Introduction

This book is about the effects of historical memory on the political affairs of nations. It is based on a detailed analysis of three countries who have struggled to face up to their morally troubling past in the wake of World War II – Germany,[1] Austria, and Japan. The central objective of the book is to explain why these states have promoted particular official historical narratives and to identify the domestic and international consequences of their doing so. Why, for instance, did the Federal Republic of Germany early on adopt a relatively penitent stance regarding the crimes of the Nazi period, whereas Austria and Japan showed contrition only decades later, and in the case of Japan only partially so? Did Germany's willingness to confront the dark corners of its history promote better relations with its European neighbors? Why did Austria, despite being deeply implicated in the crimes of the Third Reich, tackle the question of its moral culpability only much later? Why has Japan only reluctantly apologized for its Imperial past in Asia? Has Japan's relatively impenitent stance poisoned its relations with its neighbors, as is commonly assumed, or was the impact of its lack of contrition relatively marginal or outweighed by other geopolitical or geoeconomic factors?

These are perennial questions in the study of postwar Europe and Asia and have been the subject of considerable debate for decades. Since the end of the Cold War, however, they have become more pressing than ever. Despite Germany's continued contrition for the crimes of the past, new German concerns with commemorating not only the victims of Nazism, but also the millions of Germans who became the victims of aerial bombardment and ethnic cleansing, have raised troubling questions about whether the memory of the Holocaust is in the process of being relativized, possibly heralding the reemergence of a more self-centered and assertive Federal Republic. Concerns on this score have been particularly pointed in the context of the Federal Republic's relations with Poland and the Czech Republic, but have also been evident in

[1] The main focus for analysis will be the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany).

some of the misgivings regarding the German response to the recent economic crisis in the Eurozone. In Austria, the rapid ascent of Jőrg Haider's Freedom Party in the 1990s – culminating in its becoming part of the ruling coalition in 2000 – raised similar concerns and sparked a major diplomatic crisis within the European Union. Meanwhile, in Asia, Japan's relations with its neighbors – in particular with the People's Republic of China and South Korea – have been repeatedly paralyzed by tensions over historical issues. Incidents such as Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō's repeated visits to the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo between 2002 and 2006 or the Ministry of Education's approval of revisionist textbooks for use in Japanese schools have stoked a nationalist backlash in neighboring countries, undermining efforts at building stronger regional institutions and spilling over dangerously into other areas, such as territorial disputes. Instead of fading with time, in many ways at the start of the twenty first century, the memory of World War II is more contentious – and more potent – than ever.

Over the years, many explanations have been advanced to explain the differences between Europe and Asia, beginning with Ruth Benedict's famous reflections on the impact of Asian "shame" versus European "guilt" cultures and Maruyama Masao's discussion of what he called Japan's "system of irresponsibility." These explanations often were based on an overly restrictive exploration of the politics of memory in a single country, or on a limited German-Japanese comparison. Moreover, the existing models of historical memory typically reflected the disciplinary concerns of the scholars who produced them: historians tended to focus on how our understanding of the past has distorted the way in which societies remember, sociologists on the implications of historical memory for social order, and so forth. Although many such models offered useful insights, they often rested on fairly simple understanding of how politics works and tended not to address some of the central concerns of policy makers, such as the ways in which government policies can shape the broader historical memory of a given society and how the official narrative of the state may influence international relations.

To address such concerns, a more comprehensive, practically oriented approach is needed, one that analyzes the politics of historical memory from the perspective of what might be called "Historical Realism." The term "Realism" is used here in two senses. On the one hand, it suggests that we need to be realistic about the place that history and historical memory occupies in political affairs. The ways in which most people remember the past is powerfully conditioned by the narratives generated by the state, which are, in turn, driven primarily by practical considerations of security and economic gain. States are not only capable of overriding the powerful feelings of anger, guilt, and resentment generated by memories that its people may have of the injustices that have been inflicted on them, but to a surprising – and perhaps saddening – degree they are able to ignore, defuse, and even redirect them. As we shall see, post-1945 Austrians, Japanese, and even Germans were for long stretches of time strikingly impenitent about the terrible atrocities they had committed in

the past. This was true both of their governments and to a remarkable extent of their broader societies as well. Perhaps more surprisingly, some of the nations that had been the targets of their aggression – such as the People's Republic of China – were able to suppress the memories of the horrors their people had endured in order to pursue national economic and political objectives. At virtually every juncture of the evolution of the government policies that defined the official narrative, considerations of interest played a crucial, even decisive role.

