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Daniel Chirot, Gi-Wook Shin, and Daniel Sneider, eds., *Confronting Memories of World War II: European and Asian Legacies*. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2014. Pp. ix, 330. ISBN 978-0-295-99346-1.

Review by Albert J. Schmidt, Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies, The George Washington University (601alschmidt@gmail.com).

This important work consists of ten chapters arranged in four parts. Each explores the negative, sometimes horrendous consequences of the appeal to memories, real or perceived, in nationalistic rhetoric. The essays also clarify the tensions between memory and historical scholarship and discuss such subjects as guilt, shame, collaboration with the enemy, remorse, apology, motivation, colonial and wartime wrongs, national pride, genocide, historical revisionism, Cold War tensions, comparative studies, textbook content, and modes of remembrance like museums and monuments. There is only minimal subject matter overlap. Japan, China, and South Korea figure in five chapters; Germany, Israel (or Jews), and the United States in three; Austria in two; France, the Netherlands, the Baltic nations (especially, Lithuania), Indonesia, and Russia in one each.

The volume's contributing authors promise to "look at ... controversies [about memory and fact] as they pertain to what was the bloodiest war in history, at least in terms of absolute numbers of deaths, World War II. [They] explain why there is such a perceived contrast between European and Asian memories, but also why close attention to detail shows that the contrast is not quite as great as superficial generalizations would suggest" (4).

#### Part I: "The Debate over Remembrances of World War II"

In chapter 1, "Admitting Guilt is Neither Common Nor Easy: Comparing World War II Memories in Europe and East Asia," the book's co-editor Daniel Chirot (Univ. of Washington)<sup>1</sup> observes that postwar reconciliation requires admitting guilt or expressing remorse for wartime and colonial wrongs, however difficult that may be. He cites, among others, atrocities committed by the Dutch in their East Indies colony, German SS men at Oradour in France in 1944, Americans during the Filipino Rebellion (1899-1902) and in Vietnam, the French in Algeria, the Russians in Chechnya, the Turks in Armenia, and the United States with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Chirot contrasts German contrition in admitting Nazi crimes with the apparent evasiveness of the Japanese regarding their empire's atrocities. This chapter is an excellent introduction to the whole collection.

In chapter 2, "Interrupted Memories: The Debate over Wartime Memory in Northeast Asia," co-editor Daniel Sneider (Stanford Univ.)<sup>2</sup> writes that Japan, seeing itself as a victim, has shown insufficient contrition for its war crimes. He also considers the role of museums and memorials in shaping the wartime memories of various countries; he details the US Cold War policies and Chinese and Korean internal politics at play in this matter. He highlights the myths behind, for example, the divergent American and Chinese views of the cause of Japan's defeat. He shows that public Yasukuni Shrine visits and biased Japanese textbook accounts of the war have badly strained Chinese-Japanese relations. Conflicting perceptions of Japanese occupation persist as well: did Japanese colonization destroy or modernize the Korean economy?<sup>3</sup>

1. He is Herbert J. Ellison Professor of Russian and Eurasian Studies at the University's Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies.

2. He is Associate Director for research at the Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center. One of his most recent books is *History Textbooks and the Wars in Asia: Divided Memories* (NY: Routledge, 2011).

3. This and several other chapters that concern Sino-Japanese relations call to mind Michael Yahuda's *Sino-Japanese Relations after the Cold War: Two Tigers Sharing a Mountain* (NY: Routledge, 2013), which may have been too recent for inclusion in the bibliography.

## Part II: "Divided Memories about Collaboration and Resistance"

In chapter 3, "Different Strokes: Historical Realism and the Politics of History in Europe and Asia," Thomas Berger (Boston Univ.)<sup>4</sup> investigates the effect of evolving global human rights norms on the responses of war crime perpetrators, with a focus on Germany, Austria, and Japan in three periods: the early Cold War (1945–1970s), late Cold War (1970s–1991), and post-Cold War (1991–present). The prevailing issue in all three eras was the need to show remorse. During the first period, which featured occupations and war crimes trials, the former Axis countries often behaved as victims because of their own heavy losses in lives and property. The Federal Republic of Germany was from the outset the most penitent, mainly because of its developing Cold War ties with the West. Japan at first eschewed penitence, especially with regard to Korea. Austria, for its part, even in the late Cold War era, still claimed to have been the Third Reich's "first victim." At the same time, Korea, China, and Taiwan questioned Japan's belated apologies and expressions of remorse in light of its textbook revision (1982) and an official visitation to the Yasukuni Shrine (1985), where war criminals are buried along with other war dead. Berger observes that, even as late as 1991–2010, the failure of Asian powers to settle long-lasting disagreements over their memories of the war helped resurrect territorial disputes. Germany, on the other hand, embraced a policy of reconciliation and Austria finally admitted the part it had played in the Holocaust. In his conclusion, Berger expresses some optimism about European countries' quelling of tensions caused by memories of World War II; he is less sanguine about the prospect of progress that China and Japan may make in this regard.

