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2024 **Yuki Takenaka**

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Culture of Commemoration: Unraveling Official and Unofficial Memories of Hiroshima in Contemporary Japan

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Abstract

This study explores how the memory of Hiroshima is remembered in contemporary Japan and what role it plays, focusing on official and unofficial commemoration cultures. Drawing on the theories of public memory and collective victimhood, the research analyzes five addresses at the Peace Memorial Ceremony by Japanese Prime Ministers from 2019 to 2022 as examples of official commemoration and 35 film reviews in Japanese of the film *Oppenheimer* in 2024 for unofficial commemoration by employing Discourse Analysis. The findings reveal a strong inheritance of Hiroshima's memory intertwined with national identity, simultaneously highlighting differences between official and unofficial commemoration cultures. Both official and unofficial discourse on Hiroshima emphasize collective victimhood and pacifism, while the unofficial discourse also encompasses the nuanced recognition of Japan's perpetrator-hood, a perspective often overlooked in previous studies. The findings offer a new perspective on the memory of Hiroshima, providing a more complex and multi-layered understanding of Japan's historical narrative and its implications for peacebuilding. This analysis contributes to the understanding of Hiroshima's role in contemporary Japan and how the Japanese people perceive it, emphasizing the continued importance of its memory in national identity and peacebuilding efforts.

Keywords

Memory of Hiroshima; Public Memory; Collective Victimhood; Victimhood Nationalism; Discourse Analysis

Abstrakt

Tato studie zkoumá, jak jsou vzpomínky na Hirošimu v současném Japonsku uchovávány a jakou roli hrají, se zaměřením na oficiální a neoficiální připomínky. Na základě teorií o kolektivní paměti a kolektivní mentalitě oběti výzkum analyzoval pět projevů na Mírovém ceremoniálu ve městě Hirošima, které pronesli japonští premiéři v letech 2019 až 2022 jako

příklady oficiálních připomínek, a 35 japonských recenzí filmu *Oppenheimer* z roku 2024 jako příklady neoficiálních připomínek, a to pomocí diskurzivní analýzy. Zjištění odhalují silné dědictví vzpomínek na Hirošimu, které je úzce spjato s národní identitou, přičemž současně zdůrazňují rozdíly mezi oficiálními a neoficiálními komentáři k památce Hirošimy. Oba diskurzy, oficiální i neoficiální, zdůrazňují kolektivní vnímání jakožto oběti a pacifismus, zatímco neoficiální diskurz také zahrnuje uznání japonské viny, což je perspektiva často opomíjená v předchozích studiích. Zjištění nabízejí nový pohled na vzpomínky na Hirošimu, poskytující složitější a vícevrstvé porozumění japonskému historickému narativu a jeho dopad na budování míru. Tato analýza přispívá k pochopení role Hirošimy v současném Japonsku a toho, jak ji Japonci vnímají, zdůrazňujíc trvalý význam těchto vzpomínek v národní identitě a úsilí o budování míru.

Klíčová slova

Památka Hirošimy; Kolektivní paměť; Kolektivní mentalita oběti; Nacionalismus oběti; Diskurzivní analýza

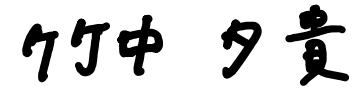
Range of thesis: 74 pages and 137,170 characters

Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.

2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.

3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague, 24. 7. 2024	Yuki Takenaka 

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Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism
Approved research proposal

Research proposal for MARS M.A. Thesis
Teze MAGISTERSKÉ diplomové práce studijního programu MARS

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Main research question (max. 250 characters)**:**

- What are the predominant themes and narratives surrounding the memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japanese society?
- How and to what extent the vernacular memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki complement and/or juxtapose the official and non-official Japanese culture of commemoration?

Current state of research on the topic (max. 1800 characters)**:**
In the contemporary context, with the looming crisis of nuclear weapons, focusing on the memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is crucial for future peacebuilding. This study explores the main themes in the collective memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japanese society, examining how non-official individual commemorations align or differ from official commemorations.

Previous research has delved into the evolution of Hiroshima's memory into Japanese national consciousness. Once erased from the collective memory of the Japanese people due to censorship during the Allied occupation of Japan, "Hiroshima" has been reintegrated into the national narrative since the country gained independence in 1951 (Hogan, 1996; Saito, 2006). Amid the nuclear arms race of the Cold War era, memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki among the Japanese populace sparked a national upsurge in peacebuilding movements (Dower, 1996). Dower (1996) observed that the reconstruction of Japan's memory of the war is an ongoing process.

The current state of research on collective memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki reveals a gap in understanding how contemporary individuals, who did not directly experience these events, engage with and share these memories. As the number of A-bomb survivors (*hibakusha*) dwindles, there is a concern that the memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki may be fading (Schmemann, 2015). This gap is noteworthy because the memory is primarily held by the Japanese population, and the potential forgetting or fading of this collective memory poses a tangible threat to global security, particularly in terms of diminishing awareness about the devastating consequences of nuclear war. Addressing this research gap can be crucial for understanding how individuals today, without direct personal experience, perceive and contribute to the collective memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and for mitigating potential risks associated with the erosion of this historical awareness.

Expected theoretical framework (max. 1800 characters)**:**
The theoretical framework for this thesis will be rooted in the concepts of "collective memory" and particularly "national memory", as elucidated by Maurice Halbwachs (1992) and Pierre Nora (1989), respectively. This conceptual foundation will serve as the lens through which the investigation into the recollection and reconstruction of memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in contemporary Japanese society will be conducted.

Maurice Halbwachs (1992) posits that individual memory is intricately shaped by social structures and institutions, emphasizing the continuous reconstruction of the past. Building on this perspective, Pierre Nora contributes to the discourse by introducing the concept of collective memory within a "national" framework. Nora's seminal work, exemplified by his Les Lieux de Mémoire project (1989), explores sites that embody and symbolize collective memory in the context of France.

The application of Halbwachs' and Nora's theories to the study of the memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki enables a comprehensive examination of how people share these memories in contemporary society, especially among those who have not directly experienced the past events. The annual Peace Memorial Ceremonies and the experience of watching a historical movie related to the atomic bombing in Japan can be considered places where people strengthen and express their collective memory. Through this exploration, the study seeks to construct a nuanced narrative that captures the complexities of collective memory formation.

Expected methodology, and methods for data gathering and analysis (max. 1800 characters)**:**
For the analysis of the official and non-official commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be employed. CDA, which examines the intricate relationships between language, power, and ideology, allows for a nuanced exploration of the underlying discursive structures shaping these reviews (Machin & Mayr, 2012). This methodology serves as an effective tool to unveil the diverse perspectives held by people and to reveal the concealed impacts of social, cultural, and political influences that shape and are shaped by discourse.

To examine the official commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, addresses at the Peace Memorial Ceremony by the Japanese Prime Minister will be analyzed. The Peace Memorial Ceremony is held every year on August 6th and 9th in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively. During the ceremony, the Prime Minister delivers a speech expressing condolences (symbolic reparations) for the atomic bomb victims and sympathy for those still suffering from the aftereffects of the atomic bomb. Moreover, the addresses usually connect the memory of the atomic bombing to current domestic and international affairs, such as COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. Therefore, these addresses serve as valuable documents to understand the current state of the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki from the official and national perspective. The official memory has a presentist character because it recalls the past in light of the present concerns and not for commemorating the past as pastness.

For the non-official commemoration, film reviews of "Oppenheimer" (2023) directed by Christopher Nolan are selected. The film portrays the life of J. Robert Oppenheimer, known as the "father of the atomic bomb". Although the film grossed over 900 million dollars worldwide (Rubin, 2023), as of October 28, 2023, its Japan premiere remains unannounced, speculated to be due to considerations for Japan as an A-bombed country (Inagaki, 2023). In comparison to addresses in the Peace Memorial Ceremony, film reviews are considered to reflect more subjective and biased views held by the general public.

Expected research design (data to be analyzed, for example, the titles of analyzed newspapers and selected time period):
As part of the data-gathering process for the official commemoration, this study examined five addresses from each of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Peace Memorial Ceremonies held over the five-year period from 2019 to 2023. The timeframe is determined based on the change in Prime Ministers, specifically Shinzo Abe,

Yoshihide Suga, and the current Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida. All the aforementioned addresses are cited from the official website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan, which has also uploaded the video recordings of the speeches.

For the non-official commemoration, this study will analyze 200 reviews of the film "Oppenheimer" from the online platform Filmarks. Filmarks, a prominent film review service in Japan, boasts over 160 million reviews. Despite not premiering in Japan, the film has garnered more than 550 reviews from viewers in foreign countries on the platform. The selection of Filmarks for this research is justified by its widespread popularity and the substantial length of most reviews, which are more detailed than brief comments.
The data is extracted using computer-aided methods, encompassing posts up to November 20, 2023—just one day before the anticipated digital release. Film ratings or the number of stars will be disregarded, as they are unrelated to the research. Although some reviewers mentioned that they had not watched the movie yet, the research includes these reviews because they also express their opinions on the film and the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Expected thesis structure (chapters and subchapters with brief description of their content):

1. Introduction
- 1.1 Overview of the research topic
- 1.2 the main research questions.
- 1.3 methodology
- 1.4 the expected results.

2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review
- 2.1 The Concept of Public Memory
- 2.2. The Concept of National Memory
- 2.3 Previous Research on the Memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

3. Background of the History of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- 3.1 Historical Background of the Dropping of the Atomic Bomb on Japan
- 3.2 The Debate over the Atomic Bombing of Japan

4. Methodology
- 4.1 Description of Discourse Analysis (DA)
- 4.2 Data Gathering
  - 4.2.1 Official Commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Addresses of Peace Memorial Ceremony of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
  - 4.2.2 Non-official Commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

5. Results
- **5.1 Analysis of Official Commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki**
- **5.2 Analysis of Non-official Commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki**

6. Conclusions
- 6.1 Summary of the Main Findings
- 6.2 Discussion on the Research Limits and Possible Future Trend

7. References

Basic literature list (at least 5 most important works related to the topic and the method(s) of analysis; all works should be briefly characterized on 2-5 lines):

- Assmann, A. (2019). *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur* (H. Yaskawa, Trans.). Iwanami Shoten. (Original work published 2013 by C. H. Beck)
  - Examines dissatisfaction and criticism regarding the recollection of Holocaust victims, questioning the possibility of remembrance that transcends origins and borders.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On Collective Memory* (L. A Coser, Trans.). University of Chicago Press.
  - Discusses the concept of "collective memory" and explores how individual memories are shaped and influenced by social structures and collective experiences.

- Hogan, M. J. (1996). *Hiroshima in history and memory*. Cambridge University Press.
  - Compiles essays on the atomic bombing of Japan, providing a historiographical overview and examining how the memory of the event has evolved over time.
- Olick, J. K., Vinitzky-Seroussi, V., & Levy, D. (2011). *The Collective Memory Reader*. Oxford University Press.
  - Introduces essential texts from various scholars who have contributed to the study of collective memory.
- Saito, H. (2006). Reiterated commemoration: Hiroshima as national trauma. *Sociological Theory*, *24*(4), 353–376. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9558.2006.00295.x
  - Examines the historical transformations of Japanese collective memory of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

Related theses and dissertations (list of B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. theses defended at Charles University or other academic institutions in the last five years):

- Channing Moles, T. (2021). *In the Shadow of the Bomb: Nagasaki's Place in Atomic Memory* [Master Thesis]. Texas State University. https://digital.library.txst.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/568e633c-bd13-410e-ae8e-9df12927dca3/content
- Franck, G. (2021). *Collective trauma and Identity struggle: underground factors of the 2019 South American demonstration waves* [Master Thesis]. Charles University. https://dspace.cuni.cz/bitstream/handle/20.500.11956/149242/120397920.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Otsuki, T. (2016.). *God and the Atomic Bomb: Nagasaki's Atomic Bomb Memory and Politics of Sacrifice, Forgiveness and Reconciliation* [PhD dissertation]. University of Toronto. https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/99963/1/Otsuki_Tomoe_201606_PhD_thesis.pdf
- Seipke, A. W. (2022). *Shadows of Hiroshima: The Evolution of Atomic Bomb Memories Explored Through Japanese Manga* [Undergraduate Thesis]. The University of Vermont. https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1519&context=hcoltheses

Contents

Introduction

Hiroshima, where the first atomic bomb was dropped, is commemorated today with various meanings. Domestically, the 1945 atomic bombing instilled a traumatic memory in Japan and became a cornerstone of post-war Japanese identity (Lim, 2007, 2010, 2021; Okuda, 2010; Orr, 2001; Uesugi, 2023). For a defeated Japan, the memory of Hiroshima became an important device for securing its privileged victim status. Moreover, the memory of Hiroshima also serves as a "Mecca of Peace," conveying the reality of the nuclear disaster and playing a crucial role in preventing another nuclear catastrophe (Okuda, 2010; Saito, 2006). For instance, the G7 summit in 2023 took place in Hiroshima, marking the historical significance of the collective commemoration of Hiroshima and reinforcing international nuclear disarmament efforts. However, almost 80 years have passed since 1945, and nuclear survivors who directly experienced the tragedy of Hiroshima are passing away, raising concerns that the memory of Hiroshima may be fading (Schmemann, 2015). Additionally, social, cultural, and political changes over the years may reshape Hiroshima's memory landscape.

To address these concerns, it is crucial to examine how Hiroshima's multifaceted meanings—as a symbol of victimhood, a beacon of peace, and a reminder of nuclear catastrophe—are preserved and conveyed to future generations. Thus, this study explores the main themes in the collective memory of Hiroshima in contemporary Japanese society, examining how unofficial individual commemorations align or differ from official commemorations. Specifically, the research objective is framed by the following two research questions: How is the discourse of victimhood, hope for "Never Again," and the importance of remembering constructed around the memory of Hiroshima in Japanese society? How and to what extent does the memory of Hiroshima complement and/or juxtapose the official and unofficial Japanese culture of commemoration?

To answer these research questions, five addresses at the Peace Memorial Ceremony by Japanese Prime Ministers from 2019 to 2022 and 35 Japanese film reviews of *Oppenheimer* in 2024 are analyzed using Discourse Analysis. The addresses at the Peace Memorial Ceremony represent the official commemoration of Hiroshima due to their popularity and official and traditional nature. For the analysis of unofficial commemoration, the reviews of the American film *Oppenheimer* were chosen as it portrays the life of Oppenheimer, frequently called the "father of the atomic bomb," which stimulates Japanese to recall the traumatic memory of Hiroshima. These two data

sets are analyzed by employing Discourse Analysis, particularly focusing on three dimensions: victimhood, hope for "Never Again," and the importance of remembering.

The collected data offers insights into the perception of Hiroshima in contemporary Japanese society, revealing a strong inheritance of the memory of Hiroshima intertwined with national identity, while also highlighting differences between official and unofficial commemoration cultures. Consistent with previous studies, the research shows that Hiroshima plays a pivotal role in constructing Japan's sense of victimhood, which has a long-lasting impact on today's Japanese society. The traumatic experience of Hiroshima is also linked to Japan's identity as a pacifist nation and its motivation for nuclear disarmament efforts. Moreover, despite concerns about forgetting, the Japanese commitment to never forget Hiroshima remains profound. On the other hand, the analysis of unofficial commemorations revealed that film reviews acknowledge Japan's perpetrator-hood, a perspective not observed in official commemorations. This recognition is often overlooked in previous studies, which tend to generalize the victimhood aspect of memory. These findings contribute to a new perspective on the memories of Hiroshima, highlighting a more complex and multi-layered understanding of Japan's historical narrative.

