

# CONTESTED MEMORIES:

## VICTIMHOOD NARRATIVES IN HUNGARY AND EAST ASIA

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June 2015

Submitted to:  
Nationalism Studies Program  
Central European University  
Budapest, Hungary

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts

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**ABSTRACT:** This thesis examines victimhood narratives of World War II and their relationship to the formation of national identities in Hungary, Japan and South Korea. The guiding research questions of the study ask why these countries identify as victims of WWII and how this affects their present-day domestic and international politics. In order to narrow the scope of these questions, the Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation in Budapest, Hungary serves as a case study where memories of the war are contested by Hungarian citizens and problematized by the government. The Peace Monument located in Seoul, South Korea serves as a secondary analysis that reflects the complicated relationship between South Korean and Japanese memories of the war. By conducting a visual analysis for both structures, supplemented by historical background research, victimhood narratives appear to support national identities based off an ideal trajectory of history. This thesis is not a comparative study and instead exhibits the different ways victimhood narratives have been detrimental to political transition (Hungary) and international cooperation (Japan and South Korea).

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Traumatic events in history are often times contentious and their representations via monuments and memorials are just as problematic. The Holocaust is the most traumatic event in modern European history and it is no surprise its memorialization often faces resistance. An example of this is found in Budapest, Hungary's Szabadság Square with the construction of the Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation.<sup>1</sup> This particular memorial faces heavy criticism from the Hungarian public who sees it as minimizing the role of Hungary during World War II and its participation in the Holocaust. Outside of the European context, but of the same historical time period, the construction of Comfort Women statues, otherwise known as Peace Monuments, in Korea, the United States and various other countries faces opposition by the Japanese government. The subjugation of young women across Asia to serve as sex slaves to the Japanese Imperial Army during the War is argued as over exaggerated by the current Japanese government which currently faces heavy scrutiny by its former colonies. The Comfort Women issue is reflective of a much larger problem in Japanese political discourse on memory and its wartime history. The Yasukuni Shinto Shrine located in Tokyo also sparks debates over WWII memorialization and history-writing in the East Asia.

To say the Holocaust and the institutionalization of Comfort Women are of similar weight in what constitutes atrocity is a fruitless comparison, but an analysis of the effects the memory of these events have in present-day historical and political discourse about the War point to the rise of victimhood narratives. This type of narrative is often found in the East-Central European region and East Asia. Alexei Miller explains that countries in East-Central Europe see it as a political task to depict themselves as victims of twentieth century

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<sup>1</sup> This memorial will be referred to as the Occupation Memorial for the remainder of the thesis.

genocide.<sup>2</sup> Jerry Won Lee points to popular Korean national sentiment that Japanese colonialism deprived Korea of its country and culture.<sup>3</sup> In Japan, Alexander Bukh suggests an evolution of white-washing the country's war history, which differentiated the state and nation in responsibility of wartime crimes occurred.<sup>4</sup> Both regions currently face repercussions of adopting what Jie-Hyun Lim calls victimhood nationalism. To Lim victimhood nationalism explains the 'competing national memories for the position of collective victims in the memory wars.'<sup>5</sup> The idea of competing memories is not limited between states or countries, but also found within nations as well; the point being an entity of some sort is in competition with another to be the 'true' victim.

The institutionalization of a victimhood narrative is clearly seen in the Hungarian and Japanese examples, with construction of monuments and memorials, changes in constitutions, and absence of historical accuracy in academic textbooks.<sup>6</sup> Both countries are criticized in their attempts to establish a victimhood identity and share contested memories on the domestic front. Japan additionally faces counter memories abroad, mostly in former colonial territories. The South Korean example on the other hand experiences limited criticism within the country itself. This is related to an identity the Korean people have wholeheartedly adopted as being victims throughout history and instead points to others as victimizers. For the purposes of this paper, all three countries will serve as examples of having victimhood

<sup>2</sup> Alexei Miller, "Historical Politics: Eastern European Convolutions in the 21st Century," introduction to *The Convolutions of Historical Politics*, ed. Alexei Miller et. al., (Central European University Press, 2012), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Jerry Won Lee, "Legacies of Japanese Colonialism in the Rhetorical Constitution of South Korean National Identity," *National Identities* 16:1 (2014): 1-13, accessed October 6, 2014, DOI:10.1080/14608944.2013.843516.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Bukh, "Japan's History Textbooks Debate: National Identity in Narratives of Victimhood and Victimization," *Asian Survey*, 47:5 (University of California Press, 2007): 683-704, accessed May 11, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2007.47.683>., 691.

<sup>5</sup> Jie-Hyun Lim, "Victimhood Nationalism in Contested Memories: National Mourning and Global Accountability," in *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories*, ed. Aleida Assmann et. al., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 139.

<sup>6</sup> Balázs Majtényi, "Case study: the EU and the Hungarian 'National Cooperation System'," in "Critical analysis of the EU's conceptualization and operationalization of the concepts of human rights, democracy and rule of law," Frame: Fostering Human Rights among European Policies, 2014, <http://www.fp7-frame.eu/wp-content/materiale/reports/10-Deliverable-3.2.pdf>., 54.

nationalism and identities, specifically in regards to WWII. In order to narrow the topics of victimhood down, Hungary's role and its memory of the Holocaust will be analyzed via the Occupation Memorial. Japan's historical revisionism and its relationship to the Yasukuni Shrine will be briefly visited, with emphasis placed on South Korea's on going protest against Japanese historical revisionism with special attention to the Comfort Women issue. The latter two examples are interrelated therefor making this part of the study as one and represented as a regional issue. It is the implications of victimization and victimhood nationalism in Hungary, Japan and South Korea this thesis seeks to recognize and understand. Why have these countries identified with a victim narrative in WWII history and how does this affect their present-day politics and national identities?

The overall and obvious argument is that contested memories everywhere cause problems in politics domestically and internationally.<sup>7</sup> However this thesis argues that WWII history and memory have sparked victimhood identities and nationalism in both theatres of the war. The Hungarian, Japanese and Korean governments have done this in order to promote certain national identities that either removes problematic behavior in the past or places blame unto others. Albeit simplistic, this argument addresses a larger issue in the literature of theories on memory and history: analysis of case studies from different regions of the world in one study. By doing this questions of whether or not countries of a different region are appropriate units of analysis and if victimhood nationalisms have elements of constancies between cases are addressed. Hungary and Japan were chosen as case studies because despite their clear role as a perpetrator of the war (in a much broader sense) as Axis powers, they have adopted victim narratives coming out of it and face domestic and international criticism for this. Both countries have used the war as a way to articulate their national identities in way that suits their broader national narrative. Present-day ruling parties

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<sup>7</sup> Aleida Assmann, "From Collective Violence to a Common Future: Four Models for Dealing with a Traumatic Past," 43; Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad, "Introduction."

in these countries are built on conservative and nationalist platforms; the ruling party in Hungary is Fidesz and in Japan the Liberal Democratic Party. South Korea was chosen because it was a former colony of Japan during the early twentieth century and used the colonial experience as a way to form an emerging modern, national identity. As a colony, South Korea can be perceived as an established victim and faces little to no criticism about its wartime history. In addition, it is one of two countries that still have high level of anti-Japanese sentiments as a former colony of Japan.<sup>8</sup> The current ruling political party, Saenrui is also conservative. This thesis furthers the notion of victimhood as a part of national discourse and identity. This thesis attempts to fill this gap by showing the complex dynamics between memory and history in present-day case studies from East-Central Europe and East Asia.

The thesis structure is as followed: a literature review on definitions and theories of memory, history and victimization; a transition which reiterates the purpose of the thesis and prepares the reader for the coming case studies with an explanation of methodology; historical background and analyses of three case studies separated into two chapters, first Hungary, then Japan and South Korea; a short chapter on comparisons and finally a conclusion with speculations and predictions of victimhood identity and nationalism and their implications. In the conclusion with the Hungarian example, reflections on the European Union's role and responsibility in memory of the Holocaust will be addressed and in the two East Asian examples, the dynamics of colonial memory and future developments of international relations in the region. The thesis is not a strict comparison and focuses on the Occupation Memorial as the main case study with the Peace Monument serving as a secondary case study.

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<sup>8</sup> Kirk Spitzer, "Why Japan is Still Not Sorry Enough," Time, December 11, 2012, <http://nation.time.com/2012/12/11/why-japan-is-still-not-sorry-enough/>.

## II. DEFINING HISTORY AND MEMORY: A LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of memory is an overwhelming task that struggles in its complex relationship with history. The sheer amount of definitions attributed to memory and memory-related topics proves nearly unmanageable as there is no clear line of when memory becomes history or vice versa. Although descriptions of memory as personal or individualistic phenomenon attempt to differentiate it from history, a shift into collective memory further complicates this notion. Like Pierre Nora's description of individual memory, collective memory undergoes processes of remembering and forgetting, can be conscious or dormant and vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation.<sup>9</sup> In addition to this description, collective memory goes beyond in that it is a compilation of memories and an interaction based on everyday communications between individuals. The communicative trait of collective memory is similar to history's universal quality in sharing and reflecting on what has happened. Perhaps the most significant distinction between collective memory and history is then the process in which history is created and institutionalized whether it is via governments or academia. Furthermore, the cumulative nature of collective memory, as Michael Rossington states, proposes the practiced and reinforced processes of remembering in the societies and cultures where they occur.<sup>10</sup> This is unlike learned institutionalized histories directed to adhere to national narratives which induce conscious or unconscious and banal acts of nationalism.<sup>11</sup> Undoubtedly memory and history contrast, but their interwoven

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<sup>9</sup> Pierre Nora, "from *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire*," in *Theories of Memory: A Reader* ed. Micheal Rossington et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2007), 148.

<sup>10</sup> Micheal Rossington and Anne Whitehead editors, *Theories of Memory: A Reader*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 134.

<sup>11</sup> Refer to Michael Billing's *Banal Nationalism*.



presence in public, academic and politic discourse rejects the idea that they are indeed in complete opposition.<sup>12</sup>

As two of the foremost thinkers in memory studies, Maurice Halbwachs and Nora emphasized the difference between memory and history as matter of connection or abstraction from the present. In other words, memory is continuous and exists in the living consciousness of individuals or a collective, whereas history is temporal and reduced to events of comparable terms and analysis.<sup>13</sup> Aleida Assmann builds on Halbwachs and Nora's characterizations, but clearly defines a fundamental difference crucial to understanding the paradox of integrated memory and history. Memory creates a profile to support an identity and provides orientation for action of an individual or collective; it is recalled in the most useful times. History on the other hand is in search for truth or an objective recording of the past.<sup>14</sup> Obviously this definition of history is more of a quintessential than it is real. The politics of history writing are far too influenced by contradictory memories and motives for history to exist in its ideal. In theory, the differences between memory and history are written and defined, but in practice the line of distinction is permeable.

