

Escaping War Crime Reflections of WWII: Japan's Postwar Narratives through the Lens of Imperial Preservation, Remnants of Militarism, and Education

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Abstract

This article presents systematic research regarding the factors that led to Japan's evasion of war crime after WWII. There are three major factors behind such evasion: the preservation of the imperial system, which provided legitimacy and a symbolic foundation for right-wing forces; the revival of militarist ideology and elites under the conditions of the Cold War; and the education system of Japan, which shaped the country's "victim identity". The combination has portrayed Japan's victimhood while hindering its aggression and war crime responsibility. By analyzing these factors through historiographical review and the professional concepts of memory studies, this research article demonstrates how Japan's selective remembrance became institutionalized in Japanese society and politics.

Keywords

Japan, East Asia, postwar narrative, WWII, militarism

1. Literature Review

1.1 Background

World War II is the largest conflict throughout human history and involves more than 100 million people from over 30 countries and the loss of innocent lives. As a major force of the fascist camp and the aggressor to China and most parts of East and Southeast Asia during WWII, Japan not only rejected reflecting on its war crime but also never officially acknowledged its responsibility while intentionally justifying its wartime conduct. The aggressive wars that Japan initiated and the war crimes it committed have become a matter of widespread concern in contemporary scholarly discussions and the international community. Japan's postwar attitude toward historical reflection has appeared to be hesitant, divided, and highly contentious. Germany gradually established an institutionalized culture of reflection through the Nuremberg Trials and launched a series of comprehensive "denazification" measures that included the process of European integration and official apologies. Japan's trajectory regarding the identical problem, however, has been markedly different: from Emperor Hirohito evading direct responsibility in his "Imperial Rescript on the Termination of the War" to the United States strategically supporting right-wing forces during the Cold War and its postwar education system, which consistently emphasized Japan's "victim history" while hiding the actual history of invasion with crucial war crimes.

According to recent scholarly discussions, the general trend focuses on debates over Japan's selective narratives and historical memory. In Japan, scholars have focused on Japan's wartime conduct; specifically, scholars have sought to confront Japan's wartime aggression in a direct manner and documented atrocities that include the appealing Nanjing Massacre and the "comfort women" system in token to the promotion of war crime reflection and official apologies to the victim countries; however, conservative scholars continue to persist in the selective narratives and the historical memory shaped by Japan, with a firm intention to perceive Japan as a victim of the war, primarily through the harms of the atomic bombs and postwar occupations, while minimizing the extent of Japan's wartime aggressions. This current situation of internal scholarly debate in Japan is reflected in textbook controversies and disputes over official visits to commemorating sites such as the representative Yasukuni Shrine. To date, Japan's historical narrative has consistently been marked by significant concealment, which has distorted the collective memory as the experience of the past generation, since collective memory can be reconstructed as time passes. This has not only impacted Japan's domestic historical education but also provoked dissatisfaction and skepticism from victim countries such as China and South Korea in foreign relations. Those are contemporary percussions that echo historical memory, further reflecting the wounds of victim countries in East Asia and their desire for justice.

In sum, the problem of Japan's postwar reflection is not merely a matter of historical record but also in relation to how countries choose to interpret and transmit their history across generations. In this context, it is crucial to remember the past and transmit history correctly by objectively reflecting and interpreting the past. However, Japan's selective narratives and political propaganda, which are integrated into multiple aspects of its society, have produced fragmented information that complicates both domestic identity formation and regional diplomacy in East Asia. Thus, it is important to first analyze the factors behind Japan's evasion to take objective reflection into account.

1.2 Objectives

This research aims to delve into the reasons behind Japan's rejection to acknowledge and reflect upon its wartime atrocities. It analyzes how the postwar preservation of the imperial system enabled the Japanese royal family to become the spiritual stronghold of right-wing forces and support their political movements, which enhanced the public recognition of Japan as a victim, thereby indirectly obscuring war responsibility and how ideological remnants of Japanese militarism can persist and even resur within the Cold War framework.

1.3 Methodologies

This study applies a combination of research methodologies of historiographical analysis and interdisciplinary memory studies; the combination as a whole effectively examines Japan's postwar narratives and its evasion of responsibility for wartime conduct.

The methodology of historiographical analysis is used to situate this research within a broader range of scholarship on Japan's postwar reflection through engaging with articles written by Japanese, Chinese, and Western scholars that systematically integrate multiple perspectives in the literature. This methodology also clarifies how academic narratives have evolved over time and how they reflect on the topic in their ideological context.

By the historiographical analysis methodology, this research is not only a synthesis of previous scholarship but also a contribution to the ongoing debate related to Japan's role as an aggressor in World War II and the construction of its war memory. For the second methodology, the interdisciplinary memory studies approach is applied to analyze the complexity of Japan's selective remembrance in an objective manner while obtaining a better interpretation of the subjective standpoint of Japan through multiple aspects. With the combination of diverse concepts, including collective memory, historical memory, and transitional justice, this methodology perceives memory as a multilayered process that is shaped by multiple aspects, as it acknowledges that memory is not purely a reconstruction of the past but is more likely to be a societal phenomenon that is gradually shaped and developed. Such an investigation of memory highlights the influential factors of the preservation of imperial institutions, the Cold War revival of militarism, and the shaping of Japan's victimhood in education, which institutionalize Japan's evasion of war crime responsibility.

The combination of these methodologies ensured the depth of this research and enabled it to move beyond purely descriptive content; instead, it states the mechanisms through which Japan has constructed and

introduces the factors that resulted in the evasion of war crime reflection in a systematic manner with comprehensive investigations.

1.4 Research questions

This study seeks to address the following core questions:

- Why was the imperial system preserved after the war, and how did this influence Japan's historical reflection?
- How did the Cold War framework facilitate the resurgence of Japanese right-wing forces and militarist remnants?
- Why does Japan's education system emphasize Japan's "victim identity" while avoiding presenting information about its war crime conduct to students in transmitting historical memory across generations?

1.5 Research values

This research has significant empirical and practical value as a systematic analysis of the factors that caused such a phenomenon that contributes to the current scholarly discussion of Japan's evasion of war crime after WWII.