This thesis is structured into four chapters. The first chapter outlines the theoretical background, discussing the theories of public memory and collective victimhood that underpin the study, along with related theories to establish the theoretical framework. The second chapter provides the historical background of the atomic bombing, including the historical facts about Hiroshima, the post-war construction of collective memory, and American interpretations as context for the main findings. The third chapter details the research methodology, including the Discourse Analysis framework, general information about the dataset, and the procedures for data collection and analysis. The fourth chapter presents the main findings, divided into two sections: the official commemoration and the unofficial commemoration of Hiroshima. Each section is further divided into three perspectives: victimhood, hope for "Never Again," and the importance of remembering. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the overall findings and limitations of the study.

Finally, I will explain three changes from the research proposal. Initially, the plan focused on both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but the actual study concentrates solely on the memory of Hiroshima. This decision was made to avoid oversimplifying the complex memory landscape of the atomic bombings and to prevent trivializing either memory. The memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki undergo different processes, including the

construction of collective memory and current commemorative culture. Hiroshima, often referred to as the "Mecca of Peace," plays a pivotal role in peace-building efforts. In contrast, Nagasaki's commemoration is less prominent and relatively passive, as its atomic bomb experience is frequently associated with Catholic concepts such as the Passion and Redemption due to historical, cultural, and social factors (Okuda, 2010). Given these differences, studying both through a single approach would likely lead to an oversimplification and fail to thoroughly cover aspects of each memory; thus, this study specifically addresses the memory of Hiroshima. Along with this change, the data analyzed are exclusively from addresses at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony. The study primarily uses the terms "memory of Hiroshima" and "the atomic bombing," but when providing historical background or discussing broader implications of nuclear weapons and joint commemoration, "Nagasaki" and "atomic bombings" are also mentioned.

Additionally, the analytical framework was changed from Critical Discourse Analysis to Discourse Analysis to better align with the aims of the study. While Critical Discourse Analysis seeks to uncover underlying power structures, ideologies, and social inequalities, this research focuses primarily on understanding the cultural and historical significance of the memory of Hiroshima. Thus, Discourse Analysis, which encompasses broader perspectives, is deemed more suitable for this research.

Lastly, the first research question in the proposal was changed to fit the focus of the study. The original question, "What are the predominant themes and narratives surrounding the memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japanese society?" had a quantitative implication. The revised research question now fits the study's aim to explore the various voices surrounding the memories of Hiroshima with a qualitative approach: How is the discourse of victimhood, hope for 'Never Again,' and the importance of remembering constructed surrounding the memory of Hiroshima in Japanese society? Except for these three changes, the research was conducted based on the proposed research plans.

1. Theoretical Background

1.1 Public Memory: Concepts, Interplay, and Cultural Perspectives

This research on Japanese commemoration of Hiroshima is deeply rooted in the study of public memory. In Japan, individual and local memories of Hiroshima have transcended time and space to be remembered by the entire national population. However, there are also arguments that Japan's public memory is still not fully constructed, highlighting the need for further discussion on aspects of the memory of Hiroshima. This chapter aims to provide a fundamental understanding of the key theoretical frameworks of public memory and its construction process, as well as some arguments regarding Japan's public memory.

1.1.1 Public Memory and its Foundation

The term "public memory" is defined in various ways: it is "the circulation of recollections among members of a given community" (Houdek & Phillips, 2017, p. 1) and, in a more detailed sense, "a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present, and, by implication, its future" (Bodnar, 1992, p. 15). In essence, public memory refers to the collective understanding and remembrance of the past by a given society and group of people. Public memory positions collectivity at its core, and thus the central issues are how communities in the present remember, commemorate, and interpret historical events, figures, and experiences, essentially the past. This public memory then serves as a compass that shapes the future of society. Additionally, public memory is constructed through various commemorative events (Houdek & Phillips, 2017). In this context, according to Bodnar (1992), public memory is formed at the intersection of official and vernacular cultures, as detailed in the following section. Therefore, examining public memory through these two different commemorative cultures provides an understanding of how societies maintain their historical narratives and shape their norms and identity.

The most foundational study of public memory is the concept of "collective memory," developed by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. The main concept of collective memory is that individual memories are constructed within social institutions and groups to which one belongs and are understood only through a group context. Thus, collective memory is "the result, or sum, or combination of individual

recollections of many members of the same society" (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 39). Moreover, according to Halbwachs (1992), collective memory is not a replica of the past, but rather a reconstruction of the past based on present interpretation. Therefore, collective memory is not fixed; rather, it is continually changing based on the current context created by social groups. This dynamic nature of collective memory underscores the importance of understanding how memories are shaped and reshaped over time. Thus, the study of collective memory necessitates the consideration of changing social frameworks (Olick et al., 2011).

Furthermore, Olick (1999) distinguished between two types of collective memory: collected memory and collective memory. Collected memory refers to "the aggregated individual memories of members of a group" (p. 338). In this notion, while social frameworks influence what individuals remember, the ultimate pivotal actors in the act of remembering are individuals, and this does not necessarily assume the existence of collectivity. On the other hand, collective memory represents socially and politically constructed memory for present purposes, which is not reducible to personal and psychological processes. A prominent aspect of collective memory is that its construction plays a crucial role in defining group membership: "it is not just that we remember as members of groups, but that we constitute those groups and their members simultaneously in the act (thus re-member-ing)" (Olick, 1999, p. 342). This conceptualization emphasizes that memory is an active process involving the social construction and reconstruction of the past. Notably, these two types of memory are interconnected aspects of how societies remember, rather than being two different phenomena (Olick, 1999).

1.1.2 The Dynamics of Public Memory: Sites of Memory and Cultural Interplay

To further understand the dynamics of collective memory, it is essential to consider Pierre Nora's concept of "sites of memory" (*lieux de mémoire*). According to Nora (1996), sites of memory are defined as "any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community" (p. xvii). Building on Halbwachs' argument, Nora explored the physical representation of public memory in specific places, objects, and practices that embody and perpetuate collective historical narratives. In the case of Hiroshima, for instance, this would be the Peace Memorial

Park and Peace Memorial Ceremony on August 6, both of which embody and form the collective memory of Hiroshima. Moreover, Nora (1989) also argued that a site of memory is constructed at the point where memory and history interplay, and there must be "a will to remember" (p. 19). In this interplay between history and memory, history provides the context necessary to preserve memory by continuously reshaping sites of memory through historical interactions. However, the construction of sites of memory also requires a conscious will to remember; without this intentional effort, the significance of what is remembered could be diluted, and any entity might be considered worth remembering. In summary, Nora's concept of sites of memory provides an explanation for the dynamics of memory construction and maintenance.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning the two different representations that shape public memory: "official" and "vernacular" cultural expressions (Bodnar, 1992, p. 13). The former represents a culture that reflects the interests of leaders or authorities in society, often presenting an idealized form of historical events and figures rather than the reality (Bodnar, 1992). On the other hand, vernacular culture encompasses a variety of concerns rooted in various segments of the larger society, which are continually reshaped over time. This perspective reflects "views of reality derived from firsthand experience in small-scale communities rather than the 'imagined' communities of a large nation" (Bodnar, 1992, p. 14). Essentially, official and vernacular cultures interplay to construct public memory. This ongoing interaction contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the past, reflecting the complex realities of the present. Thus, it is underscored that exploring both official and vernacular perspectives of culture is crucial in studying public memory.

1.1.3 Fragmented Memories: The Complexity of Japan's Public Memory and the Memory of Hiroshima

Based on the nature of public memory discussed in the previous sections, the memory of Hiroshima can be considered a form of public memory. Hiroshima's experience is now remembered across Japan, where individual and local memories have transcended time and space to become a national remembrance. This also contributes to Japanese identity as "the only nation ever to have been atom-bombed," emphasizing Japan's position as a victim and further evolving into anti-nuclear and anti-war movements (Okuda, 2010; Orr, 2001; Saito, 2006). In the construction of the shared memory of Hiroshima, collected memory, such as storytelling and publications by

hibakusha (nuclear survivors), and collective memory, conveyed through such as ceremonies and monuments, incessantly interplay with each other. When exploring Japan, it is quite easy to find various forms of sites of memory that serve as reminders of the tragedy in Hiroshima.

However, some argue that Japan's public memory regarding the war is not yet fully constructed or, if it is, there is a significant gap between the somewhat constructed public memory and individual memories (Iriye, 1990; Shoji, 2002; Yasumaru, 2003). For instance, Yasumaru (2003) argues that there is no unified public memory of the war in Japan because Japan's war experience has been interpreted in various ways over a variety of issues, including colonial rule and foreign relations. Grounded in Yasumaru's argument, Nagai (2003) compared the public memory of France and Japan, pointing out that while the war experience of France and its victory contributed to unifying the nation, as illustrated by Nora's works, Japan's experience did not work in the same way. Furthermore, Iriye (1990) compared the past Axis powers Germany and Japan and argued that Germany has a clear national stance towards its war experience, but Japan does not, which leads to Japan lacking a cohesive public memory. In post-war Germany, various activities to overcome the past, known as *Erinnerungskultur* (culture of remembrance), have been engaged in both official and vernacular spheres. In contrast, Japan lacks a national stance or a similar culture of remembrance regarding the historical understanding of the war. Summarizing these arguments, Japan's wartime aggression and subsequent defeat failed to create an integrated public memory, and the lack of a shared national stance in post-war Japan further hampered this process.

Drawing from these arguments, one may hypothesize that while the memory of Hiroshima constitutes a significant part of Japan's public memory, it is constructed in a fragmented manner. To test this hypothesis, it is important to examine both the official and unofficial commemorative cultures of Hiroshima. While the official commemorative culture is expected to set a general framework for the interpretation of the past, the unofficial commemoration should have more nuanced voices regarding the past event. Thus, this study particularly focuses on the commemorative culture in public speeches and film reviews, which exemplify the official and unofficial commemorations in Japan, respectively. Understanding the case of Hiroshima helps illustrate how collective memories are formed and sustained within a society, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of the theoretical foundations of public memory.

1.2 Collective Victimhood and Victimhood Nationalism

In addition to the concepts of public memory, this research also considers the concept of victimhood. In recent eras, the construction of collective memories has shifted "from heroic martyrdom to innocent victimhood" (Lim, 2010, p. 138). The memory of Hiroshima is argued to be instrumental in supporting Japan's position as a victim (Lim, 2010; Orr, 2001). This chapter delves into the concept of collective victimhood, its relation to nationalism, and, finally, a specific case of victimhood nationalism in Japan.

1.2.1 The Construction of Victimhood

It is widely acknowledged that victimhood is not simply attributed to the state of having experienced harm but is socially constructed (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Druliolle & Brett, 2018; Huyse, 2003). The dictionary definition of victimhood refers to "the condition of having been hurt, damaged, or made to suffer, especially when you want people to feel sorry for you because of this or use it as an excuse for something" (Cambridge University Press, n.d., para. 1). However, Huyse (2003) contends that being physically, psychologically, or economically harmed is a required yet incomplete criterion for determining someone as a victim. In accordance with this argument, other elements, such as "societal norms and traditions, developed in politics, law, and culture," also influence the criteria for recognizing someone as a victim (Huyse, 2003, pp. 57–58). Ultimately, it is through the shaping by these social, cultural, and political factors that the experience of harm is interpreted as victimhood.

Building on this understanding, Vandermaas-Peeler et al. (2024) identify several criteria for recognizing someone as a victim: they must be viewed as part of humanity, excluding those in lower status categories like illegal migrants or the homeless; their suffering must be considered grave; they should be perceived as weak, vulnerable, and passive; they are designated as victims by others; they must have directly experienced the loss; and their suffering needs to be codified in law (pp. 174–175). These criteria define the principal attributes of an "ideal victim," who is fully and legitimately recognized as a victim (Christie, 1986). In this context, Vandermaas-Peeler et al. (2024) also emphasize the importance of highlighting those who do not meet these ideal criteria but are still considered to be in the status of victims. In fact, contemporary Japan is rather distant from the ideal victim by these standards. Particularly, the criterion "they must have directly experienced the loss" is not applicable to the majority of Japanese today. In this case, how

do Japanese people today, who do not have a direct tie to Hiroshima, hold and maintain the notion of being victims of the war?

1.2.2 Collective Victimhood and its Expansion

Notably, victimhood is not limited to the realm of individuals; it is also experienced by collectives. This sense of "collective victimhood" is defined as "a mindset shared by group members that results from a perceived intentional harm with severe and lasting consequences inflicted on a collective by another group or groups" (Bar-Tal et al., 2009, p. 238). For instance, when a collective entity, such as an ethnic, gender, or religious group, is targeted, the harm inflicted on individual members can be experienced as collective victimhood. This occurs because the individuals are harmed specifically due to their affiliation with the group, making the victimization a shared experience that reinforces their collective identity and sense of injustice (Huyse, 2003).

Moreover, victimhood bestows a powerful position on group members that is protected from any criticism (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Brown, 2015; Jensen & Ronsbo, 2014). Brown (2015) noted the privileged position of victims as follows: "victimhood gives us great moral superiority and entitles us to unquestioning sympathy while exempting us from examining any single one of our actions" (para. 21). Therefore, groups have the possibility to maintain their victim position in the long term and consequently incorporate it into their culture (Bar-Tal et al., 2009). This perpetuation of victimhood can solidify group identity and foster a collective memory that reinforces their victim status. Over time, these cultural narratives can become deeply ingrained, influencing group dynamics and intergroup relations.

Also, collective victimhood encompasses both horizontal and vertical expansion. In the former, group members may perceive a sense of victimhood even if they are not directly harmed (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Vandermaas-Peeler et al., 2024). According to social identity theory, individuals categorize themselves and others into ingroups and outgroups, deriving their social identity from ingroup membership (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Ellemers & Haslam, 2011). Consequently, when members of an ingroup are threatened, they perceive the threat as personal, leading to a collective sense of victimhood, regardless of whether they are directly harmed (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Staub, 1998). The latter aspect, vertical expansion, refers to groups in the present perceiving victimhood based on experiences from the distant past (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Staub & Bar-Tal, 2003). Society preserves and perpetuates memories from all eras, thus maintaining a collective identity

across generations (Halbwachs, 1992). Throughout this process of collective memory preservation, ingroup members maintain a sense of victimhood and perceive themselves as victims.

Relatedly, Baumann (1991) introduced the concept of "hereditary victimhood" (p. 236). It encompasses a collective consciousness wherein future generations inherit the suffering of their ancestors, perpetuating a self-identification as victims, especially in nations with a history of collective suffering. Two key points emerge from this concept alongside collective victimhood. First, Baumann (1991) posits that hereditary victimhood is largely "imagined" and perpetuated "through the collective construction of memory" and "individual acts of self-identification and registration" (p. 238). In this context, Baumann argues that unlike relationships based on genetics or family tradition, the status of victimhood is accessible to anyone who shares a common identity. Second, descendants not only inherit the memory of past suffering but also assume the status of the "aristocracy of victimhood," which grants them ethical indulgence for any action they take (Baumann, 1991, p. 235). By leveraging their status as victims, descendants justify their actions as morally justified, provided they can demonstrate that such actions aim to prevent a recurrence of their ancestors' suffering (Baumann, 1991). Thus, these qualities of victimhood expand the scope of those who are victimized and confer a privileged status that legitimizes their actions in the name of victimhood.