Despite the underlying goal of historians to write an "objective history," history writing is influenced by the contemporary and recent past politics of a nation in which writing is occurring. This obscures the "factual" nature of history, making it appear less of a scientific approach to analyzing the past. To further complicate "how history is done," the inclusion of memory challenges the validity or the "truth" of history.<sup>15</sup> The relationship between history and memory within national narratives creates a paradox in how the past is understood. Gábor

<sup>12</sup> Pierre Nora, "Recent History and the New Dangers of Politicization," *Eurozine*, November 24, 2011, [www.eurozine.com](http://www.eurozine.com).

<sup>13</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, "from *The Collective Memory*," in *Theories of Memory: A Reader*, ed. Micheal Rossington et al., (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 143.

<sup>14</sup> Aleida Assmann, "History and Memory", in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed.: N.J. Smelser et al., (Oxford: Pergamon, 2001): 6822-6829, 6826.

<sup>15</sup> Ferenc Laczó, "The Many Moralists and the Few Communists: Approaching Morality and Politics in Post-Communist Hungary" in *Past in the Making: Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989*, ed. Michal Kopeček, (Central European University Press, 2007), 154-155.

Gyáni reminds us that the basis of a narrative is a myth that is “at once fictitious and factual.”<sup>16</sup> Theoretically this should not be possible, but identities that are built on these myths allow for the factual aspect of it to persist. Also, the uniqueness of national narratives in parallel to others is bound to contradict recordings of historical events depending on how the multiple facets of an event are portrayed.

National narratives are constructed with historical events and memories which suit the nation. In other words a national or historical narrative links the national past to the present.<sup>17</sup> Who the nation is and who determines what suits it are points in which manipulation and instrumentalization of history is most likely to occur. Depending on the vulnerability of a nation, political parties would be quick to take this opportunity to construct a narrative that fits its platform. Countries that have trouble facing past atrocities seem to fall under this category of vulnerability. This is closely tied to the moral problem of judging the past and persistent victimization of countries in East-Central Europe. The issue of who was a perpetrator, victim or collaborator becomes obscured within the context of the nation, creating a victim role bullied into committing something a country would have otherwise not been a part of.<sup>18</sup>

Victimizing a nation’s role in history is a sensitive issue because of the emotional aspect of memory. The inclusion of memory into history writing brings together the various historical experiences of different groups or individuals that often contradict one another.<sup>19</sup> Victimization is prevalent in East-Central European countries with their role in the Holocaust. Common discourse claims the Nazi influence determined the fate of the Jewish population in these countries who were reluctant to participate in the deportations. Although victimization

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<sup>16</sup> Gyáni Gábor, “The Memory of Trainon as a Political Instrument in Hungary Today” in *The Convolutions of Historical Politics*, ed. Alexei Miller et. al., (Central European University Press, 2012), 96.

<sup>17</sup> Bukh, “Japan’s History Textbooks Debate,” 687.

<sup>18</sup> Miller, “Historical Politics,” 16.

<sup>19</sup> Gyáni, “The Memory of Trianon,” 95.

occurs throughout different levels of society, its implantation at a state level is perhaps the most precarious. When a government decides to declare a history of victimization, portions of its population are misrepresented. Although people experience the same events, their perspectives often times are drastically different, especially in the case of the Holocaust in East-Central Europe. The emergence of right-wing parties with the goal to revive nationalist tendencies sometime use the victim card inconspicuously and often times overshadow the various groups within their nation or simply ignore them.

Although victimization has been a trend in post-communist nations, the general discourse on history refers to a desire to “return to history” as important in establishing stable communities which replaced corrupt, state-controlled structures. The legitimacy mechanism of fear in East-Central European societies before 1989 no longer existed to maintain a status quo allowing for old and new interpretations of history and national identity to emerge.<sup>20</sup> This new freedom proved complicated as it was hopeful. Historical revisionism became a tool of governments to establish a preferred idea of national identity. The rejection of the communist past as a whole was paired with the determination to rehabilitate the nation-state in the political realm.<sup>21</sup> Ferenc Laczó suggests that a major trend in post-communist Hungary is to externalize blame and make others guilty.<sup>22</sup> In Japan, similar occurrences in rejecting or hiding atrocities committed in former colonies such as the Nanjing Massacre, promoted an national identity associated with victims of wartime and the fault of the then government.<sup>23</sup>

Using history to create a common national identity or history sounds encouraging, but the use of history in advancing party politics and legitimizing leadership has taken hold, especially in Hungary. Miller has outlined the methods of historical policy in which political

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<sup>20</sup> Gyáni, “The Memory of Trianon,” 91.

<sup>21</sup> Michal Kopeček, “In Search of “National Memory”: The Politics of History, Nostalgia and the Historiography of Communism in the Czech Republic and East Central Europe,” in *Past in the Making: Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989*, ed. Michal Kopeček, (Central European University Press, 2008), 75-77.

<sup>22</sup> Laczó, *The Many Moralists and the Few Communists*

<sup>23</sup> Bukh, “Japan’s History Textbooks Debate,” 691.

parties implement to determine history writing in their favor.<sup>24</sup> The first method is that specialized institutions are set up to impose certain interpretations of past events for a political force. The second is general political interference in mass media. The third is the manipulation of archive materials and restricted access to them for researchers. The fourth somewhat related to the third method, is the development of new measures to control the work of historians. The last is the instances of political interference in the content of textbooks and academic curricula. The first and last methods of historical policy by government structures are perhaps the most detrimental to history writing and orientation with the public. This is because when the government passes a law establishing an interpretation of an event as the only correct one removes avenues for significant groups that have different interpretations of a group further marginalizing them and causing the group to be discriminated against (i.e. victimization history). The last method encourages an education structure that is already inherently biased therefor limits possibilities for social change in a given nation which may still have difficulty in integrated minority groups or accepting their past and exhibited by Japanese textbooks.

From the onset, history writing faces numerous challenges, but its use by politicians is also significant in their attempts to gain votes, remove competitors and establish legitimacy. The intensification of internal political objectives of historical policy is most reflected by the rise of right-wing parties in the early twenty-first century.<sup>25</sup> Right-wing parties tend to lean towards nationalist tendencies, taking the role of defending or preserving the homeland. This is suggest by the Hungarian right-wing party Fidesz whose relationship non-resident voting rights (targeting minority populations in pre-Trianon territory), the role of Hungary during World War II and under communism has been crucial to their party platform. Unfortunately, the interference of Hungarian nationalist politicians in education and public historical

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<sup>24</sup> Miller, "Historical Politics," 11-12.

<sup>25</sup> Miller, "Historical Politics," 16.

discourse has been met with little resistance from the public.<sup>26</sup> This is not unlike the current discourse in Japan and South Korea.

According to established definitions of memory and history, an integrative relationship of the two is paradoxical and problematic. This is not a simple issue of linguistics, rather a larger problem related to the rise of national narratives in East-Central Europe and East Asia suggesting identities of victimhood. Recent scholarship has complicated the roles people of various countries and nations played during Twentieth Century history threatening positivist narratives of the nation. There is no doubt that certain nations - if not all, played a large part in the atrocities of World War II, most notably the Holocaust. Up until the 1980s the role of perpetrator in WWII was assigned to Nazi Germany and Japan, but with emerging studies in genocide and memory, roles are no longer clear cut with the additional interest of who were victims and collaborators. Moreover, the absence of clear compositions in what makes a perpetrator, collaborator or victim allows nations today to adopt their preferred role, victim.

Non-accountability or even passive acknowledgement of the past is a problem. When a specific memory, individual or collective, is used to represent history it objectifies the memories of others. Two problems other than that indicated arise. First, Assmann suggests that the non-distinction between memory and history is characteristic of authoritarian and totalitarian rule.<sup>27</sup> This becomes problematic in the East-Central European region which still struggles with processes in democratization following the collapse of communism over twenty years ago. Secondly, memory objectified for the sake of history or narrative is reflective of the intentions and ideological belief of who is remembering and creates conflict with those that do not agree, exacerbating societal cleavages and pointing out racial or ethnic tensions. Of these two points, Hungary is perhaps closer to the prior and the East Asian examples to the latter.

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<sup>26</sup> Miller, "Historical Politics," 8.

<sup>27</sup> Assmann, "History and Memory," 6825.

Monuments and memorials are important units of analysis because they provide a space in which memories can interact and be aware of each other. In most cases though monuments and memorials are often forgotten and simply become an aesthetic of the urban landscape they are a part of. They end up serving as banal reminders of nationalism or popular tourist spots. However, in exceptional cases monuments and memorials serve as a catalyst of debate if their representations differ with interpretations of the past. Monuments and memorials are susceptible to becoming objects of political conflict and play a significant role in historical construction and memory revival. This is because as James E. Young states, memory cannot exist outside of those who do the remembering, and that “collected memories” often find themselves gathered into a common memorial space.<sup>28</sup> Jay Winter states that the memory only has power when people “come together in political life and transform representations of the past into matters of urgent importance in the present.”<sup>29</sup> Representations exhibited by monuments and memorials often challenge various memories. This is a reminder of what Avishai Margalit states that an event will not have the same meaning for different communities.<sup>30</sup> A collective may perceive itself as a victim of a situation when in actuality they could have been collaborators. Young explains this is because a collective remembers events based on their own tradition, ideals and experiences.<sup>31</sup> The bias towards a passive role in situations of violence is inherent to victimhood identity and countries like Hungary or South Korea who can be perceived as minor actors in the greater WWII historical narrative.

Young makes the statement that “Memory is never shaped in a vacuum, the motives of memory are never pure.”<sup>32</sup> A government’s goal in constructing monuments and memorials

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<sup>28</sup> James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), viii.

<sup>29</sup> Jay Winter, “Remembrance as a Human Right,” foreword in *Memory and Political Change*, ed. Aleida Assman et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), xi.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead, introduction to *Theories of Memory: A Reader*, ed. Micheal Rossington et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 12.

<sup>31</sup> James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, viii.