1.6 Thesis Statement

The fact that Japan has no reflection on the country's war crime that was committed during WWII is the result of three major factors. First, Preservation of the imperial institution (or known as *tennōsei*) caused the unpursued war crime liability of the Japanese emperor Hirohito and fostered a national victimhood narrative, which preserved the stronghold of the right-wing forces and provided long-lasting legitimacy for them. Second, the remnants of militarist ideologies are far from being eradicated and were revived during the Cold War by U.S. strategic interests. Third but significant factor, Japan's education system has reinforced a "victim's identity" for Japan in WWII while obscuring its responsibility as an aggressor.

1.7 Ethical Concerns

This research is relevant to historically and politically sensitive issues from WWII, including war crimes and contested narratives of responsibility. To address these concerns, several measures are adopted while conducting the research. First, all primary and secondary materials listed in the bibliography are publicly available, ensuring that no restricted information is used. On the other hand, the study will strive to present perspectives with accuracy and fairness while avoiding unnecessary graphic descriptions that may cause discomfort to readers. As the third measure, the different perspectives from Chinese, Japanese, and Western scholarships are incorporated and presented in an objective narrative to reduce the risk of biased statements for a fair research outcome.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Key Concepts

2.1.1 Postwar Reflection

A set of practices that a country interprets its responsibility regarding a war and learns from its wartime conduct. A postwar reflection may encompass the law and policy, public narratives, and education of that country. These are all societal aspects that can illustrate the extent and way that a country reflects and unfolds over time, as elites and the public renegotiate the meaning of the past.

2.1.2 Collective Memory

Collective memory is the shared pool of memories, including knowledge and information held by a group of people who shapes the group's identity. In other words, it is how a certain group of people interpret history. It is constantly reconstructed and transmitted within that group for generations.

2.1.3 Historical Memory

Historical memory is a process in which institutions (governments, societies, academic authorities, etc.) frame and narrate history. It is inherently selective and emphasizes certain events or points of view that the institution intends to exaggerate, while marginalizing any contradictory views or events that are contradictory to the promotion of the institution, primarily for political and ideological needs as propagandas. Notably, historical memory is easily confounded with collective memory, but the British sociologist Paul Connerton perceived that historical memory, as the content of war recollections, holds particular value and significance for ethnic groups' sense of identity rather than a society's collective memory, which serves as the vessel for preserving and transmitting history (Zheng, 2016).

2.1.4 Transitional Justice

Transitional justice refers to the set of measures that societies adopt to address large-scale human rights violations committed during periods of political and societal hardship when facing unexpected situations such as social conflict, dictatorship, or political repression, as they transit toward peace and democracy.

3. Japan's Postwar Memory Trajectory

3.1 Imperial Preservation and the Emperor System

First, Japan's evasion of its war crime responsibility was attributed to the preservation of the imperial system (*tennōsei*), which provided a legal basis and functioned as the stronghold for the right-wing forces. Immediately after the surrender of Japan, the U.S. was driven by concerns over political stability and the effectiveness of its management, especially with respect to its political stability and the decision to allow Emperor Hirohito to keep his royalty a symbolic figure rather than prosecuting him to the Tokyo Trial as a war criminal. This decision positioned the emperor from an active war criminal who initiated the invasion and cruel wartime conduct to China into a peace-seeking monarch, which also protected him from convictions while shifting wartime responsibility to Japanese military leaders such as Hideki Tojo and political leaders such as Kuniaki Koiso.

3.1.1 Emperor's Pardon and Its Lasting Influence

It is obvious that all war criminals should be judged equally, while the historical fact demonstrated that although most Japanese military and political leaders are convicted, the most representative figure of Emperor Hirohito has sadly escaped from judgment, which is an unfair part of the Tokyo Trial and represents a failure to pronounce the deserved and righteous sentence.

The Japanese scholar Maruyama Masao (1914 - 1996), an influential political scientist and theorist in postwar Japan, asserts that the preservation of the emperor system (*tennōsei*) was not merely a symbolic institution but was more likely to be the ideological core that legitimized Japan's wartime militarism. Moreover, he argued that the preservation of the emperor system after 1945 perpetuated a political culture of dependency on the imperial family that rendered the Japanese people "vegetative", which made them accustomed to obedience and lacking the sense of individual subjectivity (*shutaisei*) that is necessary for democratic citizenship (Barshay, 1992). This shows that even though imperial preservation is symbolic in nature, the actual influence of the system in Japanese society never remains symbolic. In fact, it raised the obedience of Japanese people to the imperial family with militarist traditions, which discouraged them from thinking critically with subjectivity and following the one-sided narratives that Japan intends to convey.

By constitutionalizing the monarchy in Japan's 1947 Constitution as the "symbol of the State and of the unity of the People", Japan has successfully preserved imperial legitimacy under its new legal framework. This event not only maintains the cultural heritage of the throne but also provides Japanese right-wing forces with a symbolic foundation that resists a deeper confrontation with wartime atrocities. On the basis of this situation,

the right-wing forces promoted militarism in postwar Japan with imperial protections and the high conformity of the general public to the imperial family, and the revival of militarism in Japan became a natural consequence.

3.1.2 U.S. Decision to Preserve the Emperor as a Symbol

After the end of WWII in 1945, one of the most consequential decisions of the allied forces was to preserve the imperial system rather than abolish it. This led to the ruling government of Japan remaining identical to the imperial Japan that invaded China and other East Asian and Southeast Asian countries, and Japan thereby lost its opportunity to become a republic.

At this point, the United States was motivated by concerns regarding stability and considered that prosecuting the Japanese emperor Hirohito could destabilize Japan and hinder democratization efforts. As a result, the emperor was reframed as a peace-seeking figure who had guided the country to surrender; meanwhile, his wartime responsibility was shifted to a narrow group of military leaders in the Tokyo Trial, with the most representative military leader being Hideki Tojo (Yang, 2015). By constitutionalizing the emperor as a “symbol of the State and unity of the People” that created a political structure that maintained the monarchy while severing its direct governing powers. This decision is both a reflection of U.S. strategic calculations in the early Cold War and an intermediary that enabled the continuation of imperial support for right-wing forces that encouraged them to become legitimized foundations (Jiang, 2005). The American historian in modern Japanese history and imperialism Herbert P. Bix commented that imperial preservation was a conscious fabrication of political myth rather than a neutral compromise. MacArthur and U.S. officials shielded Hirohito from prosecution and censored damaging evidence to portray the Japanese emperor as a peace-seeking monarch (Bix, 2008). This is a direct illustration of how preservation contributed to the evasion of the wartime responsibility of Japan.

