

Japanese and German Projects
of Moral Recovery:
Toward a New Understanding of War Memories
in Defeated Nations

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Introduction

World War II has been a particularly problematic legacy for Japan and Germany over the past fifty years. In these nations, the legacy of the War is still part of everyday reality, directly or indirectly influencing national goals and foreign policies, postwar identity and aspirations, and intergenerational relationships. The legacy itself continues to evoke much ambivalence, trepidation, anger, and pain even today. There is also much unfinished business that still demands attention and action even after more than a half century.

The memory of World War II is problematic for Japan and Germany because it is also the memory of defeat for these countries, and the memory of the single most disastrous international military operation in their history. The stakes are extraordinarily big. This was a war that claimed over 60 million lives.¹ The mass killings and slaughters carried out during this war were of staggering proportions and incredible brutality. The enormity of destruction was such that even today we are barely able to describe it by using reverse expressions such as "unthinkable," "unspeakable," "intolerable," "unbearable," and "insufferable." The legacy of the War for the two nations, then, is also the responsibility of having started the war and setting in motion this huge destruction and injury to human lives and livelihoods.

The continuing relevance of the War and its consequences in both countries are not difficult to see today. Just in fall 1998 alone, these nations have dealt with major concerns. In October, Japan's disputed apology was offered directly to the Korean people for the first time *in writing*. But such a signed document was subsequently denied to China despite its requests. In Germany, in September,

¹ . I have used Gerhard L. Weinberg's figures throughout this study. *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

the question of how to situate the history of the Holocaust in the future of Germany was still a pertinent issue contested between Helmut Kohl and Gerhard Schröder in the national election -- represented in the controversy over the Holocaust memorial in Berlin.

The intensely emotional controversies over how to characterize the War and how to situate it meaningfully in national history reached a peak three years ago, at the fiftieth anniversary of the War's end, when many commemorative events were planned. The Japanese government at the time wanted to pass a resolution of remorse, a definitive statement of apology which would allow the Japanese people, once and for all, to put this contentious political issue behind them. Even after torturous debates, however, the conservatives, liberals, interest groups, and other stakeholders could not agree on how to word the resolution, not because of semantics, but because they could not reconcile their stakes in history. In the end, the compromise resolution itself was a vague and diluted document, practically meaningless to those for whom it was intended in the first place.²

Another example of this memory friction is the World War II museum which was planned to open on this occasion. The budget was already allocated some years ago, and the site had already been found, but the museum remained unbuilt, and it still is unbuilt today. Again, interested parties and stakeholders could not agree on how much, if at all, or how the exhibit should depict Japan's *perpetrator* role in the War, and how much and how it should describe the deaths of 20 million Asians caused by the Japanese in the War.³

Neither were the Germans exempt from painful controversies at their fiftieth anniversary.

² . Norma Field, "The Stakes of Apology," *Japan Quarterly* 42, no.4 (1995): 405-18.

³ . Arai Shin'ichi, ed., *Sens_ hakubutsukan* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1995).

One of their most bitter disputes centered on the Wehrmacht exhibit, an exhibition of newly-discovered photographs showing how the German army -- not just the Nazis but also the Wehrmacht -- took part in mass killings of civilians on the eastern front. The evidence shown at the exhibit exposed the myth that it was only the Nazis, not "ordinary" conscripts, who initiated such killings. Bitter disputes ensued throughout the year over whether to use public facilities to promote this exhibition.⁴

At the same time, Germany struggled and strained publicly over the meaning of the fiftieth commemoration: what exactly were they commemorating -- their defeat (*Niederlage*) or their liberation (*Befreiung*) on May 8, 1945? If they were liberated, then from *whom* were they liberated? From the fascists? From themselves?

Beyond this half-century commemoration, more unfinished business of the *negative war* legacy in Japan and Germany has continued to surface in different forms. One issue concerns the compensation for wartime forced laborers; some German businesses have finally now agreed to offer compensation this year. Such compensation for wartime forced workers and for comfort women is crucial also in Japan, although reasonable resolutions have yet to materialize there. More recently, Japan has contended with a surge in historical revisionism, characterized by the bestsellers written by right-wing intellectuals who want to emphasize the "positive" aspects of Japan's role in the War.