Present-day Japan also exhibits a form of hereditary victimhood. As the subsequent empirical chapters will show, the analysis of this study reveals a self-perceived sense of victimhood among the Japanese people. Expressions such as "as a Japanese" and "as the sole bombed nation" are frequently mentioned, reinforcing a collective identity as victims even though most Japanese today have not directly experienced the traumatic events in Hiroshima. This status is also exploited to maintain a morally comfortable position as victims, which facilitates the omission or ignorance of the wartime belligerence of imperial Japan. Consequently, some point out that the younger generation in Japan today tends to regard themselves as victims rather than perpetrators (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Uesugi, 2023). As an extension of this historical recognition, the history textbook controversy is significant. In the 2000s, the Japanese Society for a New History Textbook (新しい教科書をつくる会), a group of conservative scholars, compiled a historical textbook that did not describe Japan's wartime atrocities. When it was approved, it was problematized across Japan as well as

in other countries such as China and Korea. This revisionist stance is supported by the "aristocracy of victimhood" stemming also from the memory of Hiroshima, which is a crucial ideology for right-wing nationalists (Lim, 2021). This case underscores the problematic influence of hereditary victimhood narratives in shaping the perceptions and actions of future generations.

1.2.3 The Conflict over Victimhood Memory in Nation-States

The inherited status of victims is also connected to a country's nationalism. Lim (2007, 2010, 2021) further elaborated the concept of collective victimhood and hereditary victimhood in memory politics and coined the concept of "victimhood nationalism." Victimhood nationalism is an ideological form of memory politics in which a future generation inherits the experiences and status of a previous generation of victims, granting political and moral justification for their current nationalism (Lim, 2007, 2021). Nation-states now contest their legitimacy by prioritizing victimhood in their memory space while mitigating their acts of atrocities, which hampers any reconciliation process in the post-war world (Lim, 2010).

Moreover, Lim (2010) argued that the most remarkable phenomenon in victimhood nationalism is "the magical metamorphosis of the individual perpetrator into the collective victim" (p. 139) over the contestation of victimhood nationalism. This metamorphosis is exemplified, for instance, by Poland, Korea, and Israel, which constructed the memory as the greatest victim of the Second World War, exempting individual perpetrators from their crimes. On the other hand, this transformation from victimizers to victims is also witnessed in the memory cultures of past Axis powers Germany and Japan, which were perpetrators of the Holocaust and colonialist genocide, yet hide themselves from being accused of their atrocities, utilizing memory as victims. These struggles over the memory of victimhood on both sides are endlessly played out on the global stage today.

Additionally, nations where this metamorphosis is observed exhibit the phenomena of "overcontextualization" and "decontextualization" of memory (Lim, 2010, p. 141). In victimized nations such as Poland, Korea, and Israel, there is a tendency to excessively emphasize their memory of victimhood and conceal individual crimes by overcontextualizing their victimhood. For instance, the debate on the Jedwabne pogrom in Poland, which revealed that Polish individuals were complicit in the Holocaust, sometimes overcontextualizes their victimhood by emphasizing the constructed memory

as the greatest victim of the war (Lim, 2021). Perpetrator nations, on the other hand, often decontextualize their memory as victims from the flow of history, as if there is no history as perpetrators. For example, the Japanese discourse on Hiroshima exemplifies decontextualization, ignoring the wartime aggression by Japan, which will also be illustrated in the findings of this study. In these conflicts over victim status, it is crucial to contextualize the events in the correct position, recognizing the duality that one can be both a victim and a perpetrator, rather than the argument being focused on whether the claim is false or true.

1.2.4 Victimhood Nationalism: The Case of Japan

Lastly, the case of victimhood nationalism in Japan is addressed in more detail. As discussed previously, the belief that Japan is a victim of the war has widely permeated post-war Japan (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Lim, 2007, 2010, 2021; Okuda, 2010; Uesugi, 2023). This victimhood nationalism has been supported by the assumption that ordinary Japanese citizens were passive and innocent victims of the nation. Miyata (2006) points out that this lack of war responsibility is supported by the absence of introspection as to why the war happened. In post-war Japan, war responsibility is concentrated mainly on those who were convicted by military tribunals (Miyata, 2006; Orr, 2001). The general public, on the other hand, were not widely questioned for their passive obedience to authority but were rather considered to have been "cheated" by the militarists. By lacking further pursuit of war responsibility, the morally comfortable position of victims has continued among the general public.

Post-war Japan also utilized the sense of victimhood as a strategy to prevent public discontent from escalating into criticism of the government in the wake of the defeat. According to Okuda (2010), the post-war government, soon after the surrender, employed "persuasive definition" and "the theory of collective remorse" through the media (p. 38). The authorities reiterated that the war was inevitable for Japan's independence and the stability of Asia, justifying the outbreak of the war. Additionally, the acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration, which brought about the end of the war, was described as a "hardship" and an "unprecedented national crisis." Through this rhetoric, people were urged to have a spirit of sharing in these hardships. The theory of collective remorse emphasized the shared suffering and victimhood of the Japanese people rather than acknowledging individual culpability. As a result, the general public was imbued with the

consciousness of being innocent victims of the war, rather than being held accountable for any wartime actions or responsibilities.

The most decisive element that bestows Japan with the position of a victim of the war is the unique experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Lim, 2010; Orr, 2001). The language “the only nation ever to have been bombed” emphasizes Japan’s victimhood while erasing its status as a perpetrator. Furthermore, Hiroshima is often associated with Auschwitz and represented as an absolute evil in human history. At this point, Lim (2010, 2021) argues that Japan decontextualized the tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki from their historical background (2010, p. 154), giving the impression that the Japanese were innocent victims like the Jewish people and did not engage in invasion or hostilities. Through this process, Japan legitimizes and maintains the ethically advantageous status of a victim.

Based on the arguments above, Japan’s collective memory of the war is deeply anchored in victimhood. With the immunity of the Hiroshima experience, postwar Japan has been able to divert attention from the acts of aggression committed during the war and has remained comfortable in its position as a victim. However, due to the lack of a clear national stance on the historical interpretation of the war and the influence of foreign factors, there is some fluctuation between the memory of Hiroshima that contributes to the victim consciousness discussed in this section and the memory of Hiroshima as actually recalled by people. This fluctuation highlights the complexity and variability in collective memories, suggesting that while the overarching narrative promotes a victimhood identity, personal recollections may reveal a more multifaceted understanding of the past. Consequently, a thorough analysis of these varied memories is essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the Hiroshima experience shapes contemporary Japanese identity and attitudes toward historical responsibility. By incorporating diverse perspectives, this study aims to provide a more balanced view of Japan’s war memory, acknowledging both the victimhood narrative and the need for a critical examination of historical actions.

2. Historical Background of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima

2.1 The Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima: Impact and Consequences

Hiroshima, located in the western part of Japan, was one of the country's most important military bases. Since the central government established the Hiroshima Garrison (one of six garrisons in Japan) in 1873, Hiroshima gradually consolidated its military presence. As Japan began its invasion of Asian countries in the 20th century, the population of Hiroshima increased, along with the installation and expansion of military facilities. During the Pacific War, the Second Army Headquarters and local administrative offices were situated in the city. Due to its military significance, Hiroshima was chosen as the primary target for the atomic bombing on August 3, 1945.

The first bomb, code-named "Little Boy," was dropped on Hiroshima by a U.S. military plane at 8:15 a.m. on August 6. Almost 70,000 people died instantly from the heat ray, blast, shockwave, and radiation (Okuda, 2010). Those closely affected in Hiroshima recalled a tremendous flash of light, but it is said that no one heard the noise of the explosion at the moment the atomic bomb was dropped (Hersey, 1989; Okuda, 2010). The City of Hiroshima (2019) estimated that the number of people who died by the end of December 1945 was approximately 140,000. Moreover, the majority of the casualties were non-combatants, including women, children, and the elderly.

The effects of the atomic bomb on human health persisted for a long time. A great amount of radiation poured down on the people in Hiroshima after the explosion, resulting in an increased number of deaths and disabilities. Symptoms included keloids, A-bomb cataracts, microcephaly, and leukemia. Compared to acute injuries, these symptoms appeared a couple of years after the bombing. Leukemia, the deadliest disease, typically appeared almost two years after the bombing and peaked four to six years later (Listwa, 2012). Furthermore, victims' psychological disorders, such as anxiety and somatization symptoms, were also observed among people who were exposed to the atomic bomb explosion (Yamada & Izumi, 2002). However, the aftereffects of the atomic bombing are still not fully understood, and ongoing research continues to explore them from medical and psychological perspectives.

It should be noted that the victims of the atomic bombing were not only Japanese. They included Koreans and Chinese who were forced to come to Japan, foreign students

from China and Southeast Asia, German priests, prisoners of war, and Japanese Americans who had returned to Japan (Okuda, 2010; The City of Hiroshima, 2019). The second-highest number of victims was Korean, with an estimated total death toll in Hiroshima ranging from 48,000 to 50,000 (Tong, 1991). However, the complete picture of foreign victims has not yet been identified. The presence of foreign victims raises questions about Japan's identity as the "only country to have suffered atomic bombings" and reveals the intentional nature of Japan's "nationalization" of the memory of Hiroshima.

2.2 Interpreting Hiroshima: The Case of Japan and the United States

This section provides an overview of the interpretation of Hiroshima from both Japanese and American perspectives. Although the experience of Hiroshima stands as a strong anchor for the memory of the war and post-war Japanese identity, the memory of Hiroshima was once at risk of oblivion. The first part focuses on how the memory of Hiroshima was erased from public consciousness through wartime and post-war censorship by Japanese authorities and occupation forces, as well as the silence of survivors. The following part traces the construction of the collective memory of Hiroshima, particularly triggered by the Lucky Dragon No. 5 incident. Lastly, the moral justification for dropping the atomic bombs from the United States' perspective is addressed to provide broader insights into Hiroshima.

2.2.1 Censorship of Atomic Bomb Reporting

Despite the enormous damage caused by the atomic bombings, coverage about the bombings was not spread immediately after the detonation. This was because the Japanese authorities censored reporting on the atomic bombings. During the war, Japanese newspapers did not use the term "atomic bombs" and reported on the power of the bomb in a mitigated tone. Soon after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, the Information and Intelligence Agency, the government office in charge of censorship, told news agencies to obscure the information about Hiroshima due to its inadequacy (Braw, 1991). Thus, the next day, the situation in Hiroshima was only reported as "slightly damaged" (Hook, 1991, p. 14; Shigesawa, 2010). However, this stance continued even after the government received detailed information that the bomb that caused considerable damage in Hiroshima was an atomic bomb. The news agencies continued referring to the weapon as a "new-type bomb" and downplayed the extent of the damage. This censorship

stemmed from the authorities' concern that reporting the atomic bomb would lead citizens to consider the defeat of the Empire of Japan (Okuda, 2010). Thus, to prevent the Japanese public from losing fighting spirit, the authorities instructed newspaper agencies to refrain from reporting the reality of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was only after August 15, when Japan declared defeat, that the drastic damage was reported using the term "atomic bombings."

However, free reportage about Hiroshima and Nagasaki did not last long after Japan's surrender. The occupation authorities also kept the facts about the damage caused by the atomic bombs strictly under control. After the war, Japan was under Allied occupation, mainly led by the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers (SCAP). Under the occupation, SCAP implemented the Press Code to prevent Japan from supporting the military or war regime and to conceal coverage that could undermine the authorities' status. Coverage of the atomic damage was no exception. Although the Press Code guidelines did not directly reference the atomic bombings, they were considered disruptive to public tranquility (Braw, 1991; Hook, 1991). By censoring reports about the devastation caused by the atomic bombs, the authorities sought to demonstrate their moral superiority and avoid accusations of U.S. cruelty and breaches of international and humanitarian laws (Hook, 1991). Therefore, while some journalists tried to report the serious atomic-bomb disease, most media omitted these mentions to deny the aftereffects of the bombs (Hook, 1991; Shigesawa, 2010). Simultaneously, some authors and publishers, concerned about censorship, self-censored their publications (Hook, 1991; Shigesawa, 2010). In this context, reports about the atomic bombings were unknown to the majority of Japanese except those who directly experienced it. It is acknowledged that this censorship during the wartime and post-war occupation led to ignorance and indifference to the reality of the damage inflicted by the atomic bombings (Shigesawa, 2010).

In addition to the censorship, the silence of *hibakusha* also hindered the construction of the collective memory of Hiroshima. First of all, they were severely injured and wounded and struggled just to survive one day at a time. Additionally, the majority of the atomic bomb survivors tended to keep silent and reject the recollection of their experience, as is often the case with patients who have experienced trauma. For instance, during the discussion on the preservation of the Atomic Bomb Dome, some called for its demolition because of its association with the tragic memories of the atomic bombing (The City of Hiroshima, 2020). While some presented their experiences of the

atomic bombings in the form of art, such as Takashi Nagai's memoir *The Bell of Nagasaki*, most general citizens did not have the resources to externalize their voices to the public. Thus, the traumatic memory of Hiroshima was mostly confined to the local sphere and was almost on the path to being forgotten until 1951.

2.2.2 Reviving the Memory of Hiroshima

The locally confined memory of Hiroshima gradually extended to the national level after the end of the occupation. On September 8, 1951, the Treaty of San Francisco was signed, officially ending the Allied occupation and restoring Japan's sovereignty. With the lifting of censorship, coverage about Hiroshima began to be published in the media. The publication of the special magazine *Asahi Graph* on August 6, 1952, particularly garnered public attention (Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, 2005; Saito, 2006). It sold out as soon as it went on sale, with a total of 700,000 copies sold. The cover of the magazine read "The First Exhibition of Atomic Bomb Damage," and the printed photographs depicted the drastic devastation of the city, revealing the reality of the atomic bombing. Saito (2006) pointed out that this publication of *Asahi Graph* contributed to the first step in the nationalization of the memory of Hiroshima, as it provided clear images of collective memory and reached various social members, including non-elite groups. However, the general public, which did not directly experience the tragedy of Hiroshima, saw the memory of Hiroshima only from a "spectator's" perspective (Saito, 2006, p. 65). Therefore, at this point, the memory of Hiroshima was considered an event of the distant past, and it had not yet developed into a collective memory that deeply connected to the Japanese identity.

The decisive event that transformed the memory of Hiroshima into the collective memory forming the identity of postwar Japan was the Lucky Dragon No. 5 incident. On March 1, 1954, the United States conducted a hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands, causing a tremendous amount of radioactive contamination. The fallout extended beyond the designated prohibited area, and as a result, the Japanese tuna fishing boat Lucky Dragon No. 5 (Daigo Fukuryū Maru) was severely exposed to the nuclear fallout. All 23 fishermen on the fishing boat were hospitalized for several months, and one of the crew members, Aikichi Kuboyama, died in September 1954, almost six months after the detonation. Newspapers widely reported the radioactive contamination and the death of Kuboyama, proliferating the fear of nuclear weapons across Japan. As a result, the ban-the-bomb movement spontaneously expanded across the country and collected

30 million signatures within a year. Through the anti-nuclear movement, the Japanese began to consider themselves as victims of nuclear weapons, engaging with the memory of Hiroshima not as spectators but as "actors" (Saito, 2006, p. 369). At this phase, their national identity became deeply connected to the victims of nuclear weapons.

2.2.3 The Moral Justification of the Atomic Bombs in the United States

In contrast to Japan's collective memory of Hiroshima, the United States also constructed its national memory regarding Hiroshima. The interpretation of Hiroshima ranges from moral retribution to Japan and the myth of saving half a million American lives, affirming the decision to drop the bomb continues to be told today. The Japanese speculation about American people's perspectives today was observed in the analysis of this study. Thus, this section provides a brief account of the United States' historical recognition of the decision to drop the atomic bombs.