Chapter 4, "Divided Memories of World War II in the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies: Sukarno and Anne Frank as Icons of Dutch Historical Imagination," is by Frances Gouda (Univ. of Amsterdam).<sup>5</sup> The theme of her piece is collaboration as it gave rise to "divided memory" in two different countries. Although the Dutch cooperated with their Nazi occupiers—as evidenced by the fate of Anne Frank—they were horrified by Sukarno's nationalist collusion with the Japanese. Thus, Anne Frank was "an icon of reconciliation" for the Dutch, but they found it hard to forgive Indonesian collaborators, especially in light of their own suffering at the hands of the Japanese and humiliation by Indonesian nationalists after the war. Gouda's analysis of ongoing divided memory in the ethnically and religiously diverse post-colonial Dutch society is an especially valuable inclusion in this work.

Chapter 5, "France and the Memory of Occupation," is by Julian Jackson (Queen Mary College, Univ. of London).<sup>6</sup> He argues that, although French military glory was essentially dependent upon a fragmented Germany, it became evident after the war that partition of Germany was not an option. The alternative for the French was reconciliation in the form of a joint Coal and Steel Community, as conceived by Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman. But wartime memory was less a Franco-German problem than one of contemporary French identity. Certainly, defeat by Germany had been traumatic for proud France, much more so than for smaller European nations; yet the establishment of the Vichy regime meant France was only partially occupied until 1942; this satisfied many who espoused a conservative agenda firmly embedded in French history. On the other hand, the Gaullist myth—that the French had supported the Resistance and regarded Vichy as illegitimate—may have been exaggerated. Jackson considers Vichy-Nazi relations, French Jewish memory, and the prosecution of collaborators—all in the context of French national identity no less than the German occupation.<sup>7</sup>

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4. A professor of International Relations, he is the author of *War, Guilt, and World Politics after World War II* (NY: Cambridge U Pr, 2012), reviewed at *MiWSR* 2014-050.

5. A professor of Political Science, she has written on poverty and political culture in the Netherlands and France as well as Dutch colonialism and Indonesian nationalism.

6. A fellow of the British Academy, he has written extensively on French and European history: e.g., *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy, 1934–38* (NY: Cambridge U Pr, 1988), *France: The Dark Years, 1940–1944* (NY: Oxford U Pr, 2001), and *The Fall of France: The Nazi Invasion of 1940* (NY: Oxford U Pr, 2003).

7. The author's endorsement of Robert O. Paxton's *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940–1944* (NY: Knopf, 1972) as "for its impact and brilliance, ... the single most important book to have been published on twentieth-century French history by any historian" (142) is most reassuring.

### Part III: “Paths to Reconciliation”

Chapter 6, “Historical Reconciliation in Northeast Asia: Past Efforts, Future Steps, and the U.S. Role,” is by co-editor Gi-Wook Shin (Stanford Univ.).<sup>8</sup> His article revisits topics touched on in previous chapters, mostly to do with the perceived reluctance of Japan to own up to its wartime abuses and the staunch anti-Japanese sentiments evinced even by younger generations of Chinese and Koreans. Various efforts—apology, litigation, joint history writing projects, and regional exchanges—have not alleviated deep-seated animosities. Japanese avowals of remorse have often been seen as insincere; conversely, for the Japanese, their endeavors to express contrition have seemed futile and led to apology fatigue. Shin correctly shows that the United States’ role in Asian dispute resolution was inhibited by a Cold War policy that led it to side with Japan against Communist China. Shin believes the United States could help improve Japanese relations with China and Korea by reinterpreting its 1951 treaty with Japan to allow victims of Japanese war crimes to file claims. He rightly notes, however, that the United States has its own credibility problems—Nagasaki and Hiroshima. While he recommends an American presidential visit to these sites in recognition of the victims’ suffering, he is silent about domestic reaction inside the United States.

Chapter 7, “Israelis and Germany after the Second World War: Is Reconciliation Possible? Can Universal Lessons be Drawn?” is by Fania Oz-Salzberger (Univ. of Haifa Faculty of Law).<sup>9</sup> She stresses the uniqueness of Nazi genocidal policy as a “premeditated, systematic, highly technologized, ideologically nurtured German bid to annihilate the Jewish nation en bloc... [T]he singularity of the Holocaust stems from Germany’s standing as a ‘nation of culture’” (186–87). Oz-Salzberger divides this genocide into four periods: the first, from the 1940s to the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961, saw the absorption of Holocaust survivors. In the second stage, a “heightened awareness” emerged, largely because of the Eichmann trial. This awareness was fostered by what the author calls the “ritualization of memory” in, for example, museums and school curricula in the 1960s and 1970s. A third stage saw the reworking of Holocaust memory by writers, filmmakers, and young artists. The fourth stage, which began with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany in 1990, has witnessed broad Israeli-German interaction and cooperation in politics, economics, society, and culture. What lessons may be drawn from all this? Oz-Salzberger concludes that, while cultural familiarity is a hideous basis for genocide, it can also make refamiliarization “a great journey of discovery, ... a lesson capable of crossing continents and oceans” (206).

