely Japanese issue, or derivative of its US alliance (Zha, 2001; 205). However, Japan and Taiwan can be said to share bonds that, although unofficial, are solidly based in their common values, an economic network, and strategic alignment (Peng-Er, 2004; 249). This is sufficient when opposed to the “One China” framework to understand how the security issue of the Taiwan Strait can be destabilizing and heighten anti-Japanese nationalistic tensions in China even further (Saunders, 2005; 970).
  
4. The rapid rise of China's military power: China has experienced an almost unprecedentedly fast rise in its power status. Xuetong affirms that there is a “significant difference between a country that takes 30 years to rise and one that takes 300 years” (Xuetong, 2006; 5). China has established itself as a global power not intent on integrating into a status quo, but in creating a new balance of power in Asia (Tkacik, 2005). Japan perceives the Asian giant as its greatest medium and long term threat in terms of national security; operating a double policy of internal military balancing and engagement with China to confront its rise (Tellis, 2012; 197). Thus, Japan and China have both been building military capacities for strategic purposes, within a mutually perceived threat scenario, which subjects the region to a potential arms race (Ball, 2014; 54).
  
5. The US-Japan security alliance: this strategic partnership remains the most important guarantor of Japanese security (Green & Cronin, 1999; 25). However, US actions have the potential to destabilize regional balance with any changes in involvement, due to its asymmetrical relations with both Japan and China (Garrett & Glaser, 1997; 383). This is exacerbated by worsening Chinese views of the US-Japanese alliance, shifting from a perceived possible constraint on remilitarization in Japan, to an incitement from Washington for Japanese rearmament (Xinbo, 2005; 117).

These sources of tensions are encompassed within a wider political divergence: the countries vastly deviating worldviews; with Chinese party leaders operating under a realist conception of international politics, and Japanese officials upholding liberal-institutionalist values (Smith, 2009; 230). This difference evidences a key fracture in perception, and may create a misunderstanding bias and response miscalculations when dealing with a crisis; thus favoring escalation in many of the issues outlined above.

### **c. Strategic implications: bilateral political approaches**

Tokyo has seen a decrease of its strategic space and area of influence as China has become more dominant, and in turn has sought to be more proactive and engaging in regional and global dynamics, fostering initiatives conducive to its national interests (Hornung, 2014; 97). In this manner, Japan's strategic response to the rise of China has seen the nation shift paradigms, from a "friendship diplomacy" attempt to a mixed strategy approach combining realistic threat balancing and positive engagement with the Asian giant (Mochizuki, 2007; 739).

Japan's previously mentioned shift and security policy reform, especially its redefinition of its military capacities, are considered to be primarily a counterbalancing response to China (Grønning, 2014; 1). This reform is understood as an internal balancing measure, yet external initiatives have also been undertaken by Abe's government; increasing security cohesion with the United States, and enhancing its security cooperation with other key allies such as Australia and India (Koga, 2016; 777), as well as increasing its focus on other Asian nations as potential allies (Conrad, 2010; 163).

China's diplomacy and foreign policy efforts have been "working systematically towards a realignment of the international order through establishing parallel structures to a wide range of international institutions" (Heilmann. et al, 2014; 1). This has entailed a more active role in regional organizations like ASEAN, and the establishment of Asian led organisms such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (Lum, Morrison, & Vaughn, 2008; 2). Through this network of strategic organizations China seeks to target gaps within the current system of intergovernmental structures, and compete within their areas

of operation; building both supplementary and complementary structures to shape and steer the regional sphere away from Western attempts at leadership (Heilmann. et al, 2014; 1). This conception capitalizes on China's model of development, highlighting the giants local influence and identification with "shared Asian values" (Lum, Morrison, & Vaughn, 2008; 4). Through this strategic approach, China leverages the comparative benefit it holds in forming regional partnerships as a result of Japan's negative imperial heritage. In this manner, Beijing has opted for a strategic understanding of the region with Japan as a key control focus, recognizing its influence in the region's security environment (Hornung, 2014; 97), and seeking to redefine the environment to suit its international rise.

