

**THE FORGOTTEN HISTORY: TEXTBOOK CONTROVERSY AND SINO-  
JAPANESE RELATIONS**

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# **THE FORGOTTEN HISTORY: TEXTBOOK CONTROVERSY AND SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS**

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History plays an important role in shaping the relations between Japan and China. Because Japan's military expansionism during 1931-1945 has left a deep scar in the memories of the Chinese population, the issue of history remains at the core of Sino-Japanese diplomacy. Since the 1980s, the Chinese government has consistently accused the Japanese government of revising and obscuring Japan's wartime history, notably that of the Japanese military aggression in China during 1931-1945. China's reaction against the Japanese government's whitewashing of history demonstrates the fear that, by rendering Japanese youths oblivious of their nation's militarist past, Japan may repeat its past. While diplomatic negotiations to improve Sino-Japanese relations have taken place, disagreement over historical interpretation continues to fuel the discontent between the two countries.

To better understand the dynamics of the Sino-Japanese relations, the research investigates the origins and nature of the textbook controversy by discussing how the controversy came about and how each government responded to the issue. In addition, the analysis of ultranationalist movement in Japan allows us to understand the public reaction to the controversy as well as its political repercussions. I also explore the Franco-German case of postwar reconciliation and development of preventive institutions. By comparing the postwar experience of China and Japan to that of Europe, we can gain an insight about the creative ways of constructing a common history between historically hostile nations. Finally, the assessment of Japanese leadership since 2000 enables us to evaluate the future development surrounding the problem of history and its impact on bilateral relations.

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## **PREFACE**

I would like to acknowledge my advisor, Dr. Dennis Hart, for his support and guidance throughout my research and thesis writing. This work would not have been possible without his intellectual brilliance on East Asian politics. I also would like to express my sincere gratitude for Dr. Muge K. Finkel, for helping me to initiate research and to build upon my knowledge of Japanese politics through her class. Special thanks to Dr. Shingo Minamizuka, a visiting professor from Hosei University at the time, who generously donated the Japanese history textbooks that were integral to my research.

I want to thank those who made considerable intellectual contribution to my research—whether this means listening to my ideas or providing me with feedbacks and criticisms—your contribution was vital to the improvement of my paper. Lastly, many thanks to faculty members, who had generously agreed to serve on my thesis committee, and my family and friends who have been supportive despite obstacles and discouragement.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

“It is certainly a false accusation to say that our country was an aggressor nation,” wrote the chief of Japan’s Air Force, General Toshio Tamogami, in a prize-winning essay sponsored by the Apa Group, which underlined the ongoing controversy over history education as it relates to war memory of Japanese imperialism in Asia.<sup>1</sup> Immediately after the announcement of his award, *Asahi Shinbun*, the leading Japanese newspaper reported that Tamogami accused the US of ensnaring Japan into World War II and denied the occurrence of Japanese military activities in Asia. Shortly after the news of Tamogami’s essay, the Japanese Defense Ministry announced his dismissal. Despite Tamogami’s counter-argument of his right to freedom of expression, the Japanese government stood by its decision in order to dodge criticism from China and Korea. Although China and South Korea voiced shock in response to Tamogami’s case, both governments accepted that his view did not represent the Japanese government’s official position.<sup>2</sup>

Why does such a view of history arise and what does Tamogami’s case imply about the role of history in Japan’s foreign policy-making? Most importantly, why does history dating

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<sup>1</sup> "Ex-Asdf Chief of Staff Sticks to His Guns at Diet," *Asahi Shinbun*, November 12 2008.

<sup>2</sup> "The Ghost of Wartimes Past," *Economist* 389, no. 8605 (2008).

back almost a century ago play such a significant role in defining Japan's relations with its neighboring countries? In order to answer these questions, I examine different interpretations of major historical events in the last century, specifically the diverging war memories of Japanese imperialism in Asia. One of the most contested issues in Sino-Japanese relations is the interpretation of Japan's wartime aggression in Asia in Japanese middle school history textbooks. The so-called textbook controversy emerged as a result of accusations over the government screening of textbooks downplaying Japan's military past. This issue represents the larger geopolitical problems surrounding contemporary Sino-Japanese relations.

Public memory of a nation's past is not a simple replication of objective facts, but a collective narrative retrieved from many retold stories.<sup>3</sup> This official presentation of war memories deserves attention because history dating back to World War II has been a major obstacle to Sino-Japanese relations since the 1980s. Furthermore, given Japan's economic influence in the region and China's growing role in international community, both countries hold key interests that can determine the future of Asia. Thus, it becomes essential to understand origins of this ongoing battle over war memories, which influences China and Japan's economically interwoven yet politically delicate relations.

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<sup>3</sup> Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories : The Vietnam War, the Aids Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). P7.

## 1.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

The textbook controversy symbolizes a fundamental dichotomy in public war memories in China and Japan. In order to understand the impact of war memories on Sino-Japanese relations, I explore the origins and nature of the textbook controversy by discussing why the controversy came about and how each government responded to the issue. In analyzing the textbook controversy, I hope to address the following questions. Why is a history textbook a constant source of diplomatic tensions between China and Japan? Why does it play such an important role in Sino-Japanese relations?

History provides an opportunity to construct an appealing national identity through glorification of a nation's past. This theory helps us understand the controversy surrounding Japan's history textbooks. I explore the controversy from the perspective of Japan by examining a series of events that accentuate historically distorted war memories. This examination of textbook controversy at the domestic level will allow us to comprehend this public reaction as well as its political repercussions in the region. Conversely, the Chinese government employs a strategy to construct the national identity by engaging in similar censorship of history textbooks and other forms of control over media. China's victim mentality contributes to its consistent demand for apologies, which in turn are perceived in Japan as a direct assault on its national identity. This pattern undermines many bilateral initiatives; in turn, such continuous diplomatic failures sustain this dysfunctional cycle of retaliation.

The Franco-German efforts to establish a unified view of wartime history, which led to subsequent economic and political integration in Europe, provides reference for one approach to

reducing government censorship and extreme reinterpretation of historical events based on various political and ideological views. By comparing the postwar experience of China and Japan to that of France and Germany, I hope to gain insights about possibilities for mutual cooperation and regional integration between China and Japan.

## 2.0 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATIONAL IDENTITY AND HISTORY

### EDUCATION

*Past experience, if not forgotten, is a guide to the future.*

The Chinese official newspaper *Renmin Ribao* stated the remark above at the occasion of ten-year anniversary of the Sino-Japanese normalization in 1983.<sup>4</sup> As the quote indicates, history plays an important role in shaping the Sino-Japanese relations. With Chinese and Japanese leaders gathering to celebrate and to express their desire to preserve peace by strengthening co-development, the Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations looked promising. However, contrary to this superficial friendliness, a number of incidents suggest a very different picture of Sino-Japanese relations. In recent years, controversies relating back to World War II have put considerable strain on Sino-Japanese cooperation. From controversies over the Japanese Prime Minister's visits to the Yasukuni Shrine and Chinese demand for Japanese apologies, bitter memories of World War II continue to dominate the foreign policy of both countries. This recurrence of war-related problems hampers political and economic collaboration between Chinese and Japanese governments.

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<sup>4</sup> Caroline Rose, "The Textbook Issue: Domestic Sources of Japan's Foreign Policy," *Japan Forum* 11, no. 2 (1999).

Among war-related controversies, the issue of state-authorized Japanese history textbooks deserves close attention because the problem influences current and future bilateral relations. This conflict over the content of Japanese textbooks refers to the reinterpretation of World War II, which the Chinese government accuses the Japanese government of whitewashing Japan's colonial history, notably that of the Japanese military aggression in China during 1931-1945. Despite the Chinese demand for correction of controversial content in history textbooks, the Japanese government, dominated by the center-right party Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), appears reluctant to implement change. While diplomatic negotiations to improve Sino-Japanese relations have taken place, disagreement over historical interpretation continues to fuel the tensions between the two countries.

According to Caroline Rose, history remains at the core of the Sino-Japanese diplomacy since Japan's military expansionism during 1894-1945 has left a deep scar in the memories of Chinese people.<sup>5</sup> In attributing this historical period as the fifty years that overshadowed the previous two thousand years of cultural exchange, the author argues that the brutal Japanese occupation in China, particularly during 1931-1945 when the Japanese military committed a horrific series of atrocities, represents a strain on the Sino-Japanese relations.<sup>6</sup> A series of atrocities committed by Japanese military in China include the contested Manchuria Incident of 1917 and the Nanjing Massacre of 1937. These international conflicts remain central to war memories of China and Japan, as they directly relate to Japan's colonial legacy in Asia and

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<sup>5</sup> ———, *Interpreting History in Sino-Japanese Relations : A Case Study in Political Decision-Making*, Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies Series (London ; New York: Routledge, 1998). P10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

China's constant criticism of Japan for downplaying its wartime aggression and fostering blind patriotism among schoolchildren.<sup>7</sup> I will further elaborate on this theme in the subsequent section, which discusses the nature of the textbook controversy.

The textbook controversy illustrates the crucial role that history plays in the delicate and complex relationship between China and Japan. While the controversy over Japan's history textbook continues to fuel debates, the fundamental point lies in the battle for national identities.<sup>8</sup> History education allows policymakers to construct a collective national identity that ensures the continuation of their system by instilling future citizens with certain social, cultural, and political values. History textbooks are used as a policy instrument to formulate a "correct" view of national history, thereby establishing a strong national identity and defining what it means to be Chinese or Japanese. Although history textbooks represent only one of many ways of shaping national identity because other popular media such as TV shows, *manga* (Japanese comic books), books, and films also play a large role, the case of history textbooks nonetheless illustrates the use of education to foster public loyalty to the existing institutions and value system. Consequently, the textbook controversy originates from conflicting war memories, which are a result of diverging official narratives of a nation's past. Since national identities revolve around history, the textbook controversy not only shapes the political agenda of respective governments but also influences the survival of nationhood.

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<sup>7</sup> Tomoko Hamada, "Constructing a National Memory: A Comparative Analysis of Middle-School History Textbooks from Japan and the PRC," *American Asian Review* XXI, no. 4 (2003). P111.

<sup>8</sup> Hiroshi Mitani and Teruyuki Hirota, *Rekisho Kyokasho Mondai*, Shohan. ed., Ridingusu Nihon No Kyoiku to Shakai (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Senta, 2007). P248.