### Part IV: “The Past As Present and the Psychological Response to Different Kinds of Memory”

In chapter 8, “Historical Memories and International Relations in Northeast Asia,” sociologist Gilbert Rozman (Princeton Univ.)<sup>10</sup> takes a longer view than other contributors to the book. Specifically, he assesses present-day China by looking at its distant past as well as pre-1945 Japanese colonialism and nineteenth-century Western imperialism. Most notably, he ponders Communist China’s remembrance of a Sinocentric Asia. This “civilizational analysis” casts China as the leader of Eastern civilization against the United States and its partners Japan and South Korea in the battle for Asian hegemony. This notion has led the People’s Republic of China to make unacceptable territorial claims rather than seek reconciliation and negotiated settlements. Rozman’s insights are, unfortunately, sometimes diminished by his affinity for tortuous sentence structure.

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8. Occupying the Korea Stanford Alumni Chair of Korean Studies, Shin is director of the Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center and the Tong Yang Korea Foundation. He has written or edited a dozen books on Korean history.

9. The author of *Israelis in Berlin* (Frankfurt a.M.: Jüdischer Verl., 2001), she often writes for such newspapers as *Haaretz*, the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.

10. The most recent of his many books on Northeast Asia and Russia are *Strategic Thinking about the Korean Nuclear Crisis: Four Parties Caught between the United States and North Korea* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) and *Chinese Strategic Thought toward Asia* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Chapter 9, “Divisive Historical Memories: Russia and Eastern Europe,” is by Igor Torbakov (Uppsala University).<sup>11</sup> Holding that historical truth is elusive, Torbakov agrees with the late Tony Judt<sup>12</sup> that historical memory is inherently contentious: memory wars must cease if the “falsification of history” is to cease. Emphasizing the need for respectful dialogue regarding national memories and historical narratives, he holds that knowledge of the past can only be enriched by diverse interpretations and that mature historical and civil cultures belong together. Torbakov’s marvelously ambiguous piece falls short of fulfilling the purpose of *Confronting Memories of World War II*.

Chapter 10, “Guilt, Shame, Balts, Jews,” by political scientist Roger Petersen (MIT)<sup>13</sup> provides a case study of emotions in conflict by focusing on charges of Lithuanian complicity in the Nazi decimation of the Jews of Lithuania during World War II. The coinciding of such accusations with the jubilation in Baltic states over the end of decades of Soviet domination caused anger and denial—especially in Lithuania. Petersen holds that anger is sometimes a byproduct of shame over earlier wrongdoing. He concludes that Aristotle’s wisdom in this matter has been all but forgotten. This very perceptive article offers a rare account of the reputed behavior of Lithuanians during the Second World War.

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Historical memory, though variously defined in this book, still exerts a powerful influence today in, for instance, the aspirations of the so-called Islamic State (formerly the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or ISIS) to reestablish a memorable caliphate or of the Chinese to restore an ancient Sinocentric Asia. The peril posed by the latter is very real. China’s assertion of its putative rights to the Japanese-administered Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and its provocative flyovers and claims to airspace have been met by an ominous shift in Japanese foreign policy: “Japan took a historic step away from its postwar pacifism [on 1 July 2014] ... by ending a ban that has kept its military from fighting abroad since 1945, a victory for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe but a move that has riled China and worries many Japanese voters.”<sup>14</sup>

Such worrisome behaviors during the centenary of World War I call to mind the leaders of the Great Powers “sleepwalking” on the brink of horrendous conflict.<sup>15</sup> That one can even imagine a similarity in today’s behavior is testimony enough of the hazards of memory misused. *Confronting Memories of World War II* is a forceful and timely warning about the dangers of leaving problematic memory legacies unresolved.<sup>16</sup>

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11. A senior fellow at the Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Uppsala, he has written recently on Russian foreign policy and on energy, resources, and politics of the former Soviet republics.

12. See, e.g., his *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (NY: Penguin, 2005) 803–834 and *The Memory Chalet* (NY: Penguin, 2010) passim.

13. His recent work includes *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (NY: Cambridge U Pr, 2002) and *Western Intervention in the Balkans: The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict* (NY: Cambridge U Pr, 2011).

14. *Washington Post* (2 July 2014).

15. See Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (NY: Harper, 2013).

16. Besides chapter endnotes, this multi-authored volume contains a thirty-page composite bibliography and a highly usable index, rarities for a work of this sort.