At the same time, however, we also must be realistic about the limits of political power to reshape historical memory. This holds true not only for democratic societies, but for authoritarian ones as well, albeit it to a lesser degree. Although states can suppress the memories social groups and individuals may have, insurgent historical narratives can spring up that challenge the existing official narratives. These insurgent narratives evolve in response to forces that are only partly related to considerations of the material interests of the state or of the groups that promote them. They are rooted in the actual experiences of people, and they evolve according to a dynamic that cannot be explained by material considerations alone. Even though narratives can be ignored or suppressed by the state, over time they have real political effects that political leaders can ignore only at their own peril. Time and again, groups representing the victims of historical injustice, as well as groups who for their own reasons promote a historical narrative different from the existing official one, have been able to place their own concerns on the political agenda in ways that greatly complicate the efforts of political leaders to promote what they see as national interest.

The impact of such groups is particularly large in democratic countries. Yet they also can have a significant impact in authoritarian political systems where sharp divisions exist between political leaders and where history can become another arena for elite power struggles. Moreover, leaders themselves often become captive to the historical narratives that they or their predecessors had created, regardless of whether they do so in order to court the political support of the groups that promote them or because they actually come to believe in them. In this sense, historical memory as it is embedded in the political culture of a nation both conditions and becomes a constitutive element in the concrete interests of states and of political leaders and can have far-reaching consequences for the possibilities of conflict and cooperation, war and peace, in the international system.[2]

The Historical Realist perspective insists that to understand why countries choose to promote the kind of historical narratives that they do, scholars and analysts have to be sensitive to the interplay between material interest

[2] In this sense, the position outlined here is consistent with what is sometimes referred to as "thin" or "conventional" constructivism. See Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security* 23:1 (Summer 1998), pp, 171–200, and John G. Ruggie, "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge," *International Organization* 52:4 (Fall 1998), esp. pp. 880–882.

and societal memory as it exists at a specific moment in time. To cope with the consequences of the past, political leaders and policy makers have to grasp both the ways in which historical memory shapes the present and gauge the extent to which government policy can assuage and reshape the emotional impact of the past. At times it may make sense to pursue reconciliation with other nations over historical issues; at other times it may be impossible or too costly to do so. It is the larger objective of this book to help develop the intellectual resources to help decide when it is appropriate – or productive – to do so.

Acknowledgments

Appropriately for a work that has historical memory as a central focus, this book has a long history of its own. I have had a long-standing interest in the subject. In my earlier work on German and Japanese foreign and national security policies, I argued that the memory of World War II and the particular lessons both societies drew from the war had given rise to peculiar cultures of antimilitarism that discouraged them from assuming political-military capabilities commensurate with their formidable economic and technological resources.[3] While giving talks on the subject, I was confronted time and again with the question: If the lessons of the past had given rise to a comparable reluctance to use force in both societies, why was Japan so much more unwilling than Germany to acknowledge the terrible atrocities it had committed in the pre-1945 period? My standard answer to the question was that whereas Germany focused on the crimes it had committed against others, the primary concern in Japan was with the crimes that had been committed against the Japanese people *by their own military*. The Japanese people and many of the elite sectors in Japanese society, including even many of the conservative politicians who dominated postwar politics, blamed the Imperial army for having dragged the nation into a hopeless struggle against an overwhelmingly superior coalition of forces and subsequently carried on the fight even after all hope for an acceptable solution had vanished. As a result, Japan developed a historical narrative that placed responsibility for the war and the enormous cost in human life on the military. Consequently, the Japanese were as averse to relying on the military as a means for pursuing the national interest as were the Germans, albeit for entirely different reasons.

I was willing to offer some speculations as to why the Germans saw themselves as victimizers and the Japanese preferred to see themselves as victims, but in the end, it did not matter for my central argument. Demonstrating that these narratives existed and had a significant, even decisive impact on German and Japanese defense and national security policies was enough for my purposes.