### 3.0 OVERVIEW OF THE TEXTBOOK CONTROVERSY

#### 3.1 TEXTBOOK AUTHORIZATION PROCESS

School Education Law of 1947 authorizes the Ministry of Education to examine and approve textbooks written by publishers in Japan.<sup>9</sup> This textbook screening procedure involves the following steps. First, the publisher compiles a textbook manuscript by working with a team of historians and school teachers. The publisher then submits a sample manuscript to the Ministry of Education where the Textbook Approval Research Council examines the text based on Textbook Examination Standards. With recommendations from the Council, the Ministry of Education returns the textbook manuscript with recommendations such as removal of unsuitable passages to the publisher. The publisher may resubmit the revised textbook manuscript for the Ministry's approval by following the same procedure. This process repeats if the publisher fails to satisfy the Textbook Examination Standards. Due to the lengthy nature of this screening process, the approval of a history textbook usually takes four years.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, through the institutional mechanism of screening procedure, the Ministry of Education closely monitors the

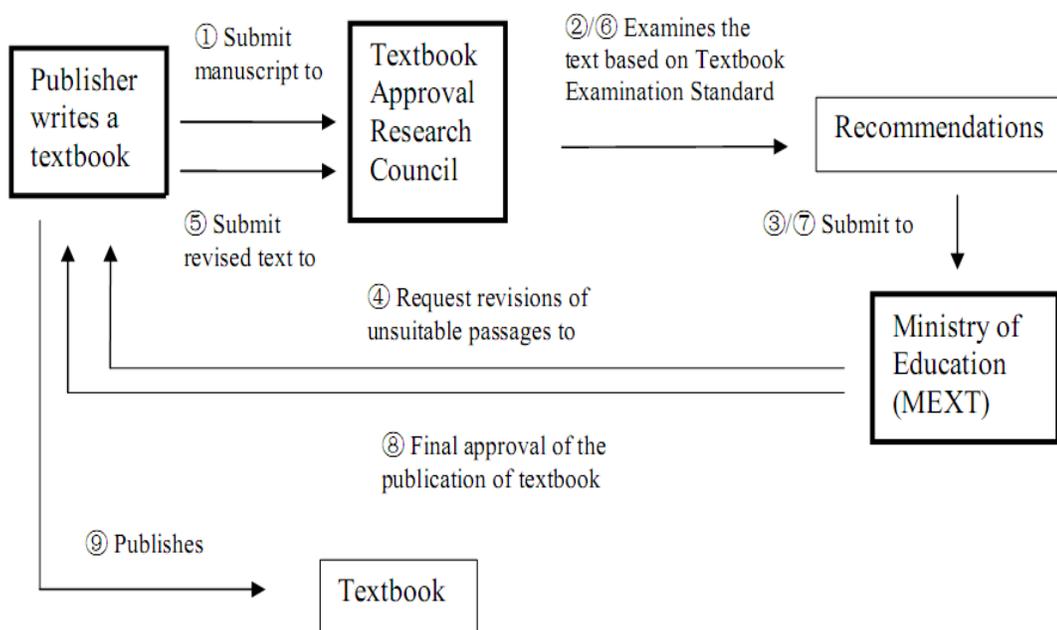
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<sup>9</sup> "Japan's School Textbook Examination Procedure," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/education/textbooks/index.html>.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

content of a textbook. For history textbooks deemed too liberal or left-wing, for example, the Ministry of Education can indirectly influence the text content by issuing recommendations, which require publishers to revise their manuscripts in order to meet the criteria.

**Figure 1: Textbook Screening Procedure**



Saburo Ienaga's textbook lawsuits (1963-1982) unleashed the controversy surrounding the Japanese Ministry of Education's textbook authorization procedure. Ienaga accused the government of infringing his right to freedom of expression and scholarship, and his successive lawsuits drew criticism from historians and teachers in Japan. The lawsuit not only challenged the constitutionality of the Ministry's authority to conduct the screening of text

content, but it also revealed the ideological divide between left-leaning scholars and teachers and right-leaning nationalist officials. Since the Ministry of Education determined textbook content, the Japanese government wields considerable power in skewing the Textbook Examination Standard in favor of its political interests. With Ienaga's case against the government, however, the Ministry of Education's screening procedure, and particularly Japanese history textbooks became a hotly debated issue. In the upcoming section, I examine how the textbook controversy sheds light on the ongoing battle between different schools of thought in Japan's postwar historiography in addition to the diplomatic repercussions of the controversy. Most notably, I will discuss the implications of Ienaga's lawsuits followed by the internationalization of Japan's textbook controversy in the 1980s, and the nationwide anti-Japanese demonstrations in China and South Korea in 2005.

### **3.2 SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT IN POSTWAR HISTORIOGRAPHY IN JAPAN**

Japan's textbook controversy revolves around three schools of thought in postwar historiography. According to David McNeill, journalist and teacher in Japan, the first school of thought is known as *Maboroshi-ha* (Illusion School), which rejects Japan's colonial past despite all the evidence and testimonies of war victims.<sup>11</sup> In countering China's claim of casualties incurred in the Nanjing Massacre, the group argues that a very small number of people were

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<sup>11</sup> "Japan," in *Hindesight: History Under Siege* (Australia: ABC National, 2008).

killed in the event. The group sometimes goes even further to state that the Nanjing Massacre never existed and was a Chinese fabrication.<sup>12</sup> What makes this school of thought influential is that its ultranationalist movement, though small in membership, consists of influential elites such as right-wing historians, conservative politicians, and business patrons. The second school of thought is called *Daigyakusatsu* (Massacre School), which essentially agrees with China's claim of Japan's wartime atrocities.<sup>13</sup> While the group consists mostly of left-leaning historians and teachers, journalists have also been advocating liberal education through media coverage and reports that highlight Japan's wartime history. Among them, Honda Katsuichi was the first journalist to travel to China in the 1970s and to feature Japan's wartime crimes in a series of articles published in the *Asahi Shinbun*. Finally, the third group falls somewhere between the previous two schools. This school of thought has a modest perspective with respect to Japan's war responsibility.<sup>14</sup> Although the group accepts the Nanjing Massacre and Comfort Women as historical facts, the group tends to tone down the language when narrating Japan's wartime past. For example, the group argues that an estimated casualty of 300,000 people in the Nanjing Massacre is an exaggerated figure. With the majority of Japanese history textbooks expressing this point of view, the third school of thought seems to represent the general view about Japan's wartime history.

Among these three schools of thought, the battle between the *Maboroshi-ha* (Illusion School) and the *Daigyakusatsu* (Massacre School) marks the domestic debate of

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Japan's history textbook. Beginning in the 1950s, the textbook controversy emerged as a result of Ienaga's lawsuits, which questioned Ministry of Education's screening authority over the textbook content.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, thanks to a series of policies aimed at reducing "biased textbooks" at this time, the LDP-controlled government attacked left-wing textbooks with patriotic education campaigns. While encouraging a more ambiguous description of Japan's war in Asia, the Ministry of Education tightened the textbook screening procedure and gradually regained control over textbook content.<sup>16</sup> By the 1970s, the partial ruling in favor of Ienaga's lawsuits reversed this trend by loosening the Ministry's screening authority. As evidence, following Ienaga's case, the public witnessed a greater amount of information in school textbooks about World War II, in particular Japan's wartime atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre and realities of the Unit 731 (biological warfare research development facility by the Japanese Imperial Army in Manchuria).<sup>17</sup>

In the 1980s, however, the Ministry of Education regained control over the textbook screening procedure as a result of the LDP's political campaign against liberal education. During this period, Japan's domestic policy had profound diplomatic repercussions. For example, the *Asahi Shinbun's* report of the Ministry of Education's textbook screening process, which was accused of downplaying Japan's wartime atrocities, provoked nationalistic reactions from China and South Korea. In response to China and South Korea's protests, the Japanese government made concessions with Chief Cabinet Secretary Miyazawa reassuring both governments that the

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<sup>15</sup> Yukio Wani, *History Textbook and Asia* (Tokyo: Syakai hyouronsya, 2001). P12.

<sup>16</sup> Rose, *Interpreting History in Sino-Japanese Relations : A Case Study in Political Decision-Making*. P81-85.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* P 95-101.

textbook content would include comprehensive coverage of Japan's wartime conduct. Although no such major changes occurred, the textbook content in the early 1990s reflected Japan's desire to maintain and improve relations with its neighboring countries.<sup>18</sup> For example, the previously excluded passages about the Unit 731, the Nanjing Massacre, and Comfort Women appeared in all history textbooks. Nonetheless, Japan's ultranationalists later responded to this drastic change in textbook content by re-launching various patriotism-enhancing campaigns aimed at reversing the left-leaning trend.

In the late 1990s, the LDP regained political control after a period of non-LDP coalition during 1993-4 and implemented policies to promote patriotism-enhancing education in Japan. By 2000, the so-called "Three All Strategy" permeated some Japanese textbooks with words like "invade" replaced by "advance," the "Unit 731" deleted, and the "Nanjing Massacre" changed to a milder expression of the "Nanjing Incident."<sup>19</sup> The Ministry of Education adopted this strategy in the screening process and applied to all submitted manuscripts. As a result, only one out of seven history textbooks contained information about Comfort Women by 2000.<sup>20</sup> These changes symbolized a drastic reverse policy from the previous years of left-leaning education. What's more, the emergence of ultranationalist groups such as *Atarashii Kyokasho wo Tsukuru kai*, known as the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, supported by the right-leaning publisher Fushōsha, became a new source of diplomatic tensions over war memories between Japan and China. For example, Fushōsha's publication of *Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho (New*

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<sup>18</sup> Wenran Jiang, "New Dynamics of Sino-Japanese Relations," *Asian Perspective* 31, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>19</sup> Caroline Rose, *Sino-Japanese Relations: Facing the Past, Looking to the Future?* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005). P60.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

*History Textbook*) in 2000 not only provoked outcries from historians within Japan but also drew criticism from China. As this overview of the textbook controversy demonstrates, there seems to be a response mechanism in Japanese society, in which various forces from the Left and the Right compete to influence the system by asserting their ideologies and values in history education. The following chapter outlines the timeline of the textbook controversy spanning from the 1950s to 2009 with three major stages of events: Ienaga's textbook lawsuits (1950-1982), *Asahi Shinbun's* report of "invasion" problem (1982-1997), and the publication of controversial *New History Textbook* (1997-present).

