Collective Memory of the Nanjing Massacre

A case study on Chinese social media--Sina Weibo

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the collective memory of the Nanjing Massacre on the Chinese social media platform Sina Weibo, it aims to discuss how some of the Chinese social media users perceive the Nanjing Massacre, and to explore the correlations between the Chinese social media users’ memories and the Chinese official memory on the topic of Nanjing. Theories of social media and memory, collective memory will be used in this research. To achieve it, it firstly conducted a qualitative analysis on the chosen narratives of the Chinese social media users from Sina Weibo, and then made a comparative analysis between the Chinese social media users’ narratives and the Chinese official narrative on the topic of Nanjing. Overall, this research made an in-depth case study on the collective memory of the Nanjing Massacre on Chinese social media in a historical and political context, and it explores and presents the memories of some Chinese social media users on the massacre in a rather detailed way.
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Introduction

The recollection of Chinese history has always been carefully managed by the Chinese Communist Party. Specific historical events are taken out of historical context and used by the government to reconstruct the collective memory in a preferred way for self-legitimation and to control the population. The remembrance of the Nanjing Massacre is not always preferred in the official Chinese narratives. It was in the 1980s, nearly half a century after the end of the second Sino-Japanese War (1937 to 1945), that the Nanjing Massacre became a chosen trauma and began to consistently appear in the official Chinese narratives, especially the Chinese state-controlled media and history textbooks. This new Chinese national narrative, which emphasizes the Chinese victimization during the Second World War, is utilized by the Chinese authority to strengthen the Chinese identity and secure its control over China. The memory of the Nanjing Massacre has remained the hot national memory for around two decades, and the debates over the Nanjing Massacre between China and Japan still remain quite controversial.

Since the memory of the Nanjing Massacre has been institutionalized, studies on the topic of the Nanjing memory have been frequently conducted by scholars. Many put their focus on how the event of Nanjing is represented and interpreted by the Chinese authority, or by the Chinese literary and art workers, such as those well-known Chinese film directors. However, the history and recollection of the Nanjing Massacre have been studied mostly by those who are at the macro (elite) level. They control the power and sources which allow them to expose their works to the audience easily and prevalently. Therefore, one would wonder how the Nanjing Massacre is perceived by those who are at the micro level---the grassroot Chinese. After decades of the institutionalization of the Nanjing memory, it is also quite interesting to examine the influences that may have been possibly brought on by the its representation to the grassroot Chinese by the Chinese authority. One may ask what the differences and similarities between the narratives of the Chinese authority and of the grassroot Chinese are. Thanks to the emergence of social media, the access to the grassroots’ memories have become attainable, which makes it possible for the following research to explore these questions.
Aims and Research Questions

Firstly, this research narrows down the target to a certain number of Chinese social media users who have actively participated in a Nanjing related topic managed by the Chinese social media Sina Weibo. And it aims to explore how the Nanjing Massacre is remembered by these users. Secondly, this thesis will explore the possible correlations between the Chinese social media users’ memories of the Nanjing Massacre and the Chinese official narratives. The second aim will be conducted through the method of making comparative studies between Chinese social medias’ narratives and Chinese official media’s narratives on the topic of Nanjing.

In order to show and discuss their memories of the Nanjing Massacre in a more comprehensive and concrete way, this research will focus on these social media users’ emotional bias and their perceptions on the following issues in the massacre narratives: their main focus on the massacre, main controversies over the historical facts of the massacre, Chinese national identity, the Chinese authority’s role, the Japanese authority and the ordinary Japanese people’s role, internationalization of the massacre and Sino-Japanese relations. To achieve the second goal, the Chinese official narratives will be briefly introduced and analyzed in this research as well, including the official perceptions on the issues mentioned above. So, comparative studies will be made based on the analysis of these issues to find out the differences and similarities between the memories of the Chinese social media users and that of the Chinese official narratives on the topic of Nanjing, and to analyze the correlations between them.

Disposition

The thesis is divided into three main sections. The first section deals with the literature review, theory discussion, and research method. The literature review provides a general overview on some of the studies on the memory of the Nanjing Massacre. The theory discussion introduces the theories of collective memory, memory and social media. Then, the thesis introduces the methods which explains how the research was conducted. The second section consists of historical contexts and case analysis. It on the one hand provides external information on the data of the research, and on the other hands gives the internal analysis which details how the data
is discussed and compared. The last section presents the conclusion remarks of the findings of the thesis.

**Literature review**

This section mainly reviews the memory studies of the Nanjing Massacre in China, and some works in Japan will be also briefly mentioned. The Nanjing Massacre is also termed as the “Nanjing Incident”, but this term the Nanjing Incident is used more often in Japan. The use of terms occasionally descends into a semantic dispute, such as the Nanjing Massacre being considered by some Japanese as inappropriate as it suggests a Chinese bias.¹ The historical study on the massacre is very difficult because Japan’s Imperial headquarters ordered all secret documents related to it destroyed in order to cover up wartime wrongdoings. This led to at least 30,000 documents believed to be evidence of war crimes and killing orders being destroyed during the wartime.² The first historical research on the topic of Nanjing was published in 1967, by Japanese historian Hora Tomio, which is titled *Kindai senshi no nazo* (*Riddles of Modern War History*), of the Nanjing incident; the work is based on tribunal transcripts of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (also known as the Tokyo Trials or the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal) and a few post-war Japanese recollections.³ Four years later, a well-known Japanese journalist named Honda Katsuichi took the interviews with Chinese victims and published a series of accounts

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¹ Daqing Yang, “Convergence or Divergence? Recent Historical Writings on the Rape of Nanjing,” *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (1999): 849
³ Wei, 256; and Hora Tomio, "Nankin jiken" [The Nanjing Incident], in *Kindai senshi no nazo* [Puzzles in modern military history] (Tokyo: Jinbutsuõraisha, 1967), 55–172.
of Japan’s wartime atrocities in Nanjing and other places in China. Hora Tomio’s and Honda Katsuichi’s works brought the Nanjing Massacre widespread attention, along with a provocation of a lively internal debate in Japan. During this period, doubts and denials also appeared regarding the existing Nanjing narratives. The increasing Nanjing debate became ferocious after 1982 due to the Japanese textbook controversy when the Ministry of Education attempted to replace the term “invasion” in textbooks with “advance” in order to “tone down the words describing the aggressive and brutal nature of the Japanese war in Asia during World War II.”

This act of the Ministry of Education was criticized by the Japanese media Asahí Shimbun (Asahí News), and the report of Asahí Shimbun (Asahí News) has drawn protests from neighboring Asian capitals—including the Chinese, South Korean, and Vietnamese governments—and criticisms from a number of individual intellectuals.

The publications on the topic of Nanjing in China was also erupted in this period—1980s, which was much more recent than the phenomenon of publications’ eruption on the topic of Nanjing in Japan. According to C.X. George Wei, a chapter titled “The Terrible Suffering and Memory of the Nanjing Massacre” in The Record of the Atrocities Committed by the Japanese Invaders in China (1951) written by Guo Shijie may be the earliest publication on the subject of Nanjing after the Chinese Communist Party controlled mainland China. In the early 1969s, the faculty of the History Department of Nanjing University had competed a manuscript entitled “The Massacre in Nanjing Committed by Japanese Imperialism” (Riben diguo zhuyi zai Nanjing datusha), which included some valuable materials and photos. However, this manuscript was only available to Japanese visitors, not to the Chinese public, due to

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6 Wei, “Politicization and De-Politicization,” 258.
7 Ibid., 259
8 Yang, “Convergence or Divergence,” 847.
9 Wei, “Politicization and De-Politicization,” 250.
the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations in the 1970s. The Chinese government controlled the relevant research and publications on the topic of the massacre to avoid offending Japan and to secure financial aid offered by Japan. It was in the late 1980s that Chinese historians published several historical overviews of the Japanese atrocities, and there were also some semi-fictional works produced in the same period. In 1983, a memorial dedicated to the Nanjing victims was built under the instructions of the supreme leader (Deng Xiaoping) of the Chinese government at that time for the purpose of educating the masses and the future generations. A decade later, a collaborative book called The Nanjing Massacre was published. These articles and books published by Chinese scholars are mostly based on the Chinese materials, including survivors’ testimonies and official records of the Tokyo Trials. However, the tone of Chinese academic articles, semi-fictional works, and even the memorial are highly similar, and according to Yang Daqing, all “shared a spirited defense of the verdicts of post-war trials as well as condemnation of those Japanese who either deny or question the Nanjing Massacre.” The monolithic narrative of the massacre in China resulted in the appearance of many researchers whose focus has been on how the massacre is represented and how the memory of the massacre is manipulated by the Chinese authority. During the Mao-era, the memory of the Nanjing Massacre was not preferred by the Chinese Communist Party because the event reflects the weakness of the Chinese. Given that, it did not fit the party’s ruling ideology and political interest at that time. The Chinese government might consider that collectivizing and commemorating the massacre “would have symbolically unified the Chinese nation and defined as evil another nation, the Japanese. This would have contradicted the culture structures that motivated the revolutionary movement, and which were already in place.” Mark Eykholt provides more events to show how the

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10 Ibid., 256
11 Yang, “Convergence or Divergence,” 847.
12 Wei, “Politicization and De-Politicization,” 262.
13 Yang, “Convergence or Divergence,” 847.
14 Ibid.
memory of the massacre is manipulated for the Chinese Communist Party’s interests—for example, using it to gain support from the Chinese public for the Korean War in the 1950s. At that time, a story that “American officials of Nanjing International Safety Zone have protected foreign property at the expense of Chinese lives” was told to the public in order to provoke anti-American sentiments. In the 1970s after the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations, criticism of Japan’s wartime aggressions was intentionally avoided because the Chinese government needed Japan’s economic support. In the 1990s, Japan suspended its economic aid to China because China was undertaking a series of nuclear tests and ignored the criticisms from Japan and other countries. Hence, the diplomatic debates over Japanese wartime atrocities and its past militarism were brought to the forefront by the Chinese government. The official Chinese narrative of wartime memory became intensified and consistent in the late 1980s; during this period, according to Jeffery C. and Gao, the Chinese nation’s cultural foundation eroded due to a series of intertwined events, such as the debacle of the Cultural Revolution, the death of Mao, the repudiation of revolutionary activism, and the acceptance of capitalist relations. Therefore, the need for constructing a new collective memory drove the Chinese Communist Party to bring Japanese wartime aggressions into the Chinese new national memory, with a focus on the massacre. In this new memory, the massacre was labeled as the national shame/humiliation. The Chinese government kept emphasizing that the Chinese people must understand and remember the brutality and the uniqueness of the Nanjing Massacre, and the martyrdom of those who fought hard and, through ultimate sacrifice, achieved victory over foreign imperialism. One of the goals of this new national memory was to promote the patriotism and loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party among the young generations. Hence, the government employed

17 Ibid., 43.
18 Ibid. 45.
20 Takashi, Making of the “Rape of Nanking,” 154.
21 Ibid., 105.
every possible medium—such as textbooks, literature, news reports, films, museums, monuments, and music—to accomplish its patriotic campaign. For example, the memorial of the victims of the massacre is not just a place to remember the past but also “an ideological work of celebration, a great monument to China’s national identity, to the strength and superiority of its people who were able not only to triumph over the Japanese aggressor, but also to re-affirm a full set of universal value.” This memorial was established in Nanjing by the local government in 1985. It delivers its meanings in several ways. First, it describes the Chinese people as innocent victims of Japan’s gruesome military aggressions. Secondly, it presents the globalization of the Nanjing Massacre: the massacre is linked to the Holocaust and is applied with a new and trans-historical form of universal value. And thirdly, the memorial shows the superiority of the Chinese people, that they are not only able to resist and triumph over their enemies but also capable of forgiving their enemies. Furthermore, the Chinese would build a better future no matter how much they have suffered from the traumatic past.

The topic on the Nanjing Massacre has also attracted the interest of Chinese filmmakers. However, filmmakers must face the problem of censorship in China. For example, Lu Chuan’s well-known Nanjing! Nanjing! had waited two years to gain approval after it was significantly modified and certain sections cut and re-cut. Some films, to some extent, reflect the Chinese government’s policy on this subject. For example, the ambitious film The Flower of War directed by Zhang Yimou has shown the intent to internationalize the memory of the massacre; Hollywood star Christian Bale was invited to play the leading role for the international market. The Flower of War tells a story about how some prostitutes sacrificed themselves to save student

22 Ibid., 154
25 Ibid.
girls in Nanjing during the Japanese invasion. It tries to explore and present individuals’ sufferings and sacrifices during the war period with specific emphasis on females’ roles in the massacre, but its portrayal of these females in the film has drawn many criticisms, it is criticized by Amanda Weiss, however, as it does not explore the subjectivity of the female characters and instead categorizes women according to their roles—schoolgirl, prostitutes—in a narrative framed by a male gaze and masculinist politics.27

She explains that the Chinese films that present rape during the wartime atrocities usually “prioritize male heroics” or “lament the emasculation of the Chinese nation.”28 The problematic nationalist myths of chastity are also revealed in these films. Such myths “tend to present women as symbolic rather than real figures,” and this representation “marginalizes the traumatization of Chinese women as it is often the ‘indecent’ women who are raped and, frequently, their death[s] mark the national humiliation as distant past.”29 These films produced in China on the topic of Nanjing, in general, put the focus on the atrocities, individuals’ sufferings, and their heroic acts. And these filmmakers in China cannot express entirely freely in their works due to the censorship. The situation faced by the Chinese filmmakers also reveals that other forms of artistic works on the topic of Nanjing may have been experiencing the same censorship problems. But efforts are never ceased to be made by many people to express their perceptions through different mediums. Taking the digital platform as example, one recent study discussed how the Chinese government governs online political communication on the issues related to Japan. The researcher argues that the online discourses on Sino-Japanese relations in China are overall “in line with depictions of Japan in China’s mainstream media and in officially approved cultural products.”30 The result of the research suggests that the Chinese Communist Party has been highly successful with integrating the web into its mass-communication

27 Ibid., 452.
28 Ibid., 451
29 Ibid.
paradigm. However, the same study also claims that there is still possibility for divergent and contentious voices to be available in Chinese digital works.\textsuperscript{31}

Generally speaking, the memory producers in China usually need to go through censors and negotiate their works to a government-tolerant level. Though in China’s case, the Chinese authority plays the role of the dominant memory maker, and it tightly controls other non-official narratives through censorship. But the possibility for the appearances of alternative narratives still exist, and such possibility can be created through digital works. The emergence of social networks provides a relative free space for them to articulate their views and participate in memory production. Hence, this atmosphere provides the possibility for this study on Chinese social medias’ memories on the Nanjing Massacre.

The review shows that the publications on the topic of the Nanjing Massacre in China was quite a recent phenomenon, and many scholarly works are written in a relatively similar tone. It’s clear that the Chinese authority provides a framework for the representations of the Nanjing Massacre, so the framework should be employed when the memory of the massacre is presented through different forms such as media, memorial, music, textbook and so forth. Semi-fictional works on the topic of Nanjing such as literatures or films written or produced by art workers must deal with the censorships as well. In a sense, the memory of the Nanjing Massacre is highly institutionalized in China. The narratives are dominated by the Chinese authority. However, even though the networks are also subjected to censorships, the previous studies have shown that a relatively free space still exist for the public to express their views on this topic or some other political or historical issues. Hence, this research shifts its focus to the grassroots’ memories of the massacre. It contributes to the Nanjing Massacre studies in two main ways.

Firstly, it gives an empirical case of the collective memory on the topic of the Nanjing Massacre on social media in China, which analyses how a certain number of grassroots Chinese social media users remember the massacre. As I mentioned before, previously researches have mostly focused on Chinese authority, scholars, or art

\textsuperscript{31} Schneider, “China’s ‘Info-Web’: How Beijing Governs Online Political Communication about Japan,” 2678.
workers who have the power or sources. Very little research has been done regarding the grassroots Chinese.

Secondly, collective remembering often involves memory producing and memory consuming. However, most researches have focused only on the producers’ representations without making reflections on the receptions. In this case, as we already know that memory of the Nanjing Massacre has been institutionalized for about two decades, the Chinese authority which controls and dominates the media platforms in China can be considered as the Nanjing memory producers. The grassroots Chinese who are exposed to the official memories frequently or have accepted the compulsory patriotic education are highly likely to be the official memory consumers, and the Chinese social media users are a part of these grassroots Chinese. Under this context, the second contribution of this research deals with the fact that it attempts to reflect the possible receptions to the official representations of the Nanjing memory through exploring the correlations between the Chinese social media users’ memories and the Chinese official narratives. Though it is very difficult to evaluate the impact of the official narratives on individuals and the larger society, the comparative studies with in-depth analysis conducted by this research to some extent gives some insights on this issue.

Theory

The theory part is divided into two sections. The first section will introduce the theory of collective memory; it demonstrates the characters, formation process, and functions of collective memory. The second section introduces the theoretical framework of memory and social media, and the Chinese social media platform Sina-Weibo as a form of remembrance. This section illustrates the relationship between collective memory and social networks, and gives legitimacy to data collection via social media.

Collective memory

The term “collective memory” was introduced by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs in *On Collective Memory* in 1925. According to Halbwachs, individuals’ memories consist of fragments of images and impressions. These fragments, once captured by individuals in their daily lives, become reference points encompassed in a collective space and time in people’s minds, and only through a social framework can these references points be completed as well-structured, coherent, and stable memory. This complete memory is collective memory. The social framework that helps to complete the fragments is generated from society and “used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections.” Aleida Assmann further elaborates on the concept of social framework as “an implicit or explicit structure of shared concerns, values, experiences, narratives.” Thus, Halbwachs’ conceptualization is considered as a social function, and it indicates that society is able to exercise the power of manipulation over individuals’ minds or memories. According to Astrid Erll, individual memories in Halbwachs’ explanation are rather understood as “individual images”; because these memories are just fragments, not true memories, the past does not survive in these fragments. Separating these fragments absolutely from the social context only makes them an abstraction devoid of meaning. Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam argued that this “ignores the possibility of any real personal memory and, unpainstakingly, postulates the ‘collective’ mold as


35 Ibid., 59.


37 Assmann, “Transformations between History and Memory,” 51.


the only kind of memory.” Such anti-individualism in Halbwachs’ conceptualization of collective memory remains problematic. In fact, it is argued by Wulf Kansteiner that the fact that “individual memory cannot be conceptualized and studied without recourse to its social context does not necessarily imply the reverse, that is, that collective memory can only be imagined and accessed through its manifestation in individuals.”

