

# How America Remembers Hiroshima: The Past and Present

## Change and Development in America's Way of Understanding the Hiroshima Bombing

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### 〈Abstract〉

This paper investigates the development and change occurred in America's way of remembering and interpreting the Hiroshima bombing. Unlike Japan who confirms a strong and clear stance on the incident, advocating its singularity as the only A-bomb victim, the United States remained more passive. Neither apologetic nor indifferent, the United States memory of Hiroshima avoids moral judgements on the topic. Rather, they strategically digested Hiroshima through two main rhetoric: scientism and humanism. As the common perception on nuclear power has changed since the end of Cold War, from a product of scientific pragmatism to a weapon of threat and destruction, the American Hiroshima memory has also changed accordingly. Thus, the paper argues that there is a considerable shift in America's recollection of Hiroshima, principally due to the change in perception on nuclear power. By tracking the course of commemoration process in the United States including exhibitions in national museums and president Obama's speech during his visit to Hiroshima, the paper aims to unfold the insulation and agenda setting process enclosed in the American version of Hiroshima memory.

\*Key Words: Hiroshima, Enola Gay, Barack Obama, Atomic Bomb, Humanity

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## I . Introduction

War memories and commemoration are crucial in understanding a nation's stance in digesting a historic conflict and its after-effects. Though national history is hardly neutral in most nations, the agenda and narrative of a war memory represents a country's national identity and ideology. The politicized memory of war is therefore memorialized through various means of commemoration to reinforce its intended meaning. In this notion, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, which eventually marked the end of World War II remains as one of the most crucial events in history for the United States, Japan and the world. Given this history, this paper unfolds the currently changing memory of Hiroshima bombing in America from the past to the present. Rekindling the memory of Hiroshima is vital since it entails America's stance and perception on both war and nuclear destruction. Calling the incident 'the most controversial decision' (Miscamble 2011, 1), the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 8, 1945 generated a tremendous physical and nonphysical damage. The bomb executed more so than destroying the military targets, killing approximately eighty thousand people while also injuring a similar number. Thus, Hiroshima bombing marked new era of warfare by executing an unprecedented scale of destruction.

In the United States and Japan, the Hiroshima bombing and the end of World War II became an important milestone in history. For America, the eventual victory through the detonation placed the United States at the top negotiator's seat meanwhile leaving a moral distress. Relative to past conventional warfare, United States' decision to drop the atomic bomb in Hiroshima created fundamental controversies due to its inevitability to cause unnecessary suffering. The indiscriminate nature of the atomic bomb, which did not distinguish its target from military to civilians and, by age and sex confronted the basic principle of warfare. As for Japan, the shock of the atomic bomb undermined Emperor Hirohito's ultimate

premise, the Ketsu-Go, which asserted that the “United States will have to [physically] invade Japan to secure a decision”. (Miscamble 2011, 113) Hence scholars including Sadao Asada stress the pivotal effect of the Hiroshima bombing in yielding the intransigence of imperial Japan, ultimately paving way for a surrender (Asada 1988, 479). Furthermore, the postwar constitution which is reflective of the defeat of World War II, is founded on the central idea of peace. Article 9 of postwar Japanese constitution affirms war as an unlawful action and by doing so outlaws the formation of combat military force, only keeping the Self-Defense Forces (SDF). Hence the detonation of the atomic bomb and surrender allowed Japan a steep transition from a military state to an unarmed state, altering the whole nation’s way of living.

Consequently, the two nations had to contain Hiroshima in their own respective ways - to put the name into an appropriate context in history. During the immediate aftermath period, the United States required compromise and interpretation over the two incidents, the Pearl Harbor attack and the Hiroshima bombing. President Truman’s statement in August 6, 1945 underlined that “the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare” was “dropped···on Hiroshima, an important Japanese Army base··· the Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many fold” (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12169> Accessed 2018/02/15), showing the calculus between preemptive attack in Pearl Harbor and its avenging through Hiroshima. This simple calculation of America avenging Japan for justice was widely accepted by the public during the late 1940s. Along with the president’s speech, high-level efforts to justify the nuclear bombing were made through press and media. Henry L. Stimson’s *Harper’s Magazine* article “the Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb” was one of which that was written to sway the public approval of using the bomb. Hollywood productions such as *The Beginning or the End* (1946) also aligned with such notion, featuring narratives of soldiers in the Pacific War and their near-death situation which was ultimately elevated by the use of the atomic bomb. (Hogan 1996, 146) The justification of using the bomb in

expense for saving American lives became a common rhetoric during the earlier aftermath period in the United States.

On the other hand, in Japan, the containment of Hiroshima took place at two levels: first by supporting the constitutional reform and second by consoling the grievance and reconstructing the city. The postwar Japanese constitution earned support from the public especially in accepting the Article 9 of the constitution and approving the formation of U.S. army base in Japan (Takemoto 2017, 92). With the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, Hiroshima became a symbol of ‘no more wars’ evoking a rhetoric of peacebuilding. On the other hand, the victims of Hiroshima became a fuel for anti-war movement in Japan with their ‘important symbolic power’ as victim-witnesses. As bearers of moral authority, Hiroshima survivors became living proof of inhumanity of war. Government efforts to reconstruct and reframe the city of Hiroshima aligned with similar notion as well. Trying to rectify the past image of military capital, the reconstruction project of Hiroshima conveyed the meaning of peace through advocating ‘no more Hiroshimas’ (Zwigenberg 2014, 24) As an example, in 1949 August 6, Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Law was passed receiving more than 90 percent of support in public referendum ([hpmuseum.jp/modules/info/index.php?action=PageView&page\\_id=67&lang=eng](http://hpmuseum.jp/modules/info/index.php?action=PageView&page_id=67&lang=eng). Accessed 2017/12/10). The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum which was constructed under the same law, is now receiving more than 1.7 million visitors a year ([honyaku.jserver.com/LUCHRSMC/ns/tl.cgi/http%3a//www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/www/contents/1491263589626/files/01.pdf?SLANG=ja&TLANG=en&XMODE=0&XPARAM=kw,&XCHARSET=UTF8&XPORG=e382ade383bce383afe383bce38389e38292e585a5e58a9b,&XJSID=0](http://www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/www/contents/1491263589626/files/01.pdf?SLANG=ja&TLANG=en&XMODE=0&XPARAM=kw,&XCHARSET=UTF8&XPORG=e382ade383bce383afe383bce38389e38292e585a5e58a9b,&XJSID=0). Accessed 2017/12/10), preaching the inhumanity of nuclear weapons. Hence the efforts to comprehend the atomic bomb in Japan was made through constitutional and geographical reformation, each advocating the narrative of peacekeeping and victim-witness.