## 4.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONTROVERSY

### 4.1 IENAGA'S TEXTBOOK LAWSUITS (1965-1982)

State-authorized textbooks became a hotly debated issue in Japan when the left-wing historian, Ienaga Saburo filed lawsuits against the government for violating his freedom of expression and scholarship in 1965. Having followed 137 mandatory revisions at instruction of the Ministry of Education, Ienaga filed lawsuits against Japanese government by stating that the Ministry's recommendations constituted an unconstitutional censorship.<sup>21</sup> Although Ienaga subsequently published a history textbook titled *Shin Nihonshi (New Japanese History)* after having complied with the Ministry's screening procedure, his book reflected a view that history should be based on true facts and democratic values and desire for peace.<sup>22</sup> Throughout his lawsuits, Ienaga advocated the inclusion of events, in particular those that concern Japan's aggression in Asia during World War II, which he believed was crucial to understanding Japanese history. For example, Ienaga expressed his view about the war in his textbook by stating: "most Japanese citizens were not informed of the truth of the war, and so could only

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<sup>21</sup> Kersten, "Coming to Terms with the Past: Japan," *History Today* 54, no. 3 (2004). P20.

<sup>22</sup> Laura Elizabeth Hein and Mark Selden, *Censoring History : Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States*, Asia and the Pacific (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2000). P98.

enthusiastically support the reckless war” in his book.<sup>23</sup> Because the word choice “reckless” was deemed a value judgment, the Ministry of Education suggested that Ienaga change the statement to a less subjective tone.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the Ministry noted that Ienaga’s original manuscripts included an excessively dark side of the war by depicting Japan’s military activities in Asia, and had asked such a section to be removed.<sup>25</sup>

As Ienaga’s case demonstrates, history is a highly sensitive subject because history education is regarded as a means of advocating political platform in the form of patriotism. Critiques of history textbooks often point out a general tendency to glorify the nation through laudatory narratives of the past. Thus, the significance of Ienaga’s textbook lawsuits lies in the fact that the presentation of Japan’s wartime past continues to be a powerful instrument, which can serve political interests by shaping the popular perception about a nation’s history. The use of history as a political instrument is not limited to Japan; in fact, the accusing party of Japan’s history textbooks—China—also practices the state censorship through the textbook screening procedure. In Japan’s case, Ienaga’s lawsuit represents an ongoing battle between left-wing scholars and nationalist government to dictate an ideal vision of national history.<sup>26</sup> According to Mark Selden, education represents an important vehicle through which contemporary societies transmit ideas of citizenship, as well as the idealized past and the promised future of community.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, history education represents a defining aspect of nationalism, which can be employed effectively to convey a particular political discourse. Similarly, Ienaga’s

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* P113.

<sup>24</sup> Saburo Ienaga, "The Glorification of War in Japanese Education " *International Security* 18, no. 3 (Winter 1993/94).

<sup>25</sup> Hein and Selden, *Censoring History : Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States*. P 108.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* P 96.

<sup>27</sup> Ienaga, "The Glorification of War in Japanese Education ". P97-100.

lawsuits brought the issue of Japan's war responsibility by openly challenging the prevailing perception of a nation and the government's direct impact on history education.<sup>28</sup>

Ienaga's lawsuits not only questioned the constitutionality of the Ministry of Education's screening authority but it also illustrated the power struggle between the conservative camp of the LDP-dominated government and the Ministry of Education, and the progressive camp of left-wing socialists and the Japan Teacher's Union (JTU).<sup>29</sup> For a long time, the JTU resisted the conservative the Ministry of Education's efforts to implement patriotism education. Whether the JTU opposed the Ministry's textbook screening out of respect for diversity and freedom in education, or as some critiques point out, it hopes to counterbalance the government by seeking control over the textbook content, the ideological divide remains deep between two camps.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, Ienaga's lawsuit case demonstrates the growing discontent within the teaching community towards the Ministry's inclination to an increasingly centralized system of textbook screening.

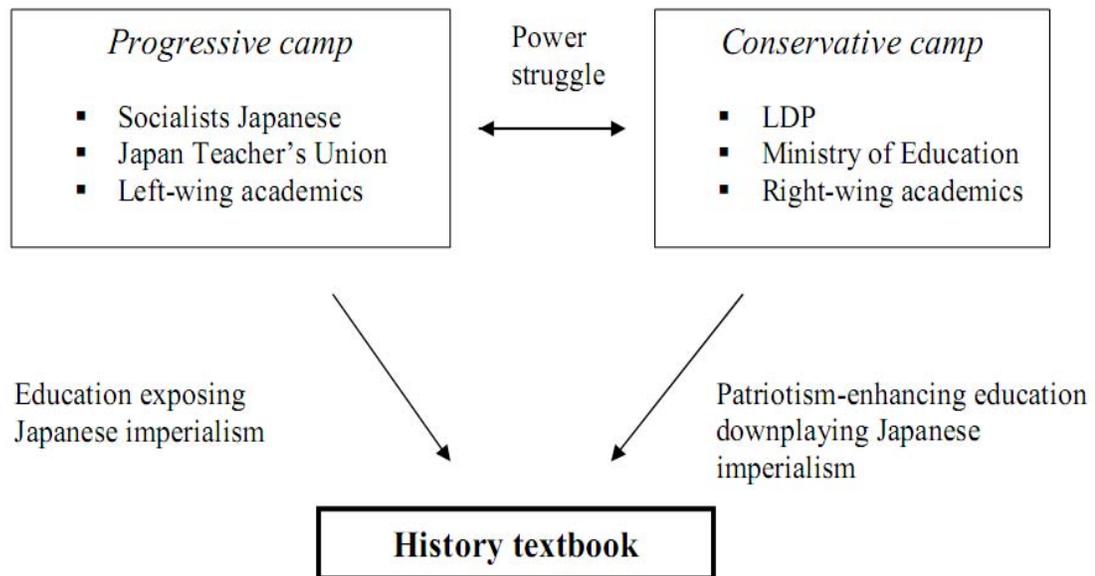
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<sup>28</sup> Yoshiko Nazaki, *War Memory, Nationalism, and Education in Postwar Japan, 1945-2007: The Japanese History Textbook Controversy and Ienaga Saburo's Court Challenges* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> R. P. Dore, "Censorship in Japan: The Ienaga Case," *Pacific Affairs* 43, no. 4 (Winter 1970-1971). P 550.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

**Figure 2: Domestic source of the textbook controversy**



When the Tokyo District Court ruled in favor of Ienaga's appeal, the case attracted great public interest and brought the textbook controversy to the forefront of Japanese media. Despite the Tokyo Supreme Court's subsequent ruling against Ienaga's lawsuit, it became evident that Ienaga left longstanding legacy since virtually all the high school textbooks incorporated the Nanjing Massacre by the 1990s.<sup>31</sup> Ienaga's case also served to mirror the voices of war victims in China and other Asian countries, and the publicity the lawsuits received in Japan encouraged public interest and further research about Japan's war responsibility. Such a drastic change in

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<sup>31</sup> Rana Mitter, "Remembering the Forgotten War," *History Today* August (2005). P 18.

textbook content was a victory for Ienaga and his supporters who revealed Japan's war guilt by challenging the Ministry's screening authority. As Ienaga accentuated the importance of understanding Japan's past through frank acknowledgement of its past wrongdoings, the renewed interest in the textbook controversy would subsequently trigger diplomatic skirmishes between Japan and China in the 1980s, particular over Japan's whitewashing of its wartime history in middle school textbooks after *Asahi Shinbun's* scandalous report, which was considered scandalous at that time.

#### **4.2 ASAHI SHIBUN'S REPORT OF "INVASION" PROBLEM (1982-1997)**

The textbook controversy became a source of diplomatic tensions in the summer of 1982 when the Chinese and Korean governments launched official protests against the Japanese government's endorsement of history textbooks. The accusations were directed at the Japanese Ministry of Education for toning down the brutality of Japanese troops during World War II by recommending the omission of details about the war.<sup>32</sup> Specifically, the Chinese government pointed to the distorted portrayal of historical events related to Japanese military aggression in middle school textbooks as a result of the Ministry's textbook screening process. The following table summarizes China's protests:

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<sup>32</sup> Rose, "The Textbook Issue: Domestic Sources of Japan's Foreign Policy."

**Table 1: Alleged revisions of key historical events**

	<b>Before authorization</b>	<b>After authorization</b>
<i>Japan's invasion of China</i>	The <u>invasion</u> (shinryaku) of North China	The <u>advance</u> (shinshutsu) into China
	The all out <u>invasion</u> (shinryaku) of China	The all out <u>attack</u> (gougeki) on China
<i>Nanjing Massacre</i>	When Nanjing was occupied, the Japanese troops killed and committed rape and arson. This Nanjing Massacre received international condemnation. It is said that the number of Chinese sacrificed at Nanjing exceeded two hundred thousand	Number of deaths deleted Cause of Nanjing Massacre is changed: the incident began because the fierce resistance of the Chinese troops caused huge losses to the Japanese troops, which led to Japanese killings of many Chinese people.

Source: Article of Remin Ribao on 30 June 1982 from Rose, Caroline. "The Textbook Issue: Domestic Sources of Japan's Foreign Policy." *Japan Forum* 11, no. 2 : 11.

While the Chinese government launched a full-scale domestic campaign aimed at criticizing Japanese textbooks, the reports of the controversy appeared in other major newspapers in East and Southeast Asia.<sup>33</sup> Such a comprehensive coverage of the textbook controversy had subsequently internationalized Japan's domestic problem and raised concerns about the revitalization of Japanese militarism in Asia. Amidst pressures on Japan to correct the content of its textbooks, China's accusations were largely based on the reports of inaccurate facts reported by Japanese press. Most notably, *Asahi Shinbun* led a band of newspaper in publishing

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

documents and manuscripts from the Ministry of Education that mistakenly linked the revisions of Japan's colonial rule in junior high school history textbooks.<sup>34</sup> As this publication of misinformation later became the basis of China's allegations, the Chinese government pointed out that the change of Japan's "*invasion*" to "*advance*" of Northern China constituted an erroneous portrayal of Japanese military quest in Manchuria. Moreover, the description of the Nanjing Massacre after the Ministry's screening process clearly employed a more ambiguous language in order to downplay the reality of Japanese aggression in China at that time.

Nevertheless, the alleged revisions of history textbook proved false, as investigations carried out by the Japanese Ministry of Education and *Asahi Shinbun* later revealed that no such changes occurred.<sup>35</sup> The actual textbook approval only required optional revisions based on recommendations from the Textbook Approval Research Council which evaluated textbooks according to the Ministry's curriculum guideline.<sup>36</sup> This was part of the screening procedure where the Ministry of Education also requested that unsuitable passages undergo revisions.<sup>37</sup> The Ministry's recommendations were categorized into optional and obligatory revisions. Contrary to the alleged revision of invade (*shinryaku*) to advance (*zenshin*), the Ministry's recommendation was an optional revision for improvement.<sup>38</sup> Although the Ministry recommended that "invade" be replaced by "advance," the investigation found out that no

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<sup>34</sup> Mitter, "Remembering the Forgotten War." P 18.

