

In December and January 1937 the Imperial Japanese Army slaughtered demobilized Chinese soldiers and Chinese civilians in Nanjing, which it captured after a fierce battle for the city. The estimated number of victims in the Nanjing Massacre varies between 100,000 and 300,000. Thanks to Iris Chang's 1997 book *The Rape of Nanking*, I stopped seeing the Holocaust in isolation and started placing it in the context of twentieth-century genocides.

The book's subtitle, *The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, suggests similarities between the Nanjing Massacre and Nazi atrocities committed during the Holocaust. Take Babi Yar. Nazi forces shot some 70,000–80,000 Jews from Kiev in the ravine of Babi Yar from September 27 to October 5, 1941; periodic executions of Jews and non-Jewish POWs and partisans lasted there until November 1943. But there are formidable differences between Nanjing and Babi Yar. Japanese forces wrought revenge for the large number of fatalities in their ranks during the battle for Nanjing. In contrast, the mass murder of Jews at Babi Yar was committed by a special unit assigned for this purpose, Einsatzgruppe C, and grounded in a specific worldview. The same cannot be said of marauding Japanese troops in Nanjing.

Rather than resembling Babi Yar and other Nazi anti-Jewish atrocities, the Nanjing Massacre more closely approximates the German suppression of the Warsaw Uprising in August–October 1944. In the face of stiff opposition by the Polish underground, the Nazis, in retaliation, killed 16,000 Polish insurgents and 150,00–200,000 civilians, expelled the remaining civilian population (150,000 were deported to camps), and razed Warsaw. I argue that despite the temptation to draw comparisons between the Nanjing Massacre and the Holocaust, Japanese atrocities at Nanjing and German atrocities against Poles in 1944 share more features than does the Nanjing Massacre with the Holocaust.