However, despite the two nation’s effort to comprehend Hiroshima into concrete memory, the American and Japanese stance on remembering and signifying the event remains divergent until present day. On one side,

U.S. President Barack Obama visited Hiroshima in 27 May 2016, first to do so as a sitting president of the state showing empathy to the victims yet offering no apologies. (Rich 2017). On another side, Setsuko Thrlow, a survivor of Hiroshima bombing co-received the Nobel Peace Prize in 10 Dec. 2017, manifesting the anti-nuclear sentiment through her personal affiliation with the bombing ([www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2017/](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2017/). Accessed 2017/12/10). Clearly, the current digestion of Hiroshima from the two states are differing at a significant level. However, though the victim-witness notion of Japan is continuously iterated through its clear symbolization, it is a matter of debate if the United States' stance on the subject is as concrete. If the core rhetoric of Japanese Hiroshima memory is peacekeeping and victim-witness, what is the reciprocal narrative of American Hiroshima memory?

Hence, this paper aims to unfold (1) how the United States remembered Hiroshima in the past and (2) how it has changed and developed over time to the present. Moreover, in tracing the variables to how war memories change over time, we explore the likelihood of war memories reflecting the contemporary moral value or the spirit lite of time (or *Zeitgeist*) as well as the politicization of memory. Due to America's difficulty in morally justifying or criticizing the Hiroshima bombing, the United States has strategically digested Hiroshima through two main rhetoric: scientism and humanism. We argue that although the scientific pragmatism approach to the bombing succeeded in containing Hiroshima memory during the earlier aftermath period, the change in America's way of perceiving nuclear weapon since the post-Cold War era- from a product of scientific advancement to weapon of threat - has triggered alterations on American interpretation of Hiroshima in the present. Thus, the paper aims to unfold the origins of change in American Hiroshima memory and the insulation and agenda setting process enclosed in the American version of Hiroshima memory by tracking the course of commemoration process in the United States including exhibitions in national museums and President Obama's speech during his visit to Hiroshima.

## II. Hiroshima in the past and present

The previous studies on war memory was mainly established under two paradigms: on one stance, arguments defining war memory as primarily a political outcome prevailed. This is to say that war memories are both formulated and reinforced by higher-level powers to create a national identity and strengthen collective binding. Scholars such as Eric Hobsbawm through his work *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), analyzed the utilization of past memories to create a present-day social cohesion. According to Hobsbawm, the creation of ritual culture based on past memory contributes in strengthening the national identity and nationalism. (Hobsbawm et al. 1983). At a similar perception, Benedict Anderson through *Imagined Communities* (1983) pointed that past memories allows present-day citizens to imagine a previous state and citizens of their own nation, creating a transcendental binding effect. (Anderson 1983) Thus, the school of perceiving war memory as fundamentally a political utility, outcome and agenda provides one pillar for studies in memory politics. On the other hand, viewing war memory through a primarily psychological angle exists. The psychological approach to war memory tends to focus on individual's mourning and devastation, digesting war memory as a product of emotional and psychological turmoil. Scholars such as Jay Winter in *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (1995) explored the case of postwar Europe after World War I and how individuals came to commemorate the war in terms of a universal notion of suffering and loss, without national boundaries or constrains. (Winter 1995) His argument tried to dismantle the hyper-political nature of war memory studies, differentiating the political agenda and psychological response to war. The dichotomous division in war memory studies limited interpreting war memories to either political or psychological boundaries. War memories in many cases therefore are often representative of the condolence for the victims or provided justification for the state's decision to go to war. However, America's memory on the

Hiroshima bombing is not centralized over the issue of legitimacy or victimization unlike most war memories. Conversely, the American memory of Hiroshima is built upon the rhetoric of scientism and humanism, a narrative distant from nationalism or even other state related values. The United States' scientific and humanistic approach to Hiroshima memory is different in that both narratives are not purely political or psychological but is alleviated to another level of discourse independent of moral judgement.

Immediate postwar debates on America's interpretation on Hiroshima bombing has tended to be focused on two main disciplines. On one hand, arguments defending the rightful use of the bomb formed one school of thought, whereas arguments asserting the illegitimacy of the bomb created another forum. Across the range of studies that has been accumulated so far, there is a tendency to interpret American's memory on Hiroshima as a discourse of legitimacy. For example, Walker argued that the United States' discussion on the Hiroshima bombing was chiefly focused on its moral measurements rather than the factual information and its causality (Walker 1996). Walker's analysis is valid in reflecting the public resonance and social movements affiliated with Hiroshima prior to the end of Cold War. For example, *Hiroshima* by John Hersey published in 1946 in the *New Yorker* swayed popular identification of Hiroshima to the death and suffering of anonymous victims (Hersey 1946). However, Hersey's analogy was challenged by the Trumanist, American nationalistic view that the bomb saved millions of Allied lives - that "what [America] is doing to Japan now - even with the new atomic bomb - is only a small fraction of what would happen to the world in a third World War." ([www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/?pid=104](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/?pid=104) Accessed 2018/01/22) Many scholars have articulated various discussion over America's memory on Hiroshima. Boyer underlined the exhibition of Enola Gay, a Boeing B-29 Superfortress bomber that dropped the first atomic bomb, as a crucial starting point of such moralistic debate (Boyer 1996a). Also, in regards to Enola Gay, Hogan also claimed that the tension over Enola Gay exhibition was a representation of the internal

conflict clashed between America's historic victory and atrocity (Hogan 1996). Heinrichs on a similar note also viewed that such tension was due to the paradox of condoning nuclear bombing during battle period and while promoting the anti-nuclear movement after the end of war (Heinrichs 2007). Wittner also adopted such premise but underlined that common perception on Enola Gay has changed to a predominantly to a negative notion. Wittner pointed to the growth of non-government organizations as the main driving force to such change (Wittner 2005). If Wittner evaluated the negative turn on Enola Gay as a result of civil peace movement, Sherry approached the same phenomenon but in the frame of declining patriotism in America, having less enthusiasm to support Enola Gay exhibition (Sherry 1996).

