

American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR)

e-ISSN :2378-703X

Volume-08, Issue-01, pp-36-42

www.ajhssr.com

Research Paper

Open Access

Beyond the Memory of Patriotism: Seeking a Way to Reconcile Patriotism-Memory in Japanese History Textbook Disputes

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines the reconciliation of patriotism and war time memory in Japanese history text book disputes, challenging the perceived dichotomy between these concepts. It focuses on the ideological clash between Saburo Ienaga's advocacy for educational freedom and the nationalistic stance of the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (Tsukurukai). The author argues for a democratic and rationalized interpretation of patriotism that coexists with historical memory. The author outlines the importance of history textbooks in shaping national identity and memory, tracing Japan's post-WWII textbook approval system and debates on wartime history portrayal. Ienaga's lawsuit emphasized the necessity of education reflecting societal values and acknowledging national errors for true patriotism. Conversely, Tsukurukai advocated minimizing Japan's wartime atrocities, promoting "healthy nationalism." Despite their shared critique of postwar democracy, Ienaga and Tsukurukai diverge significantly in addressing Japan's dark past and defining patriotism. The author concludes that genuine patriotism involves openly admitting past mistakes and learning from history. This approach challenges Tsukurukai's tendency to overlook Japan's negative history, advocating for a balanced, truthful educational representation of the past, essential for a globally responsible and peaceful future.

Keywords—Patriotism, Historical memory, Japanese history textbooks, educational freedom, National identity

I. INTRODUCTION

"Respect tradition and culture, love our country and home where they have been fostered..." This is a statement added as one of the goals of education to the Fundamental Law of Education in Japan, which was reformed for the first time since its establishment in 1947 and implemented in December 2006 (MEXT 2006a) [1]. There's been heated debates over the addition of this statement widely in Japan, mainly concerning a possible link between the statement and enforced education of patriotism before and during World War II (WWII). Although this link was refuted in the Diet, there was also an emphasis to focus on the brighter side of Japanese history, such as Japanese old traditions and historical heroes, which needs to be taught to develop an understanding and "love" toward Japanese history (MEXT 2006b, pp.32-40) [2]. How to teach the dark side of the history, which has been repeatedly debated in "history textbook disputes" in postwar Japan, was not mentioned and it showed a clear picture of patriotism and memory of dark side of the history as contradictory elements. Is it really a dichotomy though? Is there no way that these two polarized ideas can constructively co-exist?

Previous scholarly work has extensively documented the post-WWII evolution of Japan's history textbook system, the societal impact of these texts, and the contentious debates surrounding their content. However, there remains a gap in understanding how patriotism and historical memory, often seen as diametrically opposed, can be reconciled in educational narratives. I will argue that antagonism between patriotism and the dark side of Japan's history, as typified by memories of wartime atrocities, derives from a widely accepted false dichotomy between them, and they can constructively co-exist if we recognize their interconnectedness and rationalize the idea of patriotism based on the ideal of democracy.

The purpose of this research paper is to explore this complex relationship within the framework of Japanese history textbook disputes. By examining the contrasting approaches of two influential movements—

Saburo Ienaga's fight for educational freedom and historical accuracy, and the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform's (*Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho o Tsukurukai*, hereafter "Tsukurukai") nationalistic stance—I aim to challenge the perceived dichotomy between patriotism and historical memory

The paper is structured as follows:

- 2.1 Background: This section delves into the evolution of Japan's history textbook system since WWII, highlighting the role these texts play in shaping national memory and identity.
 - 2.2 Saburo Ienaga and Tsukurukai: Here, I contrast the philosophies of Saburo Ienaga and Tsukurukai, representing divergent views on the role of patriotism in education and the portrayal of wartime history.
 - 2.3 Similarities and Differences: This part explores the differences in how Ienaga and Tsukurukai approach patriotism and the dark aspects of Japan's history, revealing the complexities in their ideological stances.
 - 2.4 The Path for Patriotism-Memory Reconciliation: This section proposes a democratic approach to patriotism that acknowledges and learns from historical atrocities, suggesting how these concepts can constructively coexist in educational narratives.
- 3 Conclusion: The concluding section reflects on the implications of this reconciled view of patriotism and historical memory for future educational policies and the development of a balanced national history narrative.

Through this exploration, I hope to contribute to the ongoing discourse on national identity, education, and memory, offering insights into how countries grappling with complex histories can educate future generations in a manner that is both patriotic and critically honest.