[3] See Thomas U. Berger, "From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-militarism," *International Security* 17:4 (Spring 1993), pp. 119–150, and Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

In this sense, in my earlier work I was interested in historical memory as an independent variable – as the primary cause for the thing that I was seeking to explain, namely German and Japanese national security policy. I stubbornly resisted, however, being drawn into a systematic analysis of historical memory as a dependent variable – that is analyzing why the two countries developed these rather different narratives.

My resistance to examining the origins of German and Japanese historical narratives began to break down in 1998 after watching Japan's ambassador to the United States, Kunihiko Saito, debate Iris Chang, the celebrated author of the New York Times best seller, *The Rape of Nanjing: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* on American public TV. The ambassador – although a highly capable man – seemed totally out of his depth in his efforts to respond to Chang's emotionally charged accusations that Japan had not properly addressed the issue of its responsibility for wartime atrocities. His protestations that Japan in fact had apologized seemed unconvincing; his insistence that all claims for compensation had already been settled by treaty seemed both callous and legalistic. Even though his arguments may have been perfectly logical from the narrow perspective of international law, I was convinced that they would fall flat in the court of American and world public opinion and ultimately harm rather than further Japan's national interests. When soon thereafter John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi invited me to explore the issue of historical memory for an edited volume they were putting together, I was ready and eager to accept their invitation.

The project took far longer than I had anticipated. I soon discovered that other disciplines – history, sociology, and social psychology in particular – have tackled the topic for many years, and that vast bodies of literature had grown up regarding the nature of historical memory and the forces that shape it. Political science, I learned, is a relative latecomer to the subject, and there has been a strong tendency on the part of political scientists to avoid dealing with the topic at all. The general view in the discipline is that historical memory is an issue for cultural historians and literary theorists; serious political scientists should focus on the ostensibly more substantive forces that really drive politics and international affairs, such as the balance of military power or the quest to maximize economic interests.

Yet, although at times the topic seemed overwhelming, in the course of my research, I also became convinced that there was an urgent need for political scientists to tackle the subject. As I worked, new political crises in both Europe and East Asia emerged that revolved around disputes over the past and underlined the saliency of the issue. Friends of mine who had gone into policy making in Washington – especially Mike Green and David Asher – frequently complained to me of the absence of practically oriented analyses of the impact of historical memory on international relations and further encouraged me to continue with the topic.

In the course of my research, I have accumulated many debts. I owe special thanks to the Japan Foundation and the Center for Global Partnership, which

at a crucial juncture provided me with the funds to take time off from my research and concentrate on my writing. I am also grateful to Professor Jitsuo Tsuchiyama of Aoyama University in Tokyo for inviting me as a visiting lecturer and arranging a number of interviews and conversations with knowledgeable people. Innumerable people helped me at different stages in my research. I owe a particularly deep debt to Togo Kazuhiko, formerly Japan's ambassador to Holland and currently professor at Kyoto Sangyo University; Dr. Karl Kaiser, formerly head of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Aussenpolitik and now lecturer at the Kennedy School at Harvard; and Dr. Thomas Novotny of the Austrian embassy in Washington, DC. Their perspectives as both scholars and practitioners were invaluable. Togo Kazuhiko in particular has been extraordinarily generous in providing support and guidance during my work on this topic. I am also indebted to some of my earlier interlocutors on German and Japanese foreign policy, especially Okazaki Hisahiko, Hata Ikuhiko, and Michael Stuermer.

During this period I was also invited to a number of workshops and conferences where I had the opportunity to present my ideas to knowledgeable audiences of scholars, journalists, and former policy makers. I owe special thanks in this regard to Jitsuo Tsuchiyama of Aoyama University, Martina Timmerman at the UN University in Tokyo, Eric Langenbacher and Yossi Schain at Georgetown University, Tsuyoshi Hasegawa of Santa Barbara University, Rogers Peterson of MIT, Lillian Gardner-Feldman of the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, Ito Kenichi of the Japan Forum on International Relations, Jim Hollifield, director of the Tower Center at Southern Methodist University, and Gi-Wook Shin and Dan Sneider at the Shorenstein Center at Stanford. To both the organizers and to the many participants of these events, I wish to express my thanks for their thoughts and suggestions, as well as for an opportunity to publish some of my early work on this topic. I also thank Amy Catalinac and Shin Fujihira at the U.S.-Japan program at Harvard for arranging a smaller but very useful study group at Harvard University. Particular thanks are owed to Ide Hiroko for helping proofread the drafts of the chapters on Asia and catching mistakes in my transliteration of Japanese words.

Many colleagues in and around the Boston area have been the source of constant inspiration to me. Alexis Dudden, Yinan He, Jennifer Lind, Francisca Seraphim, and Catherine Yeh in particular were extraordinarily helpful and comradely in helping me think through the many complex issues involved in the study of historical memory. Ezra Vogel and Richard Samuels both generously agreed to read complete drafts of the book manuscript and offered plenty of both encouragement and constructive criticism. I cannot express the depth of my gratitude to these two extraordinarily accomplished and generous scholars. They truly are what one calls in Japanese my *Onshi* (teachers to whom one owes lifelong obligation).

Special thanks are also in order to Lew Bateman at Cambridge University Press, who was extraordinarily supportive of this project and who both wisely

and patiently helped guide it to its conclusion. I also wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their careful reading of the manuscript and for their many thoughtful and often very useful comments.

Finally I want to thank the members of my family, my wife Sucharita and my children, Alex and Diya, who lived through their own history during the long and laborious completion of this project. I also want to thank my parents, Peter and Brigitte Berger, who shared with me their own historical memories and in a very real way are the origins of my fascination with the past. It is to them I wish to dedicate this book.

1

Politics and Memory in an Age of Apology

We live in an age of apology and recrimination. Over the past two decades, the world has witnessed an unprecedented outpouring of expressions of contrition by political leaders for past injustices their countries are held responsible for. At the same time, there has been an upsurge in demands for apologies, restitution, and a variety of forms of compensation on the behalf of groups and nations that feel they have been victimized. The Federal Republic of Germany may well be the paradigmatic example of this trend. More than sixty years after the end of World War II, it continues to wrestle with the legacies of the Third Reich, offering long-overdue compensation to the hundreds of thousands of former slave laborers while arguing with the governments of Poland and the Czech Republic over how to commemorate the millions of ethnic Germans who were driven out of Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the war.[1] Germany might seem a special case in this regard, burdened as it is by an especially terrible history. Yet other examples abound: the bitter disputes between Russia and its neighbors over how to view the Soviet Union,[2] the disagreement between Israelis and Palestinians over whether the Arab population in Israel had fled or were driven from their homes in 1947,[3] or repeated accusations in Asia that Japan

[1] For a more complete discussion and list of references, see Chapter 2.

[2] For a general discussion of the formation of Russian accounts of World War II, see James Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Memory* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). A recent example of the way in which these disputes are affecting Russia's relations to its former satellites is provided by Lithuania and Estonia's decision to boycott the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of Russia's victory over Nazi Germany. See Roger Cohen, "1945's Legacy: A Terror Defeated, Another Arrives," *New York Times*, May 15, 2005, available at http://www.genocidewatch.org/opinion1945slegacy15may05.htm. On the European reaction to the trial in Turkey of Orhan Pamuk for his comments on the massacres, see the comments of the Council of the European Union, available at http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/cfsp/88108.pdf, as well as the editorial comment on the trial from *New York Times*, January 31, 2006, available at http://www.ahiworld.com/pdfs/020306_editorial.pdf.

[3] On the importance of lost territory to Palestinian national identity Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of

has failed to apologize adequately for its history of atrocity and aggression before 1945,[4] and the list could well be extended almost ad infinitum.