The first statement made by the United States justified the atomic bombing as Japan's karmic payback. President Harry Truman made a public statement about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima 16 hours after the drop. In the statement, Truman revealed that the American airplane dropped the atomic bomb, which had more than 20,000 tons of TNT, on Hiroshima. He also noted that "the Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor," and the atomic bomb was dropped "against those who brought war to the Far East" (National Archives, 1945, para. 2–3). Most of the remainder of the statement accounted for praise of the scientific breakthrough and the power of the United States in succeeding in the invention of atomic bombs. On the other hand, there was no mention of the mass killing of non-combatants and the damage to the city. This statement implies that the dropping of the bomb was retaliation and retribution for the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and Japan's conquests in Asia. In addition, it emphasizes the greatness of the country while overlooking the indiscriminate bombing of the city.

In the post-war United States, the prevailing narrative surrounding the use of atomic bombs centers on the "saving lives" myth. This belief asserts that deploying the bombs was necessary to end the war and minimize casualties. It finds its roots in a 1947 article by Henry Stimson, then-Secretary of War, published in Harper's Magazine:

> We estimated that if we should be forced to carry this plan [to invade Japan's southern island of Kyushu and then the mainland of Honshu] to its conclusion, the major fighting would not end until the latter part of 1946, at the earliest. I was informed that such operations might be expected to cost over a million casualties,

> to American forces alone. Additional large losses might be expected among our allies, and, of course, if our campaign were successful and if we could judge by previous experience, enemy casualties would be much larger than our own. (Stimson, 1947, p. 102)

Stimson's article on the necessity of the atomic bombings was intended to address the doubts of those who questioned the moral justification for the bombings (Miles, 1985; Okuda, 2010). The post-war United States strictly censored coverage of the aftermath of the atomic bombings both inside and outside the country. However, Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett and American journalist John Hersey published reportage that disseminated the inhumanity of the atomic bombings to the world. The coverage about the aftermath of the atomic bombings, particularly their long-term effects on health, garnered global criticism. In response to this situation, Truman's advisors, including Stimson, felt compelled to provide further explanation to justify the decision to drop the atomic bombs. Although this estimation of casualties was not supported with any clear evidence or explanation of the calculation, this belief was widely accepted among American citizens for decades (Miles, 1985).

The opinion poll on the use of atomic bombs in the United States is also crucial to examine. According to a Gallup Poll conducted from August 10 to 15, 1945, shortly after the bombings, 85% of Americans approved of the atomic bombings of Japan, while only 10% opposed them (Moore, 2005). However, a 2015 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center showed 56% in favor and 34% opposed. While the poll showed a drastic change from 1945 to 2015, nearly half of Americans still believe that the atomic bombings of Japan were morally justified. Moreover, an overview of changes in public opinion by Gallup indicates that American opinion did not change dramatically from 1990 to 2005 and from 2005 to 2015, as the percentages of those in favor and those opposed did not fluctuate more than ±5% (Moore, 2005; Pew Research Center, 2015). While further observation is needed, this data suggests that the justification for the use of atomic bombs remains solid and is expected to be hard to change.

3. Methodology

The chapter on theoretical frameworks underscored the necessity of considering the dynamic social, cultural, and political shifts that shape collective memory from both official and vernacular perspectives. As we approach the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, amidst significant societal transformations, reevaluating the memory of Hiroshima becomes imperative for understanding contemporary Japanese identity and constructing a framework for future peacebuilding. This study delves into the analysis of both official and unofficial commemoration in Hiroshima, seeking to answer the following questions:

1. How is the discourse of victimhood, hope for "Never Again," and the importance of remembering constructed surrounding the memory of Hiroshima in Japanese society?
2. How and to what extent does the memory of Hiroshima complement and/or juxtapose the official and non-official Japanese culture of commemoration?

To explore these questions, this research utilizes Discourse Analysis of two materials: addresses delivered at the Peace Memorial Ceremony and film reviews of *Oppenheimer* in Japanese. This chapter provides a brief overview of Discourse Analysis, introduces each piece of data to be analyzed, and outlines the procedure for analysis.

3.1 Discourse Analysis

Prior to the empirical part, having a foundational understanding of discourse is beneficial, given its diverse definitions. Scholars broadly define the term "discourse," encapsulating concepts such as "language-in-use" (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 1; Gee, 2011, p. 8), or as "a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1). In a related argument, Gee (2015) introduced the terms "small d" discourse and "big D" Discourse. "Small d" discourses focus solely on "language-in-use," while "big D" Discourses consider not only language itself but also encompass "saying(writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations" (Gee, 2015, p. 171). Despite these differences in definition, they share a common focus on examining specific instances or patterns of language (Schiffrin et al., 2001).

Building on this understanding, Alvesson and Kärreman (2000) provide a more detailed comparison. In their discussion of Discourse Analysis, Alvesson and Kärreman delineate two distinct approaches to discourse: "the study of the social text" and "the

study of social reality" (p. 1126). The former centers on the verbal and written aspects of everyday interactions, while the latter investigates how linguistic actions construct social reality. Essentially, the first approach treats discourse as separate from other aspects of social reality and lacks generalizable content, as it only examines specific communication elements within a given context. Conversely, the latter approach views discourse as overarching frameworks or structures, representing general patterns or systems prevalent within a certain period of time.

Given the research objectives aimed at uncovering how discourse shapes broader social constructs, identities, and cultural narratives surrounding the memory of Hiroshima, this study aligns more closely with the "big D" Discourse and the latter approach advocated by Alvesson and Kärreman (2000). In this context, Discourse Analysis serves as a method to investigate how spoken and written language represents reality (Gee, 2011). By employing Discourse Analysis, the study considers "a broad conglomeration of linguistic and nonlinguistic social practices and ideological assumptions" (Schiffrin et al., 2001, p. 1).

3.2 Data Sources

The examination of the commemoration of Hiroshima is divided into two parts: the analysis of official and unofficial commemorations. The first part analyzes five addresses delivered at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony by the Japanese Prime Minister. This ceremony is held annually on August 6th, marking the anniversary of the atomic bomb's detonation in Hiroshima. These addresses were selected for their traditional and official nature, as well as their international audience, details of which are elaborated in the following chapter. The data spans a five-year period from 2019 to 2023 and includes speeches delivered by three different Prime Ministers: Shinzo Abe (2019, 2020), Yoshihide Suga (2021), and the current Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida (2022, 2023). All cited addresses, in both Japanese and English, are sourced from the official website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan. The analysis is primarily based on the Japanese transcripts of the speeches, with English translations reviewed for supplementary reference purposes.

For the analysis of non-official commemoration, this study examines reviews of the film *Oppenheimer* in Japanese from the online platform Filmarks. The premiere of *Oppenheimer* was a significant event in the context of Hiroshima commemoration, drawing public attention and sparking controversy in Japan, notably illustrated by the

“#barbenheimer” movement. Filmarks, a prominent Japanese film review service boasting over 190 million reviews as of March 2024, allows users to post and view film reviews free of charge. The choice of Filmarks for this research is justified by its widespread popularity in Japan and the depth seen in its reviews, which are typically detailed and substantive, providing comprehensive discussions of the film content. Additionally, while reviewers can rate films on a scale from zero to five stars, this study does not focus on the star ratings because they are influenced by factors such as actors’ performances and sound effects, which are not the target of this study. In contrast to the addresses at the Peace Memorial Ceremony, film reviews reflect more subjective and potentially biased views from the general public.

In total, 35 film reviews were extracted for analysis through purposive sampling conducted in two phases. Initially, reviews posted between March 29 and April 4, the week following the film’s premiere, were targeted. This period included 8,226 reviews, chosen with the expectation that these were from particularly enthusiastic viewers. The reviews spanned from pages 1368 to 2196 on the website as of July 6, 2024. Systematic sampling commenced from page 1408, randomly selected to ensure unbiased coverage across each day. An interval of 40 pages was added after each selection, effectively distributing the sample evenly across the available pages, thereby maximizing the diversity of reviews and ensuring representation from each day. From this set, 200 reviews were extracted. In the second phase, these 200 reviews were further filtered based on criteria that included specific words or phrases, matching the analysis requirements. The criteria were defined as follows:

Victimhood: Reviews including terms such as “victim” (被害者), “affected country” (被害国), and “as a Japanese” (日本人として).

Hope for Never Again: Reviews including phrases such as “anti-war” (反戦), “anti-nuclear” (反核), and “not to repeat” (繰り返さない).

Importance of Remembering: Reviews including phrases such as “continue to learn” (学び続ける) and “never forget” (忘れない).

By screening the reviews according to these criteria, 35 reviews were consequently extracted. The sampling process was halted at this point, as this number was considered sufficient for robust analysis. Ethical considerations were addressed by ensuring that all

reviews analyzed are from publicly accessible sources, and personal identifiers were omitted to maintain the privacy of the individuals who posted them.

3.2.1 The Official Commemoration: Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony takes place annually in Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima on August 6th. This ceremony has been held every year since 1947, except for 1950 when it was canceled due to the Korean War. Although the program for the ceremony has evolved over the years, the current established program is as follows (based on "Shikijidai [Program of the Ceremony]," n.d.; the City of Hiroshima, 2023c):

1. Dedication of the Register of the Names of the Fallen Atomic Bomb Victims
2. Address by the Chairperson of Hiroshima City Council
3. Dedication of Flowers
4. Silent Prayer and Peace Bell (at 8:15 a.m., the time the atomic bomb was dropped)
5. Peace Declaration
6. Release of Doves
7. Commitment to Peace
8. Addresses
9. Hiroshima Peace Song (chorus)

As of 2023, around 50,000 people attended the ceremony (Cabinet Public Affairs Office, Cabinet Secretariat, 2023).

While the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony is organized by locals, it serves as a national site of memory. The City of Hiroshima is responsible for organizing the ceremony, with its "solemnity based on understanding and cooperation from citizens and others" enshrined in the local ordinance (Hiroshima Peace Promotion Basic Ordinance, 2021; Yomura & Niiyama, 2021, para. 3). The participation of various groups further underscores its national character: government officials; citizens' representatives; *hibakusha* and bereaved families; peace organization representatives; Ambassadors to Japan; and foreign dignitaries (The City of Hiroshima, 2023b). Additionally, the broadcast of the ceremony plays a crucial role in national commemoration. It is aired live on the Japanese public broadcaster NHK, Hiroshima local TV and radio stations, and streamed on the Internet, including platforms such as YouTube and TikTok. Through

these live broadcasts, the local ceremony reaches a national audience, increasing awareness among the involved parties (Okuda, 2010).

3.2.2 The Addresses by Prime Minister of Japan

The involvement of the Prime Minister of Japan, the highest political position in the country, in the ceremony represents the official culture of remembrance of Hiroshima. The tradition of the Prime Minister participating in the Peace Memorial Ceremony dates back to 1971 when Eisaku Sato attended the ceremony for the first time as an incumbent Prime Minister. Before 1971, the Prime Minister's participation was less active, limited to sending a message or dispatching an elected representative or bureaucrat from Hiroshima as a proxy. This limited involvement was influenced by the occupation authorities, reflecting the government's intention to marginalize the memory of the atomic bombing (Okuda, 2010). Thus, the transition in government participation in the ceremony demonstrates the government's increasing interest in commemorating Hiroshima through the engagement of the Prime Minister at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony.

The addresses by the Prime Minister are crucial in analyzing how the discourses surrounding Hiroshima are constructed in official commemorative culture. Okuda (2010) pointed out that the Prime Minister's addresses create "a discursive space in which the experience of the atomic bombings is associated with the Japanese sense of victimhood" (p. 194). According to Okuda (2010), there are four characteristics of these addresses. Firstly, there is the "nationalization" of the local atomic bombing devastation (Okuda, 2010, p. 191). Since 1960, the phrase "the only nation ever to have been atom-bombed" (*yuiitsu no hibakukoku*) has been repeated almost every year. By framing the local atomic bombing experience as a national crisis, this discourse constructs a sense of victimhood nationalism surrounding the memory of Hiroshima. The next characteristic involves vows to take initiative for lasting peace. In their addresses, Prime Ministers traditionally express their determination to establish lasting peace and abolish nuclear weapons. The third feature is the mention of atomic bomb victims and their relief measures. In the ceremony in 1969, for the first time, the address showed empathy for victims suffering from long-lasting diseases. After the enactment of the Atomic Bomb Survivors Support Law, mentions of the aging of victims and the promotion of relief measures became typical. Lastly, there is a declaration to advocate the "Three Non-Nuclear Principles." Eisaku Sato first articulated the Three Non-Nuclear Principles of "not possessing, not producing, and

not permitting the introduction of nuclear weapons" in 1967 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, n.d.), and in 1978, at the U.N. General Assembly on disarmament, the government declared its commitment to these principles. Since then, this commitment has been reiterated almost every year. In summary, previous research reveals that addresses by the Prime Minister are closely linked to the national sense of "victimhood" along with the determination for "Never Again." The following empirical part studies how these ideologies are expressed and constructed in the addresses in more detail.

3.2.3 The Unofficial Commemoration: Film *Oppenheimer* and "#Barbenheimer" Memes

Oppenheimer (2023) is an American film directed by Christopher Nolan. The film portrays the life of J. Robert Oppenheimer, known as the "father of the atomic bomb." It grossed over 974 million dollars worldwide (Carollo, 2024) and won seven Oscars in March 2024. However, the premiere in Japan was delayed by almost eight months, while it premiered between July 11 and 21, 2023, in most countries around the world. This delay is speculated to be due to distributors' reluctance to get involved in political controversy, or at least to avoid a release date around the A-bomb anniversary in August (Inagaki, 2023; Reizei, 2023).

Even before its screening, the film garnered attention in Japan. The Japanese were intrigued by how the United States, the only country to have used nuclear weapons, depicted the nuclear bombings. It is well known in Japan that Oppenheimer was keenly aware of the consequences brought about by his actions and devoted himself to nuclear disarmament after the war. Therefore, some expected the film to be an anti-war and anti-nuclear film, focusing on his post-war torment of becoming the father of the atomic bomb. On the other hand, soon after the premiere in the United States, some criticized the film for not portraying the realities of nuclear use; for instance, it never depicts the moment of the atomic bombings and the aftermath in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Faguy, 2023; Zemler, 2023). Combined with the criticism and the uncertainty of Japan's premiere, the Japanese people became even more interested in the film.

Additionally, what drew even harsher attention from Japanese people was an internet phenomenon called "Barbenheimer." The name Barbenheimer comes from two films, *Oppenheimer* and *Barbie*, which were released on the same day in the United States. Film fans spontaneously created memes that combined elements from both films and posted them on the internet with the hashtag "#barbenheimer." While Barbenheimer

became popular worldwide, most Japanese people were offended by the representations in the memes. The reason for their anger was that they considered the memes to trivialize the reality of atomic bombs by portraying the atomic bombings as humorous, such as depicting a smiling Barbie against the background of a mushroom cloud or a cutely pinkish mushroom cloud. When the official United States account for the film *Barbie* took advantage of this trend, posting on X (formerly Twitter) that "It's going to be a summer to remember" with a quote from the Barbenheimer memes, Japanese backlash spread on social media with the hashtag "#nobarbenheimer," and some called for the film's release in Japan to be canceled. This disturbance subsided after Warner Bros. apologized for their inconsiderate action, but it was enough to disappoint the Japanese. In addition to the main topic of the film, the criticism of not portraying the realities of the atomic bombings and the Barbenheimer movement prompted Japanese people to recall and consider the memory of Hiroshima from various perspectives. Taking into account this context, the Japanese audience's discourse on the memory of Hiroshima is addressed in the following analysis chapter.