Yet these studies were still confined to the concept that Hiroshima memory is fundamentally a conflict between what is right and wrong, sided by associated social groups such as U.S. veterans and nuclear activists. (Newman 2004, 98) The major constraint of these prior studies is that they primarily lead the argument to a 'binarism' of moral debate: that American memory on Hiroshima bombing is polarized into morally positive or negative end, either underlining American victory or anti-nuclear sentiment. As early studies have been circulating in such reductionism, less efforts have been made in investigating how periodically, over the duration of post-World War II and post-Cold War era, the United States' memory has changed in construing the Hiroshima bombing. Hence, to expand current boundaries, we approach the change in American Hiroshima memory in relation to how the social perception on nuclear power has shifted over the duration of post-Cold War era. In short, we argue that the America's past and current assessment on Hiroshima differs significantly because there has been changes in the way Americans perceive nuclear weapons.

This paper asserts that American Hiroshima memory did not simply transition from a positive memory to a negative memory, but that a new rhetoric to comprehend Hiroshima has been made. One of the scholars who fore sought the possibility of new Hiroshima memory was Dower.

Dower distinguished war memory of Hiroshima into three categories. First is reciprocating Hiroshima to its victim memory whereas second is reflecting Hiroshima as a memory of victory (Dower 1996). Last is perceiving Hiroshima as a memory of a tragedy. Although the two prior memories share the same notion of binarism - victimization and victory - the third memory underlined that American Hiroshima memory can be interpreted on another framework, independent from the preexisting rhetoric. Hence this paper endorses Dower's argument that new narratives - and consequently memories - on the Hiroshima bombing can be formulated from a different angle of thought. Under this premise, we argue that there has been an emerging change in America's perception on Hiroshima. We argue that, after the immediate postwar period of late 1940s, there has been two main segments to American Hiroshima memory, which are (1) "past American Hiroshima memory" and (2) "present American Hiroshima memory".

First, the past American Hiroshima memory is the former perception that views Hiroshima as a product of scientific pragmatism. As the moral debate on Hiroshima bombing gradually lessened after the late 1940s, the memory of Hiroshima in the United States centered around the issue of nuclear weaponry. As anti-nuclear activism flourished in the mid-1950s, activists incorporated Hiroshima as evidence to nuclear distress yet primarily analyzing Hiroshima as a result of scientific advancement rather than in terms of atrocity. As anti-nuclear movements intensified in the United States, attention to Hiroshima and Nagasaki increased as well. The "Nuclear War in St. Louis" (1959), a documentary narrative written based on the data and recollection from Hiroshima and Nagasaki discussed the physical and non-physical effects of the atomic bomb, underlining the Hiroshima case as an example of human hubris - the other side of scientific progression. (Hogan 1995, 151) In spite of these anti-nuclear movements brushing over the incident of Hiroshima bombing, the mainstream agenda of the issue centralized on the idea of 'nuclear weapon' rather than Hiroshima itself. The Hiroshima narrative popularized by anti-nuclear activism therefore conducted a scientific

memory over Hiroshima rather than its war-related nature.

Although the debate over American victory and anti-nuclear sentiment clashed amongst Americans, the premise that nuclear weaponry was a product of the United States' technical superiority was shared predominantly in earlier postwar American society. Eugene Rabinowitch in 1956 wrote on *the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* that with very few exceptions, the American public perceived Hiroshima and Nagasaki as demonstration of America's scientific progression and military ascendancy. (Rabinowitch 1956) Hence, independent from the moral debate of Hiroshima, the United States' scientific comprehension of the atomic bomb was widely accepted after the end of World War II and was retained throughout Cold War arms race period to the détente and nuclear disarmament period. This first domain of Hiroshima memory earned its longevity until the end of Cold War primarily because the power competition between the United States and Soviet Union largely utilized nuclear weapons. Although negative connotations on exhibiting Enola Gay were present during the Cold War era, the scientific understanding on Hiroshima was retained because the American public - regardless to Enola Gay - accepted the presence of nuclear arsenals as a necessity. As an example, a NORC survey conducted by the University of Chicago in the following month after the Hiroshima bombing showed that only 4% of the respondents disagreed with the decision to use the atomic bomb ([ropercenter.cornell.edu/public-opinion-using-nuclear-weapons/](http://ropercenter.cornell.edu/public-opinion-using-nuclear-weapons/) Accessed 2018/03/01). The approval rate on the Hiroshima atomic bombing was retained throughout the Cold War period as in 1965, 70% of Harris poll respondents answered that 'we did the right thing' in bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Furthermore, in 1951, Gallup poll showed that 67% approved the usage of atomic weapon if war broke out between Soviet Union and the United States, proving that the Cold War tension between the two nations required atomic arsenals as a means of national security.

Additionally, the strategic importance of nuclear arsenal in relation to U.S-Soviet competition was intensified more so after the bombing of

Hiroshima as the Soviet Union perceived the Hiroshima bombing as an anti-Soviet move, trying to deprive Soviet Union's gain from the Far East. As such, on August 20, 1945, less than two weeks after the Hiroshima bombing, Stalin passed a decree to set up a special committee on the atomic bomb with the chairmanship of Lavrentii P. Beria. (Holloway 2010) Hence, acknowledging Hiroshima as an emblem of America's upper hand on the Cold War arms race was a common premise, contributing to the scientific comprehension of the Hiroshima bombing, distancing the incident from a moral or legitimacy issue.

