

The meaning and functions of the war memorial

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Abstract: War often brings disaster and pain to people. The war memorial has always been one of the most important events for the country. This article examines the functions of the war memorial with the case study of the Chinese War memorial. It includes individual emotion and collective memory. At the same time, it also explores the political functions behind the war memorial. Moreover, the discussion also highlights the educational purpose of the war memorial.

1. Introduction

Wars always bring disaster to everyone and caused damage. War memorials gradually become an essential event for the country which has previously suffered from the war. War memorials will honour the lives sacrificed in a formal manner and visible acknowledgement. It also provides an appropriate reason to console the bereaved and condemn the crime done by invaders. It is also used as politically, which reinforces the idea of the country and cultivates patriotism. Besides, the war memorial is also used as a tool to maintain an international relationship. For the nations used to be allies during the war will find similarities between each other which strengthening political and cultural exchange. Through education, the government can increase the feeling of patriotism of their citizens. China provides a great example to demonstrate the functions of the war memorial.

2. Recognition of heroes

War memorials provide opportunities for participants to share their sense of civic responsibility, contribute to the nation, and elicit the recognition and respect of all the soldiers who fought for their countries [1]. War memorials are a lasting tribute to virtue, valour and self-sacrifice [2]. War memorials remind people to be grateful for the people who sacrificed their lives for their nation so that people can enjoy peace and harmony. Like the saying in *The Scotsman* in 1919: Lay its foundation deep. Here, where the heroes sleep; To meet the sky -Their name must never die [3]! In China, World War II (also called Anti-Japanese war) formally broke out in 1938.7.7. However, Japan began to invade China in 1931.9.18. This is why the Chinese define the length of the Anti-Japanese war as 15 years. During the 15 years, at least 1.48 million soldiers sacrificed their lives in exchange for China's victory in World War II. War memorial in China will remind the Chinese always to remember the contribution of martyrs. During the Second World War, the Kuomintang government was the official government of China which is not the current Chinese Communism government. Thus, people began to forget the achievement of the Kuomintang army and focus mainly on the battlefield participated by the army owned by the CPC party. But, the War memorial brings people's attention to Kuomintang's military. Chinese former president Hu Jintao officially recognises their contribution at 2005, the 60th Anniversary of the Victory of the War of Resistance Against Japan. This meeting provides a solid foundation for the compensation to the Kuomintang martyrs and veterans. Currently, veterans in China receive payment every year. Many voluntary organisations also visit those veterans and bring warmth to them, reminding them that the nation does not neglect them.

3. International influence

Besides, at the international stage, the world war II memorial of China will remind the world of China's contribution during the second world war. Currently, many countries seem to forget the sacrifice made by China in world war II. Their world War II history documentaries mainly focus on European and Pacific ocean battlefields. Some historical views even use the idea that "China could not have won the war on its own and defeat of Japan depended on western, and in particular, American finance, military support and supplies" to undermine China's effort in the second world war [4]. Through the war memorials, China will bring truth to the world. China contributed significantly to the second world war and successfully stopped the Japanese invasion of India. 40,000 Chinese soldiers fought in Burma alongside American and British troops in 1944, helping to secure the Stilwell Road linking from Lashio to Assam in India. Since most of the Japanese army was fighting with China, it reduced pressure for the United States in the Pacific ocean battlefield. In China itself, they held down at least 800,000 Japanese soldiers [5]. So, the Chinese war memorial gave recognition to the Chinese heroes who fought for peace, not only in China but throughout the world.

4. Emotionally comforting

War memorials also aim to console the bereaved and condemn the crime done by fascism during the war. It used the collective expression to help individual people accept the brutal facts of death in battle and help them recover from the pain [6]. Many Chinese people lost their families during the war. The need to express and resolve their emotional traumas caused by the war was also the force shaping commemoration [7]. The focus on dead heroes served to strengthen their legitimacy of sacrifice. Their relatives deserve compensation and care from the government. China decided to use 3rd September as the Chinese People's Anti-Japanese War Memorial Day. On this day, all Chinese citizens are commemorating the soldiers who died in World War II. The Chinese government gave living veterans allowances and provided moral support to martyrs' relatives trying to overcome their grief. On 3rd September, the 69th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's Anti-Japanese War and the World Anti-Fascist War was held at the Chinese People's Anti-Japanese War Memorial in Beijing. All the Chinese leaders, including president XiJingping, participated in activities portraying their value for the people who lost their lives in the world war. During the activity, all the participants sing the Chinese national anthem, while the audience stood up and mourning toward the martyrs who died heroically during the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japan [8]. The Nanjing National Massacre Memorial Day for the Victims of the Nanjing Massacre was set up on 13th December, and the memorial event will take place every year. The Standing Committee makes this decision of the Twelfth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China. On 13th December 1937, the Japanese invaders began the Nanjing Massacre in Nanjing, the Republic of China's capital for more than 40 days. More than 300,000 people were killed. In 13th December, 2018, the fifth National Ceremony of Nanjing Massacre is also the 81st anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre. Chinese President Xi Jinping went to Nanjing to join the memorial activity and Comfort the deceased's families. The whole country was in a minute of mourning [9]. These activities successfully provided consolation to the people who lost their families in the war and experienced the war.

5. State Concept

War memorials also have a political purpose, such as reinforcing the state concept and cultivating patriotism. George Mosse refers to them as places where the nation worshipped itself [10]. It can encourage Chinese people to put effort into work which will contribute to their nations. The more they like their country, the more they will devote to their nation's development. Other nations bullied China in the past because Chinese citizens don't have a sense of national pride. At the beginning of World War II, many Chinese armies abandoned the city and surrendered to

Japanese invaders because they are not patriotic and do not care about their nation. Through the war memorial, people gradually realise that the only place which will protect them during the war is their nation. War memorials will inspire some people to be proud of their country. For example, the 2015 China Victory Day parade was a military parade held along Changan Avenue, Beijing, on 3rd, September 2015, to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Victory over Japan Day of World War II. The Chinese government convey the message of power and military supremacy. This activity arouses the spirit of patriotism because a lot of Chinese university students join the army afterwards. The self-image of being patriotic is created. It is a form of heightened national consciousness [11]. This is also a way to join up with national identification rituals and try to bind its citizens into a collective national identity. During the memorial, the living generations can feel their connection with the martyr, who belongs to the same national community, strengthening the nation's image of continuity and transcendence of time [12]. With a high conception of nationalism, citizens will focus more on developing their nation instead of going against it.

6. International cooperation

War memorials are also ways of maintaining international relations. During World War II, China and Korea were invaded by Japan. Japan is trying to deny their crimes. Comfort women is an example of Japanese crime. Both China and Korea are demanding apologies from the Japanese government. It promotes communication between the governments of China and Korea. Also, China and Russia alliance strengthened by the World War II memorial since both countries were on the same side during the Second World War. This is why the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, invited Putin to the 2015 China victory parade. Russia also invites Xi Jinping and the Chinese Beijing Garrison Honor Guard to the Moscow Victory Day parade. Thus, war memorials will promote political and cultural connections between the countries who fought alongside each other in the past.

7. Patriotism education

War memorials also influence education, and it is closely related to politics. It can foster students to be a stronger individual and prevent history from repeating itself. From the war memorial, they will know how and why their nation was invaded. For example, every year 18th September (the date for the Japanese invasion in 1931 of northeastern China) China's major cities will sound air defence alerts to alert future generations. Annually, the whole nation will use mourning to commemorate death. Chinese teachers also illustrate the story behind this day. One of the apparent reflections of war memorials is that many Chinese students who study abroad do STEM subjects. After they graduate, most of them plan to head back to China to contribute to their country. Chinese economic breakthrough in aeronautical and aerospace industries will testify this argument.

8. Conclusion

According to the discussion above, it is easy to realise that war memorials are used to recognise people's contributions in times of war and remembrance of the deceased. Additionally, memorials help the families to alleviate the grief of the deceased. Through war memorials, lots of political purposes are achieved, such as enhancing national pride and honour. Moreover, Through war memorials, citizenship is affirmed, and people's sense of belonging is improved. Governments use war memorials to strengthen international relations and guide students to be hardworking and have pride in their nation to serve their motherland in the future.

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