That the past and how it is represented is of political importance is nothing new. Rulers have long realized George Orwell's dictum, "Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past."[5] What is novel about the current situation, however, is the degree to which history and memory have become contested, both domestically and internationally. In the past, states, by and large, have been able to promote laudatory depictions of their history by suppressing or driving under ground dissident, critical narratives, at least in the realm of public discourse. Under the modern Westphalian system of juridically independent, sovereign states, governments were given the right to do so without interference from outside actors. Yet in many liberal democracies, the dark and negative aspects of their national history have today become accepted, even required, parts of how the past is depicted. For instance, it has become de rigueur now not only for German school teachers and politicians to discuss the Holocaust and the crimes of the Third Reich but for their counterparts in France, the United States, or Australia to discuss – respectively – the atrocities committed by the Vichy government, the horrors of American slavery and racism, and the systematic abuse of indigenous Australian peoples. Whereas in the past history was written by the victors, today – as Elazar Barkan has pointed out – the victims have a say as well.[6]

Scholars have devised a number of explanations for the worldwide emergence of this phenomenon. Undoubtedly, a major factor has been the increased pluralization and democratization of modern political systems that allows for the expression of a broader range of different views regarding the past and has created a preference for a legalized settlement of historical wrongs.[7] Likewise, the spread of human rights norms throughout the international system has encouraged groups and individuals to pursue issues of historical justice. The victims of past injustices are supported by a growing network of international institutions and nongovernmental groups, such as the International Criminal Court and Amnesty International, who wish to help them recover from their trauma and to deter the reoccurrence of similar abuses in the future.[8] Other

Pennsylvania Press, 1998) and Robert Bower, *Palestinian Refugees: Mythology, Identity and the Search for Peace* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Press, 2003).

[4] See Chapter 5 of this volume for a more detailed discussion.

[5] George Orwell, *1984*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), p. 32.

[6] Elazar Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. XVII–XVIII.

[7] On the impact of diversity, see Melissa Nobles, *The Politics of Apology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). On the democratic penchant to pursue historical justice issues through legal means, see David Bass, *To Stay the Hand of Vengeance: International War Crimes Tribunals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[8] On the impact of human rights norms and the increased trend to ascribe rights not only to individuals, but to groups, see Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations*, ibid. On the importance of pursuing historical justice issues for the sake of helping their victims, see Martha Minow, *Between*

factors that could be pointed to include the transformation of how society remembers the past thanks to changes in the technology of data collection and dissemination,[9] the functional need to create identities on the basis of universal principles in an increasingly pluralistic, multicultural world,[10] and the singular impact of the Holocaust on contemporary politics and culture.[11]

Regardless of the underlying reasons for its emergence, it is clear that we are witnessing the emergence of an international trend toward apology and contrition. What is less clear, however, is why the phenomenon is so unevenly spread. Although guilt has become officially institutionalized on a global basis, it has not done so everywhere, in the same way at the same time, with the same results. Whereas the leaders of some countries express contrition for the past, others continue to deny that they have anything to apologize for. Whereas some countries offer generous compensation to former victims, others restrict themselves to offering only token apologies. Although, in some cases, apologies and efforts at reconciliations seem to lead to more stable interstate relations, in other cases any progress that has been made remains tentative and short lived. In short, the past has been politicized as never before, and the question of what kind of historical narrative (what will be referred to here as the "official historical narrative") a state chooses to promote has become a salient feature of both domestic and international politics.

Uncertainty reigns as well over the question of what the practical implications of this phenomenon may be. With some notable exceptions,[12] mainstream international relations and political science has tended to be dismissive, regarding questions of history and culture as essentially symbolic sideshows. Instead, most scholars – and many policy makers as well – have preferred to focus on the more concrete forces believed to really drive politics, such as the balance of power and considerations of material interests. The overheated passions that are stoked by fights over history tend to be viewed as either ephemeral – with little lasting impact on political affairs – or

Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1998).

[9] Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Pimlico, 1994).

[10] Jeffrey K. Olick and Brenda Coughlin, "The Politics of Regret: Analytical Frames," in John Torpey, ed., *Politics and the Past: On Repairing Historical Injustices* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), pp.38–57.

[11] Geoffrey H. Hartman, ed., *Holocaust Remembrances: The Shapes of Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

[12] See for instance David Art, *The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Eric Langenbacher and Yossi Schain, eds., *Power and the Past: Collective Memory and International Relations* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010); Yinan He, *The Search for Reconciliation: Sino-Japanese and German-Polish Relations Since World War II* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Jennifer Lind, *Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); Jan Werner Műller, ed., *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Melissa Nobles, *The Politics of Apology*, op. cit.