On the other hand, the second domain of American Hiroshima memory is the present American Hiroshima memory. This segment of memory was established from the changing perception on nuclear weapons after the Cold War period. Compared to the Cold War period when nuclear weapons were considered as strategic assets for the country, the post-Cold War consensus on nuclear weapon was comprised as a threat to mankind. Romper poll conducted in November 2014 showed that one of three Americans answered 'nuclear war' to the question "Which one of the following do you most fear will put an end to humanity?" by far exceeding answers such as deadly virus or global warming ([i2.wp.com/ropercenter.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/end-to-humanity-sm.gif?resize=500%2C375](http://i2.wp.com/ropercenter.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/end-to-humanity-sm.gif?resize=500%2C375) Accessed 2018/03/01). As the necessity of nuclear weaponry declined with the end of Cold War, Americans began to perceive nuclear power as a potential seed for destruction rather than a means for national security. The approval rate on the Hiroshima bombing declined in accordance to such change in America's perception on nuclear arsenal. In close periodic proximity to the fall of Berlin wall, the Romper poll in 1988 showed that only 47% of respondents said dropping the atomic bomb in Hiroshima was the right thing to do, whereas 26% responded wrong. Comparing the result of 1988 and 1945, approval rates have declined to less than a half of the past, meanwhile disapproval rates increased by more than six folds. These results reflect the relationship between the regression of American public's in approving atomic weapons and their present stance on

Hiroshima bombing. The shielding effect on nuclear arsenal which provided the United States' an excuse for using the atomic bomb therefore gradually weakened as Cold War arms race ended.

Moreover, in 1995 the reconstructed body of Enola Gay was officially exhibited in the Smithsonian national museum as a part of an exhibition commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hiroshima bombing. We claim that not only did the exhibition marked the inclusion of Enola Gay in American national memory but also represented the complex discourse on nuclear power during the time. First, through exhibiting Enola Gay in science museum, the United States "distanced" the memory of Hiroshima bombing from the possibility of moral judgement. The script describing the artifact was stripped out of any controversial information only delivering factual information about the airplane. (Newman 2004, 111) Although artifacts related to the Hiroshima bombing can be found in other historic museums, Newman argue that the exhibition of Enola Gay was the most controversial battleground for veterans to put together an exhibition that satisfied their own belief and is controlled and managed by the government. As the need to tackle and comprise Enola Gay and Hiroshima still resided in the American public, however lacking the common consensus on nuclear arsenal as a strategic asset, a new narrative to memorialize Hiroshima became necessary. Hence a new narrative arose conveying that Hiroshima bombing should be discussed under the common ground of humanity and not necessarily as memory of war or emblem of scientific advancement. The present change in American memory of Hiroshima reflects the current day American public's perception on nuclear destruction which is far more negative and closely related to humanistic values relative to the past. We argue that the present American Hiroshima memory contains a narrative of universal humanism, alleviating the incident to an issue for all mankind. We also provide evidence to such reframing of American Hiroshima memory through analyzing President Obama's speech during his visit to Hiroshima in 2017 in comparison to Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's speech in Pearl Harbor in 2016.

### III. Past American memory of Hiroshima: the scientific pragmatism

The past American Hiroshima memory which entails the American perception on Hiroshima bombing throughout the immediate aftermath period of the 1940s and until the end of Cold War in late 1980s can be witnessed through number of historic memoirs, books, TV shows and currently standing national museums. America's scientific digestion of Hiroshima was clearly demonstrated in works such as the *Hiroshima Diary* (1955), a collection of diary entries written by Michihiko Hachiya, a survivor of Hiroshima bombing. Although the memoir evokes sympathy for the victims of Hiroshima, the utilization of such memoir by the nuclear test-ban campaign groups focused on the distress of the nuclear weapon, concentrating on the destructive effects of atomic power. Likewise, the *Hiroshima Maidens* which introduced a number of disfigured Hiroshima survivors coming to the United States for reconstructive surgeries were promoted by anti-nuclear activists such as Norman Cousins, broadcasting one of the survivors in a popular television show *This is Your Life* in 11 May 1955. (Boyer 1996, 144) In sum, the utilization of Hiroshima memory by the anti-nuclear activist movement and several publications and mediums conveying the inhumanity of nuclear weapons, constructed a strong linkage between Hiroshima and the immorality of scientific advancement. (Boyer 1996, 148) Compared to the Japanese version of Hiroshima memory which largely emphasized the victimized position of Japan - including the government efforts to remove Korean atomic bomb victim monument from the Peace Park (Boyer 1996, 251) and organizing Hiroshima-Auschwitz Committee and performing Peace March to globalize a 'moral-witness' position (Zwingenberg 2013, 176) - narrowing the memory to an individual suffering and casualty, the American memory alleviated Hiroshima into a scientific understanding. Although this approach incorporates individual survivors as the means to convey the actuality of scientific distress, the focal point of the memory

is not victimization, war or suffering but science and nuclear weapons itself. Thus, the level of narrative is at a universal level, setting Hiroshima as an emblem of both scientific advancement, threat and contradiction which strategically distances the American Hiroshima memory from the discussion of moral judgement.

The American narrative of scientific pragmatism is represented through various mediums. Yet, the national museums serve an instrumental purpose as it provides a physical arena to narrate the memory. As Lind states, physical forms of commemoration including national museums, monuments, ceremonies and holidays are important indicators representing a nation's official political opinion and ideological priority. (Lind 2008, 15) Because many historical events compete to be commemorated and only a scarce number of monuments or holidays can be actually implemented, only the prioritized events and narratives are represented through physical forms of commemoration. As such, national museums are apt arenas to infer what stream of history is preferred and intended by a nation. Zwigenberg on the same context underlines that the process of meaning-making for Hiroshima is achieved through physical infrastructures or commemorative ceremonies. In this perspective, national museums not only reflect the political stance of the incident but also its 'meaning' which is conveyed through the experience of viewing the exhibition (Zwigenberg 2014, 25). Even though museums generally constitute their audiences to be domestic, often times national museums are popular tourist destinations, inviting a large number of international audience as well. (Hein and Takenaka 1995, 1) Subsequently, national museums have the capacity to present the prioritized narrative of a country's memory not only to the domestic constituency but international as well, stretching its influence.

