



*Divergent Memories: Opinion Leaders and the Asia-Pacific War* by Gi-Wook Shin and Daniel Sneider.

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The history of World War II in the Asia-Pacific theater is so hotly contested as to make scholarly consensus impossible. Gi-Wook Shin and Daniel Sneider, both of Stanford University's Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, enter the debate with a thorough study of the vastly different Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and American national memories of the Pacific war and their progressions over time. *Divergent Memories* is at once both thought-provoking and, at times, frustrating.

Shin and Sneider devote nearly one-half of their book (i.e., sections I-II) to defining and examining the effects of public history, national elites, and democratic institutions and values—or the lack thereof—on perceptions of the war and wartime events. They begin by taking readers to a museum in China near the Marco Polo Bridge, the epicenter of the Sino-Japanese War, to show the centrality of resistance to invasion in the Chinese national memory. Similarly, Seoul's notorious Japanese-built Seodaemun Prison is selected to demonstrate Korean "victimization at the hands of cruel invaders" (85). As for the Japanese, the authors illustrate the divided nature of their commemorations of the war: Tokyo's Yushukan Museum, on the grounds of the Yasukuni Shrine, highlights "acts of heroism and self-defense" (103), while the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum embraces "a narrative of victimization" (109).

After a discussion of Pearl Harbor and the emblematic *Arizona* Memorial, with their lessons about America's "need for preparedness" (147), the authors move on to the far more comprehensive, but less well known, National Museum of the Pacific War. Located in Fredericksburg, Texas, hometown of Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz, the museum offers visitors an examination of the war's origins and often forgotten battles as well as the firebombing of Tokyo and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, actions that make "the war in the Pacific ... an uncomfortable war" (148) for many Americans. On the whole, the examples of commemoration selected here reveal the sharply contrasting memories that continue to inhibit reconciliation between the war's participants.

Besides charting the physical representations of dominant wartime memories, Shin and Sneider identify groups of citizens within each country who, they believe, exemplify conflicting remembrances. Interviewees from the People's Republic of China evince their nation's collective memory of victimization and vital role in defeating Japan and the Axis coalition. While surprisingly divided in ascribing blame for the war, they overwhelmingly approve of the use of atomic weapons against Japan. The testimony of Korean interviewees, meanwhile, shows that the end of authoritarian rule in the 1980s allowed a broadening of historical inquiry into the previously eschewed topics of collaboration and positive "socioeconomic changes under Japanese rule" (73).

The authors find far less unanimity among Japanese interviewees. For example, while Japan's contemporary extreme right denies the very fact of the 1937 Nanking Massacre, progressives maintain that "Japan's development over this past half-century is *built* on regret for the way Japan acted" (132-33). This divergence of historical memory supports the authors' contention that democratic societies exhibit much more varied wartime national memories than their authoritarian counterparts. But the ev-

idence from the authors' interviews with a Japanese American and a Chinese American suggest the formation of varied historical memories may be the product of a heterogeneous society.

The results of interviews with subjects chosen to represent American memory are both confusing and disappointing. However interesting their views, neither the late Iris Chang, author of the *Rape of Nanking*, nor Pulitzer Prize winning historian John Dower hold memories the authors characterize as "still largely frozen into the twin images of Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima, with a hazy sense of the grim combat that bridges those two moments in our past" (157). The story of Congressman Mike Honda's internment at Camp Amache, California, helps explain the "feelings of doubt and guilt [that] tug uncomfortably at the corners of the American mind" (149). But here again, while Honda focuses on reconciliation, the authors stress his efforts to induce Tokyo to own up to its wartime atrocities. Only Lester Tenney's story spans the full spectrum of historical memory concerning the war's origins, Japanese wartime cruelty, and the dropping of the atomic bombs. In short, the investigation of American memory of the Pacific war is incomplete at best.

The third section of the book concerns the principal sources of wartime historical controversy, starting with Japanese colonialism and use of wartime labor and comfort women. Military historians will find much of interest in the authors' analysis of the prevailing view in China of the nation's decisive role in the Allied victory, something downplayed in Japanese and Western histories.

Shin and Sneider's treatment of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) and the 1951 San Francisco Treaty are particularly valuable. They find that, while the United States and Japan agree that the Pacific war grew out of the Sino-Japanese War, American historians "overwhelmingly portray Japan as locked into a course of aggression" (233), and the Japanese emphasize their "desperate diplomatic efforts to avert war" (234). Americans view the conflict as a contest between good and evil, while the Japanese see it as "a monumental mistake in strategic thinking and judgment" (248). The authors note, too, that conspiracy theories "are consigned to the fringes of American wartime history memory" (237), while in Japan right-wing or "conservative revisionist" historiography exerts a far stronger, popular influence.

*Divergent Memories* also presents a satisfying review of the historiography of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as a consideration of how the bombs produced a "victim consciousness" (254) that allowed "many Japanese to absolve themselves of responsibility for Japanese atrocities" (261). But the authors offer a far more compelling explanation for "Japanese victimhood"—"failure to confront the issue of Emperor Hirohito's war responsibility" begot a "military clique thesis' ... [that] pardoned the Japanese of guilt" (270–71). Shin and Sneider also have valuable insights into IMTFE's decision to absolve Emperor Hirohito and Article 14(b) of the San Francisco Treaty, which shielded postwar Japan from lawsuits filed by its wartime victims.

*Divergent Memories* closes with a sobering yet hopeful assessment of the prospects for genuine reconciliation in Northeast Asia. Despite the inherent barriers posed by the San Francisco Treaty, the Cold War, nationalism, and earlier failures to achieve a postwar rapprochement, the authors are guardedly optimistic that the spread of democracy and economic interdependence will produce greater tolerance and mutual understanding.

The book does have its shortcomings. Though ostensibly a study of the war memories of opinion leaders, it wanders into discussions of popular sites of wartime memorialization and high school and college textbooks. Unfortunately, it also reads like a coauthored book. For example, one author states (wrongly) that "Joseph Stalin joined ... in issuing the Potsdam Declaration" (138), the other (correctly) that "leaders of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Nationalist Government of China together issued the Potsdam Declaration" (250). There are occasional questionable or misleading historical judgments; for instance, that "Almost one of out [sic] every five American military deaths in World

War II took place in the Philippines” (187). Such slips do not, however, detract from the overall quality of the work.

*Divergent Memories*' greatest strength is its persuasive demonstration that all the disparate memories it explores have been deeply felt and taken as accurate by certain segments of a given population. The stubborn persistence of those views of the past makes true reconciliation both sorely needed and painfully elusive.