3.3 Three Focal Points of Analysis: Victimhood, Hope for "Never Again" and Importance of Remembering

The analysis is conducted from three perspectives: victimhood, hope for "Never Again," and the importance of remembering. In the first part, the analysis focuses on the representation of victimhood. As the previous theoretical section argued, the memory of victims has dominated the memory space in post-war Japan, often overshadowing the perpetrator-hood in the war. By focusing on victimhood, this study aims to reveal to what extent the sense of victimhood has been maintained and inherited by the current generation, which did not directly experience the suffering.

The second focus of the study is the hope for "Never Again." Along with the traumatic memory of the Holocaust, the memory of Hiroshima has also cultivated the narrative of "Never Again," as exemplified by the anti-nuclear movement in the 1950s. This section examines how this narrative has evolved and how it continues to influence contemporary attitudes towards nuclear disarmament and peace.

Lastly, the analysis explores how contemporary Japanese perceive the traumatic memory of Hiroshima as a memory worth remembering. This perspective interconnects with the sense of victimhood and the lesson of "Never Again." By uncovering their moral

duty to remember, the study aims to highlight the ways in which the memory is preserved and transmitted across generations, and for what purpose.

3.4 Tools of Inquiry: Figured Worlds and Situated Meanings

To investigate the data, this study applied Gee's (2011, 2014) "tools of inquiry" (2011, p. 60). Gee (2014) introduced six tools of inquiry for analyzing a particular piece of data using Discourse Analysis: "situated meanings," "social languages," "intertextuality," "figured worlds," "Discourses," and "Conversations" (pp. 156 −157). This research particularly focused on "figured worlds" and "situated meanings."

"Figured worlds" refer to "narratives and images that different social and cultural groups of people use to make sense of the world" (Gee, 2014, p. 156). The norms and standards considered normal and typical vary depending on the group. Based on these "figured worlds," group members construct their identity and think and behave in ways that are considered natural and typical within the group. By focusing on a figured world, this study captures the shared norms and social and cultural background surrounding the memory of Hiroshima.

The second tool of inquiry is "situated meanings," which refers to the specific meanings of a word or phrase in different contexts of use. Gee (2011) pointed out that the meanings of words and phrases are not fixed or universal; rather, they are constructed within specific contexts or situations. For example, Gee (2011) illustrated situated meanings by stating:

> For example, in one context, "privileged" might mean "rich," while in another context it might mean "educated" or "cultured" or "politically connected" or "born into a family with high status" or some combination of the above or something else altogether. (Gee, 2011, p. 66)

By examining situated meanings, it is possible to observe how words and phrases convey different nuances and implications in specific contexts. In this study, the deeper layers of meanings in the addresses and the film reviews are examined to provide a broader understanding of the social and cultural context and language use.

4. Findings

4.1 Official Commemoration of Hiroshima: Addresses by the Prime Ministers of Japan at the Peace Memorial Ceremony

This chapter analyzes the five addresses delivered by three Japanese Prime Ministers at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony between 2019 and 2023. These addresses represent the official commemoration of Hiroshima in Japan. The first section focuses on the theme of victimhood as constructed in the addresses, exploring how they shape a shared sense of national victimhood. The subsequent section examines the "Never Again" narrative, highlighting how the experience of Hiroshima ties into this narrative and how the Prime Ministers expressed their hope to prevent the repetition of Hiroshima's tragedy. Lastly, the third section studies the statements emphasizing the importance of preserving the memory of Hiroshima today, almost 80 years after the atomic bombing, which connects to national identity and efforts towards global peace.

4.1.1 Victimhood

This section analyzed how Japan's identity as a victim is constructed. The analysis revealed that all addresses presented the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in various ways that contributed to the Japanese audience feeling a sense of victimhood, from self-dubbing as the sole war-bombed nation to vivid portrayals of the tragic consequences of the atomic bombings. These depictions of the memory of Hiroshima notably decontextualized the background of the experience in Hiroshima. Additionally, the clear separation between the actual victims and the Prime Ministers highlights the distinction between political leadership and public sentiment, allowing the audience to independently develop a sense of collective victimhood.

A common element in all five addresses was the emphasis on Japan's unique historical position, which shapes its identity as a victim. The phrase "the only nation ever to have been war-bombed" (*yuiitsu no sensō hibakukoku*, 唯一の戦争被爆国) consistently appeared across all addresses (Abe, 2019b, para. 4; Abe, 2020b, para. 5; Kishida, 2022b, para. 2; Kishida, 2023b, para. 2; Suga, 2021b, para. 7). This specific phrase plays a crucial role in constructing a figured world, where the local experience of being bombed during wartime has become central to Japan's national identity (Okuda, 2010). Furthermore, the choice to use the phrase "sole war-bombed nation" instead of the

more general “sole bombed nation” (*yuiitsu no hibakukoku*, 唯一の被爆国) is noteworthy. This narrative not only acknowledges the historical fact but also frames it within the context of war. By emphasizing the wartime aspect, the uniqueness and gravity of Japan’s experience are underscored, differentiating its suffering from other types of bombing experiences that lack the wartime context. By clarifying the war context, this figured world also contributes to portraying Japan as a “victim” in the Pacific War.

Similarly, their expressions of condolence and sympathy to the victims were reiterated almost word for word. As is customary, all Prime Ministers remarked at the beginning of their speeches:

> 原子爆弾の犠牲となられた数多くの方々の御霊（みたま）に対し、謹んで、哀悼の誠を捧（ささ）げます。そして、今なお被爆の後遺症に苦しまれている方々に、心からお見舞いを申し上げます。(Abe, 2019a, para. 2–3; Abe, 2020a, para. 1–2; Kishida, 2022a, para. 1; Kishida, 2023a, para. 1; Suga, 2021a, para. 1–2)
>
> (“I reverently express my sincere condolences to the souls of the great number of atomic bomb victims. I also extend my heartfelt sympathy to those still suffering even now from the aftereffects of the atomic bomb.”) (Abe, 2019b, para. 2–3; Abe, 2020b, para. 1–2; Kishida, 2022b, para. 1; Kishida, 2023b, para. 1; Suga, 2021b, para. 1–2).

The use of “souls” (*mitama*, 御霊) adds a solemn and respectful tone, constructing a narrative that honors the victims. This choice of language shapes a figured world where the victims are remembered with reverence and dignity. Such specific language use also ties into situated meaning, where meanings are deeply contextual, evoking empathy and reverence appropriate for the Peace Memorial Ceremony. These language choices resonate with an audience that includes survivors, descendants of victims, and other stakeholders, conveying a sense of collective mourning and remembrance.

The gravity and human cost of the atomic bombing are vividly described in various addresses. The addresses by Abe in 2019 and Kishida in 2023 briefly presented the day of 1945:

> 今から７４年前の今日、原子爆弾により、十数万ともいわれる貴い命が失われました。街は焦土と化し、人々の夢や明るい未来が容赦なく奪われました。一命をとりとめた方々にも、筆舌に尽くし難い苦難の日々をもたらしました。(Abe, 2019b, para. 1)
>
> ("Seventy-four years ago today, an atomic bomb deprived people said to number well more than 100,000 of their precious lives. It reduced the city to ashes and mercilessly deprived people of their dreams and bright futures. Even those who escaped death suffered hardships beyond description.") (Abe, 2019a, para. 1)
>
> 今から７８年前の今日、一発の原子爆弾により、十数万ともいわれる貴い命が失われました。街は焦土と化し、人々の夢や明るい未来が一瞬にして奪われ、一命をとりとめた方々にも、言葉では言い表せない苦難の日々をもたらしました。(Kishida, 2023b, para. 1)
>
> ("Seventy-eight years ago today, a single atomic bomb deprived people said to number well more than 100,000 of their precious lives. It reduced the city to ashes and deprived people of their dreams and bright futures in an instant. Even those who escaped death suffered hardships that words cannot describe.") (Kishida, 2023a, para. 1)

Abe and Kishida both depicted scenes of destruction, focusing on the devastation of the city, the victims, and the survivors. The phrase "reduced the city to ashes" powerfully evokes the total annihilation of the urban landscape, recalling moments when buildings and everything else were completely incinerated, leaving no trace. Additionally, describing the loss of lives as the deprivation of "dreams and bright futures" deeply resonates with the audience, highlighting the profound loss felt by ordinary citizens, from children to adults. This use of evocative language constructs a figured world that emphasizes the memory of the bombings as not just historical facts, but deeply embedded traumatic ones, consequently ingrained within the national identity.

Notably, Kishida's 2022 address is particularly striking as it distinctly portrays the tragic moment of the atomic bombing in Hiroshima:

> 本日、広島は、被爆から７７年となる朝を迎えました。真夏の太陽が照りつける暑い朝、一発の原子爆弾が広島の街を一瞬にして破壊し尽くし、十数万とも言われる人々の命を、未来を、そして人生を奪いました。川では数多（あまた）の人が斃（たお）れ、街中には水を求めてさまよう人々の姿。そうした惨状の中でなんとか一命をとりとめた方々も長く健康被害に苦しまれてきました。(Kishida, 2022b, para. 1)
>
> ("Today, Hiroshima marks 77 years since the morning an atomic bomb was dropped. As the midsummer sun blazed down that hot morning, a single atomic bomb destroyed the city of Hiroshima in a mere instant, claiming the lives, futures, and day-to-day existences of what is said to be well more than 100,000 souls. A large number of people perished in the rivers while others wandered around the city searching for water. Even those who somehow escaped death despite such miserable conditions suffered long-term health problems.") (Kishida, 2023a, para. 1)

By vividly describing the disastrous consequences of the atomic bombing, Kishida illustrates the severity of atomic bombings. His reflections on the weather that day ("the midsummer sun blazed down that hot morning") resonate with contemporary audiences, who experience similarly hot summer days in August, encouraging them to mentally reconstruct the past. Kishida further presents a vivid picture of the immediate aftermath ("a large number of people perished in the rivers while others wandered around the city searching for water"). This juxtaposition of everyday scenes with the tragic aftermath helps the audience imagine that day and comprehend the humanitarian impact of the atomic bombing. Moreover, the depiction of the death toll as "the lives, futures, and day-to-day existences of what is said to be well more than 100,000 souls" utilizes situated meanings that not only underscore the profound loss of life but also foster empathy and a sense of shared victimhood, evoking a deep sense of mourning and thereby fostering sympathy for the victims.

In terms of Kishida's 2022 address, his mindset for this ceremony should be taken into account. Kishida has ancestral ties to Hiroshima and is renowned for his passionate commitment to nuclear disarmament, which he considers his life's work. Moreover, the Peace Memorial Ceremony in 2022 was the first such ceremony he attended as Prime

Minister. This context suggests that his depiction of the atomic bombing also stems from a deep personal connection to the memory of Hiroshima and a drive to appeal to both domestic and international audiences.

On the other hand, the 2020 and 2021 addresses by Abe and Suga, respectively, further focus on resilience from the devastation of the city:

> ７５年前、一発の原子爆弾により廃墟（はいきょ）と化しながらも、先人たちの努力によって見事に復興を遂げたこの美しい街を前にした時、現在の試練を乗り越える決意を新たにするとともに、改めて平和の尊さに思いを致しています。(Abe, 2020b, para. 4)
>
> (“Despite having been turned to ruins 75 years ago through the dropping of a single atomic bomb, this beautiful city admirably achieved reconstruction through the efforts of our forebears. Standing before it, I renew my determination to overcome the trial we now face and once more turn my thoughts to how precious peace is.”) (Abe, 2020a, para. 4)
>
> その後の市民の皆様のたゆみない御努力により、廃墟から見事に復興を遂げた広島の美しい街を前にした時、現在の試練を乗り越える決意を新たにするとともに、改めて平和の尊さに思いを致しています。(Suga, 2021b, para. 6)
>
> (“This beautiful city of Hiroshima admirably achieved reconstruction from the ruins thanks to the subsequent tireless efforts of its citizens. Standing before this city, I renew my determination to overcome the trial we now face and once more turn my thoughts to how precious peace is.”) (Suga, 2021a, para. 6)

Here, Abe and Suga portray a figured world that connects the experience of Hiroshima with the resilience of the people and the nation. The juxtaposition of past Hiroshima (“ruins”) and today’s Hiroshima (“beautiful city”) highlights a narrative of overcoming adversity. Additionally, they express respect for the people’s efforts toward reconstruction by acknowledging “the efforts of our forebears” and “the subsequent tireless efforts of its citizens.” By emphasizing resilience, this figured world frames their victimhood not just in terms of vulnerability and suffering, but also in terms of strength, recovery, and ultimately peace.

Additionally, the rhetoric blurring the subject of the atomic bombings was also significant. It has been pointed out that in the discourse on Hiroshima, the atomic bombing is often perceived as if it were a natural disaster such as earthquakes or volcanic eruptions (Lim, 2010; Uesugi, 2023). This language can also be seen in the addresses. The dropping of the atomic bomb was described as "an atomic bomb was dropped" rather than "attacked," where the atomic bomb is used as the subject instead of the actual subject of the act, the Americans. This rhetoric presents a figured world that obscures the responsibility for the atomic bombings and emphasizes a collective victimhood of an unavoidable disaster. This term reflects the discharge of responsibility to the United States, derived from the international relations between Japan and the United States that have continued since the Cold War era (Uesugi, 2023). As allies, both nations developed deep economic ties and security agreements, with the American provision of military protection in exchange for strategic bases in Japan. The rhetoric in the addresses thus minimizes American responsibility for the bombings and highlights the Japanese as mere victims of an unfortunate tragic event.

Overall, the addresses by the Prime Ministers consistently convey a figured world that highlights the significant impact and traumatic experiences that people faced. Each description begins with a scene from Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, detailing the catastrophic consequences of the atomic bombing and the traumatic memory associated with the event. These depictions of the memory of Hiroshima play a key role in constructing a sense of victimhood among Japanese citizens. At this point, no other historical contexts, such as the Pacific War and Imperial Japan, are presented. This is what Lim (2010) refers to as the "decontextualization" of the past (p. 141). By decontextualizing the memory of Hiroshima from their wartime crimes and sins, Japan omits its past as a wartime perpetrator. The analysis of the addresses by the Prime Ministers reveals that their discourse on Hiroshima tends to decontextualize the past, constructing an identity solely as a victim.

However, it should also be noted that all Prime Ministers delineated between themselves and the actual victims and did not use language that directly portrayed themselves as victims. This distinction was especially vivid in their references to relief measures for the survivors. In the latter part of all the addresses, the Prime Ministers mentioned their continuing engagement in comprehensive relief measures, ranging from health, medical services, and welfare to screenings for recognizing atomic bomb diseases (Abe, 2019b, para. 10; Abe, 2020b, para. 10; Kishida, 2022b, para. 7; Kishida, 2023b,

para. 4; Suga, 2021b, para. 11). These statements on relief measures demonstrate a clear societal structure of supporters and the supported. While the overall addresses conveyed messages that provided the Japanese audience with a sense of victimhood, the Prime Ministers themselves clearly avoided self-identification as victims. This stance implies a deliberate separation between public sentiment of victimhood and political leadership, leaving it entirely up to the audience to develop a sense of collective victimhood.

4.1.2 Hope for "Never Again"

In all addresses, the determination that the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki must never be repeated was the most prominent theme, accounting for almost half of each speech. This "Never Again" narrative helps construct the national identity as a pacifist nation. Additionally, all Prime Ministers presented this narrative in the context of nuclear disarmament within Japan's post-war security policy, highlighting Japan's complex approach to international nuclear policy.