#### **d. Geopolitical significance**

Stability or insecurity in the global order seems to have a ripple effect in regional dynamics. Thus, the US-Japan alliance and US-China market dependence may serve to stabilize Sino-Japanese conflictual relations (Lee, 2015; 266); or in turn, complicate them further. Sino-Japanese security dynamics are inevitably linked to the broader interactions of the four-power balance system in Asia, between the United States, the Russian Federation, China, and Japan (Newby, 2018; 144). Regarding the effect smaller actors may hold upon this larger geopolitical context, there is much debate in the interpretation of secondary-state responses to changing regional dynamics and rising powers like China. Nevertheless, it increasingly seems that minor actors will often not seek to balance this rise, but accommodate it (Ross, & Tunsjo, 2017; 285).

Another important geopolitical element is the trilateral institutional relation among China, Japan and South Korea, that has been developing over the last decade due to shared security concerns (Zhang, 2018; 57). At present, both China and Japan operate under a shared objective of maintaining peace and stability in the region (Newby, 2018; 144); which has a relatively stabilizing effect in terms of the non-escalation of their bilateral tensions into regional strife.

However, both US influence and trilateralism seem insufficient to fully normalize Sino-Japanese political-diplomatic cooperation, or dissipate periodically rising tensions. The historical legacy Japan and China share has imbued a mutual sense of distrust and wariness between them. China remains cautious of Japanese security projection in the region, and Japan in turn remains threatened by the possibility of a revisionist China reasserting its historical prevalence in the Asia-Pacific (Newby, 2018; 144). There is an ever-present emotional dimension to Sino-Japanese relations that transcends logical, economic, or political interest (Deng, 1997; 373), and evidences the national identity forming effects their shared historical past has on their present interaction.

**e. The legacy of Nanking: Perspectives on the role of historical memories in current and future Sino-Japanese relations.**

In the words of Joshua William Walker: “Empires may be dead; however memories of empire are alive and well” (Walker, 2012; 3). This is undoubtedly so in the Chinese political landscape. Japan has come to represent a paradox in Chinese consciousness; holding a similar cultural and linguistic background, yet being differentiated historically almost as a Western power due to its economic ascent, political system, and most importantly, its military behavior during WW2 (Reeves, 2017; 15).

These historical memories are not just past events; they are projected broader collective to a shape ideas, define motivations, as well as condition mutual perception and interpretation (Alexander & Gao, 2007; 3). In this manner, they permeate current international relations, and remain a fundamental consideration if one seeks to understand current state behavior (Walker, 2012; 4).

The politics of memory imply a legitimization of power derived from the determination of what is remembered and what is forgotten (Schwartz, 2012; 29); for which there may not be a better example than Nanking. This massacre remains a cornerstone in a broader East Asian memory war (Schwartz, 2012; 29), and has become the prime intersection of the main drivers of regional instability and tension in the region: identity, nationalism, and memory (Moore, 2010; 1).



The memory of Nanking is as political, as it is historical (Lam, 2006; 69), and the remembrance of the event will never truly be only a domestic matter for either Japan or China (Rose, 2005; 1). Considering the constructivist view that narratives shape political actors (Gustafsson, 2011; 1), and the exacerbation in recent years of a clash of nationalisms between both nations, it seems as though history will remain an ambivalent topic in Sino-Japanese relations (Heinzen, 2004; 1). This discordance will bleed into the economic and political development of the entire Asian region, and condition the future of the global economic balance and international security order (Newby, 2018; 102). Thus, to analyze the present and future of Sino-Japanese relations is to evaluate the evolution that the shadow of Nanking will cast upon their interaction.

## **12. Conclusions**

The Asia-Pacific region is the world's most active center of economic activity, and a growingly unrestrainable political behemoth. This economic and political significance is largely driven by its leading powers, Japan and China, and the way in which they interact. However, bilateral relations have been tense despite economic interaction and the advance of globalization, and seem to give way to almost routine periods of security tensions.

Sino-Japanese relations have a longstanding and complex past, defined in great measure by political competition and war; which has in turn derived in mutually vilifying nationalist ideals within both nations. The impact these perceptions have on international relations is often understated, specifically those driven by the shadow of war. Historical memory still threatens to shatter Sino-Japanese economic and political complementarity as a means for peace, and had been heightened in the current context of changing power dynamics in the region.

Thus, this dissertation has sought to outline the events of the Rape of Nanking in order to develop a historical framework that can evaluate the impact of Japan and China's imperial past on their current foreign relations, and how that impact defines current and future tension escalation.