By shielding the emperor Hirohito from prosecution, such an allowance enabled the most centripetal figure of Japan’s wartime responsibility to escape judgment and additionally provided the foundation for the growth of selective narratives of history in which the emperor was shaped as a hero rather than an instigator of the aggressive war. In doing so, the occupation legitimized the continuation of imperial traditions under guise to enable the growth of right-wing forces along with the preserved ideological stronghold and reduced Japan’s ability to conduct a thorough reflection regarding its war crimes.

3.1.3 Consequences for War Responsibility Narratives

Analyzing the results of Japan’s narratives on this topic will be useful for understanding how the preservation of the imperial system can contribute to the evasion of wartime responsibility. The preservation of the imperial system had profound consequences for Japan’s postwar historical consciousness. By protecting the emperor from judgment, the allied forces reinforced the cultural logic of loyalism and allowed Shinto-inspired reverence for the monarchy to persist in the political life of Japan (Yang, 2015; Qin, 2015).

In practice, this act has isolated right-wing forces from delegitimization and granted them a symbolic figure that supports and consolidates them. It also promoted the narrative of selective memory in which ordinary citizens and the imperial household were shaped as victims of militarist manipulation and allied atomic bombings rather than as participants in the aggressive war. Over time, this narrative provided the ideological grounds for the growth of right-wing forces in Japanese politics to a dominant status, where parties sympathetic to the imperial family repeatedly resisted deeper confrontation with wartime atrocities (Zhang, 2017). Unlike Germany, the country that also belonged to the fascist camp during WWII but dismissed its authoritarian institutions and facilitated systemic reckoning, Japan’s retention of the imperial system entrenched ambivalence and enabled the persistence of revisionist tendencies in Japan’s politics and education.

Moreover, the forgiveness of the emperor has shaped the war responsibility narrative in which Japan was portrayed as a victim rather than an aggressor, either of manipulative military leaders or of the devastation of atomic bombings. This deliberate portrayal is described in the article, which entrenched a selective memory that downplayed responsibility for atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre and the “comfort women” system. The survival of the *tennōsei* thus institutionalized a form of ambivalent remembrance: while outwardly adopting democratic reforms, Japan internally maintained a symbolic order that hindered thorough reflection on its wartime aggression (Zhang, 2017). In this sense, the imperial preservation of Japan was a political choice

that functioned as the cornerstone of postwar Japan's evasion of wartime responsibility by providing the right-wing forces a stronghold to rest in and function as support for militarist ideology promotion.

3.2 Cold War Realignment

Indeed, the preservation of the Japanese imperial system increased the power of the right-wing forces, but it is crucial to admit the nature of the preservation and the ideology that they promoted was militarism, which penetrated Japanese society during WWII and was also the ideology that the symbolic figure of the imperial family spread as bailment for. Therefore, a comprehensive interpretation of the history of revival for the ideology of militarism by the Cold War became essential. The second factor behind Japan's evasion of war crime responsibility was attributed to the remnants of militarism and its revival during the Cold War, when Japan's militarist structures were not thoroughly dismissed immediately after the end of WWII in 1945; instead, their remnants were reconstituted under new institutions.

3.2.1 Incomplete Dismantling of Militarist Structures

Although the Occupation of the United States initially investigated and affixed the wartime responsibility of Japanese military and political elites, with a clear intention of dismantling the remaining militarism in postwar Japan, these efforts remained shallow and did not address the militarist structures thoroughly. This phenomenon can be attributed to the presence of numerous political and military figures with wartime connections that soon returned to their original positions, and many of them served only a short period of jail time, regardless of the fact that the war crimes they committed caused countless innocent people's deaths. Moreover, the establishment of the self-defense force (SDF) in 1954, with an initial force of 150,000 personnel in active service, was officially announced as a defensive measure of Japan under U.S. political pressure, which represented a rebrand continuation of prewar military traditions of Japan rather than a decisive break (Qin, 2015).

Declaring the defensive nature of the SDF on paper is obviously never sufficient because the core goal is to dismantle the militarist structures of the former Japanese Imperial Army and eradicate the root of militarism to avoid any potential risk that may cause its revival. Therefore, this incomplete dismantling not only left behind the people who had participated in the Japanese war crimes during WWII but also justified the militarist ideology that was easily adapted to the postwar society of Japan, while the combination of identical militarist networks and political alliances enabled the revival of militarism directly from its remnants in WWII. In this case, it is discernible that postwar Japan was not established on a clean ground with a thorough break even when the U.S. dedicated efforts to eradicating militarism and its remnants, which also shows the persistency of such an ideology. Through the structures that carried significant continuation inherited from the prewar era, the creation of the SDF further reinforced militarist influence and took advantage of its organizational patterns and symbolic traditions from the Japanese Imperial Army. This presence of wartime institutions contributed to the avoidance of war crime reflection and the dilution of responsibility; meanwhile, the historical memory that Japan intended to promote became dominant. As a result of such a presence, Japan's capacity for genuine reflection has weakened and gradually entrenched a selective narrative of victimhood, which has enabled the shadows of its wartime past to continue shaping its postwar politics and its historical memory.

In general, the incomplete dismantling of Japan's militarist structures by the U.S. Occupation created a postwar Japanese society that inherited significant continuations of militarist ideology, and the political system was also filled with politicians and military leaders from WWII as well as war criminals. By allowing former elites to retain power on the political stage and keeping imperial military traditions in the SDF, the occupation was out of control with the growing and reviving militarism that enabled Japan's wartime aggression.

3.2.2 From Reverse Purge to Rehabilitation

As the tensions of the Cold War escalated, the top priorities of the U.S. shifted from the demilitarization of Japan to political stability and anti-communist, which also led to the redistribution of the resources and strategic focus of Washington from Japan to the Communist camp. This shift opened the door for the rehabilitation of former wartime military leaders and politicians, with many of these figures entering the newly formed Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which enabled them to depart from the militarist ideology and its remnants, ensuring that conservative dominance in the political system could grow (Zhang, 2017).