The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum and National Museum of Nuclear Science and History are two examples of arenas that exhibit the American narrative of Hiroshima memory, both of them being foundationally science museums aligning with the scientific, nuclear narrative of American Hiroshima memory. Because the two museums are

controlled and managed within the influence and funding of the United States government (Newman 2004, 98), these arenas of American Hiroshima memory are appropriate mediums to retrace America's official narrative on the Hiroshima bombing. Although various exhibitions and museums about the second World War exists in non-scientific contexts, the most representative artifact of the bombing which are the Enola Gay and actual casings of the two bombs Little Boy and Fat Man are held in two science museums.

In regards to American military museums that features Japan and World War II, the National WWII Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana is of major scale and magnitude. However, the National WWII Museum is profoundly a nationalistic war museum that displays the history of American victory in World War II. Although exhibits related to Japan exists - a permanent exhibition named "Road to Tokyo" - the narrative of the exhibition is told through the eyes of an American soldier, retracing the "trail that led from Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay" ([www.nationalww2museum.org/visit/exhibits/road-tokyo](http://www.nationalww2museum.org/visit/exhibits/road-tokyo) Accessed 2018/03/01), arousing sympathy and pride for the American soldiers. Although this war museum features U.S.-Japan battle scenes, it does not discuss the Hiroshima bombing in detail or focus. Rather it examines the cultural difference and circumstantial challenges that American military had to confront during the battle with Japan. Also, in the "Warbirds" exhibition located in US Freedom Pavilion: The Boeing Center of National WWII Museum, no aircraft related to the atomic bombing is displayed. The North American B-25 Mitchell bomber is the only aircraft in display related to Japan, which was used to drop conventional bombs in Tokyo. ([www.nationalww2museum.org/visit/museum-campus/us-freedom-pavilion/warbirds/north-american-b-25-mitchell](http://www.nationalww2museum.org/visit/museum-campus/us-freedom-pavilion/warbirds/north-american-b-25-mitchell) Accessed 2018/03/01) Hence, the recollection and narrative of the Hiroshima bombing is most explicitly represented in the two science museums rather than military museums, supporting the scientific digestion of American Hiroshima memory.

First, the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum located in

Washington DC, established in 1946 is one of the largest aircraft museums displaying historic aviation artifacts. The museum has drawn much debatable attention for its exhibition of “Enola Gay” which is now on display at the Advar-Hazy Center, an annex of the original Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, located in Fairfax County, Virginia. The display of Enola Gay aroused rigorous controversies in the 1990s for its twofold nature of unethical usage and historic importance. (*Los Angeles Times* 1994/01/03) However, from 1996, the aircraft was on exhibit with the strong backing from the U.S. veteran associations. (Hein et al. 2007) Yet, contrastingly to the Japanese sanctuary for Hiroshima, which is the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, the Enola Gay is not exhibited in a war or a peace museum, but in a science museum. Unlike the Japanese museum’s rhetoric of peace and victimization, the Advar-Hazy Center’s introduction of Enola Gay - included in the “World War II Aviation” exhibition - sets its theme to “major technological advancement during World War II”. ([airandspace.si.edu/exhibitions/world-war-ii-aviation-uh](http://airandspace.si.edu/exhibitions/world-war-ii-aviation-uh). Accessed 2017/12/11) The exhibition of Enola Gay in Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum contains a highly politicized and representative meaning since the process of having the Enola Gay exhibited took multiple challenges from strong sociopolitical association.

From the formation of Enola Gay Restoration Association in the summer of 1984, associates of Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, with Martin Harwit as the director, began planning the historic exhibition. The original title for the exhibition in 1996 was “The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II”, officially showcasing the Enola Gay for the first time. Yet, the script describing the Enola Gay had complex agendas to be reflected. The veteran associations asserted that Enola Gay must be displayed as an icon of the savior, victory and achievement of science and technology and therefore must be “protected from critical analysis”. (Miyamoto 2012, 18) Whereas scholarly understanding of the artifact required factual objectivity. Such debate over Enola Gay’s exhibition in Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum

can be comprehended to two narratives: one of Truman version and another of Nitze version. According to Robert Newman in his work *Enola Gay and the Court of History* (2004), the Truman version of Enola Gay narrative comprises strongly the 'saving life' argument. The Truman narrative asserted the necessity and inevitability of the usage of atomic bomb in Japan, based on the United States government's evaluation on many U.S.-Japan battlefield experience. The United States lost nearly 7,000 marines and wounded about 20,000 soldiers in the tiny island of Iwo Jima whereas kamikaze tactics were executed in the island of Okinawa, killing 7,000 U.S. soldiers and its commanding general. (Newman 2004, 7) The massive casualty of the U.S. military supported the analogy of the atomic bomb being the ultimate solution to ease the situation. Conversely, the Nitze narrative, primarily formatted by Paul H. Nitze who wrote the United States Strategic Bombing Survey, denounced the preemptive stance of the United States' bombing. The Nitze narrative underlined that that "based on a detailed investigation of all the facts... Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated." (<http://rs5.loc.gov/service/gdc/eadxmlgdc/eadpdfgdc/2013/gc013001.pdf> Accessed 2018/12/11) Hence the two official narratives by the U.S. government had to be infused both ways for the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum to suffice the veterans and its ideological baggage. Yet, with the criticism that the exhibition shed too much light on Japanese casualties rather than its role in inducing surrender, the exhibition was canceled on 30 January 1995. (*Los Angeles Times* 1995/05/03) In retrospect to this controversial event, the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum proved to be a politically crucial arena of commemoration, intended to deliver only the intended and national narrative of Hiroshima memory. Hence, the current exhibition of Enola Gay in Advar-Hazy Center can be inferred as appropriate arena that demonstrates America's scientific digestion of Enola Gay. In efforts to alleviate the Enola Gay from such past ideological conflict, the narrative of science was inserted in both the exhibition and

America's memory of Hiroshima, desaturating its moral distress and emphasizing its value as a scientific artifact.