The relationship between collective memory and individual memory remains unsettled, in that collective memory has not been sufficiently conceptualized as distinct from individual memory. Aleida Assmann adopted phycologist’s perspective to explain the relationship between individual and collective memory—that a person usually exercises two types of memories: one is “semantic memory”, and another is “episodic memory.” “Episodic memory” refers to personal memory. Personal memory “enshrines purely personal incidents as individual-experienced; through it can be communicated and exchanged, it cannot be transferred from one individual to another without changing the quality [of] the experience through external representation.” Conversely, episodic memory can be shared but cannot be embodied by another person. This characteristic of episodic memory creates two problems: one, it is not easy to distinguish what one has actually experienced oneself from what one has been told and later absorbed into one’s personal memory. Two, personal memory is held with the aid of props—such as oral narratives, texts, and photographs—and it is therefore, to some extent, problematic to draw boundaries between individual memories and shared material signs. “Semantic memory,” on the contrary, is impersonal memory that is “related to the learning and storing capacity of the mind. It is acquired by collective instruction and the site of continuous learning, acquisition, and retention of both general and specialized knowledge that connects us with others and the surrounding world.” According to Assmann, collective memory can be understood as a crossover between semantic memory and episodic memory, and it

42 Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory,” 185.
43 Assmann, “Transformations between History and Memory,” 50.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
involves individual agency, which must be acquired by learning. When collective memory is acquired by individuals in social groups, a collective identity can be formed. To acquire the collective identity means the individual needs to participate in the group’s history, usually “by means of cognitive learning and emotional acts of identification and commemoration.”\(^{46}\) Then, through internalization and rites of participation, collective identity forms.\(^{47}\) The history of the groups are presented through external forms—such as symbols, texts, images, rites, ceremonies, places, and monuments. Such presentations are heavily depended on these external forms because groups have no organic bases. Notably, the histories presented by groups are based on selections and exclusions; they are mediated. Collective memory, then, is mediated memory.\(^{48}\) Since education is a systematic way for cognitive learning, it plays a significant role in forming collective memory and identity. For instance, in school textbooks, history contains heroic and mobilizing patriotic narratives used to serve the interests of a group, such as a nation. Through education, the members of the group would learn and thus memorize the history given in the textbook as “our history” and later absorb it as part of their collective identity. When such history transforms into shared knowledge and collective participation, it becomes re-constructed and turns into re-embodied collective memory. Furthermore, through the education system, collective memory can be conveniently transmitted to future generations.\(^{49}\)

Collective memory’s connection to the collective identity illuminates the social base and social function of collective memory. To reflect such a social base and social function, terms other than “collective memory” were devised by scholars, such as “national memory,” “public memory,” and so forth.\(^{50}\) The terms “cultural memory” and “communicative memory” used by Jan Assmann have attracted more attention. He argues that memory is the faculty that enables human beings to form an awareness of both personal and collective identity; it is related to time, and it can be identified at

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\(^{46}\) Ibid., 52.

\(^{47}\) Ibid.

\(^{48}\) Ibid., 55

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 56.

\(^{50}\) Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory,” 181.
three levels: the inner level, the social level, and the cultural level. Memory at the inner level functions through the neuro-mental system, limited on inner, subjective time, which actually refers to individuals’ personal memory. The concept of collective memory is however explained by Jan Assmann at two levels: at the social level, individuals are as carrier of social roles in social time, memory at this level held by them “is a matter of communication and social interaction”, so it refers to communicative memory. This, again, underlies the social function possessed by memory, which has been mentioned previously that “memory enable[s] us to live in groups and communities and living in groups and communities enables us to build a memory.” Memory at the cultural level, reflects upon historical, mythical, cultural time, it is called cultural memory. It refers to a form of collective memory shared by a certain number of people, and it conveys to these people a collective cultural identity. Hence, Halbwachs’ concept of collective memory is broken up into communicative memory and cultural memory by Jan Assmann. Specifically, cultural memory is characterized as a kind of institution; “it is exteriorized, objectified and stored away in symbolic forms.” Moreover, it is stable and situation-transcendent, and it must rely on external objects as carriers to represent memory. Therefore, the memory makers who control these external carriers control the representation of cultural memory as well. In terms of communicative memory, what distinguishes it from cultural memory is the structure of participation. Communicative memory is non-institutional. In other words, it is “not cultivated by specialists and is not summoned or celebrated on special occasions; it is not formalized and stabilized by any forms of material symbolizations; […] it lives in everyday interaction and communication”; and it has a relatively short time span, usually within three

52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., 110.
55 Ibid., 111.
56 Ibid.
interacting generations. When it comes to cultural memory, Assmann introduces two statuses of cultural memory: potential and actual cultural memories. The potential cultural memory exists when the representations of the past are stored in external forms, such as archives, libraries, and museums. When these representations are employed and given new meaning in new social and historical contexts, the cultural memory gains its actuality. The problem, however, is that the new adopted meanings of these representations might traverse the whole spectrum from the realm of communicative memory to the realm of cultural memory.

Memory’s relationship to history also remains unsettled. It is argued that memory is usually taken as an unreliable source of valid history; it plays the role as servant of history. The history of memory is usually characterized in three stages: premodern period, modern stage, and postmodern stage. The first stage is the premodern period, which is marked by the identity of history and memory. Aleida Assmann argues that, at the pre-modern stage, history and memory were not clearly distinguished. The writing of history mainly functioned as a tool to preserve the memory of a dynasty, the church, or a state, so as to legitimize these institutions. The second is the modern stage. This stage has shown a polarization between memory and history, that the differentiation between memory and history became sustained and systematic because professional historiography was established as a specialized discipline and independent institution at universities. Historians, at this stage, can “either support the play of political power or challenge it; they can act as architects or critics of national constructions.” After a long period of polarization of history and memory, the two are then considered as complementary in the third period, the postmodern stage. At this stage, the interaction between memory and history is described as “memory

57 Ibid.
58 Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory,” 182.
59 Ibid., 183.
60 Gedi and Elam, “Collective Memory,” 33.
61 Assmann, “Transformations between History and Memory,” 57.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., 59.
motivates historical activity, [while] historical research utilizes memory,” and “memory complements history, [while] history corrects memory.”

Though history can be selectively represented by the memory makers, these representations might not be exactly adopted by the memory consumers; rather, they are used, ignored, or transformed by the memory consumers according to their own interests. Therefore, collective memory is interpreted by some scholars as a mediated action that involves three agencies: memory producers, memory consumers, and the third is defined in different ways. One way is illustrated by Wulf Kansteiner as “the intellectual and cultural traditions that frame all our representations of the past.” And another way is given by James V. Wertsch as the textual resources, which he characterizes as the major structural tool for representations. Kansteiner conceptualizes collective memory as “the result of the interaction among three types of factors: the intellectual and cultural traditions that frame all our representations of the past, the memory makers who selectively adopt and manipulate these traditions, and the memory consumers who use, ignore, or transform such artefacts according to their own interest[s].” Wertsch takes collective remembering as a form of mediated action. He prefers the term “collective remembering” rather than collective memory because “remembering” emphasizes the active processes. According to Wertsch, a textual narrative must be employed no matter how collective memory is formed and who controls it. Meanwhile, such a narrative employed by group members “always belong[s] to, and hence reflect[s], a social context and history,” and therefore, collective remembering is essentially social. In terms of the function of the textual narrative, Wertsch characterizes narrative productions into two types: specific

64 Ibid., 63.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
71 Wertsch, Voice of Collective Remembering, 171.
narratives and schematic narrative templates. Specific narratives refer to “information about specific dates, places, actors, and so forth,” and schematic narrative templates are abstract forms of narrative representation and typically shape several specific narratives. 72 “The use of textual narratives may result in homogeneous, complementary or contested memory,” 73 which means that there is possibility for different distributed versions of collective memory. “Homogenous” refers to the simplest version, which implies that all group members share the same representations. Another distributed collective memory is termed “complementary”; in this case, different members of a group may remember the past with different perspectives and different things, but these exit “in a coordinated system of complementary pieces.” 74 The third distributed version is “contested distribution,” the representation of the past of this one contains competition and conflict. “Instead of involving multiple perspectives that overlap or complement one another, the focus is on how these perspectives compete with or contradict one another,” 75 and in some cases, specific perspective may be designed to rebut another. 76 In addition, because every distribution has a central tendency, there is neither a total dissensual memory nor a total consensus. 77 How the distribution develops and becomes possible depends on the interaction between agents and textual narratives. The agents use narratives to create a usable past based on their own interests, so when agents change from one to another, the narratives might vary or change as well. Thus, the collective remembering is mediated and is a dynamic process. 78

As mentioned previously, collective memory involves memory production, consumption, and representations. Kansteiner criticizes that most studies on memory focus mainly on representations without reflecting on the audiences of the

72 Wertsch, “Collective Memory,” 122.
74 Ibid., 23
75 Ibid., 24.
76 Ibid.
78 Wertsch, Voice of Collective Remembering, 33
representations. This results in a methodological problem in that “the wealth of new insights into past and present historical cultures cannot be linked conclusively to specific social collectives and their historical consciousness.” To deal with the problem, Kansteiner suggests that methods of media and communication studies can be adopted when it comes to the problems of memory “receptions.” Because this thesis also aims to bring some insights on the possible receptions of the Chinese official representations on the Nanjing Massacre, therefore relevant theoretical frameworks on the memory and social media is introduced as next in this section.

To conclude, the concept of collective memory is quite complicated, and this part of theory section tried to grasp some understandings on it. Collective memory is mediated memory with certain social functions. It can be utilized to construct collective identity especially through institutionalized system, such as education system. Furthermore, collective memory involves not just the representations of the memories (especially the official memories), but also the employment and interpretations of these representations by their audiences. Therefore, the grassroot Chinese, as the possible audience of the Chinese official memory, became the focus of this research. Meanwhile, based on Kansteiner’s suggestion on the methodological problem, the research limited the grassroot Chinese to some of the Chinese social media users. Importantly, the narratives which may contain different interpretations of the Chinese official narratives on the topic of these Chinese social media users can possibly generate different distributions of the collective memories. It is also interesting to know which type of distributed collective memory will be uncovered in this research, whether it is homogeneous memory, contested memory or completing memory.

**Memory and Social Media**

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80 Ibid., 180
Memory is selectively structured and shows a selective process that involves remembering and forgetting.\(^\text{81}\) Therefore it is also mediated, and different forms of mediations can be identified in both individual and collective memory. Notably, the possibility of reverting memory to external forms should not be excluded from individual memory; individuals can also borrow tools for memories or for oblivion, such as rituals, objects, texts, and so forth. \(^\text{82}\) Collective memory depends fundamentally on external forms because the collective groups have no organic basis; therefore, memorials, texts, monuments, and so on become common external carriers of collective memory. The previous section introduced that, according to Wertsch, textual resources are the most influential external form in the formation of collective memory. Texts, in a broader definition, include text and talk\(^\text{83}\)—in other words, they include discourse. Discourse is considered social cognition because “socially shared cognition also systematically appears in text and talk.” \(^\text{84}\) As social cognition, discourse is the key to understanding memory and memory’s formation process. Discourse can function as a way of constitution, manifestation, and distribution of knowledge, where knowledge “is materialized in texts and other symbolic artefacts forming the material basis of remembering.”\(^\text{85}\) Furthermore, discourse also provides access for the examination of a collective belief system, patterns of thought, and the structure of argumentation. Therefore, examination of the constructive discourse of memory can lead to a better understanding of the nature of memory.\(^\text{86}\) How memory is formed depends on discursive interaction and people’s understanding of discourses. And social media provides platform for presenting discourse and discursive interactions among people. So the question is what is social media? What role it plays


\(^{82}\) Ibid., 87.


\(^{85}\) Pentzold and Sommer, “Digital Networked Media,” 78.

\(^{86}\) Ibid., 79.
in the formation of memory and why? Firstly, one widely agreed-upon definition of social media defines it as

web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.  

Moreover, social media have four essential features: persistence, replicability, scalability, and search ability. Persistence refers to the expressions made online that are automatically recorded and stored; replicability means that content made online can be duplicated; scalability means that the online content has great potential visibility, though such visibility is not guaranteed; and search ability refers to the fact that online content can be viewed by web users through search. The features of social media show that it can support discursive interactions. On the one hand, social media is a “vast hypertext archive of information,” so it works as a digital external platform, which allows individuals to share their memories in textual form. On the other hand, it provides web users as potential partners in interactive dialogue. Therefore, social media and memory are inevitably mutually connected, in the sense that social media provides a new form for the externalization of memory. Social media not only supports different forms of memory but also mediates them. Social media platforms are


technologies which mediate the production of collective and individual memories; they mediate recording, storage and retrieval as well as erasing […] they also mediate sharing with and broadcasting to others.

Effectively, then, social media works as a resource and promoter in constructing collective memory, which is based on mediation and lexicalization.

As discussed in the previous section, Assmann divides collective memory into two types of memories: communicative memory and cultural memory. Communicative

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87 Bartoletti, “Memory and Social Media,” 91.
89 Pentzold and Sommer, “Digital Networked Media,” 80.
90 Bartoletti, “Memory and Social Media,” 89.
91 Pentzold and Sommer, “Digital Networked Media,” 80.
memory is characterized by “instability, disorganization, and non-specialization,”92 and it is “widespread among all the members of a group that participate in social interaction.” Cultural memory is a highly institutionalized memory that “comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose ‘cultivation’ serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image.”93 Further, cultural memory is limiting and has privileged holders who “have been given the institutional role of safeguarding and passing on to future generations the cultural sense of a collectivity.”94 Media has a hierarchical structure where media power highly relies on one-way communication, and such one-way communication has been monopolized by mainstream media. Under such a structure, a distinct boundary exists between media producers and consumers. What is produced by mainstream media is consumed as the primary source for consumers to learn about the world. That is, the producers behind mainstream media decide what is presented to the media consumers, which means they choose what should be remembered and what should be forgotten. However, the emergence of the social web is challenging this hierarchical structure in the sense that the social web allows the media consumers, not just the previous producers, to also participate in the process of memory production.95 As a result, the “ordinary people” have gained more autonomy in memory production. And given that, the grassroots have the opportunity to participate in constructing cultural memory; hence, the boundary between communicative memory and cultural memory becomes more permeable.96

According to Bartoletti, there are five distinct forms of memory activities carried out on social networks. First, private archives can be created and managed by the web users online, and the memories of these archives are possibly created in the forms of photographic images, videos, and texts that are supported by different types of social media, such as Flickr, YouTube, Twitter, and so on. Furthermore, social media can

92 Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory,” 182.
93 Ibid., 182.
94 Bartoletti, “Memory and Social Media,” 88.
96 Bartoletti, “Memory and Social Media,” 99.
make such personal archives “immediately public, visible and shareable.” 97 Meanwhile, the memories of these personal archives “may be private and autobiographical, or mediated by fragments of pop culture, a song, a scene from a film, or perhaps a single moment of a historic event.” 98 The effect is that these memories are usually non-strategic, and the internet provides them broader and greater accessibility where they can be immediately made available to the public. 99 Second, the internet can be also a place for strategic grassroots collective memory and a place for the construction of cultural memory. Roberta Bartoletti provides an example showing that the Italian Banca Della Memoria (memory bank) can construct cultural memory. This website is a private, non-profit program that aims to collect the memories of elder generations in order to build a cultural memory. The fragments of memories are recorded, sent in by individual users, and then systematically selected and organized by a curator in the online archive. In some cases, individuals also have the opportunity to collaborate in digitalizing the paper-based archives, depending on how the website functions. 100 Third, social media can be a place for ritual commemoration or celebration. On the web the commemoration sites and rituals can be set, and then the grassroots can join the commemorations online harmoniously with the official commemoration or to express counter-narratives. 101 Since online commemorative activities or celebrations are not limited in time and space, the participation in these can take place at any time and from any place. 102 Therefore, participations in commemorations or celebrations can be more prevalent, not just be regional. Fourth, individuals can participate directly in the construction of institutional memories; their private memories can network directly with institutional memories. This is identified as the case of “social archiving,” where social web users are allowed to consult archived documentation and to make comments or contributions (as private histories), and then integrate their memories with “the statistical data and the information originally collected by historians in their

97 Ibid., 94.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid., 96.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
fieldwork.”¹⁰³ Social archives show that the internet can indeed be a more structured place for anyone to participate in constructing collective/cultural memory. Thus, it may “launch important challenges for public strategies of remembering that will necessarily involve academic historiography, cultural institutions and perhaps even political institutions.”¹⁰⁴ Finally, social media indeed provides a new platform for grass root collective memory “when its forms of writing take on a legitimacy analogous to that of official sources of collective remembering---or at least a competing, competitive legitimacy”.¹⁰⁵

To conclude, social media provides a place for both autobiographical remembering and collective remembering. On the one hand, social media provides a new way to maintain the embodied memories that risk disappearing with the passing of older generations. On the other hand, social media has become a place where web users can “record, store and make visible to others their own memories.”¹⁰⁶ More importantly, social media as a “new media power” is challenging the traditional hierarchical media structure, for it allows grassroots to participate in memory production. Therefore, memory production is no longer controlled entirely by “institutional memory entrepreneurs who hold the power of writing in many forms.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, alternative collective memory discourse may appear and compete or complement the official (institutional) narrative of collective memories.