The determination to "never repeat Hiroshima and Nagasaki" was reiterated in all speeches without exception. The Prime Ministers consistently and emphatically stated that the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki "must never be repeated" ("決して繰り返してはならない", "二度と繰り返してはならない") (Abe, 2019b, para. 3; Abe, 2020b, para. 5; Kishida, 2022b, para. 2; Kishida, 2023b, para. 2). The phrase "must never be repeated" carries situated meanings that extend beyond merely reminding the audience of past tragedies to also calling for action against future atrocities, emphasizing global responsibility. For instance, Suga's statement "Hiroshima and Nagasaki must never be repeated" ("ヒロシマ、ナガサキが繰り返されてはならない") is particularly noteworthy. Typically, the names "広島、長崎" (Hiroshima, Nagasaki) are written in Kanji, which are Japanese characters used to convey complex meanings and concepts. However, Suga used "ヒロシマ、ナガサキ" in Katakana, which are typically used for foreign words, technical terms, or to convey a modern or international impression. According to the City of Hiroshima (2023), using Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Katakana indicates the cities not merely as regional entities but as globally recognized A-bombed cities. Thus, Suga's choice of Katakana transcends local identity and reinforces the situated meanings of the phrase, enhancing its call to a worldwide audience for nuclear disarmament.

Following the statement of "never be repeated," the addresses expressed their commitment to a world without nuclear weapons. Abe stated that this commitment was "Japan's unchanging mission" ("変わることのない我が国の使命", "我が国の変わらぬ使命") (Abe, 2019b, para. 3; Abe, 2020b, para. 5), while Kishida described it as "the responsibility borne by Japan" ("我が国の責務") and "my pledge" ("私の誓い") (Kishida, 2022b, para. 2; Kishida, 2023b, para. 2). Within the figured world constructed by these speeches, Japan is envisioned as "a pacifist nation" with a unique historical perspective and moral authority on the issue of nuclear weapons (Orr, 2001). This narrative positions Japan not just as a victim of past atrocities but as a proactive agent for global peace.

The cliché "the only nation ever to have been war-bombed" (唯一の戦争被爆国, *yuiitsu no sensō hibakukoku*) is linked to the "Never Again" narrative. All Prime Ministers stated that creating a world without nuclear weapons is their responsibility as the sole nation to have experienced wartime nuclear devastation. Suga's address in 2021 articulates Japan's role in international nuclear policy:

> 我が国は、核兵器の非人道性をどの国よりもよく理解する唯一の戦争被爆国であり、「核兵器のない世界」の実現に向けた努力を着実に積み重ねていくことが重要です。(Suga, 2021b, para. 7)
>
> ("Japan, as the only country to have experienced the horror of nuclear devastation in war, understands the inhumanity of nuclear weapons more than any other country on earth. It is important to steadily build up efforts over time towards the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons.") (Suga, 2021a, para. 7)

By highlighting the uniqueness of the Japanese historical background, the addresses also present a figured world that endows Japan with the identity of a moral indicator and drives its international peace advocacy.

Additionally, the specific policy for the realization of a world without nuclear weapons was mentioned in the addresses. It was articulated that their nuclear disarmament policy has consistently been founded on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Specifically, Abe mentioned the 50th anniversary of the NPT's entry into force in 2019 and 2020, along with the upcoming Review Conference. He stated that

"Japan will urge all countries to carry on with their united efforts" and "continue to make active contributions" (Abe, 2020a, para. 8). Following this policy, Suga in 2021 claimed that the NPT is "the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime," which is crucial "to maintain and strengthen" (Suga, 2021a, para. 9). This wording was echoed by Kishida in 2022. In 2023, Kishida did not specifically address the NPT but instead introduced the "G7 Leaders' Hiroshima Vision for G7 Nuclear Disarmament" of 2023, which is also based on the NPT. Overall, these Prime Ministers have consistently positioned the NPT at the center of their nuclear disarmament discourses.

Here, Japan's nuanced discourse on international nuclear policy is clearly reflected in these addresses. The NPT, a foundational treaty for nuclear disarmament declared in 1970 and signed by all nuclear-armed states, aims to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy. However, it does not aim for the complete abolition of nuclear weapons, as it primarily focuses on preventing nuclear proliferation while allowing the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China to maintain nuclear arsenals. Japan, as the only country to have suffered from atomic bombings, aspires to nuclear disarmament, yet it concedes to the power of the United States, as its national defense is strongly supported by U.S. nuclear deterrence (Akimoto, 2020). Thus, Japan's nuclear policy so far aligns with the principles of the NPT. At this juncture, some *hibakusha* and supporters of comprehensive nuclear abolition criticize the Prime Ministers' stance, which appears to deny the possibility of nuclear abolition and supports the nuclear deterrence (Matsui & Taue, 2022; NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation), 2022). Thus, the addresses underscore Japan's multifaceted discourse on nuclear disarmament, intertwining the desire for nuclear abolition with concessions to nuclear deterrence.

In summary, the addresses by the Japanese Prime Ministers highlight a complex and multifaceted discourse on nuclear disarmament and the memory of Hiroshima. The addresses consistently conveyed the tragedies of the atomic bombings and the commitment to a world without nuclear weapons. This language shows that the memory of Hiroshima serves as an international cornerstone for nuclear disarmament efforts, and the Japanese identity is particularly associated with this responsibility. On the other hand, they also navigate the nuanced realities of international nuclear policy and national security. By positioning Japan as a moral authority on nuclear disarmament while aligning with the principles of the NPT, these addresses reflect Japan's unique historical

perspective and its ongoing struggle to reconcile its pacifist aspirations with the practicalities of global politics. This balance underscores the broader challenges faced by the nation in advocating for peace while ensuring its own security in a world still shaped by nuclear deterrence.

4.1.3 Importance of Remembering

While the importance of remembering Hiroshima was not the primary theme in the addresses, it was mentioned by all Prime Ministers without exception. The Prime Ministers consistently acknowledged the significance of understanding the realities of the atomic bombings, which is deeply embedded in Japan's national memory. Additionally, their references to "the inhumanity" of nuclear weapon use align with both domestic and international discourse on nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, Kishida's mention of specific efforts to preserve this memory underscores its importance to society as a whole. These consistent references highlight a collective commitment to ensuring that the lessons of Hiroshima remain a central component of Japan's national identity as a pacifist nation and global peace efforts.

In all five addresses, the importance of understanding the realities of nuclear weapons was consistently emphasized, albeit through different approaches. For instance, Abe, in his 2019 address, posited that by having "firsthand knowledge of the tragic realities of the atomic bombings," people "can renew their determination to achieve peace" (Abe, 2019a, para. 5). Similarly, Suga in 2021 stressed the foundational role of this understanding in advancing nuclear disarmament, asserting that "having a correct understanding of the realities of the atomic bombings is the starting point for all efforts towards nuclear disarmament" (Suga, 2021a, para. 10). Collectively, the Prime Ministers uphold the belief that a thorough awareness of the atomic bombings' consequences is essential for fostering a world free from nuclear weapons and ensuring lasting peace. However, it is important to note that they did not extensively describe what the realities of the atomic bombings entail. The addresses envision a figured world where these realities are implicitly understood and emphasized among people, particularly the Japanese. This assumed common understanding may reflect a shared national memory that is considered universally recognized within Japan.

Moreover, both Abe and Suga from 2019 to 2021 mentioned "the inhumanity of using nuclear weapons" (核兵器使用の非人道性) in this context (Abe, 2019a, para. 7;

Abe, 2020a, para. 9; Suga, 2021a, para. 10). For instance, Suga's 2021 address clearly grasped the importance of remembering and understanding the inhumanity of atomic bombings:

> 我が国は . . . 核兵器使用の非人道性に対する正確な認識を継承し、被爆の実相を伝える取組を引き続き積極的に行ってまいります。(Suga, 2021b, para. 10)
>
> Japan will pass down an accurate understanding of the inhumanity of using nuclear weapons and continue to actively engage in efforts to convey the realities of the atomic bombings. (Suga, 2021a, para. 10)

The term "inhumanity of nuclear weapons" encompasses both local and global discourse on nuclear weapons. Domestically, it invokes traumatic memory of the atomic bombings experienced by Japan. The instantaneous deaths of hundreds of thousands, the devastation of cities, and the physical and mental suffering inflicted on the *hibakusha* are all encapsulated by the term "inhumanity." Internationally, it appeals to a broader, global concern for humanity. Before 2010, discourse on nuclear arsenals was mainly dominated by nuclear deterrence theory. However, since the 2010 NPT Review Conference highlighted "the catastrophic humanitarian consequences any use of nuclear weapons would have" (2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, 2010, p. 12), there has been increased global attention to the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons (Minor, 2015). The situated meaning of "inhumanity" thus bridges personal trauma with a universal concern over the horrors of nuclear conflict, positioning Japan as a credible voice in global efforts against nuclear armament, shaped by its unparalleled historical experiences.

Kishida's addresses echoed these determinations, and his 2023 speech specifically highlighted his efforts to preserve the memory of Hiroshima. First, he emphasized Japan's commitment to the G7 Hiroshima summit, held from May 19 to 21, 2023. This summit marked a historical milestone: for the first time, G7 leaders from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, along with representatives from the European Union, collectively commemorated the memory of Hiroshima. During this event, leaders visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and engaged in a dialogue with a survivor of the atomic bombing. They also paid their respects by offering flowers and observing a moment of silence at the Cenotaph for the

Atomic Bomb Victims in Peace Memorial Park. Furthermore, at the summit, Kishida advocated for younger generations and others to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Second, he emphasized his initiative to preserve the memory of Hiroshima for future generations. He specifically highlighted the "Youth Leader Fund for a World Without Nuclear Weapons" program, which he announced at the 10th Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 2022. Organized by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and supported by contributions from the Government of Japan, the program aims to provide young people from various countries with opportunities to hear the voices of atomic bombing survivors and to equip them with crucial knowledge for nuclear disarmament. By presenting this specific initiative, Kishida demonstrates his leadership and passion for maintaining the memory of the atomic bombings. Importantly, he frames the memory of Hiroshima not just as a historical event, but as a living narrative that can shape contemporary policies. Additionally, the presentation of his practical activities helps audiences evoke a sense of moral duty and historical responsibility that is deeply rooted in the Japanese national identity and its global stance on nuclear disarmament. Overall, his address powerfully affirms the critical need to keep the memory of Hiroshima alive as a cornerstone of global peace efforts.

The analysis on the importance of remembering Hiroshima reveals that the memory of Hiroshima remains deeply ingrained in Japan, even nearly 80 years after the event, and will be transmitted to younger generations. The consistent references to the inhumanity of nuclear weapons and the imperative to understand the realities of the atomic bombings underscore a collective commitment to ensuring these lessons are perpetually remembered. Moreover, the Prime Ministers' addresses have constructed a narrative that combines the collective memory of Hiroshima with the broader international discourse on nuclear disarmament. This emphasis on remembering Hiroshima not only honors the past but also provides a moral foundation for Japan's ongoing efforts to promote nuclear disarmament and global peace. This approach ensures that Japan's victimhood mentality is preserved in a morally acceptable manner for future generations, framed within the broader context of peacebuilding. By situating their experiences and memories within the context of global peace efforts, Japan can sustain its identity as a victim while circumventing the narrative of its role as a wartime aggressor. This strategy enables Japan to continue advocating its victim position interwoven with

international cooperation towards nuclear disarmament, further reinforcing its national identity centered on victimhood.

4.2 Unofficial Commemoration of Hiroshima: Film Reviews of Oppenheimer

For the unofficial commemoration of Hiroshima, 35 film reviews of *Oppenheimer* were analyzed. Similar to the analysis of the official commemoration, the first section addresses the sense of victimhood expressed by Japanese audiences in the reviews. The second section explores how the "Never Again" narrative developed from the viewers' film experience and their determination to never repeat Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The final section examines how contemporary Japanese recognize the significance of remembering Hiroshima.

4.2.1 Victimhood

The reviews of *Oppenheimer* revealed that watching the film led the general Japanese audience to perceive a sense of collective victimhood regarding the atomic bombings. The Japanese viewers tended to see the film from a Japanese perspective, expressing negative sentiments towards scenes that glorify the development and use of nuclear weapons. The phrase "as a Japanese" emphasizes their unique position as victims, delineating a clear line between Japanese and others. They also considered how international audiences, specifically Americans, perceived the film, recalling the Barbenheimer phenomenon. Additionally, while several reviews strongly expressed their sense of victimhood, others acknowledged Japan's perpetrator-hood through their film experience. This consideration for various perspectives underscores the importance of understanding the broader context of these historical events.

The analyzed reviews frequently showed that the audience watched the film from a Japanese perspective, expressing empathy and self-identification with the victims. Several reviews revealed how the reviewers' Japanese identity influenced their perception of the film, eliciting feelings of confusion, anger, and discomfort (e.g., @dabi07, 2024, para. 2; @kana_ahchan, 2024, para. 1; @noopy_movie, 2024, para. 2). The following review illustrates the complex sentiment of viewing the film as a Japanese:

> 映画として大変見ごたえのある作品。一方で、日本にアイデンティティをもつ人間として複雑な気持ちもかかえながら見ていた。(@kana_ahchan, 2024, para. 1)
>
> ("A very impressive film in terms of cinematic experience. However, as someone with an identity connected to Japan, I watched it with complex feelings as well.")

The review by @kana_ahchan underscores an emotional conflict where appreciation for the film's cinematic qualities is juxtaposed with complex feelings tied to a Japanese identity. This dual perspective highlights how cultural and historical contexts profoundly influence viewer reactions. The review by @dabi07 further expresses clear resentment towards the film, suggesting that these feelings may impact overall evaluations:

> 日本人として憤りを感じる部分も多く、その不快感から低評価になるだろうなとも思う。(@dabi07, 2024, para. 2)
>
> ("As a Japanese person, there are many parts that evoke feelings of indignation, and I also think that these discomforts might lead to lower ratings.")

As @dabi07 speculated, the film evokes a sense of anger and discomfort among Japanese viewers in many scenes, from the Trinity experiment to the meeting where the location of the atomic bombing was decided, to the scene where Oppenheimer is praised by the American public (@0722mo, 2024, para. 2; @simejisarami, 2024, para. 3; @TakuoAoyama, 2024, para. 15). These reviews indicate a figured world where discomfort is a natural response for Japanese viewers due to the nation's unique history as the only victim of atomic bombings. This perspective frames the narrative of the film as a personal and national story rather than just a historical recount, influencing a complex reception of the film. However, it is also crucial to note that this anger and these complex feelings were directed at specific scenes in the film, not the film itself. Overall, they understood the film addressed a biography of Oppenheimer and evaluated the film experience positively, as detailed in the following section on the hope for "Never Again." Therefore, several reviews showed their dilemma between appreciating the film's cinematic experience and their negative sentiments towards certain portrayals within the film (@78360, 2024, para. 1; @fkjonny, 2024, para. 11; @jouji.kiyo, 2024, para. 1).

The reviews further acknowledged the unique perception of the memory of Hiroshima among Japanese reviewers. In reviews filled with complex and negative emotions, the phrase "as a Japanese" ("日本人として") frequently appeared (e.g.,

@dabi07, 2024, para. 2; @riko___, 2024, para. 1; @ururunnnu, 2024, para. 2). These expressions underscore a sense of collective victimhood deeply ingrained in the national consciousness. This terminology not only highlights the identity of the Japanese as victims but also points to a unique, collective experience of historical events. For instance, one reviewer mentioned, ". . . a lingering sense of unresolved unease. I think this is something that only Japanese people can possess" (". . .解決されないモヤモヤが残り続ける。もしかしたらこのザワザワは、日本人しか持ち得ないものなのかと思う") (@78360, 2024, para. 1–2), suggesting an exclusivity to the Japanese emotional response that may not be fully empathized with by other nationalities.