In the introductory statement of the World War II Aviation exhibition, it is underlined that "the United States mobilized its vast human and industrial resources to achieve history" in aircraft advancement. It also mentions that "the Boeing B-29 Superfortress [Enola Gay] became the most advanced bomber of its day" emphasizing the technological superiority of Enola Gay. In the short two-paragraph length of the statement, the Enola Gay is highlighted as the crowning jewel of the exhibition, yet de-characterized from its historic context and focused solely on its scientific aspects. Accordingly, the summary text describing Enola Gay in the exhibition is concentrated on the factual information about the machinery. For example, the text describes Enola Gay as "the most sophisticated propeller-driven bomber in World War II" which "in the Pacific, B-29s delivered a variety of aerial weapons: conventional bombs, incendiary bombs, mines, and two nuclear weapons." ([airandspace.si.edu/collection-objects/boeing-b-29-superfortress-enola-gay](http://airandspace.si.edu/collection-objects/boeing-b-29-superfortress-enola-gay). Accessed 2017/12/11) By placing the atomic bomb in the array of other conventional bombs, the scientific narrative of Hiroshima bombing universalizes the event as one of many incidents in World War II. Also, it mentions that "On August 6, 1945, this Martin-built B-29-45-MO dropped the first atomic weapon used in combat on Hiroshima, Japan" describing the historic dates and facts about the bombing yet without causal context. Furthermore, in spite of Enola Gay's historic importance, the artifact is displayed amongst various kinds of aircraft used in World War II, including the Aichi M6A1 Seiran which is a Japanese bomber designed to strike mainland United States.

The desaturation of historic background in displaying Enola Gay contributes in strengthening the perspective of digesting Hiroshima in scientific terms. The rhetoric embedded in the Advar-Hazy Center's World War II exhibition narrates the content of war memory into the agenda of scientific advancement and technical progression. Through this contextualization, the scientific representation of Enola Gay helps

American memory to distance itself from legitimacy or moral debate, diverging from the usual mode of war memory.

The National Museum of Nuclear Science and History also conveys a similar narrative of scientism in its exhibit of Hiroshima memory. The National Museum of Nuclear Science and History is the only congressionally chartered museum in the field of nuclear science in the U.S., located in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Established in 1969, the museum's mission is to "serve as America's resource for nuclear history and science", exhibiting the story of the Atomic Age. ([www.nuclearmuseum.org/visit/](http://www.nuclearmuseum.org/visit/). Accessed 2017/12/11) Historic artifacts and footages remembering Hiroshima is also found in this museum, in the permanent exhibitions, "Hiroshima and Nagasaki" and "Decision to Drop". Similar to the National Air and Space Museum, the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History is primarily a science museum and not a war museum. This museum narrates the whole era of nuclear energy, ranging from nuclear medicine, waste transportation to warfare usage. Thus, the memory of Hiroshima is not dealt separately as a footage of war but merged into the collection of nuclear developments and scientific expansion. The de-characterization of the Hiroshima bombing is found both on the sequence of the exhibition and the actual display of Little Boy and Fat Man bomb casing. By placing the artifacts in between other non-war related exhibitions such as Uranium exploration and Nano nuclear technology, the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is planted as another example of nuclear science. Hence, the memory of Hiroshima envisioned in the National Museum of Nuclear Science is one of technological ascending.

In the exhibition "Decision to Drop", which continues to the "Hiroshima and Nagasaki", displays the actual casings of Little Boy and Fat Man, the two atomic bombs detonated in Hiroshima. Along with the portraits of renown nuclear scientists, the two casings stand as evidences first and last nuclear weapons used in warfare. However, similarly to the description of Enola Gay, the script in the panel of the casings is written

with predominantly the technological information about the weapon rather than about why or how it was used. For example, the text describes the Little Boy as “a uranium gun-type device” with the length of 8 feet 8 inches. It also describes the Fat Man as “a more complicated and powerful implosion weapon using plutonium, similar to the device tested at Trinity”, ([i.ytimg.com/vi/supO4gVR9Zs/maxresdefault.jpg](http://i.ytimg.com/vi/supO4gVR9Zs/maxresdefault.jpg). Accessed 2017/12/12) delivering information about the capability and scientific methodology behind the bomb. This desaturated description introduces the artifacts not as evidences of critical war memory but a product of technical advancement related to nuclear science. Moreover, in the “Hiroshima and Nagasaki” exhibition, the video footage of Col. Paul Tibbets is displayed along with after-bombing pictures of the two locations. This exhibition holds a more humanistic approach to Hiroshima compared to the prior exhibition, underlining that the “commitment for peace and conflict resolution” which came after the surrender. ([www.nuclearmuseum.org/see/exhibits/hiroshima-and-nagasaki/#2](http://www.nuclearmuseum.org/see/exhibits/hiroshima-and-nagasaki/#2). Accessed 2017/12/12) Yet, the exhibition sets Hiroshima as a singular incident of nuclear bombing rather than placing it in the context of war, eliminating the reason for bombing and otherwise shedding light on the universal distress of nuclear destruction. The underlying message of the exhibition entails the horror of nuclear misuse and undercutting the war memory and emphasizing the concept of scientific calamity.

Hence, the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History is also a commemoration evidence that reveals the American Hiroshima memory in scientific and nuclear approach, alleviating the incident as both the result of scientific advancement and of contradictory destruction. By focusing on the factual data about the atomic bombs, the narrative of Hiroshima is fashioned into a recording of nuclear history than war history.