Reckoning with a Negative Legacy

Over the past fifty years, Germany and Japan have reckoned with their war memories in

⁴ . Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung, "Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944" (1995).

multifaceted ways. Both have gone through, at different times, periods of collective silence. Both have also struggled to reckon with what went wrong, and saw their conservatives and liberals vehemently clash over how to right the wrong. Both countries have had their fair share of people who want to deny what happened, or those who accuse the occupation of imposing victor's justice. There are also those in both nations who want to universalize the atrocities and relativize history, and those who can only see themselves as victims. At the same time, there are also those in both countries who want to atone, taking their guilt and shame to heart, even dedicating their lives or careers to make amends for the past.

Yet, at the end of these five decades, Germany and Japan have clearly ended up in very different places. Despite similarities in their basic patterns of response, it is fair to say that there is now a clear international consensus that the Germans have accomplished more by far than the Japanese in facing up to their war legacy. The Germans are more willing to confront the memory upfront; they are more willing to assume responsibility for what happened; they have also long established textbook committees with the neighbor countries they victimized, to write history in ways that are agreeable to both sides. They have also thoroughly incorporated the Holocaust in the school curriculum, and in their educational programs as a whole.

More symbolically, Germans have been more successful in sending out a positive picture of their atonement to the world. A well-known example is the picture of Chancellor Willy Brandt kneeling down in the Warsaw ghetto, which expressed the *sincerity* of Germany's sense of remorse. Another example is President Richard von Weizsäcker's historic speech to the Bundestag on the fortieth anniversary of the surrender, in which he publicly and unambiguously defined Germany's collective responsibility toward history for the postwar generations.

By contrast, Japanese responses give the impression of just barely fumbling through, awkwardly, and apparently without clear direction. Many observers have noted their awkwardness in speaking about the war, and their strong victim consciousness. Many Japanese continue to universalize or relativize the War (i.e., "all wars are bad" or "we were bad, and they were bad, too"). Indeed, they give the unmistakable impression that they have not fully come to terms with their negative heritage, hence continuing to disagree on critical issues like the apology and financial compensations.

In symbolic politics, there have also been many conspicuous blunders. Japan has virtually lost count of the number of cabinet ministers who have made off-hand, inappropriate remarks in public, downplaying Japanese atrocities such as the Nanking massacre, or glorifying Japan's role in "liberating" Asia from white, Western domination. These unguarded remarks have made for disastrous public relations, provoking outcries, hurts, threats, contempt, and worsening international relations. In many ways, Japan is today still in a messy place when it comes to war memories.

The Moral Recovery Project of Defeated Nations

How did this difference come to be? How could Germany and Japan have come out of the same experience, and ended up in such different places? Where did their paths diverge and why? If collective memory is always selective according to different conditions for remembering the past, as Halbwachs suggested, then, we must try to identify and specify those conditions that have shaped the two ways of coping with negative war legacies.⁵

⁵ . Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

Some writers have suggested that this difference originates in the distinction between guilt culture and shame culture -- i.e., it is guilt which motivates the Germans to act remorsefully, while shame motivates the Japanese not to act remorsefully.⁶ This dichotomy, however, breaks down as soon as we recognize that those emotions are neither distinct nor mutually exclusive: do the Germans then feel no shame, and the Japanese feel no guilt? Of course they feel both. While this dichotomization can be helpful to point to the relevance of guilt and shame in understanding war memories, it ultimately fails to explain the national differences that arise from human agency (the initiatives that actors take which affect the outcome of events), or changes over time.

To answer these questions adequately, we must turn to a larger picture to explore the set of circumstances which shaped the war memories. My purpose here is to present this larger picture by systematically comparing the various conditions for memory-making that the two nations encountered in the postwar decades. This comparative analysis of the social responses to negative legacy should benefit from taking account as much as possible of the sentiments, values, and motivations of ordinary people, not only decision-makers and intellectual elites. Hence, it is instructive first to appraise Japan's and Germany's postwar decades by identifying the fundamental *driving force* of these societies after their defeat.

To uncover the fundamental motivation of the defeated nations in these postwar decades, I believe that it is critically important to focus on the notion of *recovery* -- the notion that you have had a setback, you have incurred some losses, and now you have to make an extra effort to *make up* for these losses. From this perspective, I suggest that the fundamental driving force of both Japan and Germany over the past decades has been, first and foremost, this "recovery

⁶ . Ian Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1994).

work."

There is, of course, one type of recovery that is well known and documented: their *economic recovery*. We know that both Japan and Germany put enormous efforts into rebuilding their national economies. Both countries achieved double-digit economic growth; both were also called economic miracles. Both recoveries were also, ironically, precipitated by the Korean war, which was itself a consequence of the War.

