

## Museums of the century of national humiliation – psyching the Chinese public for war

The notion of China's humiliation at the hands of foreigners is almost one hundred years old. It was first popularised in 1915 in response to Japan's 21 demands on the Chinese state. From 1927 to 1940, in Republican China there was an official holiday called National Humiliation Day. The notion was largely forgotten after the communists took over China in 1949. Through the Great Leap Forward (45 million dead) and the Cultural Revolution, individual Chinese were more interested in personal survival than angst over ancient insults. More recently, the rise of the great bulk of China's population out of poverty has allowed the self-indulgence of worrying about China's past to be taken up again. China's century of humiliation is taken to start with the First Opium War in 1839 and end with the communist takeover in 1949.

China has over one thousand museums and at least 150 of these are dedicated to commemorating the darkest period of China's century of humiliation: the Japanese invasion from 1931 to 1945. For example in Shenyang in northeast China, the *September 18 Historical Museum* was built in 1991. September 18 is the date in 1931 that the Japanese army, which had been occupying parts of Manchuria since the first Sino-Japanese War, launched a surprise attack on Shenyang and began its full-scale invasion of China. The day is now celebrated as National Humiliation Day.



The entrance to the September 18 Historical Museum in Shenyang.

The current Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, is the first of the “heirs” to take power. He is the son of a communist general who fought the Japanese and the Nationalists. As such, he is a princeling, a member of the new hereditary aristocracy. The following passage from an essay by the Australian defence analyst Paul Monk is very telling about what President Xi intends for Asia's near future:

“In any case, Xi Jinping, despite his genial smile, good English and familiarity with the United States, is no reforming liberal. Shortly after assuming the presidency, he took all member of his politburo with him to the bizarre museum the Party has built in Tiananmen Square – the museum of national humiliation and revival. He pointed out to them the exhibits showing the arrival of the Jesuits via Macao in the sixteenth century and how this had been the beginning of the infiltration and humiliation of China by the West. He pointed out the exhibits showing the Japanese invasions of China and the unfounded assertion that they defeated by the Communist Party with a little help from “good” Nationalist generals. The Americans, he said, then became the enemy. “Against this external enemy,” he told China’s inner group of top leaders, “we must stick together.”

To erase the shame of its century of national humiliation, China will need to have an unequivocal victory over somebody. The victory the Chinese dream of is of a quick war with the United States after which the United States retreats to Hawaii, leaving China as undisputed master of Asia. Short of that, the most likely candidate is Japan.

Help to stop the Chinese funding that war by not buying any Chinese products.