## **IV. Present American memory of Hiroshima: the universal humanism**

### **1. United States' post-Cold War nuclear perception**

The end of Cold War marked by the fall of Berlin wall in 1989 brought considerable change to how Americans perceive and assess nuclear weapon and its affiliated aspects including nuclear waste, plants and power. Although traditionalists affirmed that the mass public lacks the ability to comprehend politically complex and sophisticated matters such as nuclear weaponry and security (Almond 1950; Lippmann 1922), revisionists argue that the public may not be entirely informed about the details of such matter but still has set of value standards to provide coherent understanding (Holsti 1992). In respect to Holsti's argument, the American public's understanding on nuclear arsenals and its necessity to national security has experienced change during and after the post-Cold War period. There are two major reasons to this transition. First, the highly competitive dynamics of Cold War arms race earned general consensus on the necessity of nuclear arsenal. However, the reduced level of arms competition after Cold War eradicated such shielding effect over nuclear weaponry, arousing debates over its essentiality. Second, during the Cold War period, secrecy surrounding nuclear weapons due to its strategic importance made the public difficult to access information about the issue (Herron et al. 2014, 110) Given this circumstance, the public was more susceptible to higher-level persuasion to accept nuclear weapon as an unnegotiable priority. However, the influence of globalization and increased channels to access information about nuclear weapons compromised for past secrecy over the item. Furthermore, catastrophic events related to nuclear misuse and disaster alerted the public of its potential calamity. The Three Mile Island accident in 1979 and Chernobyl disaster in 1986 raised fear amongst the public that a similar catastrophe may happen in the near future, gradually adding to the heightened risk

perception on nuclear weapons and power. (Greenberg et al. 2007, 2) Due to these changes in circumstances, the American public's view on nuclear weapons translated more as a seed of danger than of military superiority. In Herron and Jenkins-Smith's quantitative research on American public's perception on nuclear security, respondents showed increasing trend in perceiving nuclear weapons as 'highly risky' or 'extremely risky' over the past, indiscriminant to which country - all of North Korea, Iran, China and Russia - proliferates their nuclear arsenal. (Herron et al. 2014, 113)

In response to the transition in American perception on nuclear arsenal, a new narrative and rhetoric was required to contain Hiroshima reflecting the current values and standpoint of the public. The humanistic approach to Hiroshima therefore is a product of both the declining appreciation to nuclear weapons and growing awareness and risk perception to nuclear disasters. Studies accumulated after the end of Cold War have witnessed that the public is most concerned about nuclear distresses directly related to and influential to them and their family and friends. (Baldassarre and Katz 1992) Therefore, not only did the perception on nuclear weapons transition from a military asset to potential seed of disaster but the way American public view its risk is directly related to humanitarian values. The long-term effects of nuclear radiation and other stinking images of nuclear victims raised consciousness (Greenberg et al. 2007, 1) that nuclear weapons contain aspects that surpasses the boundary of military terms, able to penetrate one's way of life. Therefore, the speech delivered in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park by President Obama reflects the shift in America's values on atomic weapons and consequently their way of remembering the Hiroshima bombing.

## **2. Barack Obama's Visit to Hiroshima and Abe Shinzo's Visit to Pearl Harbor**

According to Lind, a government's interpretation of past violence is revealed through variety of instruments, one of them being the statements

made by the leaders. (Lind 2008, 14) As part of official remembrance, leader's statements, although may not reflect popular sentiment or offered solely for strategic reasons, is still important in its power to transcribe historic records and provide leadership on various societal areas such as scholarly agendas, textbook coverage and civic activism. In regards to Lind's argument, the exchange of condolences by Prime Minister Abe Shinzo during his visit to the Pearl Harbor and the reciprocal visit of President Obama in Hiroshima provides significant information about how the two countries remember the past history of violence in present day context. The singularity of these visits, both of them being the first time as sitting presidents to visit each site, enclose an important political message as well representing the national stance about the two incidents.

Relative to Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's speech at the Pearl Harbor in Dec. 27, 2016, which emphasized the importance of tolerance and reconciliation, President Obama's speech conveyed a significantly different message. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's speech was iterated through two main rhetorics: first of peace and second of victimization and gratitude. Firstly, the narrative of peace was the most dominant and comprehensive of Shinzo's message. By remarking that "we must never repeat the horrors of war again" the Prime Minister of Japan affirmed that the U.S.-Japan alliance is an "alliance of hope", a relationship that is bonded through "power of reconciliation, made possible through the spirit of tolerance." (*The New York Times* 2016/12/27) The rhetoric of peace which is most representative of Japanese Hiroshima memory is transcended in Prime Minister Shinzo's speech as well, evidencing the continuity of Japan's concrete memory on Hiroshima. The narrative of victimization and gratitude is conveyed through a personal tale that captures the difficult post-war situation in Japan. By stating that

*"When the war ended and Japan was a nation in burnt-out ruins as far as the eye could see, suffering under abject poverty, it was the United States, and its good people, that unstintingly sent us food to eat and clothes to wear...The Japanese people managed to survive and make their way toward the*

*future thanks to the sweaters and milk sent by the American people.” (The New York Times 2016/12/27)*

Prime Minister Abe Shinzo emphasized both the victimized position of Japanese people due to the remnants of war and at the same time capturing the notion of gratitude to United States’ benevolence. Yet, the second rhetoric still aligns with Japan’s original memory of Hiroshima which emphasizes the victim-witness position of the country. Thus, the two rhetoric combined in Prime Minister Shinzo’s speech does not deviate from Japan’s conventional perception on Hiroshima - narrative of peace and victim-witness - despite its currency of event.

Conversely, President Obama’s speech and interview on his visit to Hiroshima conveys a vastly different narrative compared to past. During this occasion, the president revealed the newly revised narrative of American Hiroshima memory, endorsing the general sentiment of nuclear weapon as product of science advancement yet also introducing the rhetoric of ‘humanism’ to secure the destructive side effects created by such advancement. In efforts to encompass the increased sensitivity to humanistic values, revising the past narrative of scientism to context of humanism was a reasonable transition. As such, after officially announcing the visit in 10 May, President Obama released an exclusive interview with NHK on 22 May to address his agenda of the visit. Alongside clarifying that his purpose is to convey the message that “we should continue to strive for a world without nuclear weapons”, President Obama explicitly answered “No” to the question “Do you think an apology will be included”(NHK World 2017/05/22). Underlining that high-level leaders are often faced with difficult decisions to be made, he retreated the subject of conversation back to the horror of war. The difficulty of Obama tackling the topic of apology, deviating the question to a larger rhetoric of human suffering of war alluded two types of reasoning: the unavoidability of decision-making and the horrific nature of nuclear war while not discussing the causal relationship of dropping the atomic bomb in Hiroshima.