<sup>35</sup> Rose, "The Textbook Issue: Domestic Sources of Japan's Foreign Policy." P 207.

<sup>36</sup> "Japan's School Textbook Examination Procedure."

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> ———, "The Textbook Issue: Domestic Sources of Japan's Foreign Policy." P 207.

textbooks adopted such recommended revision.<sup>39</sup> The subsequent diplomatic tension between China and Japan thus resulted due to Japanese media's erroneous reports of revisions.

In September 1982 after the Chinese government officially accepted the Chief Cabinet Minister Miyazawa's apology, *Asahi Shinbun* issued its own apology for carelessly reporting the textbook controversy but the acknowledgement proved too late.<sup>40</sup> While the textbook controversy was a result of the inaccurate reporting on the part of Japanese press, the Ministry of Education also bore the responsibility since it failed to respond to foreign accusations in a timely manner. Both actions reiterated the highly sensitive nature of history in Sino-Japanese relations, and although the issue began as a mere domestic matter in Japan, it later transformed into a constant source of diplomatic tensions between Japan and China.

### **4.3 ULTRANATIONALISTS MOVEMENT IN JAPAN (1997-PRESENT)**

While the textbook controversy of the 1980s questioned the transparency and accountability of the Japanese government regarding war responsibility, an increasingly ultranationalist position emerged in reaction to the problem of history textbooks. The so-called revisionist movement in Japan began as a reactionary force to the textbook controversy in the 1980s. China's demand for correction and international pressure on Japan has contributed to growing frustration among nationalist conservatives, who saw left-leaning education as

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> "Statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Kiichi Miyazawa on History Textbooks," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/state8208.html>.

“masochistic” portrayal of Japanese history.<sup>41</sup> This annoyance with external pressure eventually gave birth to a fervent nationalist group advocating for the revision of a long-standing view of Japan’s war past. Consequently, the ultranationalist movement originated from domestic campaigns by nationalist groups composed of government officials, scholars, and business patrons in the late 1990s.

The formation of *Rekishi Kyokasho o Tsukuru-kai* (Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform) in 1995 confirmed the growing strength of the ultranationalist movement in Japan. According to the Society, the denunciatory view of history presented a perversely masochistic view in primary and secondary school students about their identity as Japanese.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, such a negative image of Japan must be replaced with a healthy version of history for future generations by emphasizing the uniqueness of the Japanese nationhood. This promotion of Japan’s cultural and linguistic uniqueness along with the omission of Japanese wartime aggression can then instill pride in Japanese youths about their nation.<sup>43</sup> The strategy to recreate and reinterpret the generally accepted history rests at the heart of this movement, which challenges mainstream historical narratives by offering a different view about causes and outcomes of the war, in particular, about the nature of Sino-Japanese War.

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<sup>41</sup> Shingo Minamizuka, "The Textbook Controversy (Powerpoint)," in *World History Seminar for Teachers* (University of Pittsburgh2008).

<sup>42</sup> "Statement of Objectives (Shutyo)," Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, [http://www.tsukurukai.com/02\\_about\\_us/01\\_opinion.html](http://www.tsukurukai.com/02_about_us/01_opinion.html).

<sup>43</sup> John K. Nelson, "Tempest in a Textbook: A Report on Te New Middle-School History Textbook in Japan," *Critical Asian Studies* 34, no. 1 (2002). P130-131.

## 5.0 TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS

### 5.1 5.1 EXAMINATION OF JAPANESE HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

In order to diagnose the ideology of the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, I compare the controversial textbook *New History Textbook* (2005) published by Fusōsha with another history textbook titled *Middle School History* (2005), which is published by Teikoku Shoin. We examine the content of *New History Textbook* because its publication provoked nationwide protests in China in 2005 due to its nationalistic text that de-emphasized Japan's militarization in Asia. I selected *Middle School History* as a comparison textbook for two reasons. First, I could not locate the history textbook published by Teikoku Shoin, which is the most widely used textbook in Japan with a market share of 51.2%, at the university library. Instead, I found the history textbook published by Teikoku Shoin, which has the third largest market share (14.9%) of history textbooks in Japan. I selected *Middle School History* as a substitute for the most commonly used history textbook published by Tokyo Shoseki. Second, I read through the text and made an assumption that *Middle School History* is fairly representative of a generally accepted view of Japanese history in textbooks. The comparison of the standard history textbook with the controversial *New History Textbook* can serve to illustrate different

interpretations and portrayals of same historical events. An analysis of this gap can unmask a fundamental divide in ideas about Japanese national identity. In the comparison of two textbooks, the Sino-Japanese War and the Nanjing Massacre are subjects of interest because of their disputed way of portrayal.

As of 2006, the adoption rate of *New History Textbook* is 0.4%, which is much lower than *Middle School History* published by Teikoku Shoseki whose market share is 14.9% (see Table 2). The low adoption rate of Fusōsha's *New History Textbook* is noteworthy since the percentage of market share has increased by 0.4% over a period of four years. Although the change is small, if the adoption rate were to continue changing at this rate, the overall impact on school curriculum can be significant. Compared to other textbooks whose market share had increased by about 4%, the small increase in Fusōsha's market share is noteworthy given the criticism and diplomatic tensions its controversial reinterpretation of Japan's wartime history triggered. Therefore, the significance of this controversial history textbook cannot be underestimated. In addition, the so-called spillover effect, according to Sven Saaler, could have an indirect impact on subsequent editions of other history textbooks in Japan.<sup>44</sup> As witnessed in the gradual change in the language used to account history relating back to World War II, most publishers toned down the language by replacing the Nanjing Massacre with a milder version of the Nanjing Incident and even omitting statistics of the Nanjing Massacre and the Comfort Women.

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<sup>44</sup> Sven Saaler, *Politics, Memory and Public Opinion: The History Textbook Controversy and Japanese Society* (Munich: Iudicium Verlag, 2005). P62.

**Table 2: Market share of 8 textbook publishers**

Survey of 583 school districts in Japan

	Tokyo Shoseki	Osaka Shoseki	Kyoiku Shuppan	Teikoku Shoin	Nihon Shoseki Shinsha	Shimizu Shoin	Nihon Bunkyo Shuppan	Fusosha
2002	51.2%	14.0%	13.0%	10.9%	5.9%	2.5%	2.3%	0.0%
2006	47.3%	18.0%	13.4%	14.9%	2.1%	2.7%	1.2%	0.4%
Δ %	-3.9	+4.0	+0.4	+4.0	-3.8	+0.2	-1.1	+0.4

Source: statistics from <http://www4.ocn.ne.jp/~aoitori/siten3.html> (accessed on 20 December 2008).

The following table shows textbook covers for the controversial *New History Textbook* (2002, 2006) by Fusōsha and commonly used *Middle School History* (2006) by Teikoku Shoseki.

**Table 3: Middle School History Textbook Covers**

New History Textbook (2002)  
© Fusōsha

*\* Image of textbook has been removed due to copyright.*

New History Textbook (2006)  
© Fusōsha

*\* Image of textbook has been removed due to copyright.*

Middle School History (2006)  
© Teikoku shoseki

*\* Image of textbook has been removed due to copyright.*

To assess the difference of narratives in respective textbooks about Japan's wartime activities, the chart below compares presentations and interpretations of the two major historical events: the Nanjing Massacre and the Sino-Japanese War.

**Table 4: Comparison chart**

	<p><i>New History Textbook</i> (Fusosha©2005)</p> <p>Controversial textbook with 0.4% market share</p> <p><i>* Image of textbook has been removed due to copyright. Please consult page 199 in the textbook.</i></p>	<p><i>Middle School History</i> (Teikoku Shoin©2005)</p> <p>Standard textbook with 14.9% market share</p> <p><i>* Image of textbook has been removed due to copyright. Please consult page 204 in the textbook.</i></p>
Sino-Japanese War (1939-1945)	<p>The Japanese military, in order to maintain Manchukuo and secure resources, had placed a friendly government in the neighboring north China region... On the night of July 7, 1937, a shot was fired against a Japanese army unit that was on exercise at the Marco Polo Bridge outside of Beijing. This resulted in a military engagement with the Chinese army the following day (the Marco Polo Bridge Incident).</p>	<p>The Japanese military did not remain in Manchuria, but advanced its troops into northern China in search of natural resources. In July 1937, Japanese and Chinese forces clashed outside of Beijing in the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, triggering the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War.</p>
Nanjing Massacre (1937)	<p>In August of the same year, two Japanese army officers were shot and killed in Shanghai, a city where foreign interests were concentrated. This incident escalated the confrontation between Japan and China. The Japanese army believed they could make Chiang Kai-shek surrender by taking the Kuomintang capital of Nanjing. In December, they occupied Nanjing, but Chiang Kai-shek transferred the capital inland to Chongqing and continued to resist.</p> <p>*Footnote at the end of this sentence: “At this time, the Chinese military and civilian population suffered many casualties due to the Japanese military (the Nanjing Incident). Furthermore, controversy has arisen with the data used to calculate the number of victims in this incident. Many perspectives exist on the number of victims and other details about this incident due to doubts about the historical record, and debate continues to this day.</p>	<p>The Japanese military also invaded China from the south and occupied Shanghai and Nanjing, the capital at the time. In Nanjing, many Chinese, not only soldiers but also women and children, were killed. Japan was criticized by the international community for the “barbarism of the Japanese military” (the Nanjing Massacre). The Japanese people, however, were not informed of this incident.</p>

Source: Translation credit to Je Kaleidoscope: Multilingual Translation of Mext-Approved Middle School History Textbooks.<sup>45</sup>

As the comparison of two textbooks demonstrates, different explanations offered for the causes of the Sino-Japanese War and the Nanjing Massacre represent two drastically different understandings of history. For example, *New History Textbook* seems to indirectly attribute the cause of the Sino-Japanese War to Chinese violence against Japanese in Manchuria. The paragraph about the Sino-Japanese War begins with a description of a shot being fired against the Japanese army, and without any explanation for why such an incident occurred, the text then proceeds to suggest that the Chinese violence triggered the war. In *Middle School History* textbook, however, the paragraph describing the Sino-Japanese War makes no mention of such a shot being fired. Instead, the text describes the clash between Chinese and Japanese armies (the Marco Polo Bridge Incident) as a trigger event of the Sino-Japanese War. In addition, the use of ambiguous language is more evident in *New History Textbook*, as it portrays the military confrontation between Chinese and Japanese army as “military engagement,” whereas *Middle School Textbook* clearly states it as the war.

With respect to the Nanjing Massacre, the first notable difference in two textbooks is the naming of the event. While *Middle School History* textbook presents the event as the Nanjing Massacre, *New History Textbook* assigns a more neutral name of the “Nanjing Incident”. As readers move from the section of the Sino-Japanese War to the Nanjing Massacre, *New History Textbook* implies a misleading link between the Nanjing Massacre and killing of Japanese

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<sup>45</sup> "Je Kaleidoscope: Multilingual Translation of Mext-Approved Middle School History Textbooks," Japan Echo Inc. , <http://www.je-kaleidoscope.jp/english/index2.html>.

officers. In this section, readers learn that the killing of two Japanese officers in Shanghai had provoked the Japanese invasion of Nanjing. Through attributing the initial killing of Japanese officers by Chinese to the cause of the Nanjing Massacre, the textbook seems to justify the Japanese atrocities in Nanjing.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, *New History Textbook* minimizes the scale of Japanese violence in the Nanjing Massacre by avoiding the mention of casualties incurred as a result of the Japanese assault. To express doubts about the facts regarding the Nanjing Massacre, a small footnote at the bottom of page 295 points out that the number of victims still remains contested due to the controversial nature of the issue. The footnote says: “*Many perspectives exist on the number of victims and other details about this incident due to doubts about the historical record, and debate continues to this day.*” This ambiguous language not only creates an impression about reduced severity of the event but also leaves the motive of Japan’s wartime conduct in China unaddressed. In contrast, the *Middle School History* textbook offers a brief description of the Nanjing Massacre. As the text indicates, the Japanese occupation of Nanjing incurred significant casualties involving women and children, and the event received international condemnation. Although the *Middle School History* text offers a brief summary of two events, readers will also notice that the text is almost too concise and fails to offer a concrete explanation for the cause of the Sino-Japanese War and the Nanjing Massacre. Since the textbook does not mention the number of casualties and no images of the Nanjing Massacre are provided, readers are left with unanswered questions about the causes of the Sino-Japanese War.

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<sup>46</sup> Nelson, "Tempest in a Textbook: A Report on Te New Middle-School History Textbook in Japan." P139-140.

After having compared the two Japanese history textbooks to the history textbook published for middle school in People’s Republic of China, the difference in the presentation style of same historical events is striking. The following table illustrates the Marco Polo Bridge Incident (beginning of the Sino-Japanese War) and the Nanjing Massacre in China’s state-endorsed history textbook.

**Table 5: Sample Pages of middle school history textbook in People’s Republic of China**

Marco Polo Bridge Incident	Nanjing Massacre
<p><i>* Image of textbook has been removed due to copyright. Please consult page 75 in the textbook.</i></p> <p>The sentence under the first image says: “Chinese army is courageously resisting the Japanese occupation army.</p> <p>The sentence under the second image says: “Chinese army at the Marco Polo City rush to the battlefields.”</p>	<p><i>* Image of textbook has been removed due to copyright. Please consult page 76 in the textbook.</i></p> <p>Description of Japanese atrocities in Nanjing: (1<sup>st</sup> image on left) “Japanese soldier beheading a Nanjing youth” (2<sup>nd</sup> image on right) “Japanese army using children for military exercises” (3<sup>rd</sup> image on left) “Japanese army burying Nanjing citizens alive” (4<sup>th</sup> image on right) “Japanese general seizing and leading youths to be execution camps located outside of Nanjing”</p>

Text and image credit to Middle School Chinese History © People’s Education Press.<sup>47</sup>

In addition to the detailed description of two events, the Chinese textbook provides more visual images to demonstrate the cruelty of Japanese occupation in China. Contrary to photos of

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<sup>47</sup> "Chinese People's Japanese Resistance War," in *Chinese History* (Beijing Renmin Jiaoyu Chubangshe (People's Education Press) 2006).

the brave Chinese army defending and fighting against the Japanese army shown on page 75, the following page displays images of the ruthless, almost inhuman Japanese troops executing innocent Chinese people. This presentation style of Chinese history textbook embodies almost propagandistic element, which utilizes visual aid to convey a certain image of the Japanese army—merciless and aggressive—through the Sino-Japanese War. Certainly, the Chinese textbook has its own flaws, especially in the use of critical tone against the Japanese army.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy to observe that the Chinese portrayal of the Sino-Japanese War and the Nanjing Massacre differs considerably from that of Japanese textbooks. Not to mention the presentation of Japanese wartime activities in China by *New History Textbook*, even one of the most commonly used history textbooks lacks details concerning the war. If the reader were to compare these textbooks by length, the space devoted to Japan's wartime activities in Chinese textbook exceeds that of Japanese textbooks (total of 3 pages compared to 1 page). Some scholars have even argued that this tendency to avoid excessive description of the war is the result of passive self-censorship on the part of the publishers of Japanese history textbooks.<sup>48</sup> Whether this form of self-censorship directly emerged due to pressure from the Ministry of Education or is merely the publisher's cautious approach to dodge overseas criticisms, the textbook controversy continues to remain unresolved as long as the disputed content is perceived to be unjustly interpreted to serve Japan's self-interests.

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<sup>48</sup> Kersten, "Coming to Terms with the Past: Japan."

## 6.0 THE UNRESOLVED CONTROVERSY

### 6.1 HISTORY AS BASIS OF WAR MEMORIES AND POLITICAL DOCUMENT

History serves as an important function of informing the next generation of citizens about their nation's past and instructing them about how to live and behave in relation to other countries.<sup>49</sup> History makes up public memory that shapes citizens' understanding of the past and ideas about future society. Public memory of a nation's past is not a simple replication of objective facts, but a collective narrative retrieved from many retold stories.<sup>50</sup> Thus, measuring whether or not Japanese textbooks present an accurate account of the Nanjing Massacre does not address the question of this research. Rather, it is the selection of these historical facts, which reveals certain ideological predisposition and political agenda that deserves the discussion. The underlying theme behind the textbook controversy lies in an ongoing struggle for the dominance between defenders of various political ideas in Japan.<sup>51</sup> The controversial *New History Textbook* simply represents one ideological camp (right-wing conservatives and ultranationalists)

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<sup>49</sup> Hugh B. Mehan and Sarah A. Robert, "Thinking the Nation: Representing of Nations and the Pacificism in Latin American and Asian Textbooks," *Narrative Inquiry* 11, no. 1 (2001).

<sup>50</sup> Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories : The Vietnam War, the Aids Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). P7.

<sup>51</sup> John E. Bodnar, *Remaking America : Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992). P13.

attempting to shape Japan's war memory through a different narrative of history. What's at stake here is the national identity, and the race to determine who should define what it means to be Japanese.

Consequently, all political forces have interests to preserve or change the existing system by fostering public loyalty to a particular structure of society through history education. Both the ultranationalists' motive to create a "correct" view of Japanese traditions and culture through history rewriting, as well as the opposing ideology of left-wing scholars and teachers demonstrate this attempt to define Japanese identity with grand historical narrative.

As the textbook demonstrates, the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform has successfully transformed the history textbook into a political document to convey its political messages to students.<sup>52</sup> The glorification of Japanese history, for example, symbolizes the group's objective to reconstruct public memory in order to imbue a certain form of patriotism among youths. According to John Bodnar, a history professor at Indiana University, patriotism is invented as a form of social control in the quest for power by various political groups.

Thus, the nationalist flavor of *New History Textbook* embodies the function of history as a political instrument to serve the interests of right-wing group. Given the dominance of the LDP in Japanese politics, right-wing conservatives have clear interests to safeguard the existing power structure by fostering national pride among citizens so that they will remain loyal to status quo and fulfill patriotic duties to ensure the survival of the current system. The continuing legacy of history and patriotism education is both effective and powerful; thus, the Japanese government

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<sup>52</sup> Robert, "Thinking the Nation: Representing of Nations and the Pacificism in Latin American and Asian Textbooks."

wields considerable power to nourish loyal citizens by allowing official expressions to permeate the language of history textbooks.

Other aspects of history and public memory manifest in the definition of a nation as a unique entity. By extolling the exceptional qualities of a nation, history textbooks such as *New History Textbook* can construct memory of a nation by comparing it with other nations. This comparison enhances the nation's uniqueness and helps people consolidate and strengthen their national identity with respect to other nations. In most cases, regardless of the accuracy of facts, public memory of national history will survive as long as the public deems it to be true. This illustrates history textbook's important function as both political and cultural document aimed at mobilizing citizens in a particular direction, usually for legitimizing the governing body or targeting against a particular group of people.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the issue of history textbook in Japan symbolizes a struggle between right-wing and left-wing groups, and has roots to the government's patriotism-enhancing campaigns. By creating official interpretations of history, textbooks can serve as a powerful instrument of nation-building and promoting a particular form of national identity.

In fact, the use of history as part of political discourse is not limited to Japan. The accusing country, China, for example, also employs a centralized educational system to present an official view of history. Since the Chinese government directly supervises the publication of history textbooks, the official presentation of Chinese history also serves to legitimize the rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Therefore, Japan does not stand alone with respect to the

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<sup>53</sup> Hamada, "Constructing a National Memory: A Comparative Analysis of Middle-School History Textbooks from Japan and the Prc."

political use of history textbooks. The interesting point about Japan's case is, however, that the issue of history continues to remain highly sensitive due to Japan's attitude towards its war responsibility. Unlike its Western counterpart Germany, who negotiated considerable compromises for history writing after World War II and eventually achieved a high level of regional integration through formation of the European Union (EU), Japan has not yet achieved credibility in the eyes of Asian neighbors.

The importance of history, especially its role of formulating public memory and mobilizing the mass towards a particular direction, must not be overlooked. As China and Japan attempt to establish self-images in this globalizing era, the concept of ethnocentric nationalism and "regional centrality" in Asia remains central to understanding the occasional diplomatic skirmish over Japanese history textbooks.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, one cannot dismiss the role of right-wing groups in Japan because of their potential impact on public memory and policy-making. Finally, the existence of strong network among political, social, economic, mass media groups supportive of nationalist ideology implies that the movement is not limited to the sphere of education alone. The movement is rapidly spreading to other popular media sectors such as *manga*, films, and novels. For example, the growing popularity of Yoshinori Kobayashi's political commentary comic, known as *Neo Gomanism Manifesto Special: On War*, deserves attention. Kobayashi's right-leaning ideology manifests in his denial of the Nanjing Massacre and Japanese war crimes in his *works*. With the analysis of the significance of the ultranationalist movement in Japan, the

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

following section analyzes China's attitude towards and diplomatic strategy in response to the textbook controversy.

## 6.2 POLITICS OF THE VICTIM/VICTOR COMPLEX: CHINA'S STRATEGY

When the Japanese Ministry of Education approved *New History Textbook* in 2001, the event did not receive as much media attention as it did in 1982 with *Asahi Shinbun's* "invasion" and "advance" report. During 1982, for example, the Chinese media launched a campaign against the alleged revision in Japanese history textbooks with numerous media coverage of the issue. *Renmin Ribao*, China's official newspaper, published a total of 232 articles related to the textbook controversy over a period of two and half months in 1982.<sup>55</sup> As the Chinese government maintains a tight control over media, the sustained effort to publicize Japan's domestic problem implies the CCP's strategy to manipulate Chinese nationalism in order to divert the growing anger with domestic problems abroad. As China embraced the capitalist market, the government no longer rests on an ideological support of communism. With the loss of ideological appeal, the Communist regime now relies heavily on vibrant Chinese nationalism. As a result, the Chinese government has been indirectly encouraging nationalism, in particular among youths through media campaigns depicting China as a victim country against aggressive,

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<sup>55</sup> Rose, *Sino-Japanese Relations: Facing the Past, Looking to the Future?* P64.

non-apologist Japan.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, the systematic reinforcement of Chinese nationalism in the state-authorized history textbooks propagates anti-Japanese sentiment with heroic descriptions of Chinese Resistance Movement against the Japanese Imperial Army.<sup>57</sup> The popular anti-Japanese sentiment witnessed in the 2005 nationwide protests partly reflects the result of the government's political strategy.

The politics of victim/victor complex is deeply embedded in Chinese foreign policy vis-à-vis Japan. While the frequent demand for Japan's apology of its wartime atrocities illustrates China's victim mentality, the victim complex of China dictates the general diplomatic approach towards Japan, as well as the belief that China has moral responsibility to educate Japan into acknowledging and remedying its past wrongdoings.<sup>58</sup> By deliberately provoking public uproar over Japan's distortion of history, the Chinese government has succeeded in reinforcing nationalism by linking the textbook controversy to the public fear of Japanese remilitarization. Such fear is deeply rooted in China's collective memory of Japanese aggression during World War II, and China's history as a victim country defending its national sovereignty against Japanese imperial force. Finally, the official presentation of Japan as an aggressor country allows the Chinese state to fully exploit and cultivate nationalism against Japanese as a means of scapegoat for corruption, political repression, and growing socioeconomic gap at home. Thus, it is no surprise that Chinese diplomacy based on the victim/victor complex resembles that of Japan's patriotic education campaigns. Both sides hope to boost pride and confidence in their

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<sup>56</sup> John Chan, "Anti-Japanese Protests Erupt in China," *World Socialist Web Site* 8 April 2005.

<sup>57</sup> Chunghee Sarah Soh, "Politics of the Victim/Victor Complex: Interpreting South Korea's National Furor over Japanese History Textbooks," *American Asian Review* 21, no. 4 (2003). P176.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* P177.

own country by selectively choosing parts of history that appeal to readers' patriotism. For example, because the Japanese government hopes to further enhance patriotism among children, the LDP favors history that portrays Japan as a unique, benign country. Similarly, the growing anti-Japanese sentiment among Chinese people serves to reinforce the national unity that is crucial to bolster the current regime's political legitimacy.<sup>59</sup>

Nevertheless, China's aggrieved and defensive nationalism may backfire in the future if the public opinion conflicts with the official agenda. In fact, the uncontrollable nature of popular anger against Japan poses a dilemma for the Chinese central government. Although the regime has been fostering the public anti-Japanese sentiment, the violent demonstrations throughout China in 2005 in response to the controversial Japanese textbook illustrated that the violence of angry mobs could escalate to the level where the government can no longer contain.

Despite China's authoritarian regime, public opinion plays an important role in shaping the government's foreign policy. With respect to the protests against Japan's textbook controversy, the Chinese government is well aware of the danger of leaving the public hostility unaddressed for the fear of instability triggered by the uncontrollable anti-Japanese movement. The fear about the transformation of popular uproar into anti-government movement has roots to history of social unrests in China. Examples such as the May Fourth Movement of 1919 provide an insightful lesson about the repercussions of excessive nationalism.<sup>60</sup> The famous May Fourth Movement occurred due to Germany's territorial concession of China to Japan as a result of the Versailles meeting. The public sense of injustice sparked the nationwide student and worker

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<sup>59</sup> Rose, *Sino-Japanese Relations: Facing the Past, Looking to the Future?* P126.

<sup>60</sup> Chan, "Anti-Japanese Protests Erupt in China."

movement against not only Japan but also against China's corrupt government for accepting the concessions.<sup>61</sup> As this anti-Japanese and anti-imperialist movement brought an end to the Qing Dynasty and eventually gave power to the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese government fears that uncontrolled nationalism, if left unmanaged, could potentially topple the current regime.

Although the Chinese government issued statements blaming the Japanese government about the handling of history problem, the government also appealed to the Chinese public to remain calm. Following the nationwide protest in China, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, Qin Gang, expressed that Chinese people had to express their positions in a rational manner.<sup>62</sup> The Chinese government even moved to protect Japanese businesses and consulates as police quickly dispersed angry crowds. This series of preventive actions to reduce and confine the magnitude of anti-Japanese sentiment represents the regime's recognition of the limitation of exploiting the textbook controversy to its own political advantage. China understands the long-term benefit of promoting mutual understanding, as peaceful bilateral relations remain indispensable to ensuring stable economic development in Asia. Although China tends to exploit the history issue to limit Japan's political influence in Asia, both Japan and China must realize that the nationalistic discourse disguised in patriotic education for political gains can only generate more suspicion and mistrust between two countries.

The attempt to attribute one's domestic problems to other's perceived threat neither helps nor resolves the damaged bilateral relation. Rather than manipulating the controversy for

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Mitter, "Remembering the Forgotten War."

political gains, the Chinese and Japanese governments need to respond to the growing need to construct a long-term stable relationship. As Mindy L. Kotler suggests, “the Japanese government, by focusing on Yasukuni shrine visits and reinterpretation of history, ignores a dynamic, democratic, and prosperous postwar Japan in favor of a potentially darker memory of order, militarism, and obedience while the Chinese government ignores Japan’s grief on China’s own mistakes in order to relive the unifying satisfaction of victory and victimization.”<sup>63</sup>

The 2007 visit by Chinese President Hu Jintao in Japan has demonstrated China’s pragmatic approach to bilateral relations by prioritizing economic, cultural, and political ties instead of continuing the anti-Japanese bashing policy. In his speech, Hu Jintao affirmed the importance of Sino-Japanese friendship: “as neighbors, and as countries with an enormous influence on Asia and the world, China and Japan have no alternative but to walk the road of peace, friendship and cooperation.”<sup>64</sup> Most notably, Hu Jintao accentuated the fact that it is essential to come to terms with each other’s differences through a common understanding of the past. This statement underscores the idea that the Sino-Japanese relations cannot continue without mutual trust of one other in reconciling history and promoting collaboration in trade and security.

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<sup>63</sup> Kotler, Mindy L., and others. "Chinese and Japanese public opinion: searching for moral security." *Asian Perspective* 31, no. 1 (2007). P123.

<sup>64</sup> Frackler, Martin. "In His Visit to Japan, China Leader Seeks Amity" *New York Times* (2008), [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/08/world/asia/08china.html?\\_r=1&fta=y&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/08/world/asia/08china.html?_r=1&fta=y&oref=slogin). (accessed May 17, 2008).

## 7.0 IMPLICATIONS OF THE TEXTBOOK CONTROVERSY

### 7.1 DETERIORATION OF BILATERAL RELATIONS

The alleged promotion of a positive view in the publication of *Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho (New History Textbook)*, which was approved by the Ministry of Education in 2001, became a source of diplomatic tensions between China and Japan. While the first publication of *New History Textbook* in 2001 attracted little public attention, the second publication in 2005 triggered massive anti-Japanese demonstrations throughout China and South Korea in conjunction with protests against Japan's bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. The widespread protests in major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenyang illustrated the growing public anger against *New History Textbook*, as the mob accused the Japanese government of portraying chauvinistic nationalism by justifying Japanese aggression as liberation of Asian countries.<sup>65</sup> Such public outrage at the backdrop of the controversial history textbook had translated into violent demonstrations with people smashing windows of Japanese consulates and shops and boycott of Japanese goods.

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<sup>65</sup> Philip P. Pan, "Japan-China Talks Fail to Ease Tensions: Protests Continue as Foreign Ministers Confer in Beijing," *The Washington Post*, 18 April 2005.

As if to make the matter worse, Japanese Prime Minister, Koizumi Junichiro paid tribute to the Yasukuni Shrine where Class-A war criminals are buried and honored. In response to Koizumi's Yasukuni Shrine visits, a series of officially tolerated anti-Japanese protests and demonstrations occurred in Beijing, Shanghai and other major cities in the spring of 2005.<sup>66</sup> This annual visit has provoked strong criticisms from China against the perceived glorification and revival of Japan's imperialist and militarist past.<sup>67</sup> In addition to the growing anti-Japanese sentiment in China, the Chinese government retaliated by suspending major summit meetings with Japan and stated that China would not resume the official talks as long as Prime Minister Koizumi insisted on visiting the Yasukuni Shrine. The reasons of official and unofficial protests were multifaceted. Masses paraded with anti-Japanese banners and protested against three issues: the publication of *New History Textbook*, Koizumi's Yasukuni Shrine visit, and Japan's bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. Interestingly, all three issues touched upon the issue of Japan's wartime past and coincided in a timely manner.

As a result of popular protests in China in 2005, the Sino-Japanese relations hit the lowest point since 1989 during Koizumi's five-year leadership.<sup>68</sup> While the Chinese perceived Koizumi's annual visits to Yasukuni Shrine as indication of Japan's non-apologist attitude towards war responsibility, the widespread idea that Japan has failed to learn lessons from its

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<sup>66</sup> Jiang, Wenran. "New dynamics of Sino-Japanese relations." *Asian Perspective* 31, no. 1 (2007): pp. 16.

<sup>67</sup> Suzuki, Shogo. "The importance of 'Othering' in China national identity: Sino-Japanese relations as a stage of identity conflicts." *The Pacific Review* 21, no. 1 (2007): pp. 26.