Their return also meant that strands of prewar nationalist and militarist ideology were woven into the very fabric of postwar Japanese conservatism. The “reverse purge” made this rehabilitation particularly visible through the example of Nobusuke Kishi, the former prime minister of the Japanese cabinet, who once jailed as a suspected war criminal and was released in 1950, later went on to become the prime minister of Japan in 1957, whereas Mamoru Shigemitsu, the former minister of foreign affairs who was convicted at Tokyo Trials, was also released in the same year of 1950 and soon returned to political life. Their re-obtainment of political positions reflected that the prewar nationalist and militarist ideology was woven directly into the fabric of postwar Japanese conservatism. The Japanese political scientist Yoshikazu Sakamoto (1934 - 2014) stated that the fact that enabled war criminals escaped from prosecutions to court resulted in the long-term persistence of unresolved historical injustices, with the end of the Cold War and the wave of democratization across Asian countries, including Japan. The problem of how to deal with responsibility toward the ignored who are abandoned by the Japanese government became crucial and emergent for justice, as it was taken up by the very victims of Japanese militarist brutalities who had been silenced under these dictatorial regimes. This is also the problem of compensation for the victims of the war, such as the “comfort women” and the victims of forced labor (Sakamoto, 2005).

This pattern shows that people with wartime backgrounds were largely involved in postwar rebuilding, with their tight networks leading to militarism. This phenomenon is a political compromise made by the United States, extenuatingly because the stress from the communist camp and the distribution of attention and resources are rearranged. As a result, the original goals of democratization and demilitarization were gradually subordinated to the reconstruction of a Japan with imperial traditions and an anticommunist ally in East Asia. The return of former wartime elites was justified as a pragmatic necessity, but it is a compromise in nature, and Japan took this chance to avoid reflecting war crime responsibility.

3.2.3 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and Anti-Communist Alignment

Since the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, which formally tied Japan’s survival to the U.S. alliance, accountability for wartime responsibility was sidelined, as Japan was remade into a bulwark against communism in East Asia during the Cold War. Although the treaty formally required Japan to accept the verdicts of the Tokyo Trial under Article 11, in practice, this obligation was diluted by Washington’s compromises, which allowed wartime elites to regain their legitimacy or even return to their former positions in the government. These developments marked a turning point in which the Cold War imperatives abandoned the pursuit of justice but embedded the continuation of militarism from the past into the foundations of postwar Japan.

While Washington was actively encouraging amendments and participated in the afterwar re-establishment for Japan, the country became more dependent on the U.S. politically and thus had more room to avoid the reflection of wartime responsibility and more reasons to justify its conduct under the current affair at that time of the Cold War. Moreover, since it was just shortly after WWII, there was still a remnant of right-wing forces in Japan that insisted on promoting militarist ideology in the general public and in Japan’s political stage. Thus, right-wing forces have found reliable political coverage from the U.S. and are able to advocate their military revival and strive for greater autonomy in defense affairs (Qin, 2015). This strategic realignment effectively subordinated historical reckoning and Japan’s reflection of war crime responsibility to geopolitical necessity. Furthermore, this treaty also motivated the establishment of the SDF with militarist traditions in 1954, which was officially justified as a defensive power but inherited prewar military traditions and was the continuation of the Japanese Imperial Army in nature. While Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan formally renounces war as a sovereign right of the country forever for the aspiration to an international peace with justice and order (The Constitution of Japan, 1946), the reinterpretation of this clause under U.S. influence allowed Japan to develop its SDF to a more militarized power than Japan’s defensive needs, which violates Article 9’s promise that any war potential will never be maintained. The Japanese-American Jurist Dr. Fackler from the University of California College of the Law insists that the SDF indeed violated Article 9’s spirit of the Japanese Constitution, as he explains that the successive reinterpretation of Article 9 was first strict self-defense but was later defined as active self-defense and eventually collective self-defense, which illustrates the phenomenon that Japan has moved further away from pacifism. Moreover, he noted that these shifts of interpretation legitimized the SDF as the power that exceeded the defensive nature and allowed its expansion into overseas peace-keeping and collective self-defense alongside allies (Fackler, 2025). The process of changing the interpretations of Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan is a direct illustration of how this clause’s language

can be stretched beyond its original intent and how the intention of justifying militarist traditions and ideology exists in the SDF.

Thus, the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and the Cold War alignment both illustrated how geopolitical priorities can mitigate the pursuit of justice, as the attention of the United States shifted from managing postwar Japan and judging its war crime responsibility to dealing with communist threats. Through subordinating such a pursuit to strategic necessity, Washington enabled the return of Japan's wartime elites, including politicians and military leaders, back to stage and institutionalized an atmosphere where militarist legacies can endure under the cover of international relationships. This compromise reinforced Japan's dependence on the U.S. and simultaneously granted room for militarism to grow and reinterpreted Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. These are all signs that the impact of this compromise can weaken the chance for Japan to genuinely reflect on its war crime responsibility. This permissive environment, which functioned as the foundation for the growth of right-wing forces, still enabled the militarist ideology to persist in Japanese society even today, where it gradually re-emerged in the country's public discourse and national politics.

3.2.4 Persistence of Militarist Ideology in Contemporary Japanese Society

In present-day Japanese society, the highly permissive environment became an ideal vessel that allowed the militarist ideology to persist implicitly on the surface but is actually influential deeply on society as an entrenched part of the country's political thought. This persistence resulted in the growth of right-wing forces and increased their power in influencing public opinion. One of their major goals is to perceive Japan's war crime responsibility as a mission that liberates East Asia from Western imperialism and establishes a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" that enabled all of East Asia to prosper rather than for the selfish purpose of imperial conquest.

Since the persistence of militarism in Japan left much room for right-wing forces to accommodate, they are able to revive through expanding the population stands with their side and accept the identical ideology and beliefs as they promoted. The textbook controversies also revealed how militarists' narratives crept back into Japan's education system, as the public discourse emphasized Japan's victimhood in the atomic bombings while justifying that the goal of war was "altruism" to establish the "Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" but not invade other countries. As observed, this "victim-centered" memory that comes with justifications for the aggressive nature of war has overshadowed the acknowledgment of atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre or the exploitation of "comfort women" (Zhang, 2017). In this way, militarist ideology has successfully survived as part of the culture of postwar Japan and contributed to the growth of revisionist politics to blend them well into Japanese society in the next decades. The Japanese cultural anthropologist Tomomi Yamaguchi specifically pointed out the persistence of militarist ideology in contemporary Japan, as she stated that right-wing forces mobilized a broad campaign to promote an ideology that rejected the desire to acknowledge the wartime atrocities that Japan conducted in WWII, such as the comfort female system, and they strongly intended to frame these debates as part of "history wars" (*rekishi sensō*) to legitimize revisionist objectives and militarist ideology in contemporary Japanese society (Yamaguchi, 2020). According to Yamaguchi, right-wing forces have dominated domestic textbook controversies and public discourse while actively extending their activism internationally in the U.S. This activism played a reflectional role in showing how militarist ideology can persist in Japanese society today and function as an active and organized political force that influences both public discourse and national politics.

In general, contemporary Japan is a permissive environment that has allowed the militarist ideology to persist beneath the surface and become an entrenched part of the country's political thought; such persistence has fueled the rise of right-wing forces that justified Japan's war crime responsibility as a mission to liberate all of East Asia under the imperial scheme of "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere". The selective narratives, which are filled with revisionist and militarist views, influence both public discourse and national politics, which corresponds to the historical memory that Japan intends to shape. In addition to these political factors that resulted in Japan's evasion of reflection, an important part that shapes public discourse and is also related to national politics is the country's education system, while the historical narratives that Japan intends to convey are also largely dependent on the education system.

3.3 Education System and Historical Narratives

The third factor that explains Japan's evasion of war crime responsibility lies in its education system, which has consistently reinforced a sense of "victimhood" while minimizing the country's role as an aggressor. Through textbooks, curricula, and classroom teaching, generations of Japanese students have grown up with an image of their country as the victim of war rather than as one of its main instigators (Yang, 2015). Education is the key to opening the future of any society and the necessary way to raise the next generation; however, it can also become a powerful tool for political propaganda and spreading subjective ideologies to students when they lack the ability to think independently. In Japan, such a one-sided way of education also played a significant role in shaping the country's innocence through educational propagandas that can be easily seen through textbook content.

3.3.1 Textbook Controversies and the Emphasis on the Victimhood of Japan

It is clear that the Japanese government held the intention of justifying its position through education; correspondingly, the postwar textbooks of schools in Japan at that time placed a strong emphasis on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and were dedicated to presenting the atomic bombings as historical memories of the war (Dower, 1995). In this narrative, the Japanese people appear to be innocent civilians who suffered devastating attacks from the outside world. This narrative exaggerated the tragedy of national suffering but left little room to confront the reality of Japan's invasion of Asia. In many editions, bombing scenes are described in detail, while the broader context of Japan's territorial expansion and aggression during the war are relegated to a few lines of description or left out.

This narrative has been reinforced by conservative forces during the textbook approval process, which encouraged the framing of Japan as a passive victim of American power rather than as an aggressor in Asia (Jiang, 2005). Furthermore, contemporary Japanese textbooks mention the Nanjing Massacre but introduce significant distortions that hide the invasive and devastating nature of the war, with a focus on minimizing the war crime responsibility of Japan. The massacre is typically narrated in obscure and detached languages; for example, perpetrators are referred to impersonally as "the Japanese army", whereas victims are described in human terms. In the context of the Nanjing Massacre, the title is just "Nanjing Incident" (or known as *Nankin Jiken*), which is the direct demonstration of the intention to justify the intrinsic nature of the Nanjing Massacre from a brutal war crime to a regular historical event. This rhetorical imbalance shifted the focus away from war crime responsibility and fostered a sense of distance between contemporary Japanese society and the historical event. In addition, the textbooks often portray the relevant content of Nanjing Massacre as something revealed only after the war and typically by external sources that raised doubts about its authenticity (Barnard, 2001). In support of this, the Japanese historians Yoshiko Nozaki and Mark Selden, specialists in the modern history of East Asia, both addressed that the problem of downplaying the wartime atrocities of Japan that caused text controversies was a measure that right-wing forces impose revisions that minimized Japan's war crime responsibility and emphasized the victimhood of Japan in WWII. As such, numerous words are used in the textbook to make the atrocities seem to be normal historical events, such as replacing the word "aggression" with "advance" in the 1982 version of the textbook when it describes Japan's invasion into China or adding phrases that suggest that the Nanjing Massacre occurred as a result of temporary chaos rather than the atrocities made by the Japanese Imperial Army (Nozaki and Selden, 2013).

In summary, these textbook revisions, which caused controversies, revealed the necessity that Japanese textbooks be shaped systematically to convey the narrative of victimhood while downplaying atrocities. This further reflects Japan's intention to construct a "victim identity" in WWII regardless of the wartime conduct that resulted in atrocities and long-term wounds in real victim countries. The textbooks with such revisions are used in Japan's national curriculum, which taught students distorted history instead of a balanced and honest reflection of the war. The education system often taught a version of history that made Japan appear more as a victim than as an aggressor.

3.3.2 Silences on Comfort Women

At the same time, atrocities, including the organized comfort women system committed by Japan in China and across the victim countries in Asia, are often presented through ambiguous language in the Japanese education system, which is another illustration of the governmental intention to avoid war crime reflection.

Historically, the Japanese Imperial Army forced local Chinese women to fulfill the sexual desires of Japanese soldiers during the war to increase their fighting ability, and the women who served them were called “comfort women”; however, the phenomenon whereby the army provided sexual service to Japanese soldiers was also observed on the Korean Peninsula. In addition to the brutal Nanjing Massacre being described as an “incident”, the coercion of “comfort women” is glossed over or omitted altogether. Such silences are not accidental; they reflect the influence of conservative groups who resist what they call “masochistic history” (Zhang, 2017). Moreover, Professor Edward Vickers at Kyushu University and British historian Mark R. Frost collectively noted that the problem of the silences on comfort women was less a matter of ignorance than deliberate political choice. As a result, the voices of survivors were marginalized, and information concerning the comfort female system was either erased from public history or reframed in depersonalized terms to trim the brutality (Vickers and Frost, 2021). This is another demonstration of the silences on comfort women as designed by Japan to avoid brutal narratives that speak of the truth on the comfort women system and its institutionalized violence. Through erasing or mitigating the suffering of these women, Japanese textbooks and public discourse effectively shifted attention away from the reflection of war crime responsibility, which portrayed this issue as peripheral rather than as a major component of wartime atrocities. Such intentionally designed silences have not only prevented Japanese society from developing a full recognition of its aggressions but also deepened the recognition of the wounds of victim countries, specifically the comfort of women who are victims in this context, where survivors continue to seek acknowledgment and justice. In that sense, the silence surrounding the comfort women is not merely an educational gap but also a political act of historical denial with a selective narrative to shape the historical memory that Japan expects.

This selective narrative, which silenced the fact that the comfort female system has distorted the historical understanding among Japanese students, has contributed to Japan’s strained relationship with China and South Korea, where these episodes remain central to the collective memory of the war.

3.3.3 Intergenerational transmission of ambivalence

A key mechanism for transmitting the selective narrative to the public is the Japanese education system, which is adopted as the intermediary for shaping students’ historical thoughts and interpretations of Japan’s deeds in WWII. While historical memory has passed across generations, this component has caused Japan’s avoidance of war crime reflection to gradually become more entrenched in Japanese society. Education contributes to such transmission intergenerationally; when students are educated by biased information, parents and teachers are willing to educate their sons or daughters about the ideologies that they consider to be right, the identical thoughts that they teach will naturally pass down to their children. With respect to schools, the narratives remained part of Japan’s education system, and the history that students learned at school was the historical memory that the government intended to convey, which ultimately resulted in a lack of reflection on Japan’s invasive history and war crimes. Since then, many Japanese people have never perceived Japan’s wartime conduct as wrongdoing and have followed the information that they learned on the basis of this education system and filled with one-sided opinions.

Specifically, the content that students learned in schools is consistently exposed to narratives that show the suffering of Japan during WWII, with the most representative atomic bombs being cast by the United States, which caused hundreds of thousands of deaths, civilian losses caused by the war, and postwar hardships as unexpected results of the war, while they receive little information about Japan’s aggression in Asia, Japanese students are educated on the basis of one-sided information and a limited narrative that convinced them of Japan’s victimhood (Yang, 2015). This imbalance directly fosters a form of historical ambivalence in which the younger generations acknowledge Japan’s involvement in the war but lack a concrete understanding of its culpability and the historical fact of Japan’s aggressor status.

Over time, this ambivalence has reproduced and caused denialism to persist in public discourse long-term. The review by Dr. Zhang noted that Japan’s state-approved curriculum includes selective narratives that the government intends to shape as the country’s historical memory, which has been institutionalized as a history that lacks war crime reflection and has created a cycle in which a victim-centered identity is passed from one generation to the next (Zhang, 2017). Through this logic, the education system of Japan has not only shaped its victimhood of the war internally but also influenced the country’s relations with its neighbors, where the lack of full acknowledgment remains a source of political tension.

4. Implications for Memory Politics in Japan's Postwar Narratives

Through an analysis of Japan's evasion of wartime responsibility, valuable and novel insights are introduced into how the combination of collective and historical memory can shape national ideology, politics, and international relations. Japan's promotion of its historical memory and emphasis on victimhood also demonstrated how institutionalized historical narratives can become entrenched in society and how difficult it is to change from the current situation. These lessons go beyond Japan itself and provide valuable perspectives for a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges that other victim countries faced in confronting the invasive pasts that Japan initiated. Thus, Japan's lack of war crime reflects three major implications: the lessons from post-authoritarian states such as Japan, the role of education in the process of evasion, and Japan's diplomacy in East Asia.

4.1 Implication 1: Lessons from Post-Authoritarian States

History is the mirror that reflects lessons to the world; in this context, the lesson is taught by transitional justice through post-authoritarian states such as Japan, demonstrating that postwar narratives will never be partial or even one-sided, since the goal of history is to take an honest and objective reflection from the past to avoid future tragedies. Unfortunately, where institutions of authoritarian rule remain active in Japanese society, they keep providing political and ideological justifications for their own perspectives; thus, one-sided narratives are shaped to survive even in symbolic form. This unexpected production of one-sided narratives is also widely observed in Japan's education system and public discourse, which resulted in the evasion of war crime responsibility.

For this reason, the preservation of the imperial system in Japan and the rehabilitation of wartime elites demonstrated that compromises made for short-term stability often come at the cost of long-term consequences, whereas for Japan, one of the most noticeable consequences is the revival of militarism. For other states emerging from dictatorship or conflict, this suggests that addressing structural legacies of power rather than isolating the war crime responsibility to a few individuals, such as politicians and militarists, is essential to prevent revisionism and denial from resurfacing and symbolic judgment. As a post-authoritarian state, Japan in WWII offers a cautionary figure that illustrates the consequences for the incomplete implementation of transitional justice. By preserving symbolic institutions such as the imperial system and allowing wartime elites back to political life, Japan's selective narratives emphasized its "victim's identity" while evading its war crime responsibility. Concerning this lesson from post-authoritarian states, Professor Weitseng Chen from the Faculty of Law at the National University of Singapore and Dr. Hualing Fu from the Faculty of Law at the University of Hong Kong collectively argued that despite Japan's postwar democratization, the features of authoritarian legality persisted and entrenched in "state conservatism" and were supported by enduring bureaucratic structures. Thus, the occupation reforms introduced the new 1947 Constitution; however, there are numerous wartime legal professionals and institutions remain in Japanese society (Chen and Fu, 2020). This illustrates how incomplete transitional justice gradually became entrenched when authoritarian states such as Japan failed to thoroughly dismantle the remnants of the militarist ideology of their past. This trend continues, and persistence can normalize the selective narratives of war crime responsibility and help shape the historical memory that the authoritarian state intends to promote; in this context, Japan is a state that legitimizes the activism of right-wing forces. As a result, the case of Japan shows the consequences of a lack of decisive reforms that can eliminate authoritarian institutions and actors and allow post-authoritarian states to risk embedding distorted historical memory into their legal and political systems. Ultimately, authoritarian states such as Japan will weaken the responsibility to take a historical reflection on the past atrocities that they have conducted; for Japan, these include Nanjing Massacre and the comfort women system.

It is concluded that the case of Japan as a post-authoritarian state reveals that transitional justice cannot be reduced to symbolic actions or partial reforms but must involve comprehensive structural reforms that address the problem directly. For the lesson in plain language, by keeping the emperor system and allowing wartime leaders back to power, the country failed to take full prevention from the revival of militarism and honest reflection from its aggressive history; for other countries, the lesson taught the need for transparency and honest engagement with wartime atrocities. Without such commitments, post-authoritarian states face the risk of long-term injustice, weak diplomacy with neighboring countries, and the negative moral legitimacy of their own democratic development.

4.2 Implication 2: Role of Education in Japan's Evasion of Wartime Responsibility

Through the marked effects that the education system has had on students' perceptions of history, the one-sided narrative and historical memory integrated in the Japanese education system both resulted in the evasion of war crime responsibility as an influential factor in terms of education; therefore, it is necessary to interpret the implication that it shows that education may not be a neutral process of transmitting objective knowledge to people as expected but can be a highly politicized tool to shape the fixed and incorrect ideology that the government intends to shape as historical memory. This further explains the importance of establishing an objective narrative in any education system and encouraging critical thinking, especially for the subject areas associated with such a controversial topic of history. Thus, Japan's case has played a decisive role in the long run in shaping the way that future generations might learn to interpret the history of WWII.

The influential role that education played in Japan's evasion of wartime responsibility can also be seen through Japan's new moral education textbooks, as Dr. Felix Sprenberg, a historian of modern Japan and educationalist from Ghent University, stated that education in Japan functions less as a neutral transmitter of knowledge, which is the role that it should play originally, but it is more likely to be an apparatus that contributed to shaping historical memory through selective narratives that emphasized Japan's national pride while omitting its wartime responsibility for aggression in WWII. This happens, as moral education was reintroduced in 1958 despite its wartime predecessor having been heavily criticized for fostering militarism and ultranationalism as governmental control over textbooks was restored. In the 1950s, the Ministry of Education began censoring the moral education of Japan; instead, they started to teach in a narrative that encouraged national victimhood to deflect attention from Japan's war atrocities, and this phenomenon was just the beginning of a decade-long struggle between the conservative establishment and progressive teachers (Sprenberg, 2021). This finding directly highlights the historical fact that the Japanese education system shaped the country's victimhood through education, which highlights the impactful role that education has played in the evasion of its wartime responsibility as a major concern. If education emphasizes the narratives that shape the victimhood of Japan in the war without teaching about responsibility, then they are producing the next generations, who inherit a distorted view of history and interpretation of the war, which also affects their perception of values. For example, if Japanese students are learning the textbook content that justified the war that they initiatively launched and even the atrocities that Japan committed, they will automatically establish the perception of value that convinced the initiation of wars is usual and that killing or massacre should be accepted. This happens, since students are just learning what schools teach and can only receive any information imported from the educational authority, and they will automatically follow those teachings when they lack subjectivity and the ability to think critically.

Conversely, balanced education can shape a comprehensive and objective view that fosters reconciliation and reflection regarding the war crime responsibility of Japan. As such, experience emphasizes how the country's education system proceeds in a way that is not neutral; it reflects the struggle of society to either confront or evade its dark history of invasion. For countries seeking genuine reconciliation, the first step is ensuring that education systems include honest discussions of history, especially in terms of content related to past atrocities. Without this foundational step, the cycle of selective memory will repeat over time and leave younger generations unable to build trust with neighboring countries or participate in a shared regional narrative.

4.3 Implication 3: Japan's Memory Diplomacy in East Asia

Diplomacy is the practice of managing international relationships through a series of political operations, including dialog, negotiation, and the stipulation of foreign policies for ensuring a peaceful means to solve conflicts. However, excessive aggression regarding historically and politically sensitive events in association with wartime conduct greatly reduces the likelihood of making ideal diplomatic conversations. Unexpectedly, a similar phenomenon is observed in East Asia today because of Japan's lack of war crime reflection. In other words, the historical memory that Japan shaped through selective narratives has direct political consequences for its diplomacy in East Asia, and the subsequent influence is clearly perceived, especially in China and the Korean Peninsula. South Korea and the DPRK are the two political entities in severe ideological conflicts on the Korean Peninsula, and they both used to claim the other side to be part of their sovereign territory; nevertheless, there is a consensus that both sides have reached solidly: the resentment toward Japan's aggressive wartime conduct and its lack of war crime reflection, despite their profound ideological divergence

and political hostility. Both South Korea and the DPRK consistently criticized Japan for its denialism of appealing wartime conduct and hiding the atrocities that it had committed. This rare alignment also underscores how Japan's selective narratives raised the denialism of reflecting its domestic politics and shaped a common point of view to mitigate the criticisms toward Japan's wartime conduct from foreign countries.

Evidently, the newly aggressive conduct of Japan has still been observed in recent decades. As one of the most prominent incidents, the prime minister's multiple official visits to Yasukuni Shrine provoked the victim countries of Japan's wartime invasion: Between 2001 and 2006, the prime minister Junichiro Koizumi visited Yasukuni Shrine six times despite repeated protests from China and South Korea. These visits not only strained Japan's diplomacy with East Asian neighbors but also caused a wave of domestic lawsuits. Approximately 6,000 people, including South Korean citizens in Japan whose relatives had been enshrined at Yasukuni against their wishes, filed lawsuits across six district courts, as they convinced Koizumi's visits to violated Japan's constitutional principle of the separation of religion and state, since he acted not as an individual citizen but in his official position as a prime minister. Faced with these lawsuits and protests both domestically and internationally, Koizumi publicly continues his visits in the name of the prime minister (Tanaka, 2004). This incident illustrates a dilemma in Japan's memory diplomacy in East Asia: the contradiction between foreign protests with small-scale domestic disagreement and the acts of commemoration that glorify wartime legacies who are also warring criminals for victims' countries simultaneously. By prioritizing domestic national sentiment over regional sensitivity, Japan has undermined its credibility as a country committed to historical reflection. Thus, these acts provoked political disagreement for China and South Korea with respect to Japan's lack of reflection in addressing its past.

Following this trend, Japan has consistently projected narratives of victimhood through multiple aspects to the public and has offered no official apologies; it has fueled skepticism and resentment in countries that have suffered under its wartime occupation. Owing to the lack of war crime reflection and provocative actions enacted by Japan, such as government officials formally visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, the site for commemorating mortal Japanese soldiers in wars has resulted in public dissatisfactions and anger in victim countries, especially in China and Korea.