<sup>32</sup> Young, “from *The Texture of Memory*,” 178.

are as Young claims how to explain the nation's past through a specific narrative and are invested with the national soul and memory. The previously mentioned Yasukuni Shrine literally hosts the souls of national heroes. Young provides clear descriptions of memorials and monuments that help to answer the question of what is memorialization. To Young memorials represent deaths and a tragic event whereas monuments are celebratory. He quotes Arthur Danto, "We erect monuments so that we shall always remember and build memorials so that we shall never forget."<sup>33</sup> Memorials are ritualized remembrances and the reality of ends whereas monuments make heroes and triumphs.<sup>34</sup> Despite these fundamental differences though, both can function as one another. A memorial is not limited to being a physical structure and can be a moment of gathering or literal spaces. Monuments on the other hand are physically constructed with a specific historical understanding of it. Monuments are also related to commemorative rituals.

Winter states that, "Memory performed is at the heart of collective memory."<sup>35</sup> Commemoration as an intentional, formalized and collective action is subject to criticism depending on what or who is being commemorated.<sup>36</sup> Commemoration ceremonies are different from other rituals in they refer to "prototypical persons and events, whether these are understood to have a historical or a mythological existence."<sup>37</sup> They contain highly symbolic value and are selective to specific historical figures and events in order to reaffirm identity. Assmann specifically refers to the identity of a nation or state. With this association, commemoration is considered a reflection of a national narrative. Again, this reminds the reader of the Yasukuni Shrine and the significance of visitations to it and what it means for Japanese national narrative. Neighboring countries often view these visits as insults and

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<sup>33</sup> Young, "from *The Texture of Memory*," 179.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Jay Winter, "The Performance of the Past: Memory, History, Identity," in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, ed. Karen Tilman et. al., Amsterdam University Press, 2010. 11.

<sup>36</sup> Assmann, "History and Memory," 6823.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

acknowledge Japan's inability to actually apologize for its past committed atrocities. Timothy Snyder refers to Francois Furet that commemorative history is felicitously narrated."<sup>38</sup> In other words, what is remembered is selected is suited for the purposes the commemoration is held for. This relates us back to the victimhood identities found in Hungary and South Korea. Monuments to an unknowing onlooker are non-contextual and usually only tell what it wants to tell. In this case commemoration can serve as a threat to history or a danger to the historical reality the monument is representing. More importantly Snyder argues that commemorative causality will reduce the history of the Holocaust not in a way where there will be a lack of context or knowledge rather it will generate poor histories of the Holocaust and those related or compared to it.<sup>39</sup> The Shrine visits are also indicative of an attitude that does not acknowledge the disrespect actually causes.

Jeffrey Alexander's basic argument that trauma is not only created out of an event, but something constructed by society builds upon this idea of trauma being used to frame national narratives.<sup>40</sup> Alexander makes the point that social groups often refuse to recognize the existence of others' trauma or place responsibility for it on people other than themselves. How nations have dealt with a traumatic past is significant in the politics of current governments. As Aleida Assmann suggests, if trauma is dealt with appropriately, via reconciliation and integration, new forms of coming to the terms with the past could "bolster the transition of dictatorships and other regimes which have grossly violated human rights into democracies" as well lead to further normalization in international relations.<sup>41</sup>

The discourse that surrounds victimization, victimhood identity and nationalism is dependent on the nation that uses it. The issue of who was a perpetrator, victim or

<sup>38</sup> Timothy Snyder, "Commemorative Causality," *Eurozine*, June 6, 2013, [www.eurozine.com](http://www.eurozine.com).

<sup>39</sup> Snyder, "Commemorative Causality."

<sup>40</sup> Jeffrey Alexander, "Cultural Trauma: A Social Theory," in *Trauma: A Social Theory*, Cambridge Polity Press, 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Aleida Assmann, "To Remember or to Forget: Which Way Out of a Shared History of Violence?" in *Memory and Political Change*, ed. Aleida Assmann et. al. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 62.



collaborator becomes obscured within the context of the nation, this is especially seen in Hungary and Japan, creating a victim role bullied into committing something a country would have otherwise not been a part of.<sup>42</sup> Since Korea was occupied by an imperial aggressor, Japan, implies its role as a victim of colonization. As Jie-Hyun Lim suggests, the assumption that the global public sphere tends to be more sympathetic to innocent victims, causes nations to show “who suffered the most.”<sup>43</sup> Assmann and Sebastian Conrad point out that memory is no longer limited to the bounds of the nation state, and increasing globalization challenges memory constructs of the nation state whom reasserts to ‘moral comport and accountability.’<sup>44</sup> Memory is thereby affected by memories of a different collective. Conflicting memories are challenged by the search for a shared memory and acknowledgement of a traumatic past.<sup>45</sup> Lim argues that the trajectories of victimhood memory are not bound within national borders. By this he means contested memories cannot be understood in abstraction or out of context, specifically a global frame of reference. He emphasizes Assmann and Conrad’s point on the emergence of new transnational memory communities as problematizing victimhood memory and identities.<sup>46</sup> Because of the impact transnational memories have on victimhood identity, conducting a comparative study on identity construction in very different parts of the world will emphasize the distinctive features of each case analyzed while also addressing commonalities between the cases. In doing so, comparing offers explanations and exposes trends or experiences which were otherwise mostly unknown. Contrasting elements between cases also allow for different avenues of expression and contextualization in order to highlight specific characteristics that

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<sup>42</sup> Miller, “Historical Politics,” 16.

<sup>43</sup> Jie-Hyun Lim, “Victimhood Nationalism,” 139.

<sup>44</sup> Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad., *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2.

<sup>45</sup> Assmann and Conrad, *Memory in a Global Age*, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Lim, “Victimhood Nationalism,” 138.

are usually isolated in traditional history.<sup>47</sup> Using a comparative study for memory diminishes its conceptual ambiguities.

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<sup>47</sup> Haupt, Heinz-Gerhard and Jürgen Kocka, “Comparative History: Methods, Aims, Problems” in Deborah Cohen, Maura O’Connor, eds., *Comparison and History. Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York, 2004), 23-39.

### III. REFLECTIONS

A reflection is made on Dominick LaCapra's argument that scholars have limited their knowledge to canonical texts, leading to reductions and routinization of how large concepts are understood and used.<sup>48</sup> Memory studies is no stranger to this. LaCapra points out that making concepts and ideas relational helps address understanding interpretations and problems of history and social life.<sup>49</sup> As helpful as LaCapra's suggestions of integrating history and theory is, its application to memory studies proposes new ways of learning about memory via a transnational scope. Wulf Kansteiner's argues that the conceptualization of memory studies is a flaw of the discipline.<sup>50</sup> Fortunately, recent literature on memory has already engaged this issue of conceptualization through the relationship between identity, specifically national identity, and memory. What is needed are more case studies, and contentious monuments and memorials which are direct point of interaction between conflictive memories serve as examples of where studies can start and move forward with. By providing direct, current case studies this thesis directly works to fill this gap.

Kansteiner is correct in saying that memory studies turns academics in to concerned citizens who share a burden in memory crisis, but the fundamental problem with "turning academics into concerned citizens" is that they should already be concerned.<sup>51</sup> A shift in regarding academics, or scholars, as onlookers making sense of what is happening to make more of them active participants in what is happening could contribute to a reconceptualization of memory and its dynamics in proposing victimhood identity. Looking at this memorial in Hungary can serve as a model to watch for in other countries of the greater

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<sup>48</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 8-9.

<sup>49</sup> LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust*, 8-9.

<sup>50</sup> Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (2002), 180

<sup>51</sup> Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory," 179.

East-Central European region. Following the politics of the Comfort Women statues serves a reminder of countries who still have a long way to go despite doing well very well since WWII. Gi-Wook Shin states that East Asian Nations, unlike their European counterparts, have not yet “come to terms with the past.”<sup>52</sup> Perhaps he meant to apply this statement to specific European countries, because in Hungary and most of East-Central Europe this is not the case. It is the responsibility of historians and memory studies scholars to not overlook the issues of transnational phenomenon such as victimization.

Despite the extensive literature on history and memory studies, the presence of a gap in case studies and the application of theory to practice contribute to an absence of studies between different geographical regions. This thesis attempts to help fill this gap by looking at Hungary and East Asia and their experiences with contested memories and victimization. The question of why these countries identify with a victim role in WWII history is complex and can only be understood with a working knowledge of events either leading up, during or following the War. In the case of Hungary, Trianon has a significant impact on the country’s victim narrative. In East Asia, the general colonial experience between Japan and its colonies facilitated victim identities. Hungary, South Korea and Japan specifically share experiences in dealing with trauma from the twentieth century. At first glance, Hungary compared to South Korea or Japan seems improbable considering their drastically different societies and cultures and present-day economic and political statuses in the world. But it is how these countries have dealt with their past that is of interest. Hungary and Japan currently face a dilemma within government discourse in regards to WWII history. The South Korean government and its allies reaffirm South Korean victim identity by criticizing the actions of the Japanese government. All three countries came out of the War as ‘losers’ (albeit, Korea’s role is a bit complicated since it was under Japanese control) and were subjected to further control by

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<sup>52</sup> Gi-Wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006), 219.

‘larger powers,’ the Soviet Union and the United States. Geographical distance placed aside, the three countries twentieth century experience shares some similarities and have ultimately resulted in intense disagreement with the past thereby dismissing an East versus West dichotomy of experience. All three countries have risked social instability in order to establish an identity, which depicts them as victims rather than perpetrators in order to reflect an ideal national image that builds upon a shared history and ethnicity. More importantly the conflicts over memory and history have resulted in severe cleavages within Hungarian society and between South Korea and Japan. Why these cleavages occurred can be explained by how they are portrayed and understood via the Occupation Memorial and Peace Monument. There is no doubt that these structures represent very different memories and history, the Occupation Memorial in reference to the Holocaust and the Peace Monument specifically to Comfort Women and more broadly Japanese imperialism. But both structures depict a conflict between memory and history, a state and society and traumatic experiences of WWII. If the Occupation Memorial was in specific reference to responsibility to the Holocaust, both structures are then representative in specific events of systematized violence in which neither perpetrator wants to take responsibility.

By using tangible structures in the form of monuments or memorials provides a specific place of analysis where actual confrontation to occurs. It has been to the benefit of the author to live in Budapest while active protest and reports have been made about the Occupation Memorial in addition to witness the weekly Wednesday protests in Seoul, South Korea at the Peace Monument.

## METHODOLOGY

This thesis mostly focuses on two structures, the Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation in Budapest, Hungary and the Peace Monument in Seoul, South Korea. The memorial and monument are referred to as structures when written or referred to at the same time for brevity's sake and because by calling both either just a memorial or monument is an inaccurate description for them. In order to know the context of these structures, background on their contemporary political and social situations are provided by select news sources. A formal visual analysis conducted for the purposes of this thesis supplemented by historical background serves as the research core of this thesis. The visual analysis was conducted with following points in mind: location, construction and symbolism.<sup>53</sup> More specifically, location includes the history of the site, visibility and accessibility to the structure, and its architectural setting; the construction refers to the materials used to build it, how it was built and the structure's size and ratio; and symbolism includes the narrative the structure suggests, iconography and historical and artistic references.

Both structures exhibit history and represent memories of WWII; their differences are the location and theatre of war they are a part of. Despite WWII being a popular and well-researched topic, plenty of gaps still exist in its literature including narratives that integrate the European and Asia-Pacific wars together. Both regions face issues of remembering and forgetting and the lack of comparative studies may actually limit political, social and cultural institutions from taking different perspectives or experiences in dealing with the past, especially in regards to contested memories. This thesis is not strictly a comparative study per say, but does encourage methodological changes in the memory studies and history disciplines to include more comparison and visual analysis. By doing this, specific case

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<sup>53</sup> Structured with the help of Professor András Rényi of Art History at Eötvös Loránd University Budapest and visiting professor of Nationalism Studies at Central European University.

studies are required, diminishing the role of just thinking about the issues. Instead theory will be put into practice with the hope of actual suggestions in ‘what to do.’

The decision to use memorials or monuments as case studies is because of their spatial and tangible traits, making it possible for memories to convene in a specific location, narrowing the memories or historical events to be specifically analyzed. The two structures serve as points of opposing interpretations of the past that challenge historical accuracy of events and personal memories of experience. With these two examples an analysis on the construction and development of victimhood nationalism and its implications for memory studies and history writing and the current political climate in Hungary and East Asia will show the domestic and transnational impact monuments and memorials have in inciting conflict between citizens and state (Hungarians versus the government) or between nations (South Korea versus Japan). More specifically, the Occupation Memorial and the Peace Monument were selected because the controversy surrounding them is current to the time of when this thesis was written.

The Occupation Memorial and Peace Monument represent two very different issues, but are not completely unrelated. The structures refer to WWII history, host a victim and express a narrative that is disagreeable. They serve as a real place where disagreement occurs and reflects the relationship between people and countries. The structures themselves are newsworthy subjects and provide a different perspective of objects usually being viewed as expressing banal forms of nationalism. Monuments and memorials are not just spots or reminders though, they measure time and represent the most persistent ideas of a government, country or nation and in cases such as the Occupation Memorial or Peace monument this can become problematic and quite frankly scary.

#### IV. HUNGARY & THE MEMORIAL TO THE VICTIMS OF THE GERMAN OCCUPATION

Erik Thorstensen, researcher at Oslo and Akershus University College, wrote an article titled ‘The Places of Memory in a Square of Monuments: Conceptions of Past Freedom and History at Szabadság Tér.’<sup>54</sup> On a visit to Budapest in 2008 he was inspired by a tent structure serving as opposition to the Soviet Liberation Monument in the square. With this Thorstensen decided to write a paper about the whole monument complex of Szabadság tér. His experience is not unlike others who have witnessed the counter memorial occurring at the Occupation memorial. In his article, Thorstensen traces Hungarian irredentism by looking at the changes in the Square and makes the argument that “Hungary is actively pursuing a cleansing of its past in public spaces, and that this process is reflected in an increased acceptance of political authoritarianism.”<sup>55</sup> This argument is supported in the remainder of this section, but suggests that the “cleansing of its past in public spaces” is indicative of victimhood narratives and part of a process towards a proposed ideal national identity related to a shared Hungarian historical heritage, language, culture and Christendom.<sup>56</sup>

Hungary suffers from the traumatic memory of the Holocaust and has used this memory to articulate a national narrative that emphasizes non-aggressive roles during atrocities via monuments and memorials. This is an example of how trauma as a collective phenomenon is susceptible to instrumental political usage. In Hungary public memory of the Jewish Holocaust is limited and reference to the responsibility of the Hungarian state in actively contributed to the deportation of the Jews is often glossed over.<sup>57</sup> The Occupation

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<sup>54</sup> Hogskolen-Oslo Og Akershus, accessed April 8, 2015, <https://www.hioa.no/tilsatt/erikth>.

<sup>55</sup> Erik Thorstensen, “The Places of Memory in a Square of Monuments: Conceptions of Past, Freedom and History at Szabadság Tér,” AHEA: E-Journal of the American Hungarian Educators Association, Volume 5 (2012): <http://ahea.net/e-journal/volume-5-2012>.

<sup>56</sup> “Fidesz-MPP (Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége, Fidesz-Magyar Polgári Párt,” CEE Identity: National Identities, 2013, <http://www.ceeidentity.eu/database/manifestoesoun/fidesz-mpp>.

<sup>57</sup> Gyáni Gábor, “The Memory of Trainon,” 93.



Memorial is accused of undermining the role of the country in the deportations of Jews to concentrate camps and the atrocities committed against them within the country.<sup>58</sup> The example depicts a conflict in memory and historical accuracy for the sake of a victimhood narrative.

Hungary serves as a case study in which victimization was adopted, whether it is official or not. The Occupation Memorial is a site where the current Hungarian government proposed an historical interpretation of the past in conflict with the memory of Hungarian citizens. The presence of a counter-memorial in front of the statue, the Living Memory, is tangible proof of conflictive memories and an exhibition of society against the state. Both memorials as a case study are important in depicting the severity of victimhood narratives; they provide as an actual site of conflict between memories and their usage. Monuments and memorials are susceptible to becoming objects of political conflict and play a significant role in historical construction and memory revival. Emilia Palonen in her article ‘Millennial Politics of Architecture’ argues how the Hungarian government, ruled by the conservative Fidesz Party, has used architecture as a tool in expressing myth of nationhood.<sup>59</sup> She points to the House of Terror Museum as a previous attempt to victimize Hungary during communism. In relation to the later erected Occupation Memorial, victimization is no longer a trend, rather intertwined into Hungarian national identity. The discourse surrounding Trianon also contributes to victimization in Hungarian history.

Éva Kovács’ article, “Overcoming History through Trauma – On the Revival of a Psychoanalytic Concept in the Hungarian Politics of History,” traces the trend of trauma in Hungarian historiography and analyzes Trianon as a social trauma experienced by Hungary.<sup>60</sup> Although Kovács primarily focuses on Trianon as a social trauma, her juxtaposition of it with

<sup>58</sup> “Civilians Protest Against Monument Falsifying History,” A flyer handed out by protestors.

<sup>59</sup> Emilia Palonen, “Millennial Politics of Architecture: Myths and Nationhood in Budapest,” *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 41:4, 531-551, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2012.743509>, 537.

the Holocaust is indicative of a much larger Hungarian experience with trauma and how it is used in history writing. Kovács refers to Gábor Gyáni's essay, "Trianon versus the Holocaust," to show how Trianon and the Holocaust are similar in the social memory of Hungarians. Both events propose a self-victimization of the nation and generalization of history, which dismisses or simply ignores Hungarian fault.<sup>61</sup> The main accomplishment of Kovacs' article frames Trianon as a trauma which affects present-day politics and processes of history writing. She explains the imagined quality of Trianon in reference to the loss of ethnic landscapes and the emotional social memory of a lost homeland is unique to those located within present day borders with Hungary and not those found in "lost territories."<sup>62</sup> In a way, the fact that the traumatic memory associated with Trianon is contained within present-day borders of Hungary agrees with Jeffrey Alexander's argument that trauma is indeed constructed by a society. Initiative within the Hungarian government, such as a change in the constitution which pushes an ethnic identity of Hungarians and an extension of voter rights to non-resident Hungarians also shows the manipulation of the Trianon trauma.<sup>63</sup>

The current Hungarian government's trend towards a more authoritarian system and politicization of the nation's trauma is represented by the Occupation Memorial as explained via flyers distributed by protestors who are present at the memorial most times of the day. Viktor Orbán has stated that the memorial is not a Holocaust one and is supposed to commemorate all the victims of the German occupation.<sup>64</sup> By stating the memorial is dedicated to all victims fails to distinguish from true victims and those that could have also served as collaborator. Overlooking the role of Hungarians in WWII the memorial essentially promotes victimization in Hungarian history.

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<sup>61</sup> Éva Kovács, "Overcoming History through Trauma – On the Revival of a Psychoanalytic Concept in the Hungarian Politics of History," 3.

<sup>62</sup> Kovács, 6.

<sup>63</sup> Balázs Majtényi, "Case study: the EU and the Hungarian 'National Cooperation System,' 21.

<sup>64</sup> Sam Sokol, "German occupation statue in Budapest not a Holocaust memorial, says Orban," *The Jerusalem Post*, June 11, 2014, <http://www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Jewish-Features/German-occupation-statue-in-Budapest-not-a-Holocaust-memorial-says-Orban-355939>.

Controversy surrounding the Memorial is not limited to the meaning of it, but also the secrecy of its construction further fueled discontent. A look at the timeline of the Memorial may help to contextualize its problems. On December 31st 2013 the Hungarian government decides to erect a monument to commemorate the German occupation of Hungary in 1944. By January 17th 2014 a copy of a draft for the proposed memorial was leaked and sparked controversy over the symbolism of the memorial. March 19th 2014 was the original unveiling date of the memorial to mark the 70th anniversary of the occupation, but was pushed back because of complications. On March 23rd 2014 a flash mob was organized to protest the construction of the memorial at its intended location. Then on April 6th 2014 parliamentary elections resulted in a win for Fidesz, allowing Viktor Orbán to remain prime minister and move forward with the construction of the memorial. Shortly following the elections on April 8th 2014 construction of the memorial begins with no dialogue with the Jewish communities and general public. By July 20th - 22nd 2014 construction of the memorial is completed and erected overnight to avoid confrontation with protestors.<sup>65</sup> As we can see the original inception of the Memorial waited a long time before its actual construction.

The Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation is located at Budapest's Szabadság tér in fifth district of the city; a short walk from Saint Stephen's Basilica or the parliament building. In other words it is in a prime location for tourists, students, diplomats and Budapest residents to come across it. The square, although relatively young, has a rich history filled with controversy. Szabadság tér was built around the turn of the century following the destruction of a prison that once occupied the space. It was not until the 1920s that the first monuments appeared on the square. Initially there were four "Irredentist Statues" built to symbolize the four territories lost as a result of the Treaty of Trianon.<sup>66</sup> Since removed, the statues symbolized the Square's relationship to irredentism and victimization of

<sup>65</sup> All dates are taken from Professor András Rényi's Monuments and Memorials course at CEU.

<sup>66</sup> Thorstensen, "The Places of Memory in a Square of Monuments."

Hungarian history. Gábor Gyáni explains Trianon as a metaphor to “express the discontinuity of the “natural” trajectory of modern Hungary’s history.”<sup>67</sup> This trajectory was further disrupted by the communist era. Both Trianon and communism were viewed as part foreign interference of which responsibility of negative experience was not solely that belonging to the Hungarians. This refers us back to the opposition to the Soviet Liberation memorial and how the square has served as a place of conflicting memories.

The presence of the Occupation Memorial furthers this notion, but its location on the square is interesting. It is placed at the opening of an underground parking garage, between two roads that cut across and behind it. In a way, it almost seems detached from the square itself. The memorial is more or less inaccessible because of this. In addition a square water fountain triggered by weight obstructs the viewer’s ability to look at the statue head on. Congregating directly in front of the memorial is also impossible because of this. The literal inability to interact with the memorial (as to walk up to it, look closely or simply view it without obstruction) is ironic in the controversy about its construction where citizens were unable to meaningfully engage with the planning of it. Unfortunately though, the memorial is large enough to spot from a distance standing at about 7 meters tall.

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<sup>67</sup> Gyáni, “The Memory of Trianon,” 103.



*Figure 1. Photograph of the Eagle and Archangel Gabriel. Taken by the author.*

The two main focal points of the memorial are of a helpless looking, young man who is supposed to be Archangel Gabriel, thereby representing Hungary and a machine-looking eagle representing Germany. The sculptor of the memorial, Peter Parkanyi Raab, although making those two figures very clear in their symbolism has left the rest of the memorial up for interpretation. The Archangel Gabriel looks as if he is about to give up, in his right hand almost dropping the Globus cruciger (a Christian symbol of Christ's authority over the world) of Hungary and his left hand simply raised into the air as if admitting defeat. Only one of the angel's wings is exposed and the other is shrouded by fabric, representing his inability to fly at this point, perhaps symbolizing Hungary's inability to do nothing, but comply with German orders. Interestingly the angel's face looks minimally distressed with his eyes closed as if he is pretending what is actually happening is not true or dreaming of something else. Overall, Archangel Gabriel or Hungary is depicted as giving up without protecting himself, shown almost as a sacrificing himself. In stark contrast, the eagle is very aggressive and distorted looking, swooping in as if to snatch or kick the Globus cruciger, and thereby taking Hungary's power. Its wings are spread wide casting a shadow over the angel, symbolizing a

dark period in Hungary's history. The eagle's left talon is marked by a wide cuff inscribed with the year 1944, the year of the occupation. Its wings are not made of soft feathers, rather rigid, mechanic looking lines and its legs are not of a normal bird, rather human like giving the eagle an unreal super-power like appearance. The eagle represents the machine-like nature of the Nazi regime.

Surrounding the two main focal points are thirteen columns and towards the top, framing the eagle, is a metal, steel-looking triangle, with the inscription underneath "Memorial to the Victims of the German Invasion." This triangle is supported by four columns, but if one looks close enough the viewer will realize that the columns would not actually be able to hold up the metal triangle without hidden support beams. The columns are made of a sandstone material and the triangle of metal. Ironically this could represent the nature of the narrative the memorial proposes as being flimsily supported by a limited group of people. It can also serve as a commentary to the entire Szabadság tér complex itself. The triangle could serve as an arrow pointing towards the Soviet Liberation memorial, which the square is named after. This symbolism almost 'completes' this idea of Hungary being victims throughout twentieth century history. The 'arrow' is pointing to the next stage occupation rather than liberation. The columns that extend on either side of the focal points are confusing and difficult to interpret. They are all destroyed in one fashion or another, one appearing as if it had been melting, which again, makes no sense considering the columns are made of sandstone. To the right of the focal points, is the inscription "In Memory of the Victims" in Hungarian, English, Hebrew and German, as well as the initial date of occupation, March 19, 1944 in Hungarian.

The memorial's message in referring to Hungarian victimhood is made clear with the angel and eagle. Supposedly though the memorial also addresses Hungarian responsibility during the war; the sculptor has stated that the angel's willingness to just give up the orb is a

statement of Hungary's responsibility.<sup>68</sup> Despite this, the grander victim narrative holds precedent and the problem of mixing perpetrators with the victims undermines the experience of those who truly experienced the horror of war. Protestors have listed four main points of the memorial insofar of historical and artistic inaccuracy.<sup>69</sup> The first is that the Germany which marched into Hungary was carrying the swastika and not the imperial eagle; the second is the alliance between Hungary and the Third Reich therefore technically making the German "occupation" a military operation; third, there were both innocent and guilty Hungarians who actively denounced, deported and murdered Jews, Roma and homosexuals, and fourth the Occupation Memorial is simply does not "meet even the basic artistic requirements of the memorial."<sup>70</sup> In order to highlight these inadequacies and to propose a truer, alternative narrative a protest or counter memorial was constructed.



Figure 2. Photograph of part of the Living Memorial. Taken by the author.

<sup>68</sup> Margit Feher, "Hungarian Sculptor Defends Monument to Victims of Nazis," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 1, 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/hungarian-sculptor-defends-monument-to-nazi-occupation-1406910612>.

<sup>69</sup> "Civilians Protest Against Monument Falsifying History."

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

The counter-memorial, found right across from the Occupation Memorial, is called the Living Memorial of Remembrance.<sup>71</sup> Hungarian citizens (about 300-400 people) decided to problematize the site of its construction and marked it with personal objects of remembrance to show how memory is contradicted by the Occupation Memorial's historical narrative. The focal point of the counter memorial is two white chairs facing each other which symbolize the missing dialogue in the construction of the memorial. The memorial in its entirety spans the length of the Occupation Memorial and consists of rocks placed in remembrance (mostly a Jewish custom or tradition), trinkets, shoes, photos, documents and various personal objects to reflect the memory of survivors, their descendants and sympathizers.<sup>72</sup> Directly in front of Living Memorial is a fountain which obstructs any sort of gathering in from of either the Occupation or Living Memorial. Between the memorial and this fountain is a tall wooden frame, once filled with reflective film or paper that served as a mirror in order for people to think critically about their pasts. Since its deterioration the frame has since been filled with photos and documents. The Living Memorial continues today with protestors/volunteers who hold information meetings about the problematic nature of the Occupation Memorial every afternoon. The significance of this memorial is a reminder of multiple memories within history and points to the Hungarian government's failure to distinguish between history and memory, which mentioned previously by Assmann can lead to forms of authoritarianism. The protestors have indicated that the Occupation Memorial represents "the government's arrogance" and intend to continue protesting until its removal which would serve as a signal of liberty returning to Hungary.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid. Now abbreviated to the Living Memorial.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> "Civilians Protest Against the Monument Falsifying History."



Hungarian politicians have gone as far as stating that monument will “will damage the country’s reputation, infuriate democratic state, and divide and offend Hungarians.”<sup>74</sup> The emphasis of dividing the country itself is mentioned in various news articles and stresses the arrogance of the current Hungarian government.<sup>75</sup> Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his political party have been accused of “falsifying (history) and dishonouring all the Jewish, Roma and gay people who died in the Holocaust.”<sup>76</sup> Perhaps the most extreme criticism the monument and Orbán faces is that the government is trying to remove the Horthy regime’s responsibility in the Hungarian Holocaust, putting blame entirely on Nazi Germany.<sup>77</sup> Orbán’s endorsement of the monument is challenged by communities who claim he is confusing the murderers and the victims in the Hungarian Holocaust.

The fact that the monument was constructed against the wishes of a large part of the population, shortly after the reelection of the Fidesz party and in the middle of the night makes the monument that much more contentious. According to Orbán the monument was supposedly constructed to express the “grief and vicissitude Hungarians felt and suffered over losing their freedom” during World War II.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore the monument is supposed to serve as a reminder of the loss of national independence, which was the reason for Hungary’s active role in the Holocaust, as if it was a forced one; again, referring to the disruption to a “natural” trajectory in Hungarian history. To build upon the victimhood narrative of Hungary, the government’s motivation for the monument was “to make it clear for the present generation

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> BT in Politics, “Government sneaks up monument as protestors sleep,” *The Budapest Times*, July 26, 2014, accessed December 18, 2014, <http://budapesttimes.hu/2014/07/26/government-sneaks-up-monument-as-protestors-sleep/>.

<sup>76</sup> Daniel Nolan, “German occupation memorial completed under cover of darkness,” *The Budapest Beacon*, July 21, 2014, <http://budapestbeacon.com/public-policy/german-occupation-memorial-completed-under-cover-of-darkness/>.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> BT in Politics, “Government sneaks up.”

and for posterity that the Hungarian Holocaust, the deportation of Jews from Hungary could not have taken place without the country's German occupation.”<sup>79</sup>

Although Fidesz is not the furthest right party in Hungary, the party has adopted and institutionalized much of the far right's party, Jobbik, rhetoric.<sup>80</sup> The growing influence of Hungarian right-wing government and nationalist tendencies is in part a reaction for minority groups found outside of the contemporary Hungarian borders. But the xenophobic persistence in national rhetoric proves detrimental as grade-schoolers are asked to pick the “real Hungarian” from pictures of multiple ethnicities.<sup>81</sup> The already present hostility found within the government and denial to deal with its history in an appropriate manner is a significant issue. No matter what the defense for the monument is, the fact that actions of constructing it were done in a sneaky matter that ignored the consideration of various communities in Budapest that would be largely affected by the monument.