Now that we can bear in mind that there are two very important functions of social media, first it is a new form for individual and collective remembering, it transforms the verbal expressions into texts, so that individual’s memory became readable to the audience, hence it provides more possibilities and convenience for accessing people’s presentations of their memories. Another important function is that social media challenged the traditional hierarchical media structure, which means alternative presentations of memories from the grassroots can be expected, which, to some extent inspired this thesis to undertake the research on the collective memory on the Nanjing

¹⁰³ Ibid.
¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 96.
¹⁰⁵ Ibid.
¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 100.
¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 100.
Massacre on the Chinese social media, considering that the Chinese social media gives the access to a quite number of potential data.

Method

Discourse analysis will be mainly used as the method for this research, it serves as major method for exploring, describing, and explaining the research. Therefore, in this research the discourse research will be based on selecting a number of discourses that given by the Chinese social media users on the topic of “Is the Nanjing Massacre relevant to me?” with a specific emphasis on the long answer written by social media user Huangtu in response to the topic, which is taken as the alternative narrative in the thesis. Besides, the data also includes the Chinese official narratives. The thesis aims to explore how the Chinese social media users perceive the Nanjing Massacre, and to discuss the correlation between their perceptions and the official Chinese narratives. To analyze these questions, the thesis will first briefly introduce and present the official Chinese narratives on the Nanjing Massacre. The data of the official Chinese narratives is taken from different sources, such as previous researches, Chinese textbooks, and especially People’s Daily, the state-controlled media. Data pertaining to the Chinese social media users, will be collected from the social media platform Sina Weibo (hereafter shortened as Weibo), the data posted on Weibo is in a timeframe from 2015 to 2017.

Weibo was launched in August 2009, it is one of the most popular media platforms in China. Weibo became one of the alternative micro-blog systems in mainland China because Twitter was blocked. Weibo is extremely popular and “has the most active user community of any micro blog site in China.” The 2016 Weibo users report

shows that, by the end of September 2016, there were 297 million monthly active
users on the Weibo platform, and 132 million daily active users, on average. The
report also states that over 77.8% of active Weibo users are well-educated, having
college or higher degrees, and nearly 70% of Weibo users are between 18 and 30
years old.\footnote{Weibo User Report, 2016, http://data.weibo.com/report/reportDetail?id=346.} Weibo provides similar services as Twitter, such as @usernames,
hashtags, reposting, and URL shortening. The post is controlled in 140 characters for
non-member users. For member users, there is no limit on characters. Because of the
features of Chinese language, 140 Chinese characters can contain 3–5 times as much
information as 140 characters in English. Furthermore, Weibo allows posts with
images and videos. Weibo users can directly comment on each other’s posts without
reposting the original as well.\footnote{Zhu et al., “Tracking and Quantifying Censorship,”.}

In terms to the contents posted on Weibo, its users do not just post fragments about their personal lives; many of them are also interested in
historical issues and current events as well, and are very often involved in relevant
debates. In addition, Weibo is also identified as an event-oriented platform.\footnote{Eileen Le Han, Microblogging Memories: Weibo and Collective Remembering in
Contemporary China (Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2016), 6.} The
constantly emerging events are crucial for the survival and vitality of Weibo, for these
events can arouse the public and stimulate its participation.\footnote{Ibid., 20.}

When the topic “Is the Nanjing Massacre relevant to me?” along with a long answer
written by social media user Huangtu has been posted on Weibo, it soon went viral
and attracted massive attention. One Weibo user named ZhengChangRenBanBuChuZhongShiEr who posted the topic and the answer has
received 4,878 comments. In this research, this popular long answer in response to the
topic “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to me” and the comments received by the
topic and the answer will be collected as the data for analysis. In addition, this long
answer is considered as alternative narrative to the Chinese official narrative in this
research. In terms to the comments, 1,652 comments which content certain amount of
information are collected out of the total 4,878 comments for doing this research. On
Weibo, this Nanjing related topic remained hot from 2015 to 2017, and the intense
participations it provoked provides the convenience for collecting a certain amount of
individuals’ discourses. Before the orientation of this topic, individuals’ discourses especially such long narrative on the Nanjing Massacre were very few and randomly posted on Weibo. As far as I know this was probably the first time a Nanjing related topic has provoked so many users to repost, and comment. The popularity of this topic “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” to some extent motivated this research to utilize the long answer and the comments as the data for case study. However, the use of these data also leads to some shortcomings, one is that the data is not prevalently covered on Sina Weibo, it is limited on this one popular long answer, therefore it cannot generalize on the overall collective memory on Weibo. So the analysis went in-depth instead. Furthermore, these comments are not just the response to the long answer but also to this topic, the contents of the comments may be inspired by the answer to some extent but also went rather different directions regarding to the topic. Another shortcoming is that not all the comments contained the same amount of information, but it in a sense reflects the emotional bias or the emphasis in each comment.

When it comes to the data analysis, both external evaluation and internal evaluation will be conducted. External evaluation helps to identify and classify the background information of the data, including the date of its appearance, the author who writes it, how it came out, with what purpose, and who was supposed to read it. External evaluation is important for the research as it helps clarify some other problematic aspects of the data, which are the possible existence of censorship and discourse manipulation on Chinese social webs. Though Weibo is subject to strong and multiple levels of control, its users still enjoy a relatively large degree of freedom online and have much passion to orient or participate in debates about sensitive events. Previous research has pointed out it already that “discussions about politics and criticisms of the government are not rare in the ‘blogsphere’ in China,” for several reasons. On

117 Tang and Yang, “Symbolic Power,” 678
the one hand, the possibility of being anonymous on the internet makes getting involved in politically sensitive discussions relatively safe. Meanwhile, it is practically impossible to monitor or track down every individual due to the huge internet population. Moreover, the topic on the Nanjing Massacre is not a taboo in China, and it can be openly discussed. Firstly, the atrocity is not directly linked to the Chinese Communist Party; the Japanese militaries are the perpetrators, and it was the Chinese Nationalist Party in power when the massacre occurred. Secondly, the memory of Nanjing currently is used by the Chinese Communist Party for promoting patriotism; thus, it is important for the government to keep the memory fresh and nationalize it instead of letting it be forgotten. However, remaining anonymous can also bring problems, it means the information of Weibo users profiles can be fake. Therefore, Weibo posts can be manipulated. For example, the government might hire bots using fake identities to write comments with strong bias. Information for external evaluation will be provided as much as possible, for it helps to build an overall understanding of the data. In terms of internal evaluation, qualitative analysis will be employed as the method. The data consists of discourse, which helps individuals to communicate and exchange ideas and information that reflect their social cognition. Therefore, coding discourse is one major methodological step to qualitative analysis. The coding process includes two steps, the first is to produce interpretations of original discourses. The second is content analysis, which aims to identify the commonality of elements, group them under one concept, and then narrow down a large variety of diverse phenomena into a limited number of codes (or categories). The thesis will make interpretations on the narratives given by Chinese officials, Huangtu, and the chosen Weibo users, and this step will be accomplished by linking them to the Chinese social, historical, and political context, thereby making these narratives comprehensible within a specific political and social context. The 1,652 comments given by Weibo users will be categorized for the content analysis. Each category will contain information that is a summary of the discourses included, and the categories will also be quantitatively demonstrated, which shows the total number of Weibo users who share similar views in each category. This step helps to understand the contents of the given data and makes it convenient to make comparisons.

To explore the correlations between the official Chinese narratives and the Chinese social media users’ narratives on the topic of Nanjing requires a third step: comparative analysis. Comparative analysis has two conventional types: the explanation of differences and the explanation of similarities. The thesis will analyze both. Three pairs of comparisons will be made: comparison between 1) the official Chinese narrative and the alternative one (the long answer posted along to the topic) written by social media user Huangtu; 2) Huangtu’s narrative and the comments given by Weibo users in response to the topic “Is the Nanjing Massacre relevant to me?” and Huangtu’s narrative; and 3) the comments and the official Chinese narrative. And the comparative analysis is made based on nine relevant issues about the Nanjing Massacre in the narratives which were identified as: 1) The emphasis of the Nanjing Massacre narratives, 2) Chinese identity, 3) Motive/cause of the Nanjing Massacre, 4) the death toll of the Nanjing Massacre, 5) Internationalization of the Nanjing Massacre, 6) the Japanese authority/right-wingers, 7) the ordinary Japanese, 8) the manipulation of the Nanjing memory and the emotions, 9) narratives about Sino-Japanese relations. The framework of the official Chinese narrative on the Nanjing Massacre is summarized from previous scholarly works, and other complementary contents such as detailed descriptions, will be added for making the data comparison more comprehensive. Through the comparison, the possible correlation between the official Chinese narratives and the Chinese social media users’ narratives will be revealed. However, another problematic aspect should be aware of is that it is extremely difficult to evaluate the impact of history education on individuals and the larger society. In this case, it is the patriotic campaign conducted by the Chinese authority, which includes the history education on the Nanjing Massacre, and the representations of the Nanjing Massacre in different state-controlled media platforms. In regards to this question, an analytic framework was proposed by scholars to study on “how ideas (defined as beliefs held by individuals) help to explain political


outcomes, that is when ideas or beliefs become institutionalized (a process refers to “embedding particular values and norms within an organization, social system, or society”), the impact of them “may be prolonged for decades or even generations”, and in such case, ideas and beliefs can gain an impact even when “no one genuinely believes in them as principled or casual statements”. Taking the case in this thesis, the memory of Nanjing has began to appear in the official memory since the 1980s and it was intensified when the patriotic campaign launched in China in 1990s. Therefore the memory of the Nanjing Massacre has already been institutionalized for around two decades. In addition, as it mentioned previously, the Weibo user report released in 2016 has shown that over 77.8% of Weibo users are well-educated and nearly 70% Weibo users are between 18 and 30 years old. It means that the majority Weibo users are the generations who were in the Chinese education system and have been inevitably exposed to the Chinese new official memory, which are spread by different mediums, especially the dominant state-controlled media. Although it is very difficult to evaluate the impacts of the official Chinese narratives on the Chinese social media users, it is still highly possible to explore the correlations between the two. Furthermore, as it mentioned previously, though the thesis cannot generalize on the overall collective memory on Weibo, it in another way provides a quite sufficiently-elaborated analysis in-depth. And the large amount of data in the analysis, to a large extent, also helps us to understand how a certain number of Chinese Weibo users perceive the Nanjing Massacre.

**Empirical Analysis**

121 Ibid., 798.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
Historical Contexts

The Nanjing Massacre and the Chinese Patriotic Campaign

The Nanjing Massacre refers to a series of atrocities—including mass killings, mass rapes, and mass lootings—committed by the Japanese military in Nanjing, the former capital of China, during the second Sino-Japanese war from 1937 to 1945. The massacre started on December 13, 1937, when the Japanese troops occupied Nanjing, and it lasted for several weeks (generally characterized as six weeks). The victims who were systematically killed during the massacre included disarmed combatants and civilians, POWs, and those who were suspected as being plainclothes soldiers by the Japanese troops. There were also “random” and “accidental” deaths caused by lootings and arson. In addition, according to some Western witnesses, about 8,000 to 10,000 cases of rape occurred.

As it mentioned in literature review section of the thesis, doing research on the massacre is quite difficult because many crucial documents were destroyed by Japan. Therefore, many controversies are left especially the issue of the actual death toll. The International Military Tribunal for the Far East in 1946 estimated that over 200,000 people were killed during the massacre. The Chinese authority claims there were about 300,000 were killed based on the result of the Tribunal. In Japan, different views exist regarding the total death toll, and the numbers are varied from hundreds to several tens of thousands. While the Nanjing Massacre is not the only barbaric crime committed by the Japanese militaries during the second Sino-Japanese war, it represents and symbolizes their brutality.

The Chinese official memory of the Nanjing Massacre is one important aspect of the Chinese Patriotic Campaign, employed by the Chinese Communist Party to secure and stabilize its control of China. In the post-Mao era, after the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the Chinese Communist Party lost credibility of its official communist ideology, and “three belief crises” have emerged: “crisis of socialism, crisis of belief in Marxism, and crisis of the party.” Then, in 1989, the “Tiananmen Incident” marked the total bankruptcy of the Chinese official ideology. The leadership of the communist regime needed a new official ideology and needed to regain broad-based national support. Under such circumstances, the Patriotic Campaign was officially started in 1991, two years after the Tiananmen Incident. The campaign mainly targets the Chinese youth, and the central purpose of the campaign is to call upon the entire nation to learn the modern history of the humiliations of China. The Chinese are told that their sufferings were brought by the Western and the Japanese invaders, and it was the Chinese Communist Party who liberated the Chinese people from their miserable fate and eventually won national independence. The campaign was carried out at full scale in 1994 in order to ensure that the documents and the central committee’s ideas were correctly understood by employees at schools (including elementary school, high schools, colleges, and universities), and almost “all schools have established the Chinese Communist Party’s branches or committees.”

The topic “Is the Nanjing Massacre relevant to me?”

The question “Is the Nanjing massacre relevant to me?” was originally posted on the Chinese question-and-answer website Zhihu (a platform where questions are oriented, answered, and edited by its users) in 2015. The original question was “Do you think that the victims of the Nanjing Massacre are related closer with the Chinese nationals than the victims of other massacres in history? such as the Irish massacre, the

131 Wang, “National Humiliation,” 789, 790.
slaughter of the Native Americans, Holocaust, or even the victims of the explosion of atomic bomb in Hiroshima Nagasaki?” This question has received many responses on Zhihu and the most popular one is listed at the place right down to the question on the website, this is the one written by user Huangtu. Then the topic and this answer was later on posted by a Weibo user named ZhengChangRenBanBuChuZheZhongShiEr on Weibo on December 13th, 2015. The topic was shortened as “Is the Nanjing Massacre relevant to me?”. After being posted on Weibo, the topic together with the answer soon went viral, the statistic has shown that it has been reposted 16488 times, received 4878 comments and been “liked” 23657 times.

In this thesis, Huangtu’s answer is taken as the alternative narrative to the Chinese official narrative. In addition, due to the popularity of this answer, Huangtu was identified and interviewed by a regional newspaper in China called Yangtze Evening News. The news report shows that Huangtu’s real name is Zhou Yuyu, and she is a student currently studying at Nanjing University of Finance and Economics. Furthermore, according to the statistics provided by Weibo, the topic has been read by over 400,000 Weibo users.

Analysis


133 Huangtu, “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant Me?” posted by Sina Weibo user @ZhengChangRenBanBuChuZheZhongShiEr, December 13, 2015, accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774. Accessed on 2018-12-06.


At the beginning of this section, it will firstly provide a brief overview of the Nanjing Massacre in Chinese official narratives. As it introduced before, the Chinese new national memory appeared with several goals, one of them was to promote the patriotism and loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party among the young generations,\textsuperscript{136} to achieve the goals the Chinese authority emphasized that the Chinese must understand and remember the brutality of the war atrocities, and the martyrdom of those who fought hard and, through ultimate sacrifice, achieved victory over foreign imperialism.\textsuperscript{137} This is very much like the framework of how the war memories should be written in the Chinese official narratives. Meanwhile, every possible medium---such as textbooks, literature, news reports, films, monuments were employed by the government to achieve the goals of the new national memory.\textsuperscript{138} It is too much to cover all the representations of the massacre in national narratives in the thesis. Since the general tone of these official Chinese narratives is similar, so I will choose Chinese historical textbooks and the largest state-owned media \textit{People’s Daily} as examples to introduce and for further comparative analysis.

\textit{People’s Daily (Renmin Ribao)} is the biggest newspaper group in China. It is managed by the Central Committee of Chinese Communist Party, and it was established in June 1946. Due to the paper’s direct link to the party, its editorials are commonly considered to be authoritative statements of the central government. This publication has four versions at present: foreign version, domestic version, Hongkong version, and Tibetan version. In recent years, it developed an online official website and has been expanding its publicity on overseas social media networks.\textsuperscript{139} Because \textit{People’s Daily} represents the Chinese authority, therefore the completing data for presenting how the Nanjing Massacre is narrated in the Chinese official narrative are taken from \textit{People’s Daily}’s domestic online archive.

Table 1 has shown that the term “the Nanjing Massacre” began to intensively appear in \textit{People’s Daily} since 1982, the year of the Japanese textbook controversy. In its

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{136} Takashi, Making of the “Rape of Nanking,”, 105
\item \textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 154.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
editorials and news reports, the term “the Nanjing Massacre” has appeared 1,262 times since 1982 to the present (July 2017), while during the period from 1946 to 1982, it was mentioned only 21 times. The majority Nanjing related reports are editorials, they interpreted the event of Nanjing which tells the readers how the massacre should be remembered. Besides the term “the Nanjing Massacre”, other terms related to the massacre were also appeared frequently in People’s Daily in the same period, these terms can provide some insights into how the Nanjing Massacre is interpreted. Table 1 is presented below to show which terms are usually used and the number of occurrences in People’s Daily at different time periods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms related to the Nanjing Massacre appeared in People’s Daily and their numbers in two different timeframes (from 1946 to 1982, from 1982 to 2017)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terms in related Nanjing Massacre reports in <em>People’s Daily</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Shame</strong> (&quot;Guochi&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victimized compatriots of the Nanjing Massacre</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The time frames of the appearances of these terms have shown the turning point of national narratives in China, it was in 1980s that the memory of the Nanjing Massacre began to show up much more often in the Chinese official narratives. Meanwhile, the frequencies of the appearances of these terms have also shown the emphasis of the Chinese official narrative, such emphasis is further elaborated in the comparative analysis section. Generally going through these terms, the use of “national shame” shows how the Nanjing Massacre was labelled as, and the use of “compatriots” indicates the identity issues. Other terms such as “Japanese militarism”, “the Japanese right-wings” reveal what might be mostly targeted. All these terms can be correlated to the keywords of the framework of the new national memory—such as “martyrdom”, “sacrifice”, “brutality”, “foreign imperialism”. More details of the reports in People’s Daily are later introduced in the comparative analysis, with a time frame ranging from 2007 to 2017. In general, narratives given by People’s Daily on the Nanjing Massacre are very interpretive, because it is presented with applied meanings (interpretations), which aim to tell the audiences what the massacre should mean to them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Time Range</th>
<th>Emphasis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>300,000 victims/innocent souls/victimized compatriots</td>
<td>1982–July 2017</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>1946–1982</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While *People’s Daily* emphasizes the interpretations of the Nanjing Massacre and the massacre’s historical and especially politically related issues in Japan, the narratives of the Nanjing Massacre in Chinese historical textbooks are quite descriptive, for they aim to tell the readers what happened in Nanjing and how barbaric it was. From the 1950s to 1980s, the history of the Nanjing Massacre appeared randomly in textbooks. In fact, it did not become compulsory content in the Chinese historical textbooks until 1986, according to the standard history curriculum for Mandatory Education in Full-Time Schools issued by policymakers. As for the policymakers, presenting the Japanese war crimes to the Chinese young generations is a major task of the history education in China, for it helps to promote their patriotic sentiments.\footnote{Yunlong Huang, “‘Nanjing Massacre’ in the Chinese Historical Textbooks” (“中国历史教科书中的 ‘南京大屠杀’”), 中华读书报, September 2, 2015. http://epaper.gmw.cn/zhdsb/html/2015-09/02/nw.D110000zhdsb_20150902_1-14.htm.}

In the 1950s to 1970s, the Nanjing Massacre was shortly introduced in some textbooks. For example, in 1950, “History of China’s New Democratic Revolution(first draft)” edited by Huhua was used as temporary textbook for high school narrated the death toll of the Nanjing Massacre and the atrocities conducted by the Japanese troops. Several textbooks used in 1956, 1962 have also introduced the atrocities conducted by the Japanese troops, more details of these atrocities were added as well. In 1963, the Ministry of Education promulgated the “full-time middle school history syllabus (draft)”, which at the first time clearly listed "the massacre conducted by the Japanese troops in Nanjing", however the outbroke of the Cultural Revolution paralyzed the education in China, the content of the Nanjing Massacre had never consistently appeared in Chinese historical textbooks during this period.

During the period of the late 1970s and the late 20th century, more and more details such as the date, the locations, the causes and the death toll of the atrocities in Nanjing were added in the Chinese textbooks, those details have reconstructed an overall picture of the killing scenes in Nanjing. Pictures of the massacre also began to be presented in the textbooks.\footnote{Ibid.}
The current textbooks enriched the contents of the Nanjing Massacre based on the previous texts. More pictures of atrocities were attached, which aimed to give a deeper impression of the massacre to the readers. Furthermore, texts and questions related to the massacre in the homework sections were also added, those were designed to promote readers’ nationalistic sentiments and to rise their anti-war awareness, as well as to inform readers on Japanese revisionists’ denial of the massacre. Generally speaking, the brutality of the massacre is highlighted and visualized in the textbooks. Specific descriptions of the massacre in the textbooks will be further elaborated in the comparative analysis.

Qualitative analysis of Weibo users’ narratives

The topic “Is the Nanjing Massacre relevant to me?” along with the long answer written by Huangtu has received thousands comments from Weibo users. The case analysis of this research is based on the collection of 1,652 comments out of the total comments posted on the website.

These 1,652 comments are categorized into four big groups as A, B, C, D based on their perceptions of the massacre. Each group has a general feature which reflects mainly an emotional bias held by the categorized commenters, group A is characterized as “radical,” B as “ambivalent,” C as “moderate,” and D as “critical.” Moreover, each group also contains some sub-categorizations which help to articulate the commenters’ perceptions.

**Group A**

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142 Ibid.

143 Huangtu, “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant Me?” posted by Sina Weibo user @ZhengChangRenBanBuChuZheZhongShiEr, December 13, 2015, accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774.

144 Ibid.
The general feature of group A is “radical.” This group can be further divided into two sub-categorizations. The first categorization mainly reflects the attitudes and emotions held by Weibo users toward Japan and the Japanese people. The second categorization reveals some Weibo users’ understandings of Japan and the Japanese people.

In the first categorization, the majority of Weibo users clearly demonstrate their hatred and hostility toward Japan. The most radical and disturbing one expressed by some users is that they want Japan and its people to be eliminated from the world. User Frostoffrost says,

I wish there will be another super earthquake in Japan, buries them [the Japanese] all, it is what the Japanese deserved; I don’t care whether if they are innocent or not. There were so many people died in Nanjing, therefore the Japanese should pay with their lives…\(^{145}\)

Some also stated that the United States should have dropped more atomic bombs onto Japan, while others express that they want to take revenge on their own, including by killing in a war against Japan or engaging in a Tokyo massacre.\(^{146}\)

“Never forgive the Japanese” is another attitude commonly shared by many Weibo users. User Ddodokk says, “I will never forgive the Japanese in my life, I will not be friendly to any Japanese.”\(^{147}\) Moreover, some users also call upon the Chinese to boycott everything from Japan and “not [to] travel to Japan.”\(^{148}\)

\(^{145}\) Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_fkey=1&is_all=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Frostoffrost, 2016-01-08, 17:32.

\(^{146}\) Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_fkey=1&is_all=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ 1991 Niba, 2015-12-14, 20:34 & user Ai LJLDN, 2015-12-16, 20:14.

\(^{147}\) Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_fkey=1&is_all=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Ddodokk, 2015-12-13, 13:08.

\(^{148}\) Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_fkey=1&is_all=1&key_word=%E
travel to Japan or buy Japanese products are criticized as “being weak” and “traitors.” Some users also criticize the Chinese as “having no spines,” thinking that so many Chinese have been slaughtered because the Chinese people are selfish and weak. Therefore, they suggest that people in China should be more coercive and stronger; to them this is the way to make “Wokou” (a discriminatory name for the Japanese) feel afraid and be respectful toward Chinese people. This categorization shows that many Weibo users have strong anti-Japanese/Japan sentiments, with some narratives even containing genocidal intent given that some users openly declare and ask for the extermination of all Japanese people.

The second sub-categorization in group A reflects how some of these users perceive Japan and the Japanese. These Weibo users think that Japan’s past actions were motivated by their national character or, in another way of saying it, their genes. Some Weibo users express that the Japanese are “psychologically distorted” and “genetically flawed,” and even though the Japanese have good manners and are well-educated, they have no moralities. Users also often employ different racial and discriminatory terms, such as “Xiao Riben” (the little Japanese) and “Riben Gou” (the Japanese dog), in their descriptions and depictions of the Japanese. Meanwhile, many also consider the Japanese as a threat, not just because they are “genetically flawed” and “psychologically distorted,” but also, as some explained, because the Japanese live on a tiny island and therefore will always want to expand and take more resources from other lands. These narratives also reveal that the users are trying to understand

5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @FMC1026, 2015-12-14, 08:41.

149 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Shushangdeliyu, 2015-12-14, 09:47.

150 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Shihuanglideshiguang, 2015-12-14, 10:40.

151 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E
the reasons that the Japanese could be so cruel and brutal when they committed the atrocities in Nanjing, and it is common for these users to take the genetic problems into their understandings and explanations. This shows that some Weibo users truly think that the Japanese have something wrong with their genes, and for those users, it is reasonable to consider the Japanese as an “inferior race.” Therefore, as they suggest, the Chinese should stay vigilant at all times.

**Group B**

As previously mentioned, group B is categorized under the general feature of “ambivalent.” The reason to choose this feature is because their narratives contain and exhibit ambivalent emotions. On the one hand, the users categorized in this group express that they are very much attracted by the Japanese culture and products. On the other hand, however, their negative emotions toward Japan are strong, especially when they discuss or reflect on the memories of the second Sino-Japanese War and the Nanjing Massacre. Their attitudes do not simply contain two polarized emotions—love and hatred. Rather, there are slight differences among their attitudes. Specifically, some express their love for the culture and products of Japan, but they also state their fear of Japan. As user 3 bai 3 says, “I like the Japanese culture, the Japanese Sakura, the Japanese animations, but the Japanese people are greedy, and their inhumanity always keeps me having a deep fear.” Some narratives contain the feelings of “confusion” or “hard to believe” because today’s Japan that users are seeing and connecting to in their daily lives is a country which created many wonderful things, such as cosmetics, food, animations, and so on. However, another version of Japan remembered by them is a country that committed horrible and inhuman atrocities. Such a strong contrast makes many users struggle to understand the atrocities that happened and correlate the atrocities to the country they are deeply

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5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ VVV-Victory, 2015-12-14, 09:33.

152 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ 3 bai 3, 2015-12-14, 17:10.
interested in or attracted to today. For example, user Beimingyouyu expressed the following:

I really like Japan, like its culture of gods, I like the clean streets, the river covered with petals in the spring time in Japan. I also like the houses covered with snows in the winter, and the Japanese language as well. But every time when I saw things related to the atrocities the Japanese have committed in China, I started having doubts about humanity, why those Japanese, who seem to be nice and polite, are stained with the blood from countless people of our nation? 153

Many of these Weibo users have expressed such feelings, that they really could not believe Japan could have done such things.

This co-existence of both positive and negative feelings has troubled some users. To some extent, some of the users think that they are not supposed to have positive feelings toward Japan. However, because they do have them, it makes them feel uncomfortable or even guilty. Therefore, many of these users are eager to emphasize their Chinese identity and to claim that they will keep prioritize their patriotic love for China, as well as keep it as the basic principle for being a Chinese. Therefore, they may feel less uncomfortable and less guilty. In other cases, users take this attitude to avoid the potential criticisms from other patriotic Weibo users. After all, these users have openly expressed their love for things related to Japan. Some try to justify their pro-Japan sentiments by making a distinction between Japan (as a nation, its authority, and the Japanese people) and things from Japan, such as Japanese culture, food, products, landscapes, and so forth. User Miermaoduo says she/he likes some of the Japanese animations and the sushi, but she/he does not like Japan. She/he thinks that it does not matter if someone worships a famous (foreign) star or is attracted to other countries in (their) daily lives. However, when it comes to some special circumstances (the user did not explain what special circumstances), a Chinese must

153 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Beimingyouyu, 2015-12-14, 10:11.
support China; this is a basic principle for Chinese citizens to follow. User Shouxian_nide_yanzhidao expressed the following:

I like some things from Japan, but no matter how much I like them, as long as people start talking about the past event [the Nanjing Massacre], I immediately become very angry. In fact, my life is not affected by it [the massacre], however, if I am a Chinese, this memory will be remembered in my entire life.”

Another user said, “…I love the Japanese animations as well as the Japanese Sakura, but that is all, I love my country more, the history cannot be forgotten. How Japan and the Japanese are remembered by many Chinese are significantly different and, in some cases, even contrast the impressions that Japan gives to these Chinese in their daily lives. In one way, the Chinese authority’s depictions of the massacre seem to be quite deeply rooted in the memories of many Chinese people, which said that the Japanese are inhuman and brutal. In another way, the images of the Japanese nowadays have shown that they are well-educated and have good manners. Moreover, the Japanese culture and products are also very popular and attractive. Despite many Chinese being fond of Japan in some ways, such fondness does not minimize the negative emotions held by the Chinese toward Japan. On the contrary, many of those who express such fondness feel obliged to show their patriotic sentiments and loyalty to China. Perhaps doing so helps avoid the criticisms or attacks from those who hold extreme anti-Japanese sentiments.

**Group C**

154 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Miermaoduo, 2015-12-14, 12:22.

155 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Shouxian_nide_yanzhidao, 2015-12-14, 09:52.

156 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Monster-Housecat, 2015-12-14, 11:33.
Group C is characterized as “moderate,” for Weibo users in this group prefer having peace over expressing and spreading hatred. Most Weibo users in this group perceive the Nanjing Massacre as a national shame, and they think that being weak and powerless are the main reasons that led to the massacre in China. Hence, users in group C demonstrate that the Chinese should learn from history and pass the memory of it to the next generation. Many comments share the same content of “remembering the history and never forget[ing] the national shame!” just like shouting a slogan. Moreover, many also think that the memory of the massacre will motivate the Chinese to love their country, thereby making China prosperous. Further, they say that, only if China becomes strong and powerful, can a repeat of the humiliations from the past be prevented. For instance, some state that the massacre happening was “inevitable” because “being backward [weak and underdeveloped] brings invasions.”

While these users put the blame on China’s backwardness, they also express that it is important to maintain peace and that the hatred should not be remembered; instead, what should be remembered is the history. Some say that their Chinese identity makes the massacre more special and meaningful for them to commemorate. Furthermore, users in this group also argue about whether the ordinary Japanese should be

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157 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_fvtype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Nanguapai he Yxiojie, 2015-12-14, 06:01.

158 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_fvtype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Bijing Zhangshiren, 2015-12-13, 13:49.

159 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_fvtype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Juetian dakeai, 2015-12-14, 06:17.
condemned. In addition, many stated that the ordinary Japanese should not be condemned the way the Japanese government has been; rather, the Japanese people should be distinguished from the Japanese government.

**Group D**

The narratives of group D demonstrate relatively critical views. This group can be divided into three sub-categorizations: the first reflects people’s doubts and critiques on the attitude held by the Chinese authority when it handles the historical issues and its incapability of improving the quality of life for the Chinese people. The second contains the debates over Huangtu’s narrative and the historical facts of the Nanjing Massacre. The third reflects many Weibo users thinking, that the memory and people’s emotions are manipulated by the Chinese authority.

Under the first categorization, some Weibo users think that Japan’s attitude toward the Nanjing Massacre shows that the Chinese authority did not make enough of an effort to bring justice to the Chinese people and to defend their self-esteem. One user expressed that the Chinese all became very angry, but that complaining is not the solution. They know that the massacre truly happened despite Japan’s denial of it, but the Chinese authority never really fights for the truth. This post stressed that the Chinese people are just ordinary people who have no power. If the Chinese officials are not going to defend the grassroot Chinese, then who is able to do it? The Chinese officials are more resentful than Japan. Some asked, “Why was the horrible massacre exposed by Iris Chang such a delicate woman but not by our nation? And what has our nation done when Japan refused to apologize?” Another user said that the Chinese Communist Party uses the Nanjing Massacre to promote nationalism.

160 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Miaolaoda, 2015-12-14, 17:40.
161 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Qiuyueyifei, 15-12-14, 06:12.
every year, but the party does not really dare to wage a war against Japan. A few
users criticized that the Chinese government is incapable of bringing the Chinese a
better life. These users also said that the government’s failure of making a better life
for the Chinese is the real national shame, not the Nanjing Massacre. They think that
the Chinese government should improve the quality of education and ensure food is
safe to eat, not just focus on the annual National Memorial Day of the massacre,
which does not really affect their (the grassroot Chinese) daily lives.

The second categorization contains a few debates over Huangtu’s narrative and the
historical facts of the Nanjing Massacre. Some narratives argue that the readers
should not entirely employ the discourses in Iris Chang’s book (which are mentioned
and quoted most in Huangtu’s narrative) because some stories given by Chang are not
accurate or true to the facts, though the commenters did not give any specific
examples. Furthermore, some explain that Chang’s death was not actually caused
by doing research on the Nanjing Massacre. For example, Huangtu’s narrative, to
some extent, implies that Chang’s death is closely linked to her Nanjing research,
some Weibo users also think the Japanese right-wingers are responsible for her
death. When it comes to the historical facts of the Nanjing Massacre, a few Weibo

162 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at
http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @
AA12 Quanzidongsandanqiang, 2015-12-14, 07:37.

163 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at
http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @
yang-yuki, 2015-12-13, 19:01.

164 Daqing Yang, “Convergence or Divergence? Recent Historical Writings on the Rape of
Nanjing, The American Historical Review 104, no. 3 (1999): 848. In this article, Daqing Yang
argues that Iris Chang’s book Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II
contains many inaccuracies.

165 Huangtu, the topic “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” posted by Sina Weibo user
@ZhengChangRenBanBuChuZheZhongShiEr, December 13, 2015,
http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774.

166 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at
http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E
users cast their doubt on the Nanjing narrative in Chinese textbooks, especially the
death toll claimed by the Chinese government.\textsuperscript{167} These users think there is no solid
proof to support the claim that there were 300,000 deaths.\textsuperscript{168} Such doubt has
inevitably received many angry responses. Some responses claimed that the official
Chinese death number should not be queried, and people who expressed doubt were
considered the Nanjing Massacre deniers. Some Weibo users narrated that those who
have doubt on the death numbers must have been brainwashed and should re-take the
patriotic education.\textsuperscript{169} This narrative also shows that many Weibo users’ attitudes on
the patriotic education is highly positive. They think it is important to accept such
education. Another user also considered patriotic love as a priority when discussing
the controversial issues of the massacre. A comment from user Xiangyun zaizuo
demonstrates this well:

Some people have doubt on the death numbers of the massacre, I have also heard
different versions of the death toll when I was in university, some said there were
300,000 were killed while some said the death numbers could be 100,000 people. I
didn’t know how to argue against to it [the version with the 100,000-death number].
Anyway, it is pointless to argue on the other aspects of the massacre [such as how
many people were killed] except remembering the brutality of it. The academic
research should be accurate, but the human beings are sentimental, the massacre is a
shame, being able to distinguish glory and shame, loving one’s own country should
be the basic principles of being a human.\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{167} Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at
http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774,
\textsuperscript{168} Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at
http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774,
\textsuperscript{169} Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at
http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774,
\textsuperscript{170} Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at
http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774,
In this categorization, only a small number of Weibo users had questions or doubts about Huangtu’s narrative and the historical facts of the Nanjing Massacre, but their focuses are also very narrowed and limited, mainly making mentions of the death toll and the cause of Iris Chang’s death. Meanwhile, casting doubts on the officially claimed 300,000 death toll seems very unacceptable for many other Weibo users.

Under the third categorization, many users criticize the Chinese authority’s manipulation of the memory of the Nanjing Massacre and the authority’s attempt to cover up or downplay other traumatic events that occurred because of the Chinese Communist Party. Some state directly that the memory of the Nanjing Massacre is used by the Chinese authority to provoke nationalistic emotions and to distract the Chinese people’s attentions away from other atrocities, such as those that occurred during the period of the Cultural Revolution. Some criticize that the patriotic education does not really teach the Chinese to love their nation, but instead indoctrinates them to hate other nations. Further, this patriotic education is just a policy employed by the Chinese Communist Party to keep its political power. User Chenji heshi stated,

> What happened during the period of the Cultural Revolution is much worse than the massacre, [the government] talks only about the atrocities committed by other countries, but never remember the killings we [the Chinese] did to our own people!171

“How many people died during the Cultural revolution? Has the government ever apologized? What we have known is just what the ruler wants us to know…”172Another user, Xingzhe maike, stated the following: “What must be remembered is the mass killings we committed to our own people, these events are much more important

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171 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Xiangyunzaizuo, 2015-12-14, 05:53.

172 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Chenji heshi, 2015-12-14, 05:58.

173 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @titanschess, 2015-12-14, 08:01.
for us to commemorate…”  

173 The Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the Tiananmen Incident (1989), the Great Famine in the 1960s, and the death caused by the forced demolition of Chinese citizens’ houses are specifically mentioned as examples. As one user said, “…the tortures [that the Chinese have been through] brought by our own people are more terrified.”  

Meanwhile, many users question about when the government is going to set a National Memorial Day for the victims of the Cultural Revolution.  

Some of the narratives condemned both the Chinese and the Japanese government, expressing that Japan needs to take responsibility and apologize for the massacre, but that China should also honestly face its history. However, the narratives that express that the atrocities committed by the Chinese government should also be remembered and emphasized in the national narratives have received many disagreements. Some users argue that the killings committed by the Chinese government or the ordinary Chinese are domestic issues, but the Nanjing Massacre is an issue between two nations; thus, the two events are not comparable.  

Further, disagreement ensued because the Cultural Revolution already being in the Chinese historical textbooks means that the Chinese government admits it occurred. However, the Nanjing Massacre is not in Japanese textbooks; thus, the Japanese government should be condemned. Such comments indicate that some of the Weibo users truly believe the Nanjing Massacre is totally absent in Japanese textbooks.

173 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Xingzhe maike, 2015-12-14, 13:18.

174 Ibid.

175 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Zuoantaohuayu, 2015-12-14, 09:30.

176 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Youyu, 2015-12-16, 05:45.
Table 2 demonstrates the proportions of the four distributed groups which mainly reflect an emotional bias. Group A (radical) and group C (moderate) accounted for the largest proportion, both at 41 percent. Group A and group C have demonstrated strong patriotic/nationalistic sentiments. As for the commenters in group C, their attitudes are rather moderate; they take the massacre as a shame of China and use it to motivate them to achieve the dream of China’s revival. Further, they emphasize the importance of remembering the history but also share the desire for peace. Referring to group A, they developed anti-Japanese sentiments, and statements of hatred and discriminations are very common in this group. Group B accounts for 14 percent, and it reveals that the connections and communications between China and Japan are becoming more frequent and closer than before. The Chinese, especially the young generations, have opportunities to know different sides of Japan. The images of Japan in daily life and the images of Japan in the Chinese authority’s narrative have created a big gap, which has created confusion among those Chinese who are deeply attracted by Japan. For those who openly admitted their positive emotions toward Japan, the rising patriotic/nationalistic emotions also pressure them. The comments have shown that some think there is a need to clarify their loyalty to China and their Chinese identity after expressing their love for Japan. The smallest group is group D, which accounts for only 4 percent. This group has many criticisms of and doubts about the Chinese government. Further, this small group believes that the Chinese authority manipulated the memories and emotions of the Chinese people and deliberately promoted nationalism. Perhaps more importantly, the voices from this group also show that the Chinese society still has the need for reconstructing the memories and
reflecting on the histories of other traumatic events, especially those that have occurred under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party.

Comparative analysis

In this section, a comparative analysis will be made among the Chinese official narrative, Huangtu’s narrative (the long answer in response to the topic), and the comments (Weibo users’ narratives) on the Nanjing Massacre in order to know the influences of the Chinese official narrative. Nine relevant issues related to the Nanjing Massacre in these narratives are identified and focused for comparative discussion:

1. The emphasis of the Nanjing Massacre narratives

In People’s Daily, the discourse of the Nanjing Massacre in general correlates to the Japanese right-wingers and Japanese militarism. As Table 1 shows, many terms are either directly or indirectly linked to the Japanese right-wingers, such as “Yasukuni Shrine.” The Chinese authority considers the Yasukuni shrine to be a symbol of Japanese militarism and is depicted as a place that honors the Japanese war criminals.\(^\text{177}\) The Japanese right-wing politicians’ visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, as well as their attempt to use textbooks to whitewash the history of the Nanjing Massacre, are highlighted in the Chinese official narrative and intensively condemned by the Chinese authority. Table 1 also shows that the content about “the Japanese textbook,” “Yasukuni Shrine,” “Japanese militarism,” and “Japanese right-wingers” began being stressed by People’s Daily after the Japanese textbook controversy, from 1982 to the present (July 2017). People’s Daily reported on December 13, 2016, that, “in recent years, the Japanese right-wings political power, represented by the current Abe government, is obviously turning back the clock when it comes to the historical issues, their activities—visiting Yasukuni Shrine, re-editing the history textbook have arose

the doubts of the neighboring countries and the international community.”

People’s Daily also reminds the Chinese of the culprit of their past sufferings—stating, “the severe disasters brought by the Japanese militarism” to China and the Chinese and warns the Chinese and people from other countries to be alert of the returning of the Japanese militarism.” In addition, Table 1 shows the major focuses of state-controlled media’s Nanjing discourses. Such focuses include descriptions and interpretations of the Nanjing Massacre, and interpretations and condemnations of the Japanese authority’s current activities and policies on history. Huangtu (the alternative narrative) also expresses her concerns regarding the Japanese politicians’ current activities, including their visit to the Yasukuni Shrine and the Japanese textbook controversy. Moreover, she specifically stresses that the Japanese authority has never officially apologized for the massacre. These events discussed by People’s Daily and Huangtu have been mentioned by many Weibo users as well, though these users have different perceptions on these acts of the Japanese right-wingers. However, this shows that most Weibo users are aware of the Japanese right-wingers’ controversial activities. Furthermore, when it comes to the Chinese official narrative, it is noticeable that the issue of war reparation is seldom mentioned or discussed by the Chinese authority. In 1972, during the normalization of the Sino-Japanese relations, China and Japan tried to settle the historical issues. In fact, the Chinese government gave its commitment to no longer pursue Japan’s liability for the war reparations under the premise of Japan admitting to its war-time aggressions. Such historical context has rarely been mentioned by People’s Daily. As Table 1 shows, the term “war reparation” has only been mentioned six times since 1982. It is also rarely mentioned by these Weibo users, nor does it appear in Huangtu’s narrative.

The Chinese historical textbooks center on reconstructing the killing scenes of it, including detailed descriptions on the date of the killings, the death numbers, the


179 Ibid.

killing fields, and how the Chinese people were brutally killed in different ways. In 1950, the high school textbook edited by Hu Hua for temporary use gave the official estimated death toll of the massacre and a brief introduction of the Japanese soldiers’ war crimes: killing, looting, and raping. Such description of the Nanjing atrocities became increasingly more specific. One textbook, published in 1962, described how the Japanese invaders massively killed our [the Chinese] people, raped our women, burned down the houses and took away the properties at every place they arrived, fires and bloods were everywhere. After the Japanese captured Nanjing, they went on killing rampages. The innocent residents of Nanjing were taken as the targets for shooting exercises, and some were used for bayonet attacking. There were people being burned to death, some were buried alive while some people’s organs were dug out […] the enemy attempted to use the barbaric methods to conquer the Chinese nation, and to suppress the resistance of the Chinese. The brutalities of the enemy provoked the anger of the whole nation. 181

In 1986, the teaching of the history of the Nanjing Massacre became mandatory in Chinese history education. The second version of the high school historical textbook was published that same year, and it added several specific cases of the massacre and, for the first time, provided two pictures of the killings scenes, showing a Nanjing victim buried alive by the Japanese soldiers. In 1991, the Nanjing Massacre appeared as a single chapter in secondary schools’ history textbook, which presented detailed information about the massacre, including the time, the places, and the death toll. It also specifically depicted the atrocities committed by the Japanese troops at Hanzhong Gate, Zhongshan Pier, and Caoxie Gorge, as well as the killing competitions between the Japanese officers. In addition, testimonies were also included. For example, the 1993 textbook included an eye-witness testimony by Shi Luyan, and the one in 1997 included a source recorded by a Japanese journalist: “The burned dead bodies were full of pier, one piled on another, like a dead body mountain. Among the piles of bodies, there were about fifty to one hundred people moving slowly and dragging the bodies to the riverside and threw them into the river. Groaning, the red blood, the lifeless hands and feet, and the silence, left us a very deep impression.” 182 Increasingly more information of how the massacre was

182 Ibid.
committed was added to the textbooks in different time periods. The reason to mention these contents in the textbooks from early times is that the current textbooks are based on and developed from them. As one textbook called *New Century: Standard History Textbook in Mandatory Education* published by Beijing Teachers’ College Press in 2001 included the following contents which also detailed the bloody scenes of the massacre:

The Nanjing Massacre: In December 1937, the Japanese military captured Nanjing. The Japanese military committed bloody atrocities against the residents of Nanjing and prisoners of war, killing them in extremely cruel methods including mass execution, burning, burying alive, beheading, and biting by dogs. The Nanjing Massacre was the most horrible event in world history. Moreover, the Japanese military bayoneted a crowd struggling to survive in the sea of blood to death. Then, the Japanese military scattered kerosene, burned the dead bodies, and dumped bodies and bones in the Yangtze River…

In regard to Huangtu’s narrative, she also provides detailed descriptions on the Nanjing atrocities, especially using Iris Chang’s experience, to show how horrible the Nanjing Massacre was. She says that Chang’s depressive experiences and her death could be avoided if she did not choose to research the Nanjing Massacre. The descriptions of Chang’s depressive behaviors, such as “shivering” and “having nightmares,” during the Nanjing research highlight the brutality of the massacre—that such brutality not only brought sufferings to the dead but also to the living. Huangtu also quotes directly from Chang’s book to present how exactly the Japanese killed and raped the Chinese victims:

They stripped her, raped her, then bayoneted her in the chest when they were finished. The soldiers thrust a perfume bottle in her vagina and also killed the baby by bayonet. The soldiers then stripped the girls and took turns raping them: the sixteen-year-old by two or three men, the fourteen-year-old by three. The Japanese not only stabbed the older girl to death after raping her but rammed a bamboo cane into her vagina. The younger one was simply bayoneted and ‘spared the horrible treatment meted out to her sister and mother,’ a foreigner later wrote of the scene. The soldiers also bayonet another sister, aged eight, when she hid with her four-year-old sister under the blankets of a bed. The four-year-old remained under the blankets so long she

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184 Ibid.
nearly suffocated. She was to endure brain damage for the rest of her life from the lack of oxygen. 185

In total, Huangtu’s narrative consists of 2,744 Chinese characters, within which 767 characters are written to depict the atrocities, almost one third of the narrative. Her focus on the atrocities of the massacre provide complementary information for the Chinese official narrative and gives even more specific cases of the rapes and killings of the massacre. Weibo users are also impressed by the brutal atrocities committed by the Japanese soldiers. Some of the users describe what they remember from the books, TV programs, and the pictures they have seen. Some retell the stories they have heard from their teachers or the elders, and some express what they felt and how they reacted the moment they knew the details of the massacre. For instance, user Deng Xixi said the following:

I remembered the articles about the Nanjing Massacre I have read as well as the pictures and videos showed by the teacher to us when I was a student, I will never forget this dark history, the desperate, scared facial expressions of our compatriots [the victims of the massacre]. I tried not to watch the brutal, cruel scenes because I felt my heart was hurting when I watched them…186

Another user, Dingge qingchun you meili, said, “Our headmaster in middle school showed the videos of the massacre to us, I remembered clearly that so many people cried while they were watching.”187 User Shuixin guniang depicted the killing scenes she has watched:

[I] have seen the documentary, showing a sharp knife penetrated into a pregnant woman and the baby was pulled out, women were raped, or gang raped. I have also seen the 731 chemical experiments on living humans, their guts went out from the

185 Iris Chang, The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II (Basic Books, 1997), 92.
186 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Deng Xixi, 2015-12-14, 09:17.
187 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Dingge qingchun you meili, 2015-12-14, 13:59.
belly because of the pressure, and some people’s bellies were opened by the knives to be checked on the changes inside their bodies while they were still alive…

In sum, the Chinese historical textbooks focused on reconstructing the killing scenes of the massacre and showing the brutality of the atrocities, aiming to provide the historical knowledge of the Nanjing Massacre to the Chinese people and to tell them how barbaric and horrific it was through highlighting how the killings were conducted. The Chinese state-controlled media, taking People’s Daily as an example, in another way, tries to tell the Chinese people how they should understand the history of the massacre by emphasizing provided interpretations of the massacre and Japan’s attitudes. Similar to the Chinese official narrative, Huangtu’s narrative and many Weibo users’ discourses both have specifically emphasized the brutality of the Nanjing atrocities; they gave complementary depictions of the killings to make this historical tragedy even more graphic. Furthermore, Huangtu and Weibo users are also aware of the Japanese right-winger attitudes and activities related to their war-time aggressions which was intensively narrated in People’s Daily. Moreover, none of the three agencies (the Chinese official, Huangtu, and Weibo users) discuss much regarding the aftermath (war reparations) of the massacre. In other words, the three agencies share a similar focus/emphasis in their Nanjing discourses.

2. Chinese identity

The Chinese official narrative of the Nanjing Massacre is closely linked to the (re)construction of the Chinese identity. Such (re)construction is conducted mainly through displaying the official version of Chinese history, especially the history of the second Sino-Japanese war through different mediums, such as historical textbooks and state-controlled media. (Both mediums are the main ways employed to implement the Chinese Patriotic Campaign.)

The teaching of the history of the second Sino-Japanese war, including the Nanjing Massacre, is one of the most crucial parts in the Patriotic Campaign. It’s emphasis on

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188 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Shuixin guniang, 2016-01-18, 05:58.
war atrocities, especially taking the Nanjing Massacre as the event, show that it aims to let the Chinese understand the brutality of the war, hence to understand the sufferings that the previous generations have been through. Such aims are correlated to the goals that the Chinese authority wish to achieve through the Patriotic Campaign. Narratives on the topic of Nanjing in People’s Daily are presented with applied meanings (interpretations), which aim to tell the audiences what the massacre means to them. These applied meanings, in one way, often correlate the massacre to the Chinese identity, and in another way, they deliver the perception that China was invaded because it was backward (being weak and not powerful enough). So that the massacre was labeled as the national shame, hence to remind the Chinese on the lessons the Sino-Japanese War have taught them, and to provoke a shared sense of victimization.

In 2014, People’s Daily reported that the Chinese authority had written a law to set the date of December 13th, the day that the Japanese soldiers started the killing rampage in Nanjing in 1937, as the National Memorial Day. This demonstrates that the establishment of the National Memorial Day is “the common aspiration and will of the entire nation,” and it is “an important day for the great revival of China.”

This report stresses that the Chinese should not forget the history and the martyrdom of their previous generations, and they should strengthen their faith to achieve the China dream.

These discourses are once again highlighted by People’s Daily in another editorial. People’s Daily indicates that it is very necessary to set the National Memorial Day because it has helped the Chinese people to integrate the history of the Nanjing Massacre into the Chinese collective memory. Such emotional memory can motivate the Chinese people to pursue the China dream, which is to make China prosperous, strong, and powerful, as the editorial so emotionally states: “Facing the atrocity, the Chinese people never gave in. People of the entire nation gathered together regardless the different regions they came from or the different ages they were, they were bathing in blood and fighting hard against the foreign invasion,


190 Ibid.
finally achieved the first complete victory of China’s national liberation war against foreign enemies since modern times.” 191 People’s Daily has, more than once, demonstrated that the establishment of the National Memorial Day helps to strengthen the national memory of the Nanjing Massacre and the history of the second Sino-Japanese war. The day of remembrance also makes the Chinese aware that remembering the national shame and making China prosperous requires shared faith. People’s Daily repeatedly tells its readers that the Nanjing Massacre is a national memory of China. Keeping the memory alive from one generation to another is a way for the Chinese to learn about the shame, and such shame will provoke the power that helps to uplift the national spirits of the Chinese. Terms such as “Zhonghua Ernv” (sons and daughters of China) and “Tongbao” (compatriots) are used to highlight the relevance of the massacre for the post-war Chinese generations, to remind them that they share the same blood decent with the victims and that they all belong to the same national group. For example, Table 1 shows that the term “victimized compatriots of the Nanjing Massacre” has been used by People’s Daily about 329 times. Meanwhile, People’s Daily seeks to raise the national awareness of the Chinese by illuminating the brutality of the second Sino-Japanese war and how difficult it was for the Chinese to finally achieve victory. The media specifically highlights the sufferings, the cohesion, and the martyrdom of the Chinese. In addition, People’s Daily apparently correlates the future of the Chinese to the history of the war, implying that internalizing such war memory into the Chinese collective memory and identity paves the way to a bright and prosperous future.

Comments from groups A, B, and C have all shown that these Weibo users have very strong sentiments on their Chinese identity, especially those from group A and C. Weibo users from the two groups have also largely employed the terms that also used in the Chinese official narrative of the Nanjing Massacre. Some of users also consider the massacre and Japan’s invasion as the national shame, stating that they will never forget the history of the massacre and the war. Some express directly that the

massacre matters to them because of their Chinese blood. User Xiaofei-flying said the following:

Many people said it [the Nanjing Massacre] has happened for long time, why should people still keep mentioning about it? The reason is because we are Chinese, remembering such history is the duty of being a Chinese! We didn’t ask people to boycott the Japanese products. But the basic principle [for us to keep] is never forgetting the history, [because] we are Chinese! 192

Another user, Qinglangmao, had this to say:

I think only if those of our generation do not forget it [the Nanjing Massacre], then we will teach the history of it to the next generation and they should not forget it either. Thereby the history of the massacre would pass from one generation to another and never be forgotten. I believe every Chinese who has consciousness would not easily forget the massacre, no matter what changes Japan would make, the history of the massacre would be remembered by every Chinese for a lone time and we will remind ourselves of the history every time when we face Japan. 193

These comments reflect that many Weibo users think the massacre is relevant to them because their Chinese blood is bonded to the victims of the Nanjing Massacre. Furthermore, they have also strongly adopted the interpretation of the Nanjing Massacre given by the Chinese official narrative, that the massacre is a national shame of China, that China was invaded due to its vulnerability and backwardness, and that the solution to prevent China from being invaded again is to fulfill the China dream. While many of the Weibo users agree with the making-China-better solution (a solution to prevent another invasion in the future), some disagree. Instead, they think that waging a war against Japan is the only way to solve the historical issue and to ease the hatred held by the Chinese toward Japan.

The long answer written by Huangtu, however, does not specifically connect the Nanjing Massacre to any specific national groups or any specific identity. Instead, she

192 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_fvtype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Xiaofei-flying, 2015-12-14, 11:54.

193 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_fvtype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Qinglangmao, 2015-12-14, 8:40.
tries to address the relevance of the massacre to every individual in the world. She uses Iris Chang as an example to illustrate her point that everyone should take responsibility for the history. Huangtu provides a general story and her interpretations of Iris Chang’s life and book. Chang is depicted as a “beautiful” and “delicate” woman who “has had a happy family and marriage.” And according to the Huangtu, doing research on the Nanjing Massacre, however, completely changed Chang’s life, and she ended up committing suicide at the age of 36. In this narrative, Huangtu gives her own understandings on the changes of Chang’s life. First, Chang had uncovered some primary materials that revealed many barbaric and brutal details of the massacre, and these details made Chang suffer significantly. Second, Chang had to deal with harassment from the Japanese right-wingers, so she had been living in fear for years under the Japanese right-wings’ threats. And these two are the factors changed Chang’s life, which, as Huangtu’s indicated, may have led to Chang’s death. Moreover, according to Huangtu, Chang is “the only” one who carried the responsibility for the victims of Nanjing, even though the history of Nanjing is irrelevant to her. Chang would have a “bright future” if she had undertaken something else for her research; then she would have achieved the “Meiguomeng” (American dream). “Everything that happened to her, could have been avoided,” Huangtu says. Huangtu uses Chang as an example to show how an individual takes responsibility for the history. Huangtu does not intentionally connect the massacre to Chang’s Chinese descent. Instead, Huangtu argues that the history is relevant to everyone, everywhere, and they should be responsible for it. Meanwhile, there is no expression in her narrative that reflects the Chinese official interpretation of the massacre—the national shame—nor that the Chinese should always remember it and fight for a better China. Therefore, Huangtu’s narrative can be considered as a different interpretation of the Nanjing Massacre than the Chinese official narratives on this aspect, which, made no special emphasis on Chinese identity. Differently, the comments given by many Weibo users are quite Chinese-identity-focused.

194 Huangtu, topic “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” posted by Sina Weibo user @ZhengChangRenBanBuChuZheZhongShiEr, December 13, 2015, accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#150334992774.
195 Ibid.
3. Motive/cause of the Nanjing Massacre

In the Chinese historical textbooks, the texts mainly present the killing scenes of the massacre and introductions of the official version of the basic historical facts of the massacre. When it comes to what motivated the massacre, however, the texts did not directly and clearly provide an explanation, but in the homework section, questions are designed to lead the readers to think about the causes of the massacre. For example, the textbook edited in 2007 presents two contrasting pictures with a question in the homework section. One picture is a Japanese soldier holding his child with his family before invading China. Another shows a Japanese soldier standing alongside dead bodies with a smile on his face. The question is narrated as follows,

The picture shows that the Japanese soldiers also have families, wives and children, and they are happily being together with their families, but those who have had happy families killed the Chinese in different brutal ways when they invaded China, what turns their humanity into the inhuman nature of beast? 196

The question implies the Japanese soldiers went through a transformation from being humans who have humanity to humans who have “the nature of beast,” 197 such implication indicates a loss of humanity.

Terms such as “inhuman atrocities” and “inhuman sufferings” can be also found in People’s Daily to depict the Nanjing Massacre. The use of “inhuman” again refers to the loss of humanity. In addition, People’s Daily also gives another possibility for the motives behind the massacre. On April 7, 2017, it reported that, during the war time, many Japanese youths were brainwashed by the Japanese militarism. As a result, the youths were motivated to join the war and later brought suffering to the people from China and other Asian-Pacific countries. This report tells its readers that the militarism in Japan motivated the war, hence resulting in the happening of the war atrocities.198

196 Ibid.
197 Ibid.
In Huangtu’s narrative, she mentions Iris Chang’s book, saying that the book is “not just full of blame or emotional depictions. But she also gives a deeper analysis of why did Japanese commit such anti-human atrocity, and the situations the Japanese troops were in during [their] the occupation [of Nanjing],” though Huangtu did not give further or more specific explanations on what motivated or caused the massacre. But similar to the Chinese historical textbooks, Huangtu specifically talks about the role of humanity. However, she borrows Chang’s understanding on humanity to express her view, that “people can do anything, they have the potential to make a great achievement, but also to commit the evilst crimes.” This view shows that the massacre, as one of the “evilest crimes,” can be a result of the complexity of humanity—that human beings are potentially capable of doing both good and evil things. Her emphasis on humanity indicates that she thinks this is why the massacre occurred. Similar explanations referring to humanity can be found in Weibo users’ comments as well. Some not only give their explanations from the perspective of humanity, but also add the battlefield circumstance as an extra factor for the massacre occurring, arguing that the extreme battlefield situation easily motivated extreme behaviors. Weibo user Luge Henfanzao said the following:

In fact, wars are very tragic! Those who are in the battlefield can do anything, do anything for survival or for any other personal interests! Such behavior is not the patent of the Japanese, it is human nature! We only focus on the Japanese because they did harm to us, but the Japanese are not the only group of people who would behave like this in a war.

Another user expressed that

199 Huangtu, “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” posted by Sina Weibo user @ZhengChangRenBanBuChuZheZhongShiEr, December 13, 2015, accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#150349927774.

200 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#150349927774, @ Luge Henfanzao, 2015-12-13, 20:18.
this is [a question] beyond national boundaries, it is about the dark side of humanity and the filthy desires, [people] are consuming their lives as well as the others. It is beyond the national boundaries, Einstein has said that any war is shameful. 201

These explanations include the factors that are also mentioned by the Chinese official narrative—the battlefield background and the loss of humanity. Notably, Weibo users also indicated that people from any nation are capable of committing atrocities as such phenomenon is universal. The dark side of humanity and the circumstances brought by wars do not just exist in specific national groups or nation states.

More explanations for the massacre happening are given by these Weibo users as well. Some take the geographic features of Japan into consideration, arguing that Japan is a tiny island, lacking resources and suffering frequently from different types of natural disasters. This, they argue, has motivated the Japanese to invade other countries for the purpose of looting and taking land that offers safety from the disasters. There is also another explanation that differs significantly from the two mentioned before. As the comments in group A show how many Weibo users argue that the Japanese have some specific national characters or are carrying some special genes that drove them to commit inhuman killings. User WandyChuang said,

Do not expect that the bad and deep-rooted characters of the Japanese would change, after all this country treats the [war] criminals well and this proves that the nature of the Japanese is different [than the normal people from other countries]. Maybe there are some good Japanese in their country, but there are only a handful of them, [the number] is too few to make the country better, and too few to change their bad national characters. Anyway, I will never forget the national shame [refers to the Nanjing Massacre], and I hope those Chinese who currently work for Japanese companies will not sell themselves for the money and degenerate themselves into a Japanese. 202

Still, other users argue that the “bad national characters” of the Japanese are linked to the Japanese militarism, and the Japanese militarism would continue existing unless

201 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at
http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Wuyasong, 2012-12-14, 11:04.
202 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at
http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @WandyChuang, 2015-12-14, 08:45.
Japan is wiped out from the planet. Some others think such “bad national characters” of Japan is generated from their genes. User Dudu Yaojing said the following: “Some national groups have specific characters, not everyone in Japan are bad guys, but the Japanese do have some horrible genes!” User Laoma bushitu stated that “the Japanese can have good manners, but they did not well-evolved, their thoughts are different than the normal human beings.” Another user, sqiqi, said the following:

I will not be able to like the Japanese, I against them instinctively, despite of some things of them I like, but it does not stop me against the Japanese, because I don’t believe a devil’s child will become an angel, child of a devil will always be a devil, the genes will pass from one to another forever. They [the Japanese] are the devils.

To conclude, “lost humanity” and “battlefield background” are the common explanations of the cause/motive of the massacre given by the Chinese official narrative and Huangtu, as well as by some of these Weibo users. In addition, these Weibo users also stress that loss of humanity can happen to anyone in any nation groups, not just to the Japanese. However, some very different or even opposite views are also given by many Weibo users. For example, some argue that what motivated Japanese’ misbehaviors and brutality are the genes carried by them and their specific national character, which indicates that the Japanese are different and abnormal than people from other national groups. Furthermore, many express that such genes will never change, and accordingly, Japan is and will always be a threat to China and other countries.

203 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Dudu Yaojing, 2015-12-14, 06:13.

204 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Laoma bushitu, 2015-12-14, 06:09.

205 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @sqiqi, 2015-12-14, 11:54.
4. The death toll of the Nanjing Massacre

The death toll of the Nanjing Massacre is one of the most controversial issues in Nanjing discourses. The Chinese authority estimates that above 300,000 people were killed during the massacre. A Chinese historical textbook narrates the following: “According to the calculation, the Japanese military has slaughtered over 300,000 Nanjing civilians and un-armed Chinese soldiers during its six-week occupation in Nanjing, the Nanjing Massacre is one of the atrocities committed by the Japanese invaders.”

People’s Daily also presents the 300,000 deaths number in its editorials and news reports. One on December 13, 2007, says that “the 300,000 innocent souls of the victims are the evidence [of the massacre].” Two editorials on one on February 28th and one on December 13th in 2014 clearly state the following: “over 300,000 compatriots were slaughtered during the six weeks,” and “over 300,000 compatriots were killed by the Japanese invaders.” As Table 1 in the previous section shows, terms that refer to 300,000 deaths in Nanjing related reports appeared about 108 times in People’s Daily since 1982. The memorial hall of Nanjing victims in Nanjing also states the death toll as 300,000.

In Huangtu’s narratives, she adopts the 300,000 deaths number as well. As she narrates it: “300,000 innocent souls of the victims of Nanjing.” The majority of Weibo users also seem to believe that over 300,000 Chinese were killed in Nanjing. Only some show doubt about it. User Zhaoxiaopang Shizhi Xiaojizai said that there is

206 Huangtu, “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” posted by Sina Weibo user @ZhengChangRenBanBuChuZheZhongShiEr, December 13, 2015, accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774.


208 “Remember the History”; and “Constructing and Defending the Righteous National Memory.” People’s Daily.

209 Huangtu, “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” posted by Sina Weibo user @ZhengChangRenBanBuChuZheZhongShiEr, December 13, 2015, accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774.
no evidence to prove the death toll is 300,000.\textsuperscript{210} Even though some users know that no solid proof shows that the death toll reached 300,000, they still choose to ignore it and argue that it is not important to focus on an accurate death toll. As user XiangyunZaizuo expressed that he/she had heard different versions of the estimated death toll, but he/she thinks the important thing is to focus on and remember the massacre per se rather than arguing about the exact death numbers.\textsuperscript{211} Huangtu’s narrative and the comments show that the 300,000-death toll of Nanjing claimed by the Chinese authority is also largely accepted or believed by Weibo users.

\section*{5. The internationalization of the Nanjing Massacre}

The Chinese official narrative frequently correlates the Nanjing Massacre to other mass killings, especially the Holocaust. Such correlation is used by the Chinese authority to nationalize and internationalize the memory of the Nanjing Massacre. Comparing the Nanjing Massacre to the Holocaust helps the Chinese authority to stress the severity of it. \textit{People’s Daily} categorizes the Nanjing Massacre as one of the “three big tragedies” of the Second World War, the other two are the Holocaust and the Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.\textsuperscript{212} On December 13, 2014, \textit{People’s Daily} said the following: “The death toll and the brutal killings show the Nanjing Massacre [was] definitely an inhuman atrocity, such atrocity is also evidence of this tremendous disaster brought by the fascism to the human beings, so as the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{210} Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Zhaoxiaopang Shizhi Xiaojizai, 2015-12-13, 14:46.
\textsuperscript{211} Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ XiangyunZaizuo, 2015-12-14, 05:53.
\end{flushleft}
Auschwitz concentration camp.” The Chinese official narrative further says that, because the Chinese stand on the side of justice, China’s victory of the war helps to end fascism and the sufferings of the Chinese. Given that, it is obliged to set the National Memorial Day of the Nanjing Massacre and nationalize the memory of it.

*People’s Daily* also demonstrates that, “[in] the recent years, the Nanjing Massacre is gradually being known more by the world.” Using such phrasing gives the readers an impression that the massacre was not being paid attention to by the international community. Again, such an impression is used by *People’s Daily* to justify the necessity of nationalizing the memory of the massacre and, through the nationalization, to internationalize it. *People’s Daily* says that at the National Memorial Day provides the possibility for the international community to commemorate the massacre together with the Chinese. That will then lead to the embedment of the massacre memory into the collective memories of Asia and the rest of the world. Moreover, the Chinese authority also attempts to use the recognition of the Nanjing Massacre with the international community to argue that the occurrence and the historical facts (the Chinese official version) of the massacre should not be questioned and doubted.

Huangtu also mentions the international community and the Holocaust in her narrative, but she does so to highlight the influences brought by Iris Chang’s book, not to nationalize or internationalize the memory of the massacre. She said,

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214 Ibid.


216 Ibid.

They know Auschwitz concentration camp, the millions of Jews who had been massacred by the Nazis, the Poles, the Soviets, the Gypsies, the Germans. But they did not know that during the Second World War, the Japanese troops in Jinling [previous name of Nanjing], this ancient capital of China, committed a lot of horrible atrocities. 218

She also indicated that Chang was the only person trying to uncover the history of the Nanjing Massacre and to let it be known by the international community. As Huangtu wrote, “How can such as delicate woman, be the only one who bares the responsibility for the souls of 300,000 innocent victims of Nanjing?”219 Such a statement emphasizes Chang’s role in internationalizing the memory of the massacre, as well as stresses the severity of it. Indeed, Chang published a first and comprehensive English-written book on the Nanjing Massacre, which brought massive attention from the Western world. However, Chang is not “the only one” who took responsibility for the history of Nanjing. Huangtu has neglected other Nanjing researchers’ efforts in uncovering the history of it, such as Japanese historian Hora Tomio and journalist Honda Katsuichi.220 In addition, that “they did not know…the Japanese troops…committed a lot of atrocities” in Huangtu’s narrative also shows that she thinks the massacre was not known by the international community, similar as what the Chinese official narrative indicates.

Some Weibo users’ narratives also show that they think Chang plays the main role/or was the only one who uncovered the history of the Nanjing Massacre. As user _Tutou Genv_ said, “the truth of the Nanjing Massacre is revealed by a female writer of Chinese descent to the western world at the cost of her life, this is the shame of the Chinese government and the Chinese scholars…”221 Some Weibo users also share the

218 Huangtu, “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” posted by Sina Weibo user @ZhengChangRenBanBuChuZheZhongShiEr, December 13, 2015, accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_f type=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774.

219 Ibid.


221 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_f type=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774. @_Tutou Genv_, 2015-12-14, 06:51.
understanding that the Nanjing Massacre was/is not being paid much attention by the international community, and instead of considering political reasons (such as the Mao era, the Chinese Communist Party suppressed the memory for political interests) or the insufficient academic works on the topic of Nanjing, they think the reason for this neglect is that China was backward, so the international community did not care about what happened in China. As user Becky Beibei stated,

Why the international community doesn’t know much about the Nanjing Massacre, the war crime committed by the Japanese? It only shows that a weak country has no diplomacy to speak of, nobody takes you [China] seriously, so we must remember the national shame, the national hatred can’t be forgotten, do not forget the national shame! Revitalize China! 222

Regarding other mass killings and the Nanjing Massacre, on the one hand, Weibo users did mention other massacres, but mostly they talked about the mass killings in China rather than those in other nations, such as the Holocaust. On the other hand, it reflects that some of the Weibo users are quite unfamiliar with publications on the Nanjing Massacre, they still think that the massacre hasn’t been taken seriously in general, and only a few did the research on it.

6. The Japanese authority/right-wingers

In terms of Japan’s attitudes toward the Nanjing Massacre, the Chinese authority tries to distinguish some part of the Japanese from the majority Japanese. This some part of the Japanese generally refers to the Japanese right-wingers, who are represented by the current Abe government, according to the Chinese official narrative. Three types of attitudes reflecting the Japanese right-wingers’ current activities related to its wartime aggressions can be identified in the Chinese official narrative, though these types of attitudes are not specifically distinguished or categorized by the Chinese official narrative itself. The first type of attitude can be defined as “downplaying” or “being silent.” As one report in People’s Daily describes it, “The Japanese authority and the

222 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_f_type=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Becky Beibei, 2015-12-14, 06:16.
media stay silent when they face the tragedy. Another attitude refers to a “full denial.” In 2016, *People’s Daily* puts it this way: “Some Japanese do not admit their war time aggressions and the Nanjing Massacre.” Another in 2017 says, “Some Japanese right-wingers claimed that the Nanjing Massacre is one of the biggest lies in the 20th century.” The third attitude, according to the Chinese official narrative, is that the Japanese right-wingers have their own versions of the history of the massacre, which apparently differs from the Chinese official version. From the official Chinese perspective, Japanese right-wingers’ version of the history of the massacre is apparently incorrect/or fabricated, especially when it comes to the question of the death toll. The Chinese official account claims that the Japanese right-wingers’ discourse of the massacre minimized the death toll. As *People’s Daily* stated in 2007,

Some Japanese tried all the way to re-edit the historical textbooks, taking the death numbers of the massacre as an exaggerate account… and claiming the war of invasion is for self-survival and self-defense.  

Another 2016 report in *People’s Daily* tells the readers that

A few months ago, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology announced the results of the examination of the new high school textbooks, [and] the practices of whitewashing the war time aggressions, deletion of the contents related to the Nanjing Massacre once again appeared.  

The Chinese official narrative on Japan’s attitudes is rather vague. For instance, it sometimes states that Japan is denying the massacre happened, and sometimes says Japan is distorting/fabricating the historical facts. Besides mentioning the death toll issue, it does not explain clearly in what way Japan distorted/fabricated the history of the massacre. Meanwhile, denying and distorting (or not taking the Chinese version of


224 Ibid.

225 Shichuang, “The 70th Anniversary,” *People’s Daily*

226 Ibid.

the massacre) can be very different, the readers may get confused whether it is a denial or a distortion, or both. It is also possible that Japan has different opinions on the historical facts of the massacre compared to those given by the Chinese side and offers its own version of the history. Whether that is an intentional distortion or a denial remains uncertain. Furthermore, if both denial and distortion exist, then what groups or who exactly in Japan hold these two attitudes? As discussed in literature review, only the extreme revisionists in Japan deny the Nanjing Massacre (they claim the massacre is an illusion), but some other Japanese right-wingers admit the atrocities in Nanjing, but do not agree with some historical facts (such as the death toll) claimed by the Chinese government. That is, among the Japanese right-wingers, there are also different views on the topic of Nanjing. However, People’s Daily did not specifically distinguish these different attitudes nor give more explanations, though it does try to narrow down the group in Japan who hold any of the attitudes by using terms such as “the Japanese right-wing politicians,” “a part of Japanese,” and so on.

Huangtu’s narrative on the issues related to Japanese authority’s activities and attitudes to the Nanjing Massacre has two main points: first, she thinks that

The Japanese government has never apologized [for its war time aggressions]. And a series [of] activity of Japan such as the revision of the textbooks, the visit to the Yasukuni Shrine show that they have no remorse in their hearts.  

Second, she states that,

Due to the suppression and the threatening made by the Japanese authority in the post-war period, Japan’s academic researches on the history of its war time aggression are not good. Furthermore, concerning the scholars’ personal safety and the international circumstances, China did not encourage domestic scholars [to] go to Japan and do relevant researches.  

These two points are quite problematic. In the first point, she says that “the Japanese government has never officially apologized,” which is not true. In fact, Japan has

228 Huangtu, “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” posted by Sina Weibo user @ZhengChangRenBanBuChuZheZhongShiEr, December 13, 2015, http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774.

229 Ibid.
officially apologized for its war time aggressions.\textsuperscript{230} The second point given by her says that the Japanese academic research studies are not “good” in the post-war era due to the Japanese government’s suppression, but she does not give a specific timeframe for this post-war era. The readers may wonder whether the Japanese academic research studies on the Nanjing Massacre are still unreliable or whether they have improved over time. The unclear discourses make it difficult to know whether her narrative is true or not. In Japan, the historiography of Nanjing indeed has experienced very different periods. For instance, throughout the 1950s and the 1960s, “the Nanjing Massacre remained largely outside common awareness in Japan.”\textsuperscript{231} According to Yoshida Takashi, the 1960s could be considered as the beginning of the historiography of Nanjing in Japan, for that during this period some veterans began to discuss the Nanjing Massacre in their military history.\textsuperscript{232} Then, 1980 presented a turning point, and literature on the Nanjing Massacre exploded. The Japanese society gained increasing awareness of war-time atrocities. The Nanjing memory then became internationalized in the 1990s; however, works containing nationalistic accounts also appeared in Japan. Therefore, many scholars or activists traveled across Japan giving talks and organizing meetings to battle against the revisionists in Japan.\textsuperscript{233} In fact, there are many Japanese academic studies on the Nanjing Massacre. Thus, Huangtu’s narrative may deliver the wrong message to the readers that Japan still suppresses scholarly activities related to the Nanjing Massacre and that the quality of these academic works is bad. Given that, her narrative on Japan’s historiography of its war-time aggressions is very misleading and confusing.

Weibo users who gave their comments did not ask how exactly the history of the Nanjing Massacre is fabricated or whitewashed by Japan, nor did they question what differences exist between Japan’s narrative and the Chinese narrative of the massacre. The Weibo users’ narratives indicate that many of them believe that Japan denies the history of the massacre as the terms “do not admit” and “deny” are used by many


\textsuperscript{231} Takashi Yoshida, The Making of the "Rape of Nanking": History and Memory in Japan, China, and the United States (\textit{Oxford University Press}, 2006), 59.

\textsuperscript{232} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{233} Ibid.
Weibo users. While some users did not explicitly express their views on this issue, the anger reflected in their narratives implies that they think the Japan’s attitudes or current activities are bad, just as the Chinese official narrative or Huangtu’s narrative have depicted. Some users describe the Japanese right-wingers as “evil” as well. Notably, the comments have shown that some of the information may have been inaccurately interpreted and understood. For example, in both the official Chinese narrative and Huangtu’s narrative, the Yasukuni Shrine is depicted as a place where the Japanese right-wingers/the Japanese authority visit. But in some users’ narratives, it becomes the Japanese (not just the Japanese right-wingers/authority) who visit the Yasukuni Shrine, and this makes these users think that the ordinary Japanese also honor the war criminals at Yasukuni Shrine.234

Notably, attitudes and views toward the Nanjing Massacre are very different in Japan among different groups. Even the Japanese right-wingers have different discourses regarding the history of the Nanjing Massacre. Given that, both the Chinese official narrative and Huangtu’s narrative depict the Japanese authority’s and the Japanese right-wings’ attitudes toward the massacre in a quite inarticulate and misleading way. Huangtu’s narrative even contains incorrect information that might give readers the impression that Japanese authority/the Japanese right-wingers have no remorse at all and just try to deny or fabricate the history of the Nanjing Massacre and eliminate the memory of it from their historical books. Without detailed explanations on how exactly the history of Nanjing is fabricated or distorted, any discourses differing from the Chinese version may be taken as fabrication or distortion. And this historical issue might be simply understood by many Weibo users as well, many of them believe that the Japanese authority’s/the Japanese right-wingers’ attitudes are unnegotiable, and they just want to deny the massacre happened rather than taking it as a normal debate over unsettled historical facts regarding a historical event between two nations where consensus has not been reached.

234 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @witchzry, 2015-12-13, 13:41.
7. The Ordinary Japanese

On December 13, 2015, People’s Daily depicted the ordinary Japanese as victims of the war. It says that “those ordinary people who come from different nations, such as the ordinary Chinese or the ordinary Japanese, have all been through the inhuman sufferings during the war period.”\(^\text{235}\) In the book *The Making of the “Rape of Nanking”: History and Memory in Japan, China, and the United States*, Yoshida Takashi also mentions that some Chinese research considers the Japanese military as the culprit for the war aggressions, not the ordinary Japanese. As the book states, the Research Committee on Historical Materials of the City of Nanjing has published a booklet titled *Historical Sources: Materials on Nanjing Massacre Committed by the Japanese Army of Invasion*, which held the opinion that “the Japanese military [was] solely responsible for the destruction in Nanjing as well as the sufferings of the people.”\(^\text{236}\) Currently, the focus of the ordinary Japanese has shifted to whether if they have been brainwashed by the Japanese right-wingers or not? Are they aware of the existence of the Nanjing Massacre? On December 14, 2016, People’s Daily specifically introduced the current situation in Japan. It says, on the one hand, there are many Japanese organizations that have been actively engaged in spreading the truth of the Nanjing Massacre in Japan. For over two decades, those people who devoted themselves to spreading the history of the massacre have invited many Nanjing survivors to Japan to tell their stories. On the other hand, People’s Daily stresses that nowadays some Japanese do not really care about the history of the Nanjing Massacre, and some Japanese students do not think the massacre has ever occurred because of the Japanese historical book “大东亚战争的总结 Dadongya Zhanzheng de Zongjie” (name in Chinese), which is edited by the Japanese right-wingers.\(^\text{237}\) This depiction in People’s Daily indicates that some Japanese students have been brain-washed by this book. While this report only mentions one book,


\(^{237}\) Zhu, “The Japanese Who Have Consciousness.”
some other reports only use the term “textbooks” instead of clearly pointing out which one.

In fact, some Weibo user comments show that many users have the impression that the Japan have already erased the history of the Nanjing Massacre from its textbooks completely. but this impression is incorrect, in fact, the majority of the Japanese historical textbooks do mention the Nanjing Massacre. Indiscriminative killings conducted by the Japanese troops are also detailed in these textbooks. Notably, the textbooks edited and published by the leftists (who acknowledge the Japanese wartime aggressions and try to spread knowledge about this topic) in Japan actually have been adopted by more schools than those textbooks edited by the right-wingers.\textsuperscript{238} Despite this, the information provided by \textit{People’s Daily} may mislead readers to believe the Japanese textbooks all contain false information. However, \textit{People’s Daily} further adds that there are some Japanese who care about this brainwashing situation. It says, “such [a] situation of the Japanese youth is concerned and worried by those Japanese people who have consciousness.”\textsuperscript{239} \textit{People’s Daily} summaries that, in general, the Japanese attitudes toward the Nanjing Massacre are complicated and contradictory, for some Japanese think the Chinese authority’s establishment of the National Memorial Day is understandable. However, other Japanese take it as a hostile act toward Japan. “A new trend” in Japan was introduced by \textit{People’s Daily} as well: “A part of the Japanese not only do not admit Japan’s perpetrations such as the Nanjing Massacre, but also [are] not willing to mention its victimizations during the Second World War.”\textsuperscript{240}

The Chinese official narrative, though, indicates that some Japanese are indifferent to the history of the Nanjing Massacre, and some may have possibly been brainwashed by the Japanese textbooks. It also illuminates that many ordinary Japanese who dislike the Japanese war-time aggressions are really concerned about the revision of the history of the Nanjing Massacre in Japan and try to spread the history of it by themselves. Thus, the ordinary Japanese are do aware of what happened in Nanjing

\textsuperscript{238} Tokushi Kasahara, Reconciling Narratives of the Nanjing Massacre in Japanese and Chinese Textbooks, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{239} Zhu, “The Japanese Who Have Consciousness.”
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid.
(or in China) during the war time according to the Chinese official narrative. However, Huangtu’s narrative provides a very different picture in Japan. She says that “the pathetic Japanese people also live in a collective amnesia, not because the past is too painful, so they choose to forget, but because they deleted the memory on purpose.”\(^\text{241}\) There are no further descriptions of the ordinary Japanese’s attitudes toward the massacre in her narrative. Based on what she wrote, the expression “in a collective amnesia” suggests that the Japanese collectively forget the history of the massacre. “Deleted the memory on purpose” indicates that they intentionally buried the memory of the massacre. Her narrative delivers a message that tells the readers that the Japanese society has remained silent about the massacre. This contradicts the official Chinese narrative, which reports about the Japanese activists who have been consistently devoting their lives to raise awareness of the history of Japanese wartime aggressions.

Discourses of Weibo users varied differently on questions about whether the ordinary Japanese are victims or collaborators, or questioning whether they have been brainwashed. Are they in collective amnesia? Some users argue that the ordinary Japanese are the collaborators. Weibo user Buaiyong biaodian fuhao de guniang, for example, said that “the ordinary Japanese are not innocent, the militarism is deeply rooted in their head and influenced them, they give the tacit consent to their government’s invasion to China.”\(^\text{242}\) Some users said that the ordinary Japanese are collaborators because Japan’s current leader is selected and supported by them.\(^\text{243}\) On the contrary, some other users think that the ordinary Japanese are innocent and that

\(^{241}\) Huangtu, “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” posted by Sina Weibo user @ZhengChangRenBanBuChuZheZhongShiEr, December 13, 2015, accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774.

\(^{242}\) Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Buaiyong biaodian fuhao de guniang, 2015-12-14, 06:49.

\(^{243}\) Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ O e nuo, 2015-12-1-24, 06:28.
they should be distinguished from their government. One says that many elder Japanese people have deeply reflected on the history of their war-time aggressions. But it is the Japanese right-wingers who hold the power and deny the history.²⁴⁴ One Weibo user said the Japanese government is evil, not the Japanese people.²⁴⁵ User Lok-bei shared that one of his/her teachers said that the massacre was conducted by the Japanese government. Thus, it is irrelevant to the ordinary Japanese and even the Japanese soldiers, for the soldiers just followed the orders; therefore, the ordinary Japanese and the Japanese soldiers should not be blamed.²⁴⁶ Views are quite varied on whether the ordinary Japanese are aware of the massacre or whether they have been brainwashed. Several comments mentioned that some people in Japan, such as anti-war activists and the elder generations, do acknowledge and condemn Japan’s war-time aggressions. But some comments indicate that many Weibo users think the majority of the Japanese do not admit the massacre occurred. For example, user 1991 Niba said the following: “the Japanese are so shameless, how can they even deny such bloody massacre? why hadn’t the USA dropped more bombs to blow up Japan?”²⁴⁷ Other comments show that many Weibo users believe the Japanese (especially the Japanese youth) have already been brainwashed by their government and do not admit the massacre occurred. Some put the blame on the

²⁴⁴ Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @lingchenluoyan, 2015-12-20, 12:52.
²⁴⁵ Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Cangshu dandanjun, 2015-12-14, 11:37.
²⁴⁶ Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Lok-bei, 2015-12-14, 09:33.
²⁴⁷ Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @user 1991 Niba, 2015-12-14, 20:24.
Japanese historical textbooks, arguing that it must be the deletion of the history of the massacre from the textbooks that made the ordinary Japanese know nothing about it. as one comment said, if the Japanese youth do not admit the massacre occurred, it must be the result of the editing of the historical textbooks by the Japanese government.\textsuperscript{248} Another expressed similar perceptions that:

the young generation of Japan has been brainwashed already, every time I visit the Japanese website which discussed the issues related to the comfort women and the Nanjing Massacre shows that almost all the Japanese netizens believe the Nanjing Massacre is invented by us, they think the massacre never happened. I have read some comments written by these Japanese which were posted on Weibo before, I remember one said that there were no 300,000-people living in Nanjing, how can 300,000 were killed in a city whose population is less than 300,000? I think [such views held by these Japanese] is supposedly the ‘masterpiece’ of the Japanese government’s history education. \textsuperscript{249}

These views show that some Weibo users share similar perceptions as Chinese official narrative does, and, therefore, think that the Japanese, especially the Japanese youth, have already been brainwashed by their historical textbooks. Some users provide their own observations to support such a view. It seems that these Weibo users also think that brainwashing is a prevalent phenomenon in Japan.

8. The manipulation of the Nanjing memory and emotions

\textit{People’s Daily} stated that the Japanese right-wingers are attempting to fabricate the history of the second Sino-Japanese war and the massacre by re-editing the textbooks. One report on April 7, 2017, tells the readers that the Japanese government is trying to bring the war-time concept, which is directly linked to the Japanese militarism, back to the current education in Japan. The report criticizes that such militarism-related education has brainwashed the Japanese youth about 80 years ago and eventually led

\textsuperscript{248} Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Lingchenyanluo, 2015-12-20, 05:52

\textsuperscript{249} Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Jchung-, 2015-12-14, 05:57.
them to join the war. *People’s Daily* suggests that the Japanese government’s distorted historical view is misleading its people. It also warns that “the young generation is the future and hope of a nation, and the education accepted by the young generation [will influence them] and therefore influence the future of the nation.”

This discourse indicates two important points. First, the Japanese government is trying to manipulate the Japanese youth through education. Second, such education (the one the Japanese uses to manipulate its young generation, according to *People’s Daily*) accepted by the young generation now will do harm to Japan in the future. These discourses in *People’s Daily* suggest that the Japanese government is the one who manipulates the Nanjing memory and emotions.

Is the Chinese official narrative manipulating the Nanjing memory and emotions? Apparently, a Chinese state-controlled media would not say this directly. But it can be assessed by analyzing the language it used. *People’s Daily* narrative on the Nanjing Massacre in general is written in a very emotional way. Strong terms are used frequently to describe the war-time horrors and sufferings, such as “Canjue Renhuan,” a word that describes an event which is extremely tragic and miserable. “Yuxue” refers to “bathed in blood,” and “Hairen Tingwen” means extremely horrifying and shocking. Mutual-contrasted terms are also used frequently in *People’s Daily*. For example, the terms “black” and “white” are used to describe “the truth” and “the lie” or “brightness” and “darkness.” This pair of terms also possibly refers to “the justice” and “the evil” under different contexts. “War” and “peace” also used very often. Many expressions are used to emphasize the identities, the identity of “us” (the Chinese) and the identity of “the enemies.” The victims of the massacre are called “Tongbao,” which means the compatriots. “We” (the Chinese) are referred to as “Zhonghua Ernv” (the sons and daughters of China). The Japanese are “Waidi,” which means the foreign enemy, the invaders. And the Japanese right-wingers are called as “clowns” because they attempt to whitewash the history of their war-time aggressions. Moreover, “us” and “the other” are specifically distinguished in the

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Chinese official narrative. It also uses lots of slogan-like expressions, which help to mobilize the Chinese to follow the lead of patriotism and to achieve the China dream—to make China great and prosperous (or to be more loyal to China). As People’s Daily puts it:

We are now closer to the goal of the revival than in any other periods in the history. [We should] work collectively under the guide of patriotism, to fight for the esteem of mankind and the justice of history, to defend the sovereignty of our nation and the world peace, hence to create a brand-new future and to achieve the great China dream of our people. 251

Moreover, People’s Daily stresses that “forgetting the history is a betrayal.”252 It implies that, if a Chinese individual forgets the past, then he/she has betrayed his/her identity and China.

Huangtu’s narrative does not talk much about Chinese authority’s manipulation of the memory and emotions. Rather, she only mentions “the deliberate provoking of nationalism by the Chinese government,”253 but provides no elaborated explanations. Instead, her narrative shows that, from her perspective, the Japanese government’s attitudes and activities are more problematic and disturbing. She said,

Put China’s deliberately provoking of nationalism aside, I am here to state this clearly, the Japanese government has never officially apologized for their war crimes. The Yasukuni Shrine still honors the class A war criminals. 254

She also added that the Japanese government deleted the memory of the massacre from the ordinary Japanese, as well as suppressed the academic research on relevant issues. Therefore, in her narrative, the emphasis is placed on indicating that Japan is the one who manipulates the memory and the emotions of its people.

251 “Constructing and Defending the Righteous National Memory.”, People’s Daily.
253 Huangtu, “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” posted by Sina Weibo user ZhengChangRenBanBuChuZheZhongShiEr, December 13, 2015, accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_flytype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774.
254 Ibid.
Weibo users have diversified views on whether the Japanese government or the Chinese government manipulates the memory and the emotions of the history of the war and the massacre. Some Weibo users expressed that they do not think they have been manipulated by the Chinese government, while others criticize that it is the Japanese government who is trying to brainwash its people. Some demonstrate that it is very reasonable for the Chinese government to provoke nationalism because the Japanese government denies the massacre occurred. Another attitude of Weibo users is that they do not care if they have been brainwashed by the Chinese government. They just instinctively dislike Japan. Some users said that the contents of Japanese historical textbooks are carefully selected and edited, but so are the Chinese historical textbooks. This perception shows that some users think both the governments are manipulating the memories and emotions of their people.

A small number of these Weibo users strongly criticized the Chinese government’s manipulation of the memory and the emotions. As shown in Group D (“critical”), these commenters pointed out that the Chinese government selectively chooses certain historical events to commemorate and to remember, and only emphasizes the atrocities committed by foreign countries, using them to provoke nationalistic sentiments. At the same time, the Chinese authority is downplaying or even burying

255 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Buchitang de Liming, 2015-12-14, 06:22.

256 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Jerry_KAMI, 2015-12-14, 05:59.

257 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Qianqian 1520, 2015-12-14, 10:29.

258 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Cangtianxuenai, 2015-12-14, 07:37.
the history of other horrific events, especially those tragedies brought by the Chinese Communist Party, such as the Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen Incident. As one user said,

What happened during the Cultural Revolution is much worse than the massacre, [the government] only talks about the atrocities brought by other nations, but never mention these killings that the Chinese did to their own people! \(^{259}\)

User titanschess asked, “How many people died during the Cultural Revolution? Has the government apologized? What you have seen is just what the ruler wants you to see, [we should] think about it rationally and from different perspectives.”\(^{260}\) Those who ask when the Chinese government is going to make a Memorial Day for the victims of the Cultural Revolution harshly criticize the Chinese government’s manipulation of the memory and the emotions of its people. These users pointed out that the Chinese government selectively chooses certain events to nationalize, commemorates them, and then uses these memories to provoke national sentiments. These Weibo users also expressed a strong desire for all the suffering brought by the Chinese Communist Party to be openly discussed and commemorated, as well as those brought by the other countries, not just Japan.

In some cases, nationalistic sentiments were reflected in some users’ ways of writing, despite them being unaware of it. Some users became very emotional after reading the Chinese official narratives, and some openly shared the story about how their patriotic emotions increased. For example, user Baozi Lulu said:

I never had good feelings toward Japan, the negative feelings increased little by little every time when I visited the Chinese people’s anti-Japanese war museums, by far such negative feelings have turned into hatred. I am not someone who is sacred, therefore I will never forgive the Japanese, not only those Japanese beasts in the past

\(^{259}\) Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_fftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Chenjiheshi, 2015-12-14, 05:58.

\(^{260}\) Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_fftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @titanschess, 2015-12-14, 08:01.
Another user, MeimiaoWubi de Qingchun, stated the following:

I am glad that I wasn’t there [in Nanjing] when the massacre happened, I went to the memorial of the victims of the Nanjing Massacre when I was a university student, if you have ever read those texts, the documents of the Nanjing victims, you will not have any good feelings toward Japan, though I have always liked the flowers of Japan, the Japanese animations. I am still haunted by the depressing emotions and the atmosphere of the memorial, then I realized that I have so much strong patriotic emotions [stronger than I thought], and so much love for the revolutionary martyrs after I visited Nanjing.262

Many users seem to be unaware that their emotions, including both the patriotic emotions and the anti-Japanese sentiments, have been provoked, even though many terms used by them in their narratives expressed such emotions. Except the existence of such unawareness, there are also a few Weibo users demonstrate that they think lots of comments are scary and full of hostile and radical emotions, and these comments are very disturbing.

9. Narratives on Sino-Japanese relations

Yoshida Takashi said that the Chinese authority wishes to “promote patriotism and loyalty, but not necessarily at the cost of stirring hatred toward postwar Japan or Japanese.”263 To promote the patriotism, People’s Daily repeatedly emphasizes the atrocities committed by the Japanese military in China, as well as the sufferings it brought to the Chinese, and it urges the Chinese not to forget the history. However, to avoid stirring the anti-Japanese hatred, it also quotes from massacre survivor Li Xiuying to illustrate that “[what needs to be remembered] is the history, not the

261 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Baozi lulu, 2015-12-14, 10:58.

262 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @ Jixiaoyun de xiaoxingyun, 2015-12-14, 08:22.

hatred.” People’s Daily says Li has spoken out about the wishes of those who truly love peace, that “forgiveness is acceptable, but not being forgettable”; thus, the Chinese should keep the history of the massacre in “the souls and bloods” and show their desire for peace and the hatred toward the war. People’s Daily also demonstrates that the Chinese are looking forward to the Japanese to face the history honestly, to “stop hurting the feelings of the Chinese people,” and to work together with the Chinese to enhance the mutual friendly relations between China and Japan and make devotions together for world peace. Besides calls for the Japanese to maintain the friendship with China, “defending the peace” also appeared intensively in People’s Daily. Notably, however, the Chinese official narrative also warns the Chinese to be alert to the return of the Japanese militarism, which is suggested as a potential threat to China and other countries.

The view of that Japan might become a threat can be found in Huangtu’s narrative as well. On the one hand, she says that she is deeply attracted to the Japanese culture; she likes “the Japanese culture, Japanese animation, Japanese cherry blossoms, Japanese sushi, and Hokkaido.” On the other hand, she expressed the following: “But I always have deep fear toward Japan.” She elaborated, “I do not know much about political and military affairs, but Japan’s changing of its Prime Minister so frequently is certainly abnormal.” Her discourses obviously show that she has concerns and worries about the current Japanese political trend, and it is possibly being taken as a threat by her.

Comments from group B (“ambivalent”) and group C (“moderate”) reflect similar attitudes as those can be reflected from the Chinese official narrative or Huangtu’s narrative. However, radical narratives containing the expressions of hatred, hostility,

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264 Shichuang, “The 70th Anniversary.”
265 Ibid.
266 Ibid.
267 Huangtu, article to the topic “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” posted by Sina Weibo user @ZhengChangRenBanBuChuZheZhongShiEr, December 13, 2015, accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774.
268 Ibid.
and discrimination also prevalently existed, which can be found in group A (“radical”). And those who views align with the Chinese official narrative agree that the history of the Nanjing Massacre and the second Sino-Japanese war are a national shame that should never be forgotten. Meanwhile, the sufferings brought by the war reminds the Chinese that it is important to maintain peace. Some user comments expressed an ambivalent emotion as Huangtu did; they expressed that they like the culture and products of Japan as well, but deep inside they do not trust Japan. They are afraid of both Japan and the ordinary Japanese. Moreover, Japan is taken as a threat or an enemy by many Weibo users; they believe it is highly possible that Japan will bring the militarism back and start a war again. Some say the Chinese should never trust the Japanese, and some claim that, if there is going to be a war, they will be ready to fight against the Japanese. Some users clearly demonstrated that they will never forgive the Japanese. And some even think those Chinese who have bought Japanese products are traitors. Those same users also call upon the Chinese to boycott Japanese products and tourism in Japan. More radical and disturbing narratives can be seen as well. Many users, for instance, said the Japanese should be wiped out from the planet either by natural disasters or another atomic bomb explosion. In addition, as previously mentioned, many users claim that the Chinese should take revenge, to kill every single Japanese or create a Tokyo massacre in return.

The different attitudes held by the Weibo users toward Japan and the Japanese people reveal how they expect the relation between China and Japan. Many of them agree it is vital to maintain peace, but some hold the opposite views, claiming that revenge

269 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @wulalawu, 2015-12-14, 13:23. @pianpianpianzhihuan da jia, 2015-12-14, 13:06
270 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @Bukaopu Renxing Zhongerjie, 2015-12-13, 15:21. @xiaoxianmen ME, 2015-12-14, 09:59
271 Comments of “Is the Nanjing Massacre Relevant to Me?” accessed at http://www.weibo.com/u/2423763501?profile_ftype=1&is_all=1&is_search=1&key_word=%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%B1%A0%E6%9D%80#1503349927774, @1991niba, 2015-12-14, 13:24. @yidao guanghui, 2015-12-14, 13:23
should be made, which seems to be motivated by the emotions of fear, hatred, or hostility. A double-edged effect seems to be generated from the official Chinese narrative, both the nationalistic sentiments and the anti-Japanese sentiments are provoked. Despite the official Chinese narrative also emphasizing “defending the peace” and mentioning “forgiveness,” strong hostility or hatred toward Japan still prevalently exist. In addition, Japan is perceived by many of these Weibo users as a dangerous country and China is under its threat.

**Conclusion**

This research is conducted under the context that the memory of the Nanjing Massacre was chosen as the symbolical trauma in Chinese official memory and has been institutionalized since the 1990s. And the memory of the massacre remains very controversial between China and Japan. This research to some extent shows how the Nanjing Massacre is remembered by a part of the grassroots Chinese social media users. It also explores the correlations between their narratives and the Chinese official narratives, hence bringing some insights on the possible receptions of the official representations on this issue. Social media makes it possible to conduct this research as it gives access to the Chinese social media users’ narratives of the massacre. As a new form for individual and collective remembrance, social media visualizes and textualizes grassroots’ memories, which may challenge or complement the official narratives.

The qualitative analysis has shown the emotional bias of some Chinese Weibo users on the topic of Nanjing. In general, their narratives on the massacre are very emotional. Rational debates over the historical facts of the Nanjing Massacre seem to be rare. Rather, the majority hardly cast doubts or asked questions about the historical facts presented in Chinese official narratives of the massacre. These emotionalized memories are categorized into four distributed versions. Group A (“radical”) and group C (“moderate”) represented the largest proportions, both at 41 percent. According to the comparisons between the Chinese official narrative and the different groups of Weibo users’ comments, group C (“moderate”) is highly similar to the Chinese official narrative of the Nanjing Massacre. Furthermore, Weibo users in group C share a similar tone with the Chinese official narratives. This includes using
the same terms that originate and frequently appear in Chinese official narratives, such as “the national shame.” They also tightly correlated their Chinese identity to the massacre and claimed such correlation is a reason for them to be more loyal to China and their Chinese identity. Strong patriotic/nationalistic sentiments were expressed in group C. Moreover, they also expressed a strong desire for peace.

Similar to group C, group A (“radical”) also demonstrated strong patriotic/nationalistic emotions, but their patriotic/nationalistic emotions were more extreme and radical containing a feeling hatred towards the Japanese and even genocidal intents. Further, the Japanese has been dehumanized or demonized in a sense by many users in group A, they think that the Japanese are evil and genetically flawed. Such anti-Japanese sentiments may possibly come from the negative impressions generated from the inarticulate or inaccurate discourses of Japan’s historiography of the Nanjing Massacre. The comparative analysis has shown, for instance, that some Weibo users think that the Japanese government has well-manipulated the memory of the massacre in Japan, which makes many ordinary Japanese people not believe or become unaware of the history behind it. The Chinese official narrative, however, does mention the efforts made by the Japanese in uncovering and spreading the history of Japan’s war-time aggressions. Despite that, the inarticulate narratives on the relevant issues, which especially emphasizes the Japanese right-wingers’ attitudes in the Chinese official narrative, might help reinforce a very negative impression which is already held by these Weibo users towards Japan. This, in turn, could possibly provoked stronger anti-Japanese sentiments. Many of these Weibo users’ perceptions on the memory of the Nanjing Massacre in Japan show a strong bias which makes them think that the Japanese chose to erase the history of its war-time aggressions from its collective memory and that it is a prevalent phenomenon in Japan—even though neither is the case in Japan.

These two versions of the emotionalized memories of the Nanjing Massacre held by the Weibo users in groups A and C reflect the double-edged effects which may have been possibly generated under the influence of the Chinese official narratives. On the one hand, it successfully promoted patriotism/nationalism, but on the other hand, the anti-Japanese hatred (which is not preferred by the Chinese authority) has also been widely provoked.
Weibo users categorized in Group B which comprises 14% reflect the confusion and the sense of mismatch which may possibly have been brought on by the gap between the perception of Japan and the Japanese people in the Chinese official narratives and the image of Japan in contemporary Chinese daily lives. Users in this group are deeply attracted to the Japanese culture, but many of them feel an obligation to justify their positive emotions toward Japan and to demonstrate their loyalty to their Chinese identity. This is likely linked to the increasing patriotic/nationalistic emotions of other Weibo users.

Group D only comprises 4%. Users in this group harshly criticized the manipulation of the memories and emotions of the grassroot Chinese and accused the Chinese authority of using the memory of the Nanjing Massacre to intentionally provoke nationalism. They also condemn the fact that the Chinese authority have been downplaying or even burying the memories of other traumatizing events, such as the Cultural Revolution. Generally speaking, the memories of the Nanjing Massacre presented by these Weibo users can be divided into four groups. However, such categorization is based on the highly emotionalized nature of these memories. Such memories of the Nanjing Massacre, in general, have only a vague framework of the historical events related to the massacre, and they hardly contain more specific and clear descriptions of the historical facts.

The Chinese official narrative on the Nanjing Massacre ties the memory of the massacre to Chinese identity by stressing the blood bond between the Nanjing Massacre victims and the current Chinese generation. Conversely, the alternative narrative written by Chinese social media user Huangtu does not identify with such Chinese identity-related interpretation. Instead, her narrative emphasizes that the history of the massacre matters to every human being in the world regardless of national identities. In the alternative narrative, Chinese authority’s deliberate provocation of nationalism is also briefly mentioned. But structurally speaking, Huangtu’s narrative’s major focuses are highly similar to those of the Chinese official narrative. It rests on the brutality of the Nanjing Massacre and the Japanese right-wings’ attitudes.

Huangtu’s narrative, however, provides the stories with more details on the author Iris Chang, as well as specific cases of rapes and killings committed by the Japanese
soldiers. These stories may possibly deepen the Chinese Weibo users’ impression of the brutality and inhumanity of the Japanese. Therefore, this popular alternative narrative written by Huangtu, which has attracted massive attentions and thousands of comments and reposts on Weibo, hardly challenges the official Chinese narrative; rather, it complements it. Importantly, the chosen alternative narrative also gives incorrect information on the historiography of the Nanjing Massacre in Japan, including the information stating that the academic research studies on the massacre in Japan are not reliable and that the Japanese have collective amnesia about their war-time aggressions. These misrepresentations, to some extent, possibly could mislead the readers and might strengthen further the anti-Japanese sentiments held by the Chinese Weibo users. Meanwhile, the ways in which these Weibo users perceive Sino-Japanese relations may also be influenced by these representations as some demonstrate that the Chinese authority should take more actions against Japan.

When it comes to the internationalization of the massacre, the Chinese official narrative, Huangtu’s narrative and some users ‘narratives in general share a similar tone. They think the international community’s awareness and concerns on the massacre are not enough.

The Chinese Weibo users who participated in the Nanjing topic had highly emotionalized perceptions on the Nanjing Massacre. They mostly have a very high affiliation to their Chinese national identity. The patriotic or nationalistic sentiments have also been widely promoted. But the counter effect also further intensified the existing anti-Japanese hatred. The lacking knowledge in Japan’s memories of the Nanjing Massacre might also help strengthen such emotional bias. In other words, the emotionalization of the Nanjing memories problematized the debates over the Nanjing Massacre among these Chinese Weibo users. Notably though, having a debate over the controversial historical facts of the massacre can be difficult. However, there are still a small number of Weibo users who hold strong criticisms and doubts towards the Chinese authority for its manipulation of the memories and emotions of the grassroot Chinese. These Weibo users’ discourses have shown that there are needs for the Chinese society to reconstruct and thoroughly reflect on the memories of other traumatic events brought by the Chinese authority. In addition, alternative narratives with correct, clear, and articulate discourses on Japan’s historiography of the memories of its war-time aggressions seem to be needed as well.
due to the prevalent misperceptions carried by Chinese Weibo users who participated in the topic regarding this issue.

This research provided an empirical case study on the collective memory of the Nanjing Massacre on social media in China. Although the research could not be generalized to include the overall collective memory of Weibo users, it gave an in-depth study on quite a number of discourses of the Chinese Weibo users who participated in the Nanjing related topic which went viral on Weibo. This thesis not only presented and analyzed a certain number of these participants’ memories on the Nanjing Massacre in a historical and political context, but also explored the possible correlations between their memories and the Chinese official memory. Therefore, the focus of this thesis on the Chinese social media users can be considered as an attempt to reflect on the possible audiences of the Chinese official representations, which may help to bring more insights on the collective memory of the Nanjing Massacre in China. As we know, it is very difficult to evaluate (quantify and measure) the impact of the Chinese official narratives on the Chinese Weibo users because Weibo users’ perceptions can be influenced by a variety of different factors. But the Chinese official narratives are grounded in the consistent and institutionalized Patriotic Campaign, which increases the possibility for generating actual impacts. In such cases, the correlations between Chinese social media users’ narratives and the Chinese official narratives are explored. Furthermore, these narratives also show that the Chinese social media, Weibo, can be a platform for the Chinese to further facilitate debates on the Nanjing Massacre or even other traumatic events.
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