Notably, some reviewers mentioned public opinion on the atomic bombing in the United States from a Japanese perspective. These reviewers are acutely aware of the differences in perception between themselves and the United States, recalling the Barbenheimer boom in the United States. The review by @pinocchio3165 (2024) exemplifies these differences:

> 更には我々日本人が見るとかなり心が抉られるのも確かだ。実験成功により狂喜乱舞するアメリカ人たち。投下場所を決める会議の軽薄さ。トルーマン大統領の長崎という地名すら忘れてる感じ。これを見るとアメリカ人の投下による罪の意識なんてのは皆無なんだなと実感する。バーベンハイマー騒動も起きるべくして起きたのだろう。(@pinocchio3165, 2024, para. 2)
>
> ("Furthermore, it's true that watching this film deeply wounds the hearts of us Japanese. The Americans are ecstatic over the successful experiment. The frivolousness of the meeting where the bombing locations were decided. President Truman even seems to forget the name Nagasaki. Watching this, I realize that Americans have absolutely no sense of guilt over the bombing. The Barbenheimer controversy was bound to happen.")

While the scenes where people praised the success of dropping the atomic bombs are from the film and not reality, Japanese viewers perceive contemporary Americans, who enjoyed creating the Barbenheimer memes, as resonating with the attitudes depicted in the movie. The Barbenheimer movement exemplifies the dichotomy between Japanese

and Americans, showing that Japanese viewers, deeply affected by the historical trauma of the atomic bombings, perceive the meme as a trivialization of their suffering, while American viewers may not fully grasp the depth of this emotional response. Similarly, other reviews also mentioned the Barbenheimer phenomenon, expressing confusion over why it happened (@omochi1007, 2024, para. 2) and recognizing the differences in perception between Japan and the United States (@fork18mmm, 2024). These reviews represent a figured world where Americans are portrayed as lacking guilt and understanding of the atomic bombings' humanitarian impact, while Japanese viewers carry the suffering of this historical event. This perception of Japanese disappointment may also reinforce low expectations for understanding their suffering and further deepen their sense of collective victimhood.

In a further observation, some reviews expressed a strong sense of victimhood. The following citation shows distinct discomfort and anger towards the protagonist Oppenheimer and the film *per se*:

> 長尺でかつ倍速再生のように走る映画だ。
>
> 不快だった。
>
> オッペンハイマー氏の人生の浮き沈みなど知ったことではない。
>
> 描かれている権力闘争など無意味である。
>
> 原作に無くても、ストーリーの半分を犠牲にしても、きっちり向き合い写すべきは原子爆弾の使用という米国の歴史的な犯罪の犯行現場と被害者のはずである。
>
> ノーランは、自身の目の黒いうちにヒロシマ、ナガサキを真正面に据えた映画を撮らなければならない。(@yasu_tmm, 2024, para. 1−6)
>
> ("The film is long and feels like it's running at double speed. I found it unpleasant. I don't care about the ups and downs of Oppenheimer's life. The power struggles depicted are meaningless. Even if it wasn't in the original work, and even if half the story had to be sacrificed, what should be properly confronted and depicted are the crime scenes of the historical atrocity committed by the United States and its victims. Nolan must make a film that directly addresses Hiroshima and Nagasaki in his lifetime.")

While the reviews cited earlier mostly evaluated the film itself as acceptable, this reviewer critically asserts that the film should focus more on the atrocity of the atomic bombings and the victims. This review highlights a strong sense of victimhood. The reviewer dismisses the personal and political struggles of Oppenheimer, indicating a deep-seated belief that the film's true focus should be on the suffering inflicted by the atomic bombings. The language "what should be properly confronted and depicted are the crime scenes of the historical atrocity committed by the United States and its victims" underscores a demand for a more explicit acknowledgment of the suffering caused by the bombings. This reflects a perspective where the primary narrative should center on the victims' experiences and the moral culpability of the United States. Furthermore, the insistence that "Nolan must make a film that directly addresses Hiroshima and Nagasaki" reveals a desire for an American filmmaker to confront and acknowledge this painful history. This demand reflects an underlying expectation that the United States should take responsibility for recognizing the full scope of the bombings' impact, thereby fostering a greater understanding among international audiences.

It should be noted that the review with a strong sense of victimhood also reflects the "decontextualization" of memory (Lim, 2010). For instance, the situated meaning of "victims" in @yasu_tmm's review specifically points to those who perished and suffered due to the atomic bombings, excluding other wartime victims. Another review also shows strong empathy for the victims of the atomic bombings and anger towards the film:

> 実験のときに『失敗したら◯◯円の金がパア』とか汚い金の話、実験が成功したときに流れる感動的？というかそんな感じの音楽、爆炎を見た人々の笑顔、全部胸糞悪い。あと何度も出てきた『原爆を作ってもどう使うかは自分には権限ない』的な台詞…人殺しに使うに決まってるだろ、わかってることやん。投下後の惨状を聞いて苦悩て。投下したらどうなるかわかってたでしょ。どれだけの人が地獄を経験したことか。
>
> (@kyts0424, 2024, para. 3)
>
> ("The talk about money during the experiment, like 'If this fails, we'll lose so many millions,' was disgusting. The emotional? or rather triumphant music playing when the experiment succeeded, the smiles of the people watching the fireball—all of it made me sick. Then there were the repeated lines like, 'It's not

> up to me how the bomb is used.' Of course, it's going to be used to kill people. That was obvious. It's ridiculous to claim to feel anguish after hearing about the devastation post-drop. They knew what would happen when they dropped it. So many people experienced hell.")

@kyts0424's review presents a strong identification with the victims and considers their suffering as their own. The use of words like "disgusting," "sick," and "ridiculous" indicates a profound sense of moral outrage directed not just at the film but also at the perceived historical indifference of those involved in the atomic bombings. This perspective aligns with the view that the suffering of the victims in Hiroshima and Nagasaki is central, and any narrative that fails to acknowledge this suffering is seen as deeply flawed. This strong expression of sympathy for the victims is one of the signs that this memory is remembered at a collective level (Saito, 2006). However, this review also demonstrates a selective focus, as the reviewer appears indifferent to victims outside of Japan. The phrase "so many people experienced hell" in this context only includes the people in Japan, not those in other countries. This review focuses solely on the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, excluding the atrocities committed by Imperial Japan. This "decontextualization" strengthens the reviewer's position as a victim with a strong sense of victimhood.

On the other hand, some reviews acknowledged Japan's memory as a perpetrator. By witnessing Oppenheimer's life, these reviewers adopted an American perspective and recalled wartime activities such as the Attack on Pearl Harbor, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, and the subsequent atrocities in Asian countries (@fkjonny, 2024, para. 11; @yuuiti7140, 2024, para. 8). The following review by @jouji.kiyo (2024) presents an acknowledgment of both Japan's victimhood and perpetrator-hood:

> もう「この国が悪い」とか言うのやめようや。そんなん言ってもなんの解決にもならんやん。アメリカ人全員が原爆賛成なわけないし、日本はアメリカの被害にあったけど、日本も戦争中に他国に酷いことをしてる時点でお互い様かなと思います。(@jouji.kiyo, 2024, para. 10)
>
> ("Let's stop saying things like 'This country is bad.' It doesn't solve anything. Not all Americans support the atomic bomb, and while Japan suffered from the bomb, Japan also did terrible things to other countries during the war. So, I think it's a case of mutual wrongdoing.")

@jouji.kiyo highlights the atrocities committed by wartime Japan and advocates for a cessation of enemy-blaming. This perspective introduces a complex view that acknowledges mutual wrongdoing during the war. In contrast, reviews like @kyts0424's focus exclusively on Japanese victimhood. While @kyts0424 emphasizes moral outrage and historical indifference towards Japanese suffering, @jouji.kiyo calls for an end to enemy-blaming and recognizes the atrocities committed by Japan during the war. This comparative analysis showcases the diversity of perspectives among Japanese viewers, illustrating the complexity in which national identity and collective memory shape interpretations of historical events.

Taking this position, several reviews claimed that Japanese viewers should watch the film to gain an understanding of history from others' perspectives. Some reviewers admitted that they had only known history from Japan's perspective and were unaware of other viewpoints, thus suggesting that Japanese people should watch the film (@30r, 2024, para. 2; @jouji.kiyo, 2024, para. 1; @S.K06, 2024, para. 5; @YAMAORI, 2024, para. 1; @yg555, 2024, para. 4). The review posted by @kana_ahchan (2024) particularly emphasizes the importance of understanding others' perspectives:

> 事実を多面的に、様々な角度から捉えることでその真髄が見えてくると思う。被爆国日本にアイデンティティのある私達からの視点、アメリカの政治家の視点、物理学者オッペンハイマーの視点、日本軍の視点、日本では語られることの少ない日本が占領した国々の視点。
>
> (@kana_ahchan, 2024, para. 2)
>
> ("I believe that by capturing facts from multiple perspectives and various angles, we can uncover the essence of the truth. From the viewpoint of us with an identity tied to Japan, the bombed country, to the perspective of American politicians, the physicist Oppenheimer, the Japanese military, and the often overlooked perspectives of the countries Japan occupied.")

@kana_ahchan's review goes beyond the narrative that regards Japan as a victim and the United States as a perpetrator, mentioning both the victimhood and perpetrator-hood of Japan. While the review acknowledges the tie of Japan's identity to being a bombed country, it also mentions "the Japanese military" and "the countries Japan occupied." This inclusion creates a figured world where multiple perspectives coexist, and history is understood as a complex interplay of different narratives. Additionally, the claim "the

often overlooked perspectives" indicates an acknowledgment of Japan's indifference to the brutal acts of imperial Japan, suggesting a need for broader historical understanding. In this figured world, @kana_ahchan encourages viewers to see history from various angles, fostering a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the past. This perspective challenges the simplified dichotomy of victim and perpetrator, instead promoting a multifaceted view where identities and actions are seen in a broader historical and cultural context.

It is also noteworthy that one review distanced itself from Japan's unique position as a victim of the atomic bombings. Several reviews tended to view the atomic bombings as a personal matter because they occurred in Japan, whether or not they acknowledged both victimhood and perpetrator-hood (@sana_a179, 2024, para. 21; @sinniti, 2024, para. 3). For instance, @sinniti (2024) noted, "Once the target was switched to Japan, the tension increased as I watched" ("目標が日本に切り替わってからは観ていて緊張感が増しました。") (para. 3). The film depicted the development of the atomic bomb, initially intended for Nazi Germany. However, the viewers perceived it as a personal matter once the target was changed to Japan. In contrast, a reviewer @a_tocksan provided a more objective assessment of Japan's victimhood:

> コレは唯一の被爆国の日本人だから観るのがしんどいとかそう言う短絡的な括りではないと思う。別の国に落とされていたら無関心でもいいのか？そうではないはず。(@a_tocksan, 2024, para. 5)
>
> ("I don't think it's a simple matter of saying it's tough to watch because we are Japanese, the only country that has experienced atomic bombing. Would it be acceptable to be indifferent if the bomb had been dropped on another country? I don't think so.")

@a_tocksan's review offers a critical perspective that challenges the notion of viewing the atomic bombings solely through the lens of Japanese victimhood. By questioning whether it would be acceptable to be indifferent if the bomb had been dropped on another country, @a_tocksan promotes a more empathetic and universal understanding of the event. These differing perspectives highlight the complex interplay between personal identity, national history, and collective memory. @sinniti's review aligns with a figured world where the atomic bombings are perceived as an intensely personal national tragedy,

reinforcing a sense of unique victimhood. In contrast, @a_tocksan's review constructs a figured world where the bombings are seen as a global tragedy that transcends national boundaries, calling for broader empathy and understanding.

The analysis can be summarized that these varied viewpoints in the reviews illustrate how the Japanese audience has internalized the traumatic memory of the atomic bombings while also challenging Japan's unique position as a victim by considering the multifaceted context and the potential alternate outcomes of the bombings and the wartime actions. Overall, the reviews often showed their discomfort and sympathy with the victims, which aligns with the official commemorative culture. On the other hand, some also recognized Japan's memory as a perpetrator, which was often overlooked in the previous studies. By tracing the memory of Hiroshima from the American perspective, Japanese viewers fostered a more nuanced and empathetic understanding of their past. This dialogue between different viewpoints encourages a broader recognition of shared human suffering, including the suffering in Hiroshima and the brutality by imperial Japan, and promotes a more inclusive narrative that transcends national boundaries.

4.2.2 Hope for "Never Again"

The hope for "Never Again" was also a prominent topic discussed by reviewers of the film *Oppenheimer*. Despite criticisms that the film did not address the realities of atomic bombings, many regarded it as anti-war and anti-nuclear, focusing on the ethical implications it conveyed. Their film experience reinforced their determination to prevent another Hiroshima or Nagasaki, highlighting the importance of learning history and understanding others' perspectives as the only nation to have experienced atomic bombings. However, some reviews also considered the perspectives of other countries, particularly the United States, revealing differences between Japanese viewers and others. This uniqueness underscores the challenges in creating a shared commitment to the "Never Again" narrative.

Although the film has been criticized for not portraying the realities of the atomic bombings (Faguy, 2023; Zemler, 2023), few criticisms of the film's composition or depiction were found in the reviews analyzed. Instead, the reviewers considered that the film conveyed an anti-war and anti-nuclear message (@flowpiux, 2024, para. 1; @hyouz0f0, 2024, para. 2; @ttkwm9229, 2024, para. 3). @hyouz0f0 (2024) evaluated the portrayal of the atomic bombings in the film as follows:

> まずこの映画はあくまでもオッペンハイマーの伝記であって日本での投下はオッペンハイマーが辿ってきたなかでの出来事だと言う風に捉えた方が良い。この映画は反核映画だし日本人も観るべき映画だと思う、 . . . (@hyouz0f0, 2024, para. 2)
>
> ("First and foremost, this film is a biography of Oppenheimer, and the bombing of Japan should be seen as one event within his life. This movie is an anti-nuclear film, and I believe it is a film that Japanese people should also watch.")

@hyouz0f0 understood that the film traces the development and dropping of atomic bombs through the lens of Oppenheimer and, thus, did not focus on the scenes of profound impact in Japan. From this perspective, @hyouz0f0 still considered it an anti-nuclear film and recommended that Japanese people should watch it. In this context, a figured world constructed by the reviewers centers on the ethical implications of nuclear weapons development rather than the specific historical impact on Japan. The reviewers see the film not just as a historical recount of Oppenheimer's life but as a broader lesson on the dangers of nuclear proliferation and the importance of global disarmament, expressed through Oppenheimer's post-bombing distress.

Notably, this reception of the film as an anti-nuclear film aligns with the "Never Again" narrative, which is deeply rooted in the desire to prevent future catastrophes. Reviewers like @hyouz0f0 interpret the film's message as a call for vigilance and disarmament, considering the ethical implications of nuclear weapons development. Beyond the anti-nuclear sentiment, @sea.l.a (2024) further expressed a pure hope for peace, noting that "The same human nature that led to the creation of the atomic bomb still exists today. . . . I hope, with all my heart, that a world where killing people is considered a success will, please, come to an end." ("今もある人間の性質が原爆を招いた. . . . 人を殺すことが成功とされる世界がどうか、どうか、終わりますように" (@sea.l.a, 2024, para. 4). As these reviews show, their film experience encouraged them to think about a future without nuclear warfare and to hope for further peace.