It is established that the Occupation Memorial is a manipulation of the past by politicians, but the presence of different memories and interpretations brings us to the question of nationalism and national memory. The construction of a single memory representative of groups of people proves useless, as Jan-Werner Müller suggests, albeit in the context between countries in Europe and a European identity.<sup>82</sup> This is not to argue the emergence of separate memories, since memories intertwine and entangle with history and memories of others. Rather, Müller's proposition to work towards a “shared public reasoning on Europe's past” is supported.<sup>83</sup> But with this, the issue of terminology and definition arises; how do we define victims, perpetrators, et cetera? The current blurring of actors and events of

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Kati Marton, “Hungary's Authoritarian Descent,” *The New York Times*, November 3, 2014, accessed December 18, 2014, [http://mobile.nytimes.com/2014/11/04/opinion/hungarys-authoritarian-descent.html?\\_r=2](http://mobile.nytimes.com/2014/11/04/opinion/hungarys-authoritarian-descent.html?_r=2).

<sup>81</sup> Marton, “Hungary's Authoritarian Descent.”

<sup>82</sup> Jan-Werner Müller, “On ‘European Memory’: Some Conceptual and Normative Remarks,” in *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, ed. Malgorzata Pakier and Bo Strath, (Berghahn Books, 2010).

<sup>83</sup> Müller, “On ‘European Memory,’” 36.

history may support the agenda of a political party, but threatened the stability of democracy and cohesion in society.

The memory project occurring at Szabadság tér and the greater Budapest urban landscape reflects the current government's desire to "rewrite" Hungarian history. The Square though is full of ironic statements from the presence of two American statues, the Soviet Liberation Monument which is denied by the House of Terror Museum's anti-communist theme, and the Occupation Memorial which counters any sort of liberty or freedom. Instead of Thorstensen's argument that Hungary is "cleansing of its past in public spaces" it is actually "dirtying it" or complicating it. In 2002, the House of Terror located on Andrássy Avenue in the former Arrow Cross Party's headquarters, was created under the patronage of the Fidesz government. At the time of its construction it faced similar criticism of Orbán trying to remove or limit Hungarian responsibility under communism. Suspicious that it was created for political propaganda purposes to deepen anti Communist historical images relates to takes us back to Trianon and the "natural trajectory" of the Hungarian nation, as if communism was a dark time in Hungary. Today the museum stands as a major tourist attraction with very high ratings on travel websites and encouraged by Facebook posts to visit with reviews often stated as a place "not to be missed" and provides an informative and thought-provoking experience with Hungarian history.<sup>84</sup> To say the museum no longer faces criticism is simply not true, but its integration in the Budapest urban landscape proves to extent a level of compliancy or acceptance of Orbán's imposition on Hungarian history and national narrative.

The Terror Museum's curator Mária Schmidt has been an active defender of the Occupation Memorial, suggesting the opposition is the one manipulating and narrowing understandings of Hungarian history and that the monument is misunderstood as published in

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<sup>84</sup> "House of Terror," Tripadvisor, [http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction\\_Review-g274887-d325279-Reviews-House\\_of\\_Terror-Budapest\\_Central\\_Hungary.html](http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g274887-d325279-Reviews-House_of_Terror-Budapest_Central_Hungary.html).

a long article for *Heti Válasz* and translated by the conservative Internet site *Mandiner*.<sup>85</sup> She suggests that the left-liberal elite in Hungary find it incomprehensible to understand what “Hungarian interest” means, almost indicating that the memorial actually serves in the interest of Hungarians. Schmidt rehashes twentieth century Hungarian history from the perspective of a victim and suggests that the criticisms of the memorial actually portray Hungary as worse than the Nazis.<sup>86</sup> Claims like this are yet to be found by the author of this thesis despite reading news articles pertaining to the memorial from various international and domestic outlets *Mind*, that the article was originally published in a conservative source with a limited audience. This may indicate that support for the memorial is only found amongst Hungarian conservatives. The article overall reads as a conservative, rightist and nationalist criticism, written in vague terms, of liberals and leftist in Hungary and demonstrates a general anti-European and foreign influence attitude. In response to this article, Professor Mária Kovács from the department of Nationalism Studies at Central European University provided a rebuttal to Schmidt and called her article a provocation and indicates that Schmidt did not due her homework when writing the article. References and sources selected were on the basis of supporting her argument without consideration of counter-factual information. More importantly Kovács states that Schmidt “crossed the line” with her treatment of the Holocaust and how she described the opponents of the memorial.<sup>87</sup> Like the narrative proposed by the Occupation Memorial Schmidt fails to mention the Holocaust on her own accord in the article.

The Occupation Memorial and the Living Memorial show that it is impossible to erase history, especially history that happened within the last 100 years. The Hungarian government has been guilty in passing anti-Semitic legislation in 1920, well before Germany and by the

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<sup>85</sup> “A HISTORICAL EXCHANGE: MÁRIA SCHMIDT VERSUS MÁRIA M. KOVÁCS,” *Hungarian Spectrum*, last modified July 20, 2014, <https://hungarianspectrum.wordpress.com/2014/07/20/a-historical-exchange-maria-schmidt-versus-maria-m-kovacs/>.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

time the Germans came in 1944 restrictions on Jewish life were no different from the Nuremberg Laws.<sup>88</sup> By constructing a Memorial to the Victims of German Occupation without contextualizing it with history that indicates Hungarian cooperation during World War II proves the current Hungarian government's inability to deal with its past appropriately and portrays historical victimhood on the basis of little no evidence.

The Occupation Memorial is complex in its design, making little sense, and seems to target empathetic Hungarians whose nation is represented by the Archangel, but can also attract sympathetic onlookers with little knowledge of Hungarian history. Suggestion of the eagle as a vague representation of the German invasion focuses attention onto the angel and encourages its identity as a victim. The Memorial in its entirety promotes a victimhood narrative simply by depicting national symbols of Hungary as a victim. For those that have visited Budapest will find similarities between the memorial and the Millennium Monument at Heros' Square, with the columns and presence of the Archangel Gabriel holding the Globus cruciger. Art historians have even suggested the Occupation Memorial to be a bastardization of the Millennium Monument, almost serving as the negative of a film strip.<sup>89</sup> The Millennium Monument suggests a history of Hungary which was victorious and has no representations of historical trauma. The Occupation Memorial serves in complete opposition of this, where the Archangel Gabriel appears to have fallen from its high pedestal as depicted in the Millennium Monument. The duality of these structures suggest a disconnect or a disruption of the trajectory of Hungary's history in that the Millennium Monument serving as an eternal representation of the Hungarian nation is countered by its demise as represented in the Occupation Memorial.<sup>90</sup> The latter memorial represents a dark point in Hungary's history regardless of which way it is understood, and in order to maintain an image which keeps the nation's responsibility in line with the broader national narrative of a Christian nation,

<sup>88</sup> Kati Marton, "Hungary's Authoritarian Descent," The New York Times, November 3, 2014.

<sup>89</sup> Rényi, Class notes.

<sup>90</sup> Rényi, Class notes.

Hungary is seen as a victim. Although the Occupation Memorial suggests a victimhood narrative associated to a specific event, it is rooted in a tradition and national identity that extends well before the German Occupation. The memorial is therefore is not a memorial to the trauma of a nation, in fact it conceals it, rather a political instrument to promote and preserve a specific national identity.

## **V. JAPAN AND SOUTH KOREA: PEACE MONUMENT NOT SO PEACEFUL**

In East Asia, victimhood narratives take form in two ways and in dialogical exchange with one another. The first is reflected in South Korea's victimization nationalism as proposed by Jie-Hyun Lim. The country promotes a history which portrays the country as a victim of other countries' doings, specifically Japanese imperialism in the first half the twentieth century. The second is WWII's effect on Japanese national identity and how the nation was not responsible for the actions of the state, but suffered its consequences making the nation a victim. The Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo serves as a minor case study in order to understand the Japanese victimhood narrative. Looking at victimhood narratives in East Asia addresses different types of issues, the first is that of a country, which has made it a point to portray itself as a victim of history which is currently fighting for the 'correction' of history in other countries (seen in both South Korea and Japan). The second is an assumed depiction by others of Japan as the object of suppression and power, where the war affected daily life in the country and its history challenges practices of commemoration. Overall, the two countries of South Korea and Japan, despite undergoing a process of normalization in the mid-1960s have yet to reconcile their pasts and have had problematic social relations because of this.

The presence of two victimhood narratives that are counter-factual to each other exhibits the complexities memory and history and its relationship to national identity. The study of victimhood in Japan has a rich literature, while the study of Korean victimization with a more critical lens lacks. This may be because of the roles either country had during the war, wherein justifying a victim identity in South Korea was not needed as much as it was in Japan. Following the war, Franziska Seraphim, explains the enthusiastic response of the Japanese people to place punishment on wartime leaders rather than a national repentance. The overwhelming sense of victimization of the Japanese people during the War dismissed

notions of collective accountability or responsibility in general.<sup>91</sup> The war became a point in which the country served to reinvent itself as a passive, peaceful society based on an identity that follow a victimhood narrative. The institutionalization of sex slavery in part of the Japanese military and society does not fit the national narrative Japan proposes of itself. On the other hand Korean victimization is associated with a long history of invasions, but really stems from Japanese occupation feeding into present-day anti-Japanese sentiment further exacerbated by history textbook issues and Yasukuni Shrine visits. The problem lies not in just the historical factuality of the Comfort Women rather its disconnect with Japanese national identity.

The Yasukuni Shrine was established in 1869 by the Meiji government and located in central Tokyo.<sup>92</sup> The purpose of the Shrine is to honor people who died for cause of the Japanese Empire. The spirits of 2.5 million Japanese and former colonial soldiers are enshrined there, including 14 Japanese Class A war criminals.<sup>93</sup> The admittance of these war criminals to the Shrine in 1978 caused controversy within Japanese society and politics along with straining international relations with neighboring countries, most notably South Korea and China. The presence of soldiers in the same vicinity of the leaders who essentially sent them to their deaths during World War II and the problematic relationship of the Shrine and the government despite a separation of church and state in the Japanese constitution are but two domestic issues associated with the Shrine.<sup>94</sup> Larger problems of symbolism and the meaning behind parliamentary visits to the Shrine evokes strong negative feelings in China and South Korea who view the Shrine as an insult to a shared history. To those countries, the

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<sup>91</sup> Franziska Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945 – 2005*, (Harvard East Asian monographs, 2006), 1-2.

<sup>92</sup> Yasukuni Shrine, <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/access.html>.

<sup>93</sup> Ako Inuzuka & Thomas Fuchs, “Memories of Japanese militarism: The Yasukuni Shrine as a commemorative site,” *The Journal of International Communication*, 20:1 (2014) 21-41, DOI: 10.1080/13216597.2013.869239, 21.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 22.



Shrine is representative of Japanese imperialism and aggression.<sup>95</sup> Included in the Yasukuni Shrine complex is the Yushukan Museum which was established in 1882 and houses articles of the enshrined. The museum is under fire for promoting a narrative which justifies Japanese military action during the war and the sacrifice of the lives of soldiers.<sup>96</sup> Despite actively changing the exhibitions in the museum following criticism, it continues to suggest Japanese militarism as a defensive strategy.<sup>97</sup> The Shrine and museum are reflective a much wider issue of historical revisionism, diminishing Japan's role as an imperial aggressor. Inconsistency within Japanese historical narrative and its neighboring countries is found in school texts book, which give little attention to major events such as the Nanjing Massacre or the institutionalization of sex slaves, or Comfort Women.<sup>98</sup> The discourse surrounding the denial of the comfort women does not dismiss their actual existence, but instead insists that these women were not forced, rather employed and paid to be a part of the system.<sup>99</sup> The current prime minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe and his administration have denied that Japan ran a "system of human trafficking and coerced prostitution, implying that comfort women were simply camp-following prostitutes."<sup>100</sup> The issue is a political minefield.

The presence of two victimhood narratives that are counter-factual to each other exhibits the complexities memory and history and its relationship to national identity. The study of victimhood in Japan has a rich literature, while the study of Korean victimization with a more critical lens lacks. This may be because of the roles either country had during the War, wherein justifying a victim identity was not needed as much as it was in Japan.

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<sup>95</sup> Daiki Shibuichi, "The Yasukuni Shrine Dispute and the Politics of Identity in Japan: Why All the Fuss?" *Asian Survey*, 45:2 (2005), 205, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2005.45.2.197>.

<sup>96</sup> Shaun O'Dwyer, "The Yasukuni Shrine and the Competing Patriotic Pasts of East Asia," *History & Memory*, 22:2 (2010), 147-177., 154.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 153.

<sup>98</sup> Bukh, "Japan's History Textbooks Debate," 694.

<sup>99</sup> Mindy Kotler, "The Comfort Women and Japan's War on Truth," *The New York Times*, November 14, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/15/opinion/comfort-women-and-japans-war-on-truth.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/15/opinion/comfort-women-and-japans-war-on-truth.html?_r=0).

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*.

Following the war, Franziska Seraphim, explains the enthusiastic response of the Japanese people to place punishment on wartime leaders rather than a national repentance, but even then the Yasukuni Shrine's hosting of wartime leaders counters this argument to an extent. The overwhelming sense of victimization of the Japanese people during the War dismissed notions of collective accountability or responsibility in general.<sup>101</sup> The war became a point in which the country served to reinvent itself as a passive, peaceful society based on an identity of victimization. The institutionalization of sex slavery in part of the Japanese military and society does not fit the national narrative Japan proposes of itself. On the other hand Korean victimization is associated with a long history of invasions, but really stems from Japanese occupation feeding into present-day anti-Japanese sentiment further exacerbated by history textbook issues and Yasukuni Shrine visits. The problem lies not in the historical factuality of the Comfort Women rather its disconnect with Japanese national identity.

Michael E. Robinson has described that last couple years of Japanese colonization in Korea as “the worst times for Korea.”<sup>102</sup> After a couple decades of interference on the Korean peninsula the Japanese empire finally annexed it in 1910, obtaining complete control over the Korean people. Korea was a Japanese colony until 1945 with Japan's defeat in the Asia-Pacific theatre by the Allied powers. From 1910 to 1945 Koreans were subjugated to harsh assimilationist policies which threatened the continued existence of Korean language and culture.<sup>103</sup> In addition, much of the Korean adult population was ‘forcefully recruited’ into the Japanese Imperial military. A form of ‘forced recruitment’ was that of institutionalizing women from across the empire to serve as sexual servants to the Japanese soldiers. Alternatively known as Comfort Women, these women were used as preventative tools in

<sup>101</sup> Franziska Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945 – 2005*, (Harvard East Asian monographs, 2006), 1-2.

<sup>102</sup> Michael E. Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History*, (University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 98.

<sup>103</sup> Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey*, 92-94.

order to keep Japanese soldiers from committing rape crimes.<sup>104</sup> Since the war, women survivors have kept quiet since their experiences as Comfort Women served as an embarrassment, rather than as a victim of the war. It was not until the late 1980s to mid-1990s that former comfort women mustered the courage to admit to their experiences and make it public. The survivors that came forward inspired a movement which united former Comfort Women from countries all over Asia that were subjugated to the Japanese military.<sup>105</sup>

Roughly 200,000 women, mostly from Korea and China, were forced into a system which has been called a form of sexual slavery.<sup>106</sup> What makes this atrocious system even more problematic is its recording in present-day Japanese historical narrative. Despite strong evidence, eye-witness and personal accounts of experience as being a ‘Comfort Woman,’ the Japanese government continues a cycle of denial and apology of its twentieth century war crimes. In reaction to the indecisiveness of the Japanese government, Korean Comfort Women formed initiatives in demanding honest, formal apologies and compensation by the Japanese government. One such initiative was the construction of a Peace Monument statue in Seoul, South Korean. Its location in front of the Japanese embassy serves as a focal point for dissent between Japanese leaders and Korean victims.<sup>107</sup> Since the construction of this initial statue, two replicas have been put up in the United States. In addition there is at least thirteen other memorials and monuments in regards to the Comfort Women issue in the United States and Asia.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey*, 97.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Brittany Levine and Jason Wells, “Glendale unveils ‘comfort women’ statue, honor innocent victims’,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 30, 2013, <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/jul/30/local/la-me-ln-glendale-comfort-women-20130730>.

<sup>107</sup> Aaron Schrank, “Statue Brings Friction Over WWII Comfort Women to California,” *NPR*, July 29, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/2013/07/29/206655160/statue-brings-friction-over-wwii-comfort-women-to-california>.

<sup>108</sup> “Comfort Women Monuments,” [http://peace.maripo.com/p\\_comfort\\_women.htm](http://peace.maripo.com/p_comfort_women.htm).

There are a total of three Peace Monument statues, all of which were constructed through the initiatives of citizens in Korea and the United States.<sup>109</sup> The two more recent statues, located in Glendale, California and Southfield, Michigan, although replicas of the original model, lose significance in symbolism because of their locations. With this in mind, further discussion on the Peace Monument will be limited to the Seoul statue. The Peace Monument serves as a reminder of the injustice committed against Comfort Women and to raise awareness of the issue and its unresolved nature. It was constructed on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011 in honor of the 1000<sup>th</sup> demonstration of the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, which has staged rallies in front of the Japanese embassy on Wednesday of every week since 1992.<sup>110</sup> Despite the peaceful imagery and mostly positive symbolism the Peace Monument exhibits, the statue is under heavy criticism by the Japanese government, citizens and diaspora community.



Figure 3. Image of the original Peace Monument state. Taken from [peace.maripo.com](http://peace.maripo.com)

<sup>109</sup> ““Peace Monument” for former ‘comfort women’ established in front of Japanese embassy,” *The Hankyoreh*, December 15, 2011, [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_national/510277.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/510277.html).

<sup>110</sup> “Korea ‘comfort women’ put up statue at landmark rally,” *BBC News*, December 14, 2011, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-16185314>.

The Peace Monument was designed and sculpted by the husband and wife pair Kim Un-seong and Kim Seo-gyeong. According to the sculptors the statue was designed to reflect “the spirit of the ‘comfort women’ who have come to that area every Wednesday for the past twenty years to call for an apology from the Japanese government.”<sup>111</sup> The physical structure, standing at 130 centimetres, is of a young woman sitting in a chair with another empty one to her right.<sup>112</sup> The woman and chairs are made with a bronze casting and the base is made of concrete with a granite mosaic floor finish. There are five major points of symbolism of the monument. The first important figure is that of the woman, who sits with her clenched fists on her knees, a traditional Korean dress called a *hanbok*, looking quietly towards the Japanese embassy. It is as if she is waiting for an apology. Originally the statue was not supposed to have clenched fists, but folded across her lap. After the sculptors had heard the Japanese were opposed to the installation of the statue they expressed their anger through clenched fists making it an emotional expression of the artists as well.<sup>113</sup> The shadow on the ground of an elderly woman serves as a symbol of the time that has passed since the War. The bird on the girl’s left shoulder represents freedom, peace and a spiritual bridge linking the women who have passed away with those that are still alive and the butterfly on the shadow’s chest symbolizes rebirth. Finally, the empty chair represents a space for contribution by citizens to offer comfort to the remaining survivors.<sup>114</sup>

There are two important points to discuss about the statue that should be made. The first is about the statue’s theme of time and the second is about the significance of location. The statue is a reflection of time because of the aging that occurs between the young girl statue and shadow of an old woman. There is an element of patience highlighted. The

<sup>111</sup> ““Peace Monument” for former ‘comfort women’,” *The Hankyoreh*.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Lee Jeong-bong, “The ‘comfort women’ sculptors aren’t done,” *Korea JoongAng Daily*, December, 29, 2012, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=2964622>.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

location is important to emphasize the importance of time, how long Comfort Women have waited for an apology from the Japanese government and gives context to what the young girl is doing, waiting. Overall the monument is supposed to serve as a reminder with its inscription stating:

“This peace monument reflects people's genuine desire to learn from history and remember the past on the occasion of the 1,000th weekly protest against Japan's atrocities by comfort woman forced into sexual slavery.”<sup>115</sup>

The controversy that circles the Peace Monument is a reflection of much larger issues in international relations, not only between South Korea and Japan, but the greater Asia-Pacific region and Japan. Regional stability is threatened by contrasting memories of history. Shinzo Abe has criticized textbook makers McGraw-Hill for discussing the Comfort Women as a Japanese “state-sponsored sexual slavery.”<sup>116</sup> In 2007, Abe and his cabinet also declared that there was no evidence the Japanese government used sex slaves after the demand for an apology by surviving Comfort Women.<sup>117</sup> A formal apology has been given since then by the Japanese parliament, but this brings up the fundamental issue at hand in today's politics, “any official Japanese apology is repeatedly undermined each time an official changes or shifts language on the issue.”<sup>118</sup> A powerful example of this is an objective of the Abe administration to dilute the 1993 Kono Statement which was viewed as the Japanese government's formal apology for establishing a sex camp system and using Comfort Women.<sup>119</sup> The Japanese government's inability to maintain a specific stance questions the

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<sup>115</sup> “Comfort Women Monuments.”