This has prevented the formation of genuine regional trust, in contrast to how Franco-German reconciliation strengthened European integration and the strength of reflection that Germany has. Currently, China and both South Korea and the DPRK are condemning the wartime conduct of Japan, and the societal influence among the victim countries has been strongly against the Japanese government. For Japan, the implication is clear, as the reflection required both material gestures and a genuine willingness to engage in honest teaching in its education system, which resonates with the victim countries' collective memory as victims in the broader context of East Asia and Southeast Asia. The collective memory of the past generation during wartime represents their objective historical experience. In this case, memory diplomacy is not a peripheral issue or a subordinate concern but rather a central topic that deserves further attention; it plays a crucial role in establishing international alliances, promoting cultural exchanges, and building long-term stability in the region peacefully.

4.4 Implication 4: Public Opinions as an Obstacle to Regional Peace

The implications for Japan's memory diplomacy suggest that public opinion could directly shape the outcome of diplomacy, which means that the unresolved problem of the evasion of wartime reflection can strain official interactions internationally and result in broader societal distrust that complicates the pursuit of regional peace. Countries are composed of citizens who are responsible for building their own future through shaping collective values, exercising democratic participation such as voting, and influencing the directions of foreign policy. As a crucial component of the operation of a country, the public opinions that generally represent the country count as a strong voice that shares a mutual impact with its politics and diplomacy, which is powerful for either establishing a stable and peaceful relationship with foreign states or leading to international conflicts and diplomatic dilemmas.

As such, when Japan's public opinion is shaped by selective narratives and values without a thorough reflection on wartime responsibilities, it creates the ground for distrust and hostility toward the victim countries. Simultaneously, the victim countries' public opinions will also be negatively influenced by the public opinion of Japan, since the general Japanese public does not seem to even truly understand the harms of the war and

the atrocities that Japan made to them in WWII, which provoked the public dissatisfaction that perceived Japan as a threat. This situation is unexpected for the establishment of a friendly relationship between the public of Japan and victim countries and is also an obstacle for long-term regional peace.

The public opinion data reflect how wartime memory became an obstacle for reconciliation in East Asia; unfortunately, the data show less favor to Japan from victim countries due to Japan's evasion of war crime responsibility. According to the 2016 Pew Research Center survey on hostility between China and Japan, the results show that the number of unfavorable Chinese views of Japan consistently increased from 70% in 2006 to 86% in 2016, whereas the Japanese views of China illustrate a similar pattern in which the number of unfavorable views of China increased from 71% in 2006 to 86% in 2016, with only slight inflections occurring approximately 2009 (Stokes, 2016). Similar to the public opinion of China toward Japan, in a 2017 Pew Research Center survey, only 31% of South Koreans expressed a favorable view of Japan, while showing slight improvement since 2013, the trend remains well below the 47% recorded in 2008. One of the enduring sources of this unfavorable sentiment is attributed to WWII, particularly the atrocity of "comfort women" in Korea, in which Korean women were forced to provide sexual service to the Japanese military (Stokes, 2017). These statistics illustrate the enduring role of public opinion in shaping international relations in East Asia and the effects of diplomacy. Especially in Korea, the unfavorable views are partially due to the comfort female system that Japan established during WWII, which is the atrocity that provoked negative views from Korean people to Japan. Despite decades having passed since the end of World War II, the persistence of negative perceptions is also the witness of how deeply embedded Japan's war crime can remain in victim countries' collective memory.

In summary, public opinion plays a crucial role in shaping the diplomacy of a country and can either contribute to regional reconciliation or cause international conflict. While the combination of Japan's selective narratives and lack of reflection has fostered distrust and hostility from victim countries, Chinese and Korean public opinion both reflect this point. As a result, entrenched public opinion remains one of the major obstacles to regional peace and political stability in East Asia.

5. Conclusion

Japan's evasion of war crime responsibility is attributed to the major factors of the preservation of the imperial system, which provided the right-wing forces a stronghold to grow; the ideological remnants of militarism in Japan encountered a chance of revival during the Cold War; and the Japanese education system shaped the "victim's identity" of Japan. The combination of these factors has created a strong framework of selective remembrance that enables Japan to minimize its war crime responsibility and shape its position as a victim rather than an aggressor. This combination has deeply embedded into Japan's postwar narratives that discouraged its war crime reflection, and the consequence of the lack of war crime reflection has resulted in the dissatisfaction of the victim countries and produced a negative impact on Japan's diplomacy.

For the first factor, the preservation of the imperial system functions not only as a provider of legitimacy to right-wing forces but also as a tool for protecting the monarchy from judgment by the Tokyo Trial, which in turn encouraged narratives that positioned both the imperial family and the public as victims rather than aggressors. The Cold War further compounded this ambivalence on the other hand, as the U.S. strategic priorities inevitably placed anti-communists in the first place in front of the demilitarization of Japan, the former Japanese elites regained influence, and the ideology of militarism has found new ground to spread. This gave Japanese politics in the early 1950s strong continuity from WWII. Finally, the education system of Japan also reinforced tendencies by focusing on the nuclear bombs that fell into Hiroshima and Nagasaki while intending to avoid any description of the atrocities in China and other Asian countries that Japan has invaded, which produced generations who inherited a one-sided view of history that perceived Japan as a victim. These findings highlight not only Japan's fragmented approach to historical responsibility but also the consequences for East Asian diplomacy, in which unresolved historical problems continue to provoke tensions and unhealed wounds in the countries that were invaded by Japan during WWII. Thus, the lack of war crime reflection shall be harmful for both Japan and victim countries, for Japan, this selective memory constrains its ability to exercise moral leadership in the region and undermines its diplomacy, especially when addressing issues of regional peace. For the victim countries, particularly China and South Korea, the continued perception that

Japan has failed to confront its wartime atrocities sustains popular resentment and provides a large room for the growth of distrust.

On the basis of the existing influential factors, it is important to conclude that this research on Japan's evasion of war crime responsibility through collective and historical memories is not merely an examination of the past but also mirrors the present. On the other hand, it shows how political choices can shape the national narratives that have gone through for decades. The lessons are clear that without a comprehensive acknowledgment of historical responsibility, the routine that led to reflection shall be impossible to take, and the wounds of the past resulting from the war crimes shall continue to cast darkness on the present with reflections of contemporary international relations in East Asia and the public voices from the victim countries with strong governmental criticism that desired justice. For Japan, as well as for other countries that emerge from periods of conflict and authoritarianism, the path toward genuine historical reflection remains both a challenge and a necessity, not only for an apology that comes lately but also for a peaceful future that the world should embrace.

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