Based on the acceptance of the film as an anti-war narrative, several reviews also conveyed a determination to achieve future peace. For instance, @yesasms (2024) emphasized the importance of continually confronting historical facts (para. 1), while @kana_ahchan (2024) highlighted the necessity of learning history from various

perspectives (para. 2). The reviews by @eclair-farron (2024) and @Hinanonano412 (2024) similarly underscored the importance of learning for “Never Again”:

> もう二度と現実で同じ過ちを犯さないためにも私たちは過去の失敗から学び続けることが大切 (@eclair-farron, 2024, para. 1)
>
> (“To avoid repeating the same mistakes in reality, it is crucial for us to keep learning from past failures.”)
>
> 私たちは唯一の被爆国に生まれ、今現在核のある世界を生きている。そんな時代にオッペンハイマーの苦悩に満ちた人生から学ばなくてはならないことがあると思う。二度と同じ過ちを繰り返さないために。(@Hinanonano412, 2024, para. 4)
>
> (“We were born in the only country to have experienced atomic bombing, and we now live in a world with nuclear weapons. In such times, I believe there are lessons to be learned from Oppenheimer’s tormented life. We must learn these lessons to ensure we never repeat the same mistakes.”)

The phrase “never repeat the same mistakes” clearly expresses the hope for “Never Again.” Additionally, the term “sole bombed nation” (“唯一の被爆国”) in @Hinanonano412’s review highlights Japan’s unique historical position, constructing a figured world where there is a perceived moral responsibility among Japanese people to learn from Oppenheimer’s life and advocate for a nuclear-free world. These representations may imply that the memory of the atomic bombings is deeply connected to the “Never Again” narrative and that the identity as a pacifist nation is deeply ingrained among ordinary Japanese people.

On the other hand, there is also a review that considers perspectives from others, especially Americans. The review by @ttkwm9229 (2024) expressed disappointment over the reaction in the United States, particularly referring to the Barbenheimer phenomenon:

> 私はこれを「反戦・反核映画」として受け止めたのでバーベンハイマーのミーム画像でこの作品が軽々しく消費されてしまったことに対して残念だと思うと同時に、この作品をみてああいったコラージュを作って好

> 意的に受け止めてしまう人間が多くいるのはある種オッペンハイマーの憂いた世界がこれなのかもしれないな、と思いましたが。(@ttkwm9229, 2024, para. 3)
>
> ("I perceived this as an anti-war and anti-nuclear film, so I find it unfortunate that the Barbenheimer meme images have frivolously consumed it. At the same time, seeing how many people create and positively receive such collages after watching this film made me think that perhaps this is the kind of world Oppenheimer feared.")

@ttkwm9229's review suggested that the film can be interpreted as an anti-war and anti-nuclear film without the explicit portrayal of the atomic bombings of Japan. However, @ttkwm9229 felt it was unfortunate that people in other countries did not receive it in the same way. The Barbenheimer movement is perceived as a reductive portrayal of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, contrasting with the "Never Again" narrative. Additionally, the phrase "the kind of world Oppenheimer feared" refers to a world where people do not consider the consequences of atomic bombings and the possibility of using such weapons again. This review highlights the different perceptions between Japanese viewers and others, especially Americans. In an interview with the Los Angeles Times, Paul Ham, the author of "Hiroshima Nagasaki," pointed out that since the film only traces events through Oppenheimer's lens, viewers cannot avoid seeing it from a subjective point of view, which may sideline the suffering of Japanese people (Zemler, 2023). Based on this consideration, while the Japanese audience can complement the film's background with their own historical perspective, people in other countries may focus solely on Oppenheimer's life and enjoy it as entertainment. This divergence between countries suggests that the "Never Again" narrative emerging from the film resonates more deeply with Japanese audiences due to their unique historical experiences. Therefore, @ttkwm9229's review underscores a potential cultural gap in the interpretation of the film's message, highlighting the challenges in fostering a universally shared commitment to the "Never Again" narrative.

In summary, the varied reviews of Oppenheimer reflect a strong hope for the "Never Again" narrative among Japanese audiences while acknowledging the challenges for this effort. Despite criticisms of the film's focus, many reviewers interpreted its message as anti-war and anti-nuclear, reinforcing their determination to prevent future atomic catastrophes. The recognition of Japan's unique historical position and the call for

learning from past mistakes highlight the deep connection between the memory of Hiroshima and the aspiration for global peace. However, the differing perceptions between Japanese viewers and others, especially in the context of phenomena like Barbenheimer, reveal the challenges in achieving a universally shared commitment to this narrative. This disappointment may strengthen their sense of responsibility for peacebuilding, further shaping their identity as a pacifist nation.

4.2.3 Importance of Remembering

While it was not as prominent as the two previously discussed topics, the importance of recollection was also observed in the analyzed reviews. As the Japanese audience received the anti-nuclear and anti-war message, the film also reminded viewers of the importance of remembering Hiroshima. Reviews highlighted the need for continual learning and understanding of historical events to prevent their recurrence. These reviews underscore not only a collective Japanese responsibility but also a global imperative to remember and learn from history, reinforcing the "Never Again" narrative.

Similar to those who recognized the film as anti-nuclear and anti-war, some reviewers interpreted the film as conveying the importance of learning and remembering the atomic bombings of Japan. The review posted by @gangan821 (2024) exemplifies this perspective:

> 日本に対しての、特に広島と長崎に対しての作中の表現も寄り添いや配慮、贖罪のようなものも誠実に感じ取れました。その上で今もなお、この世界に広がり続けている核兵器に対しての問題提起を受け取りました。本作をただ消費して終わり、ではなくその問題について学び、知り続け、勉強をしていくことがノーラン監督からのメッセージだとわたしは解釈しました。(@gangan821, 2024, para. 4–5)
>
> ("I felt that the film's expressions regarding Japan, particularly Hiroshima and Nagasaki, conveyed a sense of empathy, consideration, and a sincere attempt at atonement. Based on this, I perceived the film as raising the issue of the ongoing spread of nuclear weapons in the world. I interpreted Nolan's message not as something to be merely consumed and forgotten, but as an encouragement to learn about, understand, and continue studying this issue.")

@gangan821 highly evaluated the quality of the film, including its portrayal of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Grounded in this appreciation, the reviewer further highlighted the ongoing issue of nuclear proliferation worldwide and noted that the film's message emphasized the importance of continually learning, understanding, and studying this issue. @kobappp (2024) also agreed with this interpretation, stating, "I felt that the message was that we must never forget that we all possess this foolish side" ("この愚かな一面を我々が持つことを、全員が忘れてはいけない。というメッセージを受け取った。気がした。") (para. 3). Aligning with this viewpoint, @minto000312 (2024) regarded the film's message as capturing the interest of young people regarding the menace of nuclear weapons (para. 2). These reviews are based on a figured world where remembering and learning from past traumatic events is crucial to preventing the repetition of the same tragedy.

Notably, the responsibility for remembering in this context is not just directed towards the Japanese, but towards a global audience, as indicated by @gangan821's reference to "Nolan's message." The following review by @maesamu (2024) also highlighted the significance of not forgetting past tragedies:

> 戦争や、自然災害でよく言われる
>
> 「風化させてはいけない」ってよくわからなかったけど、
>
> 確かにこれを世界で忘れさせてはいけないなと思った
>
> 歴史は繰り返すから、
>
> 残忍なことが起こったけど、忘れさせてしまったらまたやろうとする人が出てくるからなんだろうなと (@maesamu, 2024, para. 20–21)
>
> ("I never really understood the phrase "We must not let this fade from memory," often said about wars and natural disasters. But I realized that we truly must not let this be forgotten by the world. History repeats itself, and although horrific events occurred, if we let them be forgotten, there will be those who try to do the same things again.")

@maesamu's review demonstrated that the film experience made the viewer realize the significance of not forgetting past disasters to prevent their repetition. @maesamu also assumed the responsibility for remembering extends beyond the Japanese people to

include everyone around the world. These reviews illustrate how *Oppenheimer* serves as a catalyst for reflecting on the importance of remembering the atomic bombings. These reflections highlight a global responsibility to remember and learn from the past, emphasizing the film's role in promoting the "Never Again" narrative. By constructing figured worlds that underscore the significance of historical memory, these reviews contribute to a broader understanding of the ethical implications of nuclear warfare and the collective effort to prevent future catastrophes.

In conclusion, the importance of remembering the atomic bombings, as highlighted in the reviews, reinforces the ethical imperative to learn from past atrocities to prevent their recurrence. The film *Oppenheimer* serves as a reminder of the shared global responsibility to remember and educate future generations about the horrors of nuclear warfare. By encouraging a deeper understanding and continuous reflection on historical events, these reviews support the ongoing effort to uphold the "Never Again" narrative, ensuring that the lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki remain a powerful call for peace and disarmament worldwide.

Conclusion

This research explored the official and unofficial commemoration culture of the memory of Hiroshima in contemporary Japan. Previous studies revealed that the memory of Hiroshima stimulated Japanese anti-nuclear and anti-war sentiment and further anchored the Japanese identity, allowing them to maintain a morally comfortable position as victims. Almost 80 years after the tragedy of Hiroshima, this study aimed to reveal the current state surrounding the memory of Hiroshima by addressing the following questions: How is the discourse of victimhood, hope for "Never Again," and the importance of remembering constructed around the memory of Hiroshima in Japanese society? How and to what extent does the memory of Hiroshima complement and/or juxtapose the official and non-official Japanese culture of commemoration? To answer these research questions, five addresses by three different Prime Ministers of Japan at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony between 2019 and 2022 and 35 film reviews of *Oppenheimer* in 2024 were analyzed using the framework of Discourse Analysis.

The analysis of victimhood reveals that Japan's identity as a victim is widely acknowledged in both official and vernacular spheres, as discussed in previous studies. The phrase "the only nation ever to have been bombed" repeatedly appeared in both addresses and film reviews, indicating that this unique local experience is now recalled as a national traumatic memory in Japan. Moreover, the empathy expressed towards victims and *hibakusha* in the addresses, as well as the self-identification with victims in the film reviews, showcases the ongoing inheritance of national memory and sense of victimhood. The vivid portrayals of human cost and city devastation in the addresses also underscore Hiroshima as a significant traumatic memory. This recognition of trauma resonates with film reviewers who expressed anger and discomfort during their film experience, highlighting a shared emotional response to the representation of Hiroshima's history in both official speeches and popular media. Overall, these discourses emphasizing a sense of victimhood exemplify the decontextualization of historical background that highlights Japan's victimhood while often ignoring memories of its role as a perpetrator.

On the other hand, the recognition of Japan's perpetrator-hood was observed differently in the official and unofficial commemorations of Hiroshima. The analyzed addresses generally stimulated the audience to feel a sense of victimhood, with no mention of the broader historical context of Hiroshima or Japan's wartime transgressions.

In contrast, some film reviews recalled Japan's memory as a perpetrator and highlighted the importance of understanding the past from various perspectives. Considering the nature of the Peace Memorial Ceremony, which is held to express condolence for victims, it may be reasonable to focus solely on the victims of Hiroshima. However, this posture has the potential to further entrench a strong sense of victimhood and ignore the wartime atrocities committed by Imperial Japan among the current generation. Meanwhile, the American film prompted Japanese viewers to consider the other side of Hiroshima, resulting in some recalling Japan's role as a perpetrator. This particular mention of Japan's perpetrator-hood represents a specific case that refutes the decontextualization of the past. Thus, vernacular commemoration culture juxtaposes the official commemoration by incorporating a broader consideration of historical context and other perspectives.

The future commitment to the "Never Again Hiroshima" narrative was also a prominent topic in both official and unofficial commemorations, discussed in various ways. A common theme was the role of the memory of Hiroshima in reinforcing the resolve to prevent the recurrence of such a tragedy. The phrase "sole bombed nation" is closely tied to this narrative again, linking Japanese identity with the moral responsibility to prevent future nuclear bombings. While the Peace Memorial Ceremony provides an opportunity to reaffirm the national commitment to a world without nuclear weapons, the film also made audiences aware of the importance of global nuclear disarmament efforts.

However, some limitations to their hope for "Never Again" were also highlighted. On the one hand, the Prime Ministers' commitment to a nuclear-free world is based on the framework of international nuclear policy, namely the NPT, which does not advocate for the complete abolition of nuclear weapons. Thus, the discourse in official commemorations reflects Japan's nuanced stance on nuclear policy, balancing the desire for nuclear abolition with concessions to nuclear deterrence. On the other hand, the film reviews expressed disappointment with the different perceptions of the film in other countries, particularly represented by the Barbenheimer phenomenon, which suggested that the film was consumed as mere entertainment. This viewer reluctance reveals the challenges in achieving a unified international commitment to nuclear disarmament. These findings underscore the complexities and obstacles inherent in fostering a universally shared commitment to the "Never Again" narrative.

The discourses on the importance of remembering were largely common in both commemorative cultures. The actors in both types of commemoration emphasized the significance of remembering, suggesting that they perceive it as a duty. This implies that

the memory of Hiroshima is deeply embedded in the identity of the Japanese people even after more than 80 years and are so strong that they are unlikely to disappear for several generations to come. Their efforts to preserve memory are motivated by anti-war sentiment and the determination to achieve future peace, resonating with the "Never Again" narrative. Additionally, they were conscious of international viewpoints in their efforts to preserve the memory of Hiroshima. The mention of the inhumanity of nuclear weapon use in the addresses reflected global attention to the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, while the film reviewers also considered that international audiences should share this perspective to prevent future catastrophes. These shared efforts highlight the enduring impact of Hiroshima's legacy and underscore the collective responsibility to remember and learn from this historical event. At the same time, however, this determination to never forget Hiroshima enabled Japan to maintain its stance as a victim in the name of peacebuilding, allowing indulgence in forgetting the memory as perpetrators.

This analysis contributes to the understanding of the role Hiroshima plays in contemporary Japan and how Japanese people perceive it by providing a qualitative examination of the discourses surrounding the memory of Hiroshima. The findings revealed that, as previous studies have argued, the sense of war victimhood has been inherited by the present generation, with the memory of Hiroshima anchoring this privileged position as victims. The language "the only nation ever to have been bombed" particularly exemplifies their utilization of local experience, enabling a metamorphosis from perpetrator to wartime victim. The memory of Hiroshima further links to national nuclear disarmament efforts, emphasizing Japan's identity as a pacifist nation. Additionally, the Japanese determination to preserve the memory of Hiroshima may imply the continuous inheritance of this position in the interest of promoting peace.

However, the analysis also uncovered that memories of Japan as a perpetrator are recognized in vernacular culture, a perspective not observed in official commemorations. The film reviews referencing Japan's wartime crimes indicate an awareness among some individuals of the problematic nature of Japan's historical narrative that focuses primarily on victimhood while disregarding its role as a perpetrator. This finding, not previously highlighted in earlier studies, suggests potential social and cultural shifts in the collective understanding of victimhood in Japan. This analysis thus provides new insights into the evolving nature of Hiroshima's legacy in Japanese society.

Still, the limitations of the study and the need for further research should be addressed. It should be noted that, being a qualitative study, the author's subjective perspective was unavoidable. Similarly, since the aim of the study encompasses various discourses regarding the memory of Hiroshima, further research employing quantitative methods is necessary to support the findings with more generalized data. Additionally, since the data was originally written in Japanese, there is a possibility that the study may not fully convey the nuanced voices inherent in the Japanese language. As memory is shaped by cultural, historical, and political transitions, continuous reevaluation of the memory landscape of Hiroshima is essential. In the world where wars incessantly occur and the menace of nuclear weapons still exists, the study of Hiroshima will remain meaningful for future peacebuilding efforts.

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