<sup>116</sup> Anna Fairfield, “Sinzo Abe's government plays down historians' concerns over South Korea's ‘comfort women’ in WWII,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <http://www.smh.com.au/world/shinzo-abes-government-plays-down-historians-concerns-over-south-koreas-comfort-women--in-wwii-20150210-13adis.html>.

<sup>117</sup> Colin Joyce, “Japanese PM denies wartime ‘comfort women’ were forced,” *The Telegraph*, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1544471/Japanese-PM-denies-wartime-comfort-women-were-forced.html>.

<sup>118</sup> Amy Lieu, “Wounds of War for Japan, Korea Re-Open with Comfort Women Statue,” *NBC News*, June 30, 2014, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/wounds-war-japan-korea-re-open-comfort-women-statue-n139481>.

<sup>119</sup> Kotler, “The Comfort Women and Japan's War on Truth.”

legitimacy of any apology in the future. The Peace Monument is not a mere representative of the Comfort Women issue as a whole, but serves a catalyst for competing memories and denials of twentieth century atrocities.

The Peace Monument indicates national identity, but not in the same way as the Occupation Memorial. Although the Peace Monument depicts a Korean woman, its audience is not necessarily for the Koreans rather for Japan. Its location in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul is crucial to symbolism behind the monument's appearance of waiting. By being placed by the embassy the monument is also directly blaming a clear perpetrator. This problematizes the structure and defining whether or not it is a monument or memorial since neither is being remembered or commemorated. It serves as a reminder for the perpetrators. This blame directly undermines Japanese identity built on a narrative where the War was not the nation's fault, but the responsibility of the then government.

The Peace Monument is representative of Korean national identity based on ethnicity and includes a relationship to the Japanese Other. Neither the Korean or Japanese government specifically instrumentalize the monument per say, rather the discourse that surrounds it. The Korean government has utilized the Japan's trend towards historical revisionism and victimhood narrative as a way to criticize Japan's inability to take responsibility of its past and cause tension over, not only historical issues, but territorial disputes. The development of a modern Korean identity during the early twentieth century was influenced by the Japanese Other and persists by maintaining Japan was the perpetrator during colonialism and WWII. Chong-Sik Lee argues to the extent that Japan "provided the negative and yet most powerful symbol for Korean nationalism, a national enemy."<sup>120</sup> Anti-Japanese sentiment in South Korea is amongst the strongest in former Japanese colonies and extends back to a long history of frequent invasion. But it is the history associated with colonialism and WWII that shapes

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<sup>120</sup> Chong-Sik Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 120.

Korean attitudes about Japan today, who sees the country as a reflection of a national identity built on a victimhood narrative. Unlike the Hungary, South Korea has a clear perpetrator in mind to reaffirm its victim status which is displayed by the women sitting in front of the Japanese embassy.



## VI. CONCLUSION

All three countries suffer from traumatic memories of WWII, the Holocaust in Hungary, Japanese colonization in Korea or the atomic bombings in Japan, and have used these memories to articulate a national narrative that emphasizes non-aggressive roles during atrocities. This is an example of how trauma as a collective phenomenon is susceptible to instrumental political usage. There is no doubt that these three examples are not the same type of traumatic event, but the effects of their memory are similar. As stated before, the Holocaust and Comfort Women issue are not comparable and it is not the purpose of this thesis to compare these atrocities. This thesis analyzed how Hungary and Japan and South Korea as a region have dealt with their past and responsibility in WWII history. The Occupation Memorial and Peace Monument are directly related to each respective countries notion of a national identity built out of or reaffirmed by the war experience. The Hungarian and Japanese governments have been successful in proposing a victimhood narrative that faces contention either domestically or internationally whereas the Korean victimhood narrative is more or less uncontested except from Japan. The difference between Hungary and Japan from South Korea is important and explained by their roles during the war. Both Hungary and Japan were Axis powers, where the Korean nation was under Japanese control already making it a victim of colonization.

By making the entire Hungarian nation a victim of German Occupation, the memorial is representative of a much larger problem of blurring who is victim and who is perpetrator there by confusing or mixing history and memory. The nationalist tendencies of the current Hungarian government have led it towards a route of semi-authoritarianism with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán propose an illiberal democracy for the country. This returns us to Assmann's point that blurring memory and history is indicative of the rise of authoritarianism. The New York Times recently published an article titled, "The New Dictators Rule by Velvet

First” and listed Viktor Orbán an illiberal leader of which the West needed to “understand how these regimes work and how to confront them.” Perhaps, the term regime is a bit overstated in the Hungarian case and distinguishing Hungary from the West is a bit problematic, but the article makes a good point that there is a shift in the democratic values found in Hungarian politics and the European Union should address this. Hungary’s current political climate as a concern for the EU is crucial to upholding some of its basic membership criteria, most significantly “stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.”<sup>121</sup> Once a part of the EU, countries are required to maintain and effectively implement membership criteria. The proposition of an illiberal democracy counters this basic requirement. Fidesz’ political platform which places emphasis on “a strong nation and on the unique role of Hungary in Europe” suggests a separation from the EU more than it does cooperation.<sup>122</sup>

The rise in right-wing political elites and scholars not a uniquely Hungarian phenomenon and seen through the East Central European region. Zoltán Dujisin’s article, “Post-Communist Europe: On the Path to a Regional Regime of Remembrance” claims that the European Union’s (EU) memory regime is influenced by the interests of these right-wing political leaders and thinkers who urge the EU to give more recognition to the memory of communism in Europe. He further argues that this “challenge from the East” has been successful with the institutionalization of the memory of communism because of political investment from the post-communist right. A significant point Dujisin makes is that politicians “support memory politics as a crucial competitive political dimension,” which reflects upon James E. Young’s statement that “Memory is never shaped in a vacuum; the motives of memory are never pure.” Dujisin’s article suggests that the political consequences of the right’s influence over memory politics in East-Central Europe may solidify an

<sup>121</sup> European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission, November 19, 2014, [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/conditions-membership/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/conditions-membership/index_en.htm).

<sup>122</sup> “Fidesz-MPP (Fiatalkor Demokraták Szövetsége, Fidesz-Magyar Polgári Párt.”

advantage over the left, problematizing the political standing of the entire European Union. Although Duijisin's argument is true that right-wing political elites have a considerable amount of power in the construction of memory and manipulation of its politics, he fails to criticize the European Union's behavior to the issue and lack of accountability it has in monitoring in the East-Central European region. Regarding memory politics between countries East-Central Europe and the EU in general, propositions to focus on 'dealing with memory' instead of 'establishing memory' as a way for European countries to deal with their past is made by Müller in his chapter "On 'European Memory': Some Conceptual and Normative Remarks."<sup>123</sup> In the case of creating a shared memory the inevitable process of choosing will have to take place therefore prioritizing certain memories over others. In other words, many memories will be suppressed. Even though Müller does not explicitly explain a notion of memory hierarchy amongst collectives (specifically nations), in his theoretical pondering over the significances and consequence of a shared European memory rather than what it should be that contributes to memory studies should be applied not just in Europe, but East Asia as well.

Working towards ways to deal with contentious memories and histories is more likely to be conclusive than trying to establish a single memory or history in one region. With the case of the Comfort Women, regardless of whether or not the Japanese government acknowledges and apologizes for its country's past does not mean the issue will ever be settled. If the Comfort Women issue is understood truly as a trauma, its memory will always persist and be a thorn in Japanese and South Korean relations. The only way to overcome this is to accept the historical reality as perceived in either country and no longer bring it to the international table. Obviously this suggestion is unrealistic and other models of dealing with the past will need to be used. Thomas U. Berger in an interview with Times Magazine

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<sup>123</sup> Müller, "On 'European Memory'," 26.

explains that for a leader of any country to apologize for misdeeds is costly and requires a great deal of political capital.<sup>124</sup> They are not likely to apologize if they do not think those apologies will be accepted and in South Korea, whose national identity is based off an element of the Japanese Other, there has been little effort in promoting acceptance of an apology.<sup>125</sup>

A possible way for South Korea and Japan to resolve their differences is the involvement of another country or organization in order to mitigate negotiations. The argument that United States is actually responsible for the historical tensions in the region and should serve this role is made by Berger and University of Chicago Professor Bruce Cumings, whose specialty is on East Asia with a focus in Korea. Cumings suggests that “Washington has always preferred Tokyo over Seoul” and the settlement of WWII by the United States failed to hold Japan accountable of its war crimes (letting many Class A war criminals “off the hook”) in order to help the country to become an industrial producer and ally of the United States. Even normalization efforts in the mid-1960s, pressured by the United States, was in economic interest and not necessarily historical or political.<sup>126</sup> In a recent article written by Gi-Wook Shin and Daniel C. Snider titled, “History Wars in Northeast Asia: The United States Helped Spark the Battles Now It must Help End Them” was published in the journal *Foreign Affairs* in April 2014. The article elaborates on Cumings’ point by explaining how the United States has recently had to face the “uncomfortable realities of wartime issues.” But if Cumings opinion that the United States does prefer Japan over South Korea, the country would be a problematic choice in mitigating. Perhaps, a country like Germany who has been successful in dealing with their wartime atrocities would be an ideal candidate.

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<sup>124</sup> Kirk Spitzer, “Why Japan is Still Not Sorry Enough.”

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> “[Interview] Bruce Cumings: “Washington has always preferred Tokyo over Seoul,”” *The Hankyoreh*, May 13, 2015, [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/691023.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/691023.html).

The Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation and Peace Monument serve as points of opposing interpretations of the past that challenge historical accuracy of events and personal memories of experience. They are also representative of the political climate in which memory and history are in. With these two examples an analysis on the construction and development of victimhood narratives and its implications for memory studies and history writing and current politics in Hungary, Japan South Korea show the impact monuments and memorials have in inciting conflict between groups within a nation to the government and between entire nations. More importantly, both structures show the significance memorialization plays in the development and sustainability of a national identity. Methodologically this thesis has provided case studies from different parts of the world undergoing problematic experiences in regards to WWII history. The use of memorials allowed for a visual analysis that helped to contextualize while also narrowing the problems of victimhood narratives in Hungary, Japan and South Korea. Overall, this thesis has contributed to the memory studies discipline by providing specific case studies, not as a comparison, but under the frame of victimhood narratives and their relationship to national identity.

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