With this aim, debates on Nanking's historiography have been introduced to explore the contentious nature of the event's historical memory, and highlight its still evolving

reality. The period immediately preceding the Second Sino-Japanese war has been explored to develop an analysis of the factors that determined the interbellum shift Japan experienced with regards to its standards of treatment of combatants and civilians. Thus, the explored political, ideological, economic, and international issues are demonstrated to be cornerstones in the shaping of pre-World War II national identity.

The historical recounting of the Rape of Nanking follows the provocation of the Second Sino-Japanese war and the entry of Imperial Forces into Manchuria, as well as their advance towards the old capital and the loot all, kill all, burn all imperative; building up the slow fracturing of Japanese internal discipline and the escalating atrocities in the route to Nanking. The entry into the city and subsequent mass killings are retold with particular focus on the sheer scale of these executions, and as a representation of the collapse of basic standards for captured combatants. This respect will echo in the gendered analysis of the widespread rape that would come to define the massacre itself, and the lasting effects it has held upon Chinese national identity and social narrative. Torture inflicted upon victims in Nanking is explored as a means of understanding the lack of control imposed by Japanese officials, and the suffering the city's people endured. Lastly, the aftermath of the Nanking massacre, and the ultimate dissolution of Japanese control on Manchuria after World War II is reflected upon, establishing the gateway to the political discordance on the event's remembrance.

A subsequent layer of historical analysis is added to the research by taking into account specific Japanese warfare practices and theories of violence, and studying the military conditions that allowed war crimes to take place during the Japanese Imperial period through the radicalization of its soldiers. Furthermore, given the extreme acts of rape that defined the Nanking atrocity, this research has explored the fundamental motivations that give way to rape, as well as its use for dominance, social disintegration, and ethnic violence. These motivations are applied specifically to the abuses committed in Nanking, and contextualized within a broader military perspective, as both a strategy and a weapon in war.

The main historic body of the study is finalized through the introduction of a broader East Asian experience with Japanese imperialism, covering other war crimes in the continent and their role in creating a regional dynamic deeply influenced by Japanese abuses and the country's precedent in military capabilities.

Building upon the previous study, the historical memory of Nanking is introduced in relation to its impact in current politics, and the effect diverging narratives of

remembrance have upon Sino-Japanese bilateral relations. For China, Nanking represents a cornerstone of the century of humiliation narrative, and an event that drives social cohesion and identity with independence to domestic politics, and directly in conjunction and opposition to Japan. In turn, Japan faces the internal divide the memory of Nanking creates, both in internal politics and in national identity; as the country struggles to reconcile the historical aggressor-victim dilemma left in the wake of World War II.

Historical memory has defined current Sino-Japanese relations as a paradox of both animosity and interdependence. The most important sources of tensions remain a reflection of clashing nationalisms, subjacent to territorial disputes and regional influence competition. Disagreements driven by nationalism and mutual threat perception have led to a redefining of bilateral political approaches, which in turn compromise the entire regional balance, and are defined by periodic escalations in tensions.

While the current situation is at a point of rebalancing, and thus very politically delicate, it remains imperative to understand the way in which Sino-Japanese relations echo within a wider spectrum of unresolved historical tensions and power realignment in the region. As geopolitical conditions in East Asia fluctuate further, the contest between China and Japan for regional leadership continues to strain along lines of rising Chinese power and Japanese remilitarization.

Ultimately, the legacy of Nanking remains an underlying reality in all aspects of Sino-Japanese relations, not only as a foundation of Chinese national narrative and Japanese politics; but as an event that has transcended simple state interaction to become a social identity phenomenon that will continue to influence the peace and stability of the entire East Asian region.

The future development of bilateral relations between China and Japan will depend on the correct addressment of historical memory differences between both countries; not only involving state representatives, but also civil society actors, which will be key in the efforts towards reconciliation.

To this end, China and Japan must seek to construct a more cohesive understanding of their common history as a foundation for future foreign relations, and as a necessary condition to ease the strain between both nations in a transition period within world politics. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr. “We are not makers of history. We are made by history”. China and Japan must now face their history in tandem, and choose to either be defined by it in violence, or be driven by it towards peace.

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