Similar rhetoric was found in his actual speech at the Peace Memorial Park the following week. Starting off with the figurative allusion of the atomic bombing - “flash of light and a wall of fire destroyed a city and demonstrated that mankind possessed the means to destroy itself” - the president immediately lifted the scale of event to a catastrophe of “mankind”, not just an incident between the Japanese and Americans. By starkly pointing out that “it is not the fact of war that sets Hiroshima apart”, Obama emphasized that the “violent conflict appeared” since the very first man and that we have witnessed the “humanity’s core contradiction” of yearning for peace while destroying each other for conquest - universalizing America’s aggression to an innate human quality. Furthermore, in discussing the moral distress of the bombing, the following analogy of “common humanity” was enunciated:

*“For this, too, is what makes our species unique. We’re not bound by genetic code to repeat the mistakes of the past. We can learn. We can choose. We can tell our children a different story, one that describes a common humanity, one that makes war less likely and cruelty less easily accepted.”*  
(*The New York Times* 2016/05/27)

Moreover, capturing the event as a catastrophic side effect of “material advancement” is stressed upon as well. By underlining that “technological progress without an equivalent progress in human institutions can doom us. The scientific revolution that led to the splitting of an atom requires a moral revolution as well.”, the statement tilts its rhetoric to the natural destructiveness of atomic weapons rather than its intended usage. The underlying meaning of the speech also conveys that unlike the previous rhetoric of scientific pragmatism, the humanistic approach utilizes Hiroshima as a symbol of atomic prohibition and will to control nuclear weaponry for the betterment of all humankind.

Therefore, the universal humanism narrative articulated by President Obama reveals how in the midst of recent changes in perceiving nuclear power - predominantly shifting to negative notions - the American

Hiroshima memory has been altered to suit the common sociopolitical stance. Although still endorsing the previous narrative of scientism, the new narrative incorporated humanism and universal morality as agents to control the vicious downsides of atomic power. Hence, along with scientism, humanism arose as the new replacing narrative for America in remembering Hiroshima in response to changes made in America's perception on nuclear weapons.

## V. Conclusion

The historic event of Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing along with the attack on Pearl Harbor remains as one of the most critical incident in the history of U.S.-Japan relationship. The past experience of an extremely ferocious war, relative to current intimacy of the two allied nations, is still a sensitive issue to be tackled. Furthermore, the first and hereto last usage of the atomic bomb signified a new era of warfare, arousing both scientific and moral debate among international communities. Hence, the American national memory of Hiroshima is vital in understanding not only how the United States consume the physicality of the atomic bombing, but also how America perceives nuclear weapons and its affiliates. Moreover, the official memory of Hiroshima represented through various mediums including national museums and statements of political leaders disclose the preferred national ideology on the issue.

The changes and developments made in America's way of remembering and interpreting Hiroshima - from a narrative of scientism to humanism - have shown that alongside with preexisting studies on war memory, a new stream of war memory adjacent to the common values of society can be created. The past and present memory of America's Hiroshima bombing displays a narrative that is distant from other previous war memories, incorporating non-political variables such as science and humanity. As the public perception of nuclear weaponry and

power changed throughout the duration of pre-Cold War and post- Cold War period, the recollection of Hiroshima bombing has gone through strategic alteration as well. The earlier memory Hiroshima and Enola Gay as an emblem of scientific advancement - distancing the memory from possible moral debates - during the Cold War desaturated the Hiroshima incident as an example that demonstrated America's progression on nuclear weaponry and not an act of atrocity. However, the end of Cold War has transformed the common notion of nuclear weapons from a military necessity to a potential threat to mankind. Hence, the scientific approach to Hiroshima required reconstruction, creating a new narrative that can encompass the current ambiance of the public. Consequently, the present rhetoric of universal humanism was initiated by President Obama, elevating memory of Hiroshima into a moral milestone for all of humanity. While endorsing the preexisting rhetoric of scientism, President Obama's speech incorporated humanism as another instrument to understand Hiroshima. America's universal humanistic approach to Hiroshima alerts the world of atomic destruction and promotes nuclear prohibition while not discussing America's role in Hiroshima bombing. Thus, the American memory of Hiroshima has acknowledged the incident at a scientific and humanitarian level, dispersing America's retaliation and signifying Hiroshima as a symbol of scientific advancement and an alarm for humanistic control over nuclear weaponry, each reflecting the common public value of respective times.

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국문요약

미국의 히로시마 기억 : 과거와 현재  
히로시마 폭격에 대한 미국의 인식 변화와 전개

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본 연구는 히로시마 원폭에 대한 미국의 전쟁 기억의 변화를 살펴보았다. 히로시마에 대해 피해자적 기억을 강조하고 있는 일본과 달리, 같은 이해 당사자인 미국의 입장은 비교적 소극적이었다. 기존까지의 연구는 전쟁 기억이 국가 정체성과 밀접한 관련이 있다고 전제하고 이를 통해 희생자를 기리거나 정당성을 부여하는 역할을 수행했다고 보았다. 그러나 미국의 히로시마 기억은 이러한 정당성 혹은 가치판단의 문제와는 거리를 두고있다. 본 논문은 미국의 기억이 과거와 현재에 차이가 있으며 그 원인이 핵무기에 대한 보편적 인식이 변화하였기 때문이라고 주장한다. 냉전 시기 전략적 자산으로 여겨졌던 핵무기가 탈냉전기를 거치며 인류에 대한 위협으로 인식되었으며, 이에 따라 미국이 히로시마를 기억하는 시각 또한 변화하였다. 따라서 본 연구는 냉전 시기의 기억을 과학주의적 접근으로, 탈냉전기 후의 기억을 휴머니즘적 접근으로 해석하였으며, 그 변화를 Enola Gay의 전시 그리고 오바마 대통령의 히로시마 방문 연설을 통해 추적하였다.

주제어: 히로시마, 에놀라 게이, 버락 오바마, 원자폭탄, 휴머니즘