<sup>68</sup> Igor Morgulov, "Beijing and Tokyo: Rivalry and Cooperation," *International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics Diplomacy & International Relations* 51, no. 4 (2005).

past also provoked fear that Japan may again repeat the mistake. Despite Japan's pacifist Constitution, the recent trend in the Japanese Diet suggests a different story where Article 9 of the Constitution, which declares Japan's permanent renunciation of the right to war, may risk to be removed. Therefore, in the eyes of Chinese, Koizumi's annual visits to Yasukuni Shrine represent not only the possible revival of Japanese militarism but also a blatant defiance to China's criticism of Japan's reluctance to confront its war responsibility. Finally, the protest against Japan's bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council challenged the public sentiment that, as a losing country of World War II, Japan deserved no right to have a say in the UN. While the current UN Security Council mirrors the post-WWII power divide, the Council also symbolizes an important source of influence in world affairs that China believes to be beyond the reach of a defeated nation. Perhaps the most important factor that contributed to the public uproar against Japan's gesture towards the UN comes from the perception that Japan's inadequate efforts to reconcile its past wrongdoings with neighboring countries, as seen in the textbook controversy and the Yasukuni visits, did not qualify the country for such a high position in the well respected international organization.

## **7.2 POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS BEYOND CHINA**

The issue of history, specifically the textbook controversy, had a profound diplomatic consequence in China, as the Chinese public opinion in favor of Japan declined significantly

from the late 1980s to 2002.<sup>69</sup> In addition, Japan's history problem also spread to other countries with broader political repercussions. In response to the first textbook controversy provoked by *Asahi Shinbun's* report of the Ministry's textbook authorization in 1982, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea expressed discomfort at Japan's attempt to portray distorted history. In particular, the neighboring country, South Korea, reacted to the controversy with massive demonstrations, boycott of Japanese products, and threats of suspending diplomatic relations.<sup>70</sup> Contrary to the Chinese experience of officially endorsed media campaigns and staged protests targeted against Japan, Korean protests mirrored anti-Japanese sentiment of popular basis.<sup>71</sup> Not to mention the issue of Comfort Women and thirty-five years of Japanese colonization of Korea, public resentment towards Japanese aggression continues to contribute to the popular view of Japan as an aggressor nation. Despite the official acceptance of Chief Cabinet Secretary Miyazawa's "Neighboring Country Clause" statement, the Korean resentment has been growing.<sup>72</sup>

Following the publication of *New History Textbook* in 2001 and the Japanese government's refusal to correct the controversial textbook, the South Korean government lodged diplomatic protests at a larger scale than China. In addition to the official statement expressing deep disappointment and regret about the Japanese history textbook, angry demonstrators protested in front of the Japanese embassy and on the streets of Seoul. Such a large-scale movement signifies the popular anti-Japanese sentiment stemming from their perceived

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<sup>69</sup> *China and Japan at Odds: Deciphering the Perpetual Conflict*, ed. James C. Hsiung (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

<sup>70</sup> Chalmers Johnson, "The Patterns of Japanese Relations with China, 1952-1982," *Pacific Affairs* 59, no. 3 (1986).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* P424.

<sup>72</sup> "Statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Kiichi Miyazawa on History Textbooks."

distortion of history in Japan.<sup>73</sup> While the Chinese response to the textbook controversy remained critical but moderate in scale, the South Korean government went even further to temporarily recall the ambassador from Japan in 2001.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, the new edition of *New History Textbook* led to another breakout of massive demonstrations in Seoul in March 2006. These protests over the history problem illustrates South Korea's firm belief that Japan must continue to apologize for its wrongdoings in Korea, as this insistence is based on an understanding that Japanese colonization of Korea was not only traumatic but also illegal.<sup>75</sup>

Following China and South Korea's anti-Japanese demonstrations in 2005, neighboring countries such as Taiwan and Philippines also expressed remorse towards Japan's handling of history problem. Since Taiwan and Philippines shared similar experience under Japanese military quest, and particularly Philippines with history of comfort women, the governments maintained a critical attitude—though at a smaller scale compared to China and South Korea—towards Japan's history problem.<sup>76</sup> As these critical responses from Asian countries demonstrate, the political repercussions of Japan's failure to adequately address the history issue have permeated other Asian countries as well. This spillover of Japan's domestic problem to neighboring countries has serious political implications because the ongoing tensions can endanger Japan's future diplomatic relations with not only China and South Korea but also Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Philippines. What's more, the deterioration of diplomatic relations with other

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<sup>73</sup> "Anger Deepens in History Book Row," *BBC News*, 10 July 2001.

<sup>74</sup> "Japanese History Textbook Raises Concerns," AsiaSource: Asia TODAY [http://www.asiasource.org/news/at\\_mp\\_02.cfm?newsid=48253#Commentary](http://www.asiasource.org/news/at_mp_02.cfm?newsid=48253#Commentary).

<sup>75</sup> Alexis Dudden, *Troubled Apologies among Japan, Korea, and the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). P63-64.

<sup>76</sup> Carlos H. Conde, "Letter from the Philippines: Long Afterward, War Still Wears Onfilipinos," *International Herald Tribune*, August 13, 2005.

countries could eventually jeopardize economic relations and thus adversely affect the already shrinking Japanese economy. Consequently, the Japanese government continues to face the challenge of developing stable relations with neighboring countries in Asia by reaching consensus over the disputed vision of its wartime history.

## 8.0 CASE STUDY: EUROPEAN POSTWAR EXPERIENCE AND HISTORY

### PROBLEM

Germany's reputation for peaceful reconciliation with neighboring countries over the problem of history deserves close examination. In case of Japan, the government's reluctance to allow other countries to meddle with its textbook content has come at price of damaged diplomatic and trade relations. Japan's unwillingness to compromise and failure to take moral and legal responsibility for its past wrongdoings continue to fuel resentment among Asian countries. Since the end of the Cold War, a considerable amount of literature about Sino-Japanese relations was devoted to comparing Japan's postwar experience with that of Germany. While Japan is depicted as offering vague apologies and attempting to distort its dark history, Germany has received praise as a role model for confronting the past by offering apologies and compensations to victims of the Nazi regime.<sup>77</sup> This contrast between Japan and Germany has illustrated the difference in respective country's postwar policy concerning war responsibility, as well as the impact on the development of regional diplomacy.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and Kazuhiko Togo, *East Asia's Haunted Present : Historical Memories and the Resurgence of Nationalism*, Psi Reports (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2008). P18.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

The comparison of Germany with Japan usually leads to a conclusion where Germany is admired as a model nation for having successfully reconciled history with its neighbors, whereas Japan's denial of war responsibility has greatly harmed relations with Asian neighbors. A close examination of the two countries reveals that the comparison may not do justice to Japan, which has different postwar experience than Germany.<sup>79</sup> Thus, the conclusion based on this comparison model may not provide a fair evaluation of Japan. Nevertheless, much can be learned from Germany's rapprochement with France by examining major factors that rendered the reconciliation and regional integration of Europe possible. By comparing the postwar experience of China and Japan to that of France and Germany, I hope to gain an insight about the ways of constructing shared history between two historically hostile nations. Such an insight from the European experience can enable China and Japan to discover new possibilities of mutual cooperation and regional integration in the future. We begin with an analysis of geopolitical and economic factors that allowed Germany to regain credibility as a pacifist nation in the eyes of France.

## **8.1 GERMANY'S POSTWAR RAPPROCHEMENT WITH FRANCE**

The politics of reconciliation after destructive World War II became a popular motif of Franco-German relations. In particular, Germany and France are two major founders of the

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

European Union—a highly integrated community of economic and political relations in Europe. The path to postwar rapprochement was by no means easy, as two countries tried to overcome historical hostility through various postwar concessions and compromises. With millions of Europeans dead, the destructive result of World War II propelled leaders to seek ways in order to avoid another war at all cost. Especially between France and Germany, who experienced 130 years of constant warfare and conflicts, there emerged a strong anti-war sentiment not only among leaders but also among people.<sup>80</sup> The critical question at this time was: “How can Europe avoid another destructive war?” In addressing this question, the United States encouraged Europe to pursue a policy of enhancing economic interdependence in the region so that war would become too costly and unimaginable. Such a proposition gave birth to the Marshall Plan in 1948—an aid provided by the United States to help Europe reconstruct economies and promote regional development by reducing trade barriers.

What’s noteworthy about the European postwar experience is that, aside from the US initiatives to help situations, Germany also actively sought to be re-integrated into Western Europe by agreeing to various treaties, which eventually evolved into the present-day EU. With an increasing military threat of the Soviet Union in the Cold War, the so-called “German Question” emerged. How can Europe prevent Germany from resorting back to the fascist regime again? How can Germany be reintegrated into democratic Western Europe? How can the Soviet threat be deterred? To answer these questions, it seemed logical to bind Germany institutionally to a collective system of multilateral diplomacy and policy-making, thus the theory of

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<sup>80</sup> Richard E. Baldwin, "East Asian Regionalism: A Comparison with Europe," in *Japanese Ministry of Finance's Study Group on China* (Tokyo2003). P 1.

supranational Europe emerged as a means of promoting deeper integration among member states to deter future threats from the Soviet Union and restore prosperity in the region.<sup>81</sup>

Beginning with 1950, a number of bilateral initiatives aimed at reconciling history and fostering multilateral cooperation took place. The first plan, known as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), linked economically and militarily significant steel and coal industries of France and Germany. The presence of a supranational authority independent of national governments governed the institutional mechanism of the ECSC. The successful institution subsequently gave rise to the European Economic Community (EEC), signed between six European countries (Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Italy, France, and Germany) in 1958.<sup>82</sup> The immediate benefit of the EEC membership was trade liberalization and reduced trade barriers. As easy inter-state trade allowed member states to prosper, the institutional framework of the EEC became an integral part of Franco-German relations. The evolution of the EEC into the EU signified the successful policy based on institutionalism and spillover effects. Although the Franco-German rapprochement commenced as an economic project with trade liberalization, efforts to push further integration signaled both countries' recognition of multilateral cooperation as an effective means of healing old wounds of historical animosity. As witnessed in the recent success of the EU, the spillover effect of economic into political realm appears increasingly plausible as the multilateral institutions become more complex and sophisticated. Finally, one must not forget that the EU emerged as a result of efforts by its

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* P 2.

<sup>82</sup> Georg Wiessala and University Association for Contemporary European Studies., *The European Union and Asian Countries*, Contemporary European Studies 16 (London New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002). P 36.

enthusiastic founders—Germany and France—to reconcile historical hostility and prevent future conflicts. According to Alice Ackermann, “the creation of a Western European Community through a combined Franco-German effort was one of the earliest postwar confidence-building measures.”<sup>83</sup> Thus, the EEC represented the first institutionalized setting in which Franco-German rapprochement occurred.<sup>84</sup>

## 8.2 ASSESSMENT OF THE CASE STUDY

The lesson from the German-Franco rapprochement for Sino-Japanese relations is evident. Regional economic integration can serve as a means of fostering closer ties between China and Japan. As the EEC had objectives of ensuring peace and stability in the region, member states have always strived to “form an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe.”<sup>85</sup> For the EU, the intensity of trade has allowed countries to engage in not only in economic interactions but also in exchange of ideas that contributed to the mutual understanding of the past. In the case of Asia, the ASEAN has played and could play a crucial role in promoting trade liberalization and cultivating a sense of unity among Asian countries. This, in return, could lead to confidence-building between countries and reduce diplomatic frictions caused by the disagreement over history. Although the reality of the ASEAN still remains far from the EU’s

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<sup>83</sup> Alice Ackermann, "Reconciliation as a Peace-Building Process in Postwar Europe: The Franco-German Case," *Peace History Society* 19, no. 3 (1994). P224.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* P245.

<sup>85</sup> Baldwin, "East Asian Regionalism: A Comparison with Europe." P7.

Common Market and political union, China and Japan, as Asia's superpowers, can cooperate to push for deeper integration in the region. Such an initiative will require bilateral collaboration and consensus over disputed historical narratives. Moreover, regional integration will not occur without convergence of economic and political cooperation. Therefore, it is crucial that China and Japan abstain from the lure of the political gains, and instead seek for a long-term solution to the problem related to history.

Although the case study presents an insightful lesson from the European experience, one also needs to recognize the limits of reconciliation and economic integration. While reconciling the past does not necessarily prevent future conflicts, the existence of institutional links can provide useful forums to resolve potential conflict of interests. In addition, the case study of Germany may not be pertinent to Japan's case since it neglects different domestic and international factors had shaped Japan's attitude toward war guilt and responsibility. In comparing Germany to Japan, there exist four factors that address Japan's inadequate response. First, the delay in Japan's recognition and confrontation with wartime past is due to the unique arrangements and geopolitical circumstances in the postwar era. The San Francisco Peace Treaty (1951) signed between Japan and the Allied Power, for example, did not oblige Japan to pay war reparations directly to victim countries. Instead, the Treaty asked Japan to direct compensations to the third party organization for distributions to victim countries. Contrary to Germany, who passed legislations to provide legal compensations to victim countries, the Japanese government

never passed law of compensations to China, South Korea, and other Asian countries.<sup>86</sup> Thus, individuals can only seek compensations by filing demands against the Japanese government, and the provision of the San Francisco Peace Treaty often allows Japan to reject such individual demands. In addition, the onset of the Cold War with the Soviet Union and the victory of Communist Party in China meant that Japan faced a difficult choice in Asia. As a close ally of the United States, Japan followed containment policy and minimized contact with China and the Soviet Union. Moreover, Japan had other urgent domestic agenda such as economic development. Aside from the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, the US showed little will to press charges against Japan's war crimes. Thus, China remained isolated from democratic Japan, and bilateral contacts remained limited during the early period of the Cold War. This unique geopolitical situation has contributed Japan's sluggishness and reluctance in confronting its wartime responsibility.

The second factor lies in domestic politics and the dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the postwar government. A number of Japanese generals accused of war crimes were released and eventually returned to the postwar government. This political loophole has contributed to the formation of the LDP's conservative ideology with respect to Japan's past of military conquests.<sup>87</sup> As evidence, the government's patriotic education campaigns and the Ministry's textbook screening procedure echo the party's general attitude. Thirdly, the absence of institutional framework such as the EEC in Europe did not exist in Asia during the postwar

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<sup>86</sup> *Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States*. Edited by Laura Hein and Mark Selden. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2000. P51.

<sup>87</sup> Hasegawa and Togo, *East Asia's Haunted Present : Historical Memories and the Resurgence of Nationalism*. P29-30.

period.<sup>88</sup> The influence of regional organizations remained minimal and very few social groups were present at that time. As a result, virtually no institutional mechanism existed to facilitate direct dialogues between Japan, China, and other Asian countries. This lack of multilateral forums impeded efforts to foster mutual understanding by discussing and resolving the grievances of victim countries. Lastly, China's decision to prioritize and pursue economic relations with Japan meant that the problem of history remained a less important agenda in the bilateral relations.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, China's deliberate silence put the issue of history under a diplomatic table, at least until the internationalization of the textbook controversy in 1982.

With both external and internal factors, certain geopolitical, domestic, and regional circumstances have delayed Japan's self-reflection of war responsibility. As mentioned previously, the case study of Germany may not serve as an appropriate model since geopolitical situations differed significantly in respective countries. Nevertheless, the European experience provides an insightful perspective about the importance of institutions, particularly regional economic organizations, to facilitate the process of reconciliation between historically hostile nations.

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* P31.

<sup>89</sup> Johnson, Chalmers. "The Patterns of Japanese Relations with China, 1952-1982." *Pacific Affairs* 59, no. 3 (1986): 26. P21.

## 9.0 JAPANESE LEADERSHIP SINCE 2000

Since 2000, the Sino-Japanese relations hit the lowest point since 1989 during Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's five-year leadership. With political impasse between China and Japan, one can observe the impact of history in respective foreign policies. When Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda replaced former Prime Minister Abe in 2007, who resigned after a short term in office, Fukuda made a more reconciliatory gesture towards China. Contrary to Koizumi's approach, Fukuda advocated peaceful relations with China and its Asian neighbors and sought to repair the damaged bilateral relations through rebuilding trust and confidence.<sup>90</sup> In return, Chinese leaders responded positively to Fukuda's gesture by avoiding the history issue at official meeting, as maintaining a stable and harmonious relation is in the interests of both countries. Nevertheless, the issue of history remains unresolved, and the resignation of Fukuda in 2008 signaled the possible shift of direction in Japan's foreign policy towards China. The new leader, Taro Aso, who echoed many right-wing views by extolling Japan's occupation of Korea from 1910-45, faces the challenges of reconciling with suspicious neighbors like China and Korea with regard to Japan's war responsibility.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Jiang, "New Dynamics of Sino-Japanese Relations."

<sup>91</sup> "The Ghost of Wartimes Past."

The recent change in Japanese leadership from Fukuda to Aso has certain implications on bilateral relations. Before becoming a prime minister, Aso made several right-wing views regarding Japan's wartime past. For example, he applauded Japan's colonial occupation of Korea, and his hawkish comments drew considerable criticisms from South Korea. In addition, Aso's family derived fortune from the mining company that used Korean slave labor during World War II, and his family background may become a target of diplomatic skirmish if the problem related to history were to resurge in the future.<sup>92</sup> So far, Aso has been maintaining a low key stance towards China. With his immediate decision to dismiss General Toshio Tamogami after being informed of his controversial prize-winning essay, Aso seems to understand the importance of prioritizing stable, healthy Sino-Japanese relations over the nationalist discourse. Similarly, the Chinese government has toned down its criticisms towards Japan in order to control effervescent nationalism at home and to allow more space for bilateral economic and political cooperation especially during the period of global recession. Whether this recognition about the importance of maintaining peaceful relations proves long-term or not, the well-being of bilateral relations will depend on the political will of both governments as well as the grassroots efforts to promote open dialogues between Chinese and Japanese peoples.

In addition to the need for economic integration in Asia, the Sino-Japanese relations remain critical to ensuring regional stability and security. As China gradually transforms itself into a superpower and in pursuit of balancing one another, two countries face numerous problems in areas of politics, trade, and security. Among them, the issue of history, and n

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<sup>92</sup> "Grandfather's Footsteps ", *Economist* 388, no. 8604 (2008).

particular, Japan's war responsibility, shapes the complex bilateral relations. The examination of historical overview of the controversy, the ultranationalist movement, and implications of Japan's history problem reveals that the problem is multifaceted and no single solutions exist. Despite the complexity of the textbook controversy, it is in the interest of both governments to foster mutual understanding about the past in order to ensure regional stability and peace. Thus, instead of continuing a cycle of bashing and accusations, Chinese and Japanese governments need to undertake collective efforts to eliminate existing frictions.

## 10.0 CONCLUSION

The analysis of the textbook controversy reveals that history education plays a crucial role in shaping national identity: it aligns the past with an idealized view of nationhood. Because national identity is based on a particular historical narrative, alternate accounts of historical events are perceived as direct assaults on national identity.

While history textbooks serve to instill a value system among students, patriotic education can also foster a certain form of loyalty among future citizens so that the continuation of current institutions can be ensured. In exposing the highly politicized nature of history textbooks in Japan and China, the textbook controversy has provided an insightful lesson about bilateral relations. History continues to be exploited by various forces as an effective way of passing down the preferred system to next generations. This battle over history among various political forces demonstrates a tendency to politicize history as a means of legitimizing and reinforcing a particular kind of value system. The attempt to control the past is a defining feature of Sino-Japanese relations because each country's foreign and domestic policy reflects the official interpretation of history. With this analysis, we can understand the importance of reconciling the past between China and Japan by separating emotional aspects of history from bilateral dialogue. Consequently, leaders can strengthen bilateral relations by recognizing how

historical interpretations relate to national identity and engaging in dialogues to reach a consensus over disputed views of history, thereby reducing tensions and future diplomatic backlash.

The overview of history textbook controversy in Japan has exposed the profound impact of war memories in Sino-Japanese relations. Moreover, the diplomatic damage of textbook controversy can spread beyond China and Korea by circulating to other parts of Asia, leaving a permanent strain to regional cooperation. The widespread anti-Japanese manifestations in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan illustrated the profound impact of the textbook controversy. Moreover, the presence of ultranationalist movement in Japan and nationalist sentiment in China represent dangerous forces that could exacerbate the bilateral relations. Therefore, the unresolved controversy will continue to damage the bilateral relations as long as both governments remain committed to exploiting history as a means of political discourse to serve its interests. As the European postwar experience shows, both Chinese and Japanese governments have long-term interest to reconcile differences over historical narratives through increased bilateral cooperation such as joint textbook projects. With this objective in mind, the health of Sino-Japanese relations will contribute to the overall regional stability in Asia and encourage economic development and cultural exchange.

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