There is, however, another kind of recovery at work in these countries that has not received nearly enough attention, even though it is as important as economic recovery: it is their *moral recovery* -- the recovery of national dignity, national honor, and "good standing" in the world. I want to propose that the imperative of moral recovery of defeated nations plays a pivotal role in the decisions and actions that Japan and Germany have taken over the past decades.

This notion of moral recovery makes sense especially when we consider the racist nature of World War II, which involved a tremendous amount of demonization of the Other and dehumanization of the enemy, as John Dower has shown.⁷ The amount of hate and contempt mobilized to enable the soldiers to kill was of inordinate proportions. But when the fighting stops, the hate and contempt are frozen in time underneath all the veneer of change. When the fighting stops, there is no program systematically to undo the hate and contempt that were built up, equally systematically, over the years. Then, the losers are "stuck" with the label of the "bad guys," and it is now up to them to make the effort to "redeem" themselves.

The imperative of moral recovery is also obvious when we recognize that for defeated

⁷ . John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

nations the moral world turns upside down with unconditional surrender. All of a sudden, the worst enemy now has to become the friend, or even the master in the Occupation. Overnight, what was thought of as the right war is now labelled the wrong war, and what was thought of as the wrong war is now labelled the right war. All of a sudden, all the people who died in the war have now died in vain for the wrong war. What was right now becomes wrong, and what was wrong, right; what you were taught to think of as true is now considered false, what you were taught to believe as false, true. The moral order is turned upside down, and the losers are at the bottom of it. The losers need to recover their position, and come up from under. Therefore, for a defeated nation, there is not only an urgent concern for recovering its *economic capital*, but also a critical concern for recovering its *symbolic capital*.⁸

Both Germany and Japan embarked on this road of moral recovery in the postwar decades, along with their economic recovery. The objective was to regain their national esteem in the eyes of others, as well as for themselves. Although both Germany and Japan pursued the recovery of their national dignity, the two countries chose different *strategies* to attain this goal -- that is, they chose different recovery strategies to regain their moral standing in the world. I believe that this is the reason why they have ended up in such different places in regard to coping with their war legacies.

The moral recovery project of defeated nations is a complex social project. It involves (1) the management of guilt and shame, (2) the institutionalization of tainted memory, and (3) the

⁸ . The terms used here refer to the different types of capital discussed by Pierre Bourdieu. See "Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 241-58.

effort to give meaning to the dead, especially the native dead.⁹ If the war was the wrong war, then those who died have died in vain -- defeated nations must now find ways to give meaning to those meaningless deaths, and find worth in such worthlessness.

This is the reason why such issues as the apology, compensation, textbook certification, commemorations, and museum exhibits are so divisive and emotionally charged. Reconciling all dimensions of this project is nearly impossible, and prioritizing among them will inevitably privilege some issues over others. Many people therefore have visceral reactions to these issues and to the different solutions that are proposed to deal with them. There is so much at stake: the recovery of face, pride, dignity, and respect of the world seemingly hinges on every single one of these issues.

Strategic Choices, Cultural Resources

If the Germans and the Japanese have followed different strategies to achieve their moral recovery, then what were these strategies, and why were they chosen? To answer these questions, it is important to recognize first that such choices always hinge on the different *cultural resources* that societies have at their disposal.

For the Germans, confronting the past has been a viable and feasible method of recovering national dignity for important reasons. Examining the past is indeed personal, grounded in the examination the self and the evil within the self. As such, it is recognizably an act that requires much courage, integrity, and maturity to accomplish. It takes an enlightened and honest person to confront such aspects of oneself; hence, in this context, examining the self can enhance one's

⁹ . These themes will be taken up more fully in my forthcoming book on war memories in defeated nations.

standing, and command the respect of others. The painful work of introspection then puts one in a category of people who are morally responsible. In this sense, confronting the past -- in itself -- adds significantly to one's symbolic capital.¹⁰

For the Japanese, this cultural resource does not exist. In Japan, confronting the past does not necessarily connote a person of dignity, honor, and learning. One may think about the past all one wants, but this act does not command special respect or social rewards. Dwelling on the past is just that -- dwelling and ruminating. If anything, esteem is due to those who have the courage to cut off and *disown* the past -- that is, to make a break, let go, and move on. The notion that the unexamined life is not worth living is a Western construct; as such, it carries no *cultural legitimacy* in Japan, or, for that matter, in many other parts of the world.

If confronting the past does not work for the Japanese as their strategy for moral recovery, what is it then that does work for them? My thesis is that the Japanese sought to recover their dignity and moral standing, not by examining the past, but by promising something for the future. The promise was *peace*, the promise to become a reliable, peaceful nation. That is, Japan pledged peace as a way to show its remorse, and offered trustworthiness as a way to atone for the past. In this way, the renunciation of war and arms -- Article 9 of the Constitution -- became the supreme act of repentance for the Japanese, their ticket to regain respect and recover their standing in the world. It did not matter that this renunciation was originally written by the American Occupation. Once written and adopted, the renunciation of the right to wage war under Article 9 took on its own meaning in postwar Japan.

But a promise is just a promise. How could something so precarious serve as a way for a

¹⁰ . A thorough discussion of the relevant cultural resources within German society and history -- e.g. philosophical, theological, and psychological -- is beyond the scope of this paper.

whole nation to make amends for the most disastrous war of the century? For the Japanese, however, it was indeed a tremendous action; and more importantly, they had the cultural resources to adopt this option more readily than confronting the past. In this context, it is helpful to remember that Japan hails from a long-standing history -- seven centuries -- of military (samurai) rule, which makes the renunciation of war a viable and credible cultural option to demonstrate remorse and commitment to change. The warrior society also offered ample historical precedents of national arms confiscation to draw on (*katanagari, hait_-rei*). There was also Buddhism -- even if it did not always practice the pacifism that it preached.¹¹ In this way, the surrender of arms and disowning the past -- particularly a military past -- offered a distinct way for the Japanese to move forward with dignity and *cultural integrity*.

This strategy of atoning for the past war by renouncing future wars worked well for Japan for many reasons. Unlike Germany's *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coping with the past), this atonement is *future-oriented*: it declares that we will be trustworthy citizens; we will not hoard arms; we will not attack; and we will be peaceful; and indeed it says nothing about the past. This suited Japan's interest because the past was too problematic to untangle, marred with too many taboos and too much pain. But for as long as the atonement for the past was future-oriented, Japan could avoid confronting the stickiest issues of the past, such as the Emperor's war responsibility and Japan's perpetrator role in the War. For as long as these questions of perpetrator guilt could be held at bay, then the dignity of the war dead was also comfortably safe, and hence the nation could move on without officially and irrevocably institutionalizing their tainted memory.

¹¹ . Brian A. Victoria, *Zen at War* (New York: Weatherhill, 1997).

This is also one of the important reasons why there is indeed a prevalence of peace rhetoric in Japan. In Japan, there has been a conspicuous and deliberate way in which the rhetoric of "peace" has been used, almost always to replace the word "war." For example, the war museum that still has not opened is indeed not called a war museum, but it is called a peace prayer hall. The ceremony commemorating the bombing of Hiroshima is not called the atomic bomb commemoration ceremony, it is called a peace memorial ceremony. The most common preambles in the various documents that represent Japan have described it as a "peace nation" or a "peace-loving" nation ("*heiwa kokka*"). This rhetoric of peace has dominated Japan, in its Constitution, public policy, the media, and in school textbooks. In reality, however, Japan's reason for being a peace-loving nation is not really just because of Japan's love for peace: it was an important tool for Japan's redemption, a strategy for Japan to regain its moral standing.

Reconciliation Imperatives

While examining their cultural resources certainly helps in understanding the two countries' choices of strategies for moral recovery, it is also important to situate their choices in the specific geo-political conditions of Germany and Japan. This will clarify the differences between the two cases further.

Germany has had an urgent and immediate political and economic necessity to reconcile with its neighbors -- its former enemies and victims. Territorially, Germany is land-locked in Europe; it borders nine countries, all of which were former enemy or occupied nations. If Germany were to have stable economic and political relationships with these countries, it was only in its best interest to start repairing and amending those relationships as soon as possible --

starting, most importantly, with France. Germany's economic and political survival depended on creating a cooperative framework with its neighbors, on integrating itself in Europe, on joining NATO, on becoming part of the European Union, and finally on forging a European identity.

Japan, on the other hand, does not directly border any neighbors' territories. Moreover, these neighbors across the sea -- the former enemy and occupied nations -- were also mostly communist nations. Japan's political and economic necessity from the very beginning of the Cold War was *not* to reconcile with these former enemies and victims. Indeed, Japan found it critical to seek its pivotal economic and political relationships with the United States, not Asia. Symptomatically, Japan's relationships with other East Asian nations had been consistently de-emphasized since the Occupation. The War itself was renamed by the Americans from the Greater East Asia War to the Pacific War. The San Francisco Peace Treaty was concluded mostly for Western Powers: China was not even invited, Korea was in the midst of its own war, and the Soviets were not welcome. Moreover, these Asian countries were also developing countries with limited power in international politics and economically dependent on Japan's aid. Thus, Japan's territorial and political conditions and the *reconciliation imperatives* in the postwar decades were drastically different from those of Germany.

The different domestic political conditions in the two countries also influenced the *direction* of their moral recovery projects. The critical difference in this domain was in the outcomes of the major conflicts between conservatives and liberals in the two countries. Both Japan and Germany have had major struggles between conservatives and liberals: but the difference is that in Germany the liberals won, and in Japan the conservatives won.¹²

¹² . I am grateful to Ellis Krauss for sharing his insights with me on this subject.

My reference here in the German case is to the 1968 movement, which dramatically changed the power dynamics between the young and the old.¹³ It also led the way to a social-democratic government, whose administration implemented a number of critical policies -- for example, in education -- which facilitated its *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. In the Japanese case, the watershed event was the 1960 AMPO -- the ratification of U.S.-Japan Security Treaty -- which, unlike Germany, resulted in the consolidation of the conservative government. The outcomes of these domestic political struggles in both cases have been critical, because those who came to power also wielded much influence in defining the official narrative of the War.

The Incomparable Conditions

Finally, it is also important to identify some particular conditions that are specific to each country -- conditions which are incomparable in the two cases. Of these, two are especially relevant to our discussion at hand. In the German case, it is the Holocaust; and in the Japanese case, it is the Emperor.

First, the Holocaust: the Nazis' systematic, industrial mass killings indeed left much evidence on German soil; and such evidence was then confiscated by the advancing allies, much also recorded in film and photographs. The remains of these concentration camps are also found today all over the nation -- many within proximity of major cities -- which makes some indisputable evidence immediately accessible to the general public. If Japan had carried out such mass killings not overseas but on Japanese soil, and if the evidence of such deeds had not been incinerated but confiscated by the allies, and if the remains of those facilities were immediately

¹³ . Heinz Bude, *Das Altern einer Generation: Die Jahrgänge 1938 bis 1948* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1995).

available all over Japan, then the Japanese would have been forced to take a direct approach to recognizing past deeds -- regardless of whether or not the cultural resources existed. The relative absence of such accessible evidence to the public makes the Japanese vastly underprepared to assess the contested issues *for themselves*.

Second, the survival of the Emperor on the throne: when Hitler died in 1945, Germany had, in effect, eliminated its wartime head of state, its wartime head of military operation, and the German ego-ideal in one person.¹⁴ In Japan, although the wartime heads of state and military operations were eliminated after the Tokyo Trial, the nation's ego-ideal, that is the Emperor, survived. Indeed the Emperor not only survived but also continued to symbolize Japan's national identity until he died in 1989. Debating war responsibility and confronting perpetrator and bystander responsibilities were complicated in this context. If the highest-ranking person in the social hierarchy who is also the ego-ideal of the nation was not accountable for the war, then why should ordinary citizens feel accountable? If the person who embodies your national identity were guilty, then where would this leave *you*? In a way, the Emperor became the excuse for not questioning about war responsibilities, and for legitimating normative continuities in postwar Japan.

In summary, managing tainted memory is a difficult business that affects international relations, intergenerational relations, personal identity, and national identity. I have suggested that different conditions prevailing in Germany and Japan, not all of which were of the German and Japanese people's own choosing, made some choices more feasible than others and some strategies more workable than others in the two countries. And as we project into the future, war

¹⁴ . Alexander Mitscherlich and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn* (New York: Grove Press, 1975).

memory management for the Japanese, in particular, is likely to become an increasingly arduous problem in the coming years.

The Gulf War as A Turning Point

It is clear that the "peace strategy" is no longer working for Japan as a way to regain moral standing in the world. For one thing, the end of the Cold War and the apparent North Korean nuclear threat no longer make the anti-war position so credible. More importantly, Japan has had to reckon with the significant drawbacks of the peace strategy during the Gulf War -- which became a significant turning point. This was the war to which Japan contributed an inordinately large sum of money, yet no troops. Japan was roundly criticized for "buying" its way out of the war, and for being unwilling to risk Japanese lives for the cause, even as it stood to benefit from the international operation. In this emerging new world order, the section of the Constitution renouncing the use of arms seemed now irrelevant, outmoded, and beside the point.

This international criticism dismayed Japan, especially because renouncing warfare was meant to produce the *opposite* effect -- to gain international respect. Yet, when even small and distant nations were able to send troops to the Gulf effort, Japan's unwillingness to participate physically appeared both sly and hypocritical to the international community. If even Bolivia could send its soldiers, why couldn't Japan? Japan had, to its dismay, created its own crisis. In this war, it became increasingly clear that sticking to its pacifist position was no longer an asset; instead, it was now rapidly becoming a liability.

In the wake of the Gulf War, then, Japan dropped its long-standing peace strategy. As yet, however, no clear, dominant, alternative strategy has emerged. The new strategy must be one

that (1) can at least be accepted by most people, (2) reinforces Japan's security and peace, (3) promotes Japan's standing and moral recovery, and (4) costs as little as possible. In addition, a new vision can be made operable only within the cultural and political resources that Japan has available today.

Given this multitude of demands, finding an alternative to the peace strategy is at best difficult: this is the very problem that lies at the heart of the messy vacuum that Japan finds itself in today. In this vacuum, the struggle to find a vision to replace the pledge for peace will not be easy. And in turn, this vacuum also offers a new opportunity for right-wing intellectuals to promote their views in their best sellers. The very fact that the Ministry of Education itself is today under criticism from *both* the liberals and the conservatives is testament to the degree to which the dominant strategy of the past has now crumbled away.

Some Observations on Future Trends

Part of the larger project on which this paper draws involved extensive interviews with both Japanese and German school teachers of history. While I intend to present and analyze these interviews in detail in a forthcoming book, some general impressions may shed light on the future of Japan's war memory experience. There are both promising and distressing trends, but the observation most relevant to this discussion concerns the gradual changes in the teaching of World War II history in Japanese schools.

(1) There is now comparatively more emphasis on contemporary history in the curriculum than in the past; hence, there is also a concomitant increase in the number of questions on contemporary history in the university entrance examinations which the students must study

for.

(2) Japanese teachers are still hard pressed to spend much time on World War II history because the high school curriculum requires them to cover all of Japanese history in one year, but more are making use of other social studies classes to introduce the subject. (3) There is a noticeable trend for Japanese history teachers to use their own handouts for their classes, so as to limit the use of the disputed textbooks which are poor teaching material. (4) Now that school trips can include air travel, more schools are taking their classes to Okinawa, instead of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With these new trips, students will now be exposed to a more complex perspective on the war, including Japan's perpetrator role.

Although such news from the schools seems more promising, the evidence regarding the sensibilities of the third generation -- the grandchildren of the war generation -- is more disturbing. When questioned in youth surveys about their willingness to fight if Japan were to become directly involved in a war, this generation has astounded many observers by declaring that it mostly wants to "run away or hide."¹⁵

Although their unwillingness to fight and kill is hardly surprising, their unwillingness to conceptualize the issue at all is certainly more problematic. Indeed, the long-standing peace strategy and peace rhetoric may have taken their toll, and have created a conceptual vacuum in the minds of these youths. This is the vacuum that is ripe for exploitation, the biggest weakness of the current paralysis in Japan.

In conclusion, it is worth pointing to the different maxims that have been used frequently in Germany and Japan to foster efforts to cope with their tainted pasts, because they highlight

¹⁵ . I am indebted to Yoshino Kosaku for alerting me to the *Asahi shinbun* youth surveys, which point out these trends.

different ways of conceptualizing the relationship between the past, present, and future. In Germany, the phrase evoked most frequently comes from Santayana, the Spanish-American philosopher: those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. In Japan, Santayana's phrase is seldom heard; instead, the most frequently cited phrase comes from von Weizsäcker's famous speech on the fortieth anniversary of Germany's surrender: those who are blind to the past will also be blind in the present. These different phrases used in Japan and Germany speak volumes about the different places in which the two countries have ended up after these years. Compared to the possibility of being condemned to repeat the atrocious war, the possibility of merely being blind and ignorant seems like a very mild threat indeed.