II. HISTORY TEXTBOOK DISPUTES

2.1 Background

History textbooks need special attention and considerations for two significant meanings: practical and symbolic. The practical meaning indicates their use as tools of school education and the potential impacts on the thought-formation of children. This is why textbooks have often been utilized by states for political purposes of ideological education such as the trend to teach a "national history" that has occurred worldwide since the nineteenth century (Mitani 2007,p.iv) [3]. The symbolic meaning of history textbooks, though, is related to a wider context of "history problem" regarding Japan's postwar responsibility, and interpreting textbooks as the reflection of national identity and memory in Japan (Takahashi 2007,p.58) [4]. In both of the meanings, history textbooks have significant influences domestically and internationally, and related disputes need to be carefully examined.

History textbook disputes have a long history in Japan. After the end of WWII, the Allied occupation forces attempted to democratize Japan's education by decentralizing the power from the government, but educational freedom soon ended and the current system of textbook approval was established in 1947. Since then, textbooks produced by private companies commissioning historians as authors, have gone through an official examination to be approved by the government (MOFA 2005) [5]. Against this policy, Saburo Ienaga, a Japanese historian and also a writer of Japanese history textbooks, sued the Japanese government claiming that the textbook approval system is censorship and is therefore illegal, and Japan's war guilt unlikely to be described in approved textbooks needed greater clarity in history textbooks. In the total 32 years of lawsuits from 1965 until 1997, Ienaga won many points on his claim but not on the actual issue of censorship, yet with his smaller victory the international textbook controversy erupted in 1982 – thereafter textbooks with more critical descriptions of controversial subjects such as the comfort women issue began to be published (Togo 2008,p.69) [6].

Responding to this trend, Tsukurukai, founded by nationalistic scholars in the mid-1990s, created history textbooks with minimum description of the dark side of modern Japanese history, causing huge domestic and international dispute over their approval by official examination in 2001 and 2005. In both instances the adoption of the textbook by schools was extremely low, but their new grassroots movement of what Eiji Oguma called "bottom-up nationalism" (Oguma 2007,p.21) [7] created new supporters for nationalistic ideas, particularly among young people, providing a big impact on the debate.

2.2 Saburo Ienaga and Tsukurukai

In the history of postwar history textbook dispute, movements by Saburo Ienaga and Tsukurukai had significant impacts on the interpretation of Japanese history in public discourse. Those movements consequently shifted the framework of dichotomy from the traditional right versus left, measured by one's attitude toward Marxist ideology, to that of supporters of national pride and apologizers for wartime atrocities (Mitani 2008,p.87:Togo 2008,p.70) [8] [6]. Here, I will examine the underlying ideas of Saburo Ienaga and Tsukurukai by analyzing their writings. Regarding Tsukurukai, because of the number and variety of the members, I will focus my analysis on "The History of a Nation" (Kokumin no Rekishi) written by Kanji Nishio, a scholar of German literature and the chairman of Tsukurukai at the time, and "the Morality of a Nation" (Kokumin no Dōtoku) by Susumu Nishibe, a critic and commissioner of Tsukurukai at the time, believing that the books share "thesame spirit with Tsukurukai for Japan's brighter future" as Nishio stated in his book (Nishio 1999,p.772) [9]. Both were edited by Tsukurukai and published prior to the release of their first history textbooks in 2001, "The New Textbook" (*AtarashiiKyōkasho*).

Ienaga, famous for his lawsuits against Japan's textbook examination system, saw as a core problem the continuity of state control in educational content and the limitation of individual human rights. For example, Ienaga articulated that the main objective of Japan's modern school system since its establishment in 1872 was education suitable for national policy, and the people's education was left under government control, which eventually served to take people from childhood and turn them into citizens who would loyally serve the emperor-system state and its policies, until post-WWII (Ienaga 1970,p.4) [10]. In postwar Japan, accompanied by intensification of the Cold War, Japan's conservative government welcomed its role as part of the anti-Communist camp, and democratization of education in the immediate postwar period was abandoned, resulting in a shift of education from democratic, pacifistic, and scientific hues to more nationalistic emphasis - the obligation to serve or rearm country amongst others (Ienaga 1970,p.6) [10]. Based on these ideas, he explained the reasoning behind the lawsuits as "to challenge directly the hard facts of continuing state control of education, which lasted so many years from the latter part of the nineteenth century, and of re-strengthening educational control amidst circumstances of world history intensified by the Cold War," and claimed the ultimate aim as "to return 'freedom of education' to the hands of people" (Ienaga 1970,p.7) [10]. Here, it is clear that he separated "state" with government system and people in the "society" as two different entities, and he blamed the state for violating freedom of education, which should belong to people's society, based on the idea of democracy present throughout the history of Japan's modern school education from the early 1870s.

In contrast, Tsukurukai adopted a more complex logic to explain their view of history. They criticized postwar education with focusing too much on the dark side of Japan's past as "masochistic", claiming that Japan needs to regain "healthy nationalism," which has been neglected in Japan under the Americanized postwar democracy (Nishio 1999:Nishibe 2000)[9] [11]. The main feature of their argument was emphasis on "nation," which was articulated by Nishibe as equaling *kuni* - "a country with its history and tradition" - and *kokumin* - "the people who readily accept that definition of nation" (Nishibe 1999,pp. 22-3) [12]. In addition, nation with a government system, namely state (*seifu*), was defined as "nation-state" (*kokka*), and Nishibe differentiated "statism" (*kokkashugi*) and "nationalism" (*kokuminshugi*), claiming that statism is "clearly a way that the invocation of state power by a centralized system becomes normal," and therefore can never be justified, but nationalism is a synonym for "a sense of public morality" and affirmed as "healthy nationalism," which contradicts with any antiforeign concept inherent in the word (Nishibe 2000,pp.58, 328, 449) [11]. Based on this logic, so-called "postwar democracy" (*sengominshushugi*) was criticized as merely a "people's politics" (*minshūseiji*), particularly regarding an imposed "Americanized constitution" which does not reflect the nation's morality (Nishibe 1999,pp.161-164) [12]. Thus, Tsukurukai's argument is characterized by the logic of "nation," which is differentiated from "state," and it criticized postwar Japan as not reflecting the nation's character in basic morality, therefore Japanese people in the "society" need to become "nation" and establish their truly democratic nation-state.

2.3 Similarity and Differences

Here I look at the similarities and differences of the different stances of Ienaga and Tsukurukai toward history and education. First, it is significant that they both separated "state" and "society," and articulated ideal roles of society in Japan based on their understandings of real democracy. Ienaga criticized the "state" as

working as a containment system of the freedom of education, and argued that "society" needs to be fully reflected in the state to be a real democratic country. Tsukurukai emphasized nation as a separated concept from "state" and claimed that "society" needs to establish nations' characters, which should be reflected to the state to realize a real democratic nation state (Nishibe 2000,p.456) [11]. They both criticized so-called postwar democracy as an insufficient model and aimed for what they believed to be a brighter future for Japan. However, because these similar ideas took different directions, they both came down on completely different theories, specifically regarding how to teach the dark side of Japanese history and what it means to be patriotic.

On the first point - how to teach the dark side of Japanese history - Ienaga and Tsukurukai have opposite stances. Based on his own experience as a history textbook writer, Ienaga criticized the state by claiming that "the government has sought to exclude as much as possible vivid depictions of the horror of war and Japan's responsibility for war and war crimes" (Ienaga 1993-1994,p.124) [13]. He believed regarding the role of textbooks on the Pacific War (1931-1945) that "the emphasis on militarism in the curriculum, combined with the media's glorification of war and the government's suppression of pacifist and liberal views, was a major factor in socializing the great majority of Japanese to support aggression enthusiastically" (Ienaga 1993-1994,p.117) [13]. Based on this understanding, his ideal history textbooks were based on scientific research and look "unflinchingly at both the bright and dark sides of a people's past, and of trying to help in the creation of future history," which were both neglected in the wartime education and difficult in postwar Japan under government control of education with textbook examination system (Ienaga1970,p.6-11) [13]. This is why his textbooks contained descriptions of the dark side of Japanese history in wartime including atrocities such as Nanjing, Massacre and the Unit 731, many of which had to be deleted or revised to be approved as textbooks. He then consequently sued the government over freedom of education.

Tsukurukai's textbook, however, minimized the description of the dark side of Japanese history for numerous reasons. First, they utilized the concept of justice and morality to understand war atrocities and the education. For example, Nishio argued that bringing "justice" and "injustice" to war "contradicts with natural law" and concluded that "it is healthier to minimize those concepts" by understanding war more as a power game (Nishio1999,p.613) [9]. Regarding education, Nishibe claimed that "Teaching children to be ashamed of the 'history of the nation' through textbooks is extremely immoral. To be proud of being a nation, children need to feel both greatness and sorrow of ancestors' works even from the kinds of incidents that we cannot help but evaluate as failures in the history (looking back now)" (Nishibe 2000,p.138) [11]. These theories of power game and national pride then led them to justify Japan's war atrocities. For example, Nishio claimed regarding Colonization of Korea in 1910 that "it was natural and a part of inevitable involvement in the power game as an obligation in the global dynamics at that time. Therefore, Japanese people shouldn't think that they did wrong things. We didn't do anything wrong" (Nishio 1999,p.720) [9]. He also quoted Natsuhiko Yamamoto's "Textbooks are to hide wrongness of one's own country" as "words of wisdom," adding Japan should learn from the US and England how to justify past wrong doings (Nishio 1999,p.727) [9] Thus, we can understand the reasoning behind Tsukurukai's textbooks to minimize Japan's dark side of history as needing to be justified and described as positively as possible to protect morality and national pride.

For the question regarding what it means to be patriotic, Ienaga and Tsukurukai again have different views. Ienaga understood patriotism as including the nation's attitude to admit its own mistakes openly. In an examination as the plaintiff during his second lawsuit, Ienaga emphasized the importance of recognizing mistakes to not repeat them in the future. He claimed to understand the statement, "develop awareness of being as Japanese and foster the fruitful love toward the people," in a certain way and pointed out the lack of resolution of social contradictions and improvement of the status of people were blind spots of prewar education, and especially re-examining Japan's own mistakes was what it lacked the most. He quoted Masahisa Uemura to express that recognizing one's own country's sins, remembering the responsibility, and re-examining the outrage against humanity is what patriotism should be, and being stubborn and idolized towards the history is "patriotism to the point of decaying conscience" (Ienaga 1972 pp.128-131) [14]. This attitude to differentiate his understanding of patriotism is also shown in his description of "emotional patriotism" or "jingoism" in indicating the prewar and postwar unscientific patriotism often emphasized by the state (Ienaga 1993-1994,pp.116,124; Ienaga 1970,p.6) [13] [10].

Tsukurukai, however, explained patriotism as a natural consequence of healthy nationalism. Nishibe articulated that patriotism is "common sense and sense of good in a healthy nation's spirit" and further states if

this "common sense" and "sense of good" are in within people then it's something national, which coupled with hope leads to patriotism (Nishibe 2000,p.158) [11]. He also criticized that only 15% of Japanese young people answered affirmatively on whether they would fight for the nation, even though generally more than 80% of young people in each country in the world answered affirmatively, and preached that "to love nation and to fight for nation is ' calm' effusion of morality". Here, he explained that morality can be divided into two separate kinds, "a sense of public morality" (*kōtoku*) and "a sense of private morality" (*shitoku*), and dying for the nation-state, namely nation as a collective form, belongs to "a sense of public morality," which has been neglected under postwar pacifism but needs to be more respected (Nishibe 2000,p.142-159) [11]. Thus, patriotism for Tsukurukai is a natural feeling that occurs from a sense of public morality, and it needs to be respected and developed among people to be a nation and establish their nation-state.

2.4 The Path for Patriotism-Memory Reconciliation

As seen above, Ienaga and Tsukurukai's different theories regarding war atrocities and patriotism were based on their different ideas, producing textbooks with different focuses. If we base our understanding of textbook disputes on the widely recognized view as "conflict between opposing sets of deeply held ideological beliefs - whether, for instance, the teaching of history should concentrate on the miseries of the nation's past or on its glories, whether it should emphasize the doings of the rulers or of the ruled, whether it should inculcate the values of patriotism and dedication to national progress or of resistance to authority and the establishment of individual rights" (Dore 1970-1971,p.550) [15], this further show the chasm between Ienaga and Tsukurukai. However, Ienaga's argument about patriotism and war atrocities suggests he understood the need to reflect on war atrocities for real patriotism based on the recognition of mistakes and to not to repeat them in the future. Arguments by Tsukurukai, though, claimed those two are never reconcilable factors, and the focus of education needs to be more on patriotism and healthy nationalism. Therefore, one possible conclusion is that whether patriotism and memory of war atrocities are really a dichotomy or not depends on how it will be interpreted by people.

However, it cannot be ignored that Tsukurukai's argument contains total dismissal of the dark side of Japan's history. As Manabu Sato claimed, Tsukurukai's idea of so-called "healthy nationalism" indicates denial of history itself in a double meaning: elimination of the memory of the dead in war atrocities, and elimination of the "nation's" abstract history through individual histories (Sato 1998,pp.307-308) [16]. Moreover, their notion of nation as a separated concept from "state" and the claim that "society" needs to establish nations' character, which should be reflected in the state for establishment of a real democratic nation state, indicates a further danger. If a nation's character is not to reflect memory and history of war atrocities and not to learn from past mistakes, then nation-state can become blind to any possible failure or mistakes in the future again after a tragic war experience under the name of "true democracy." That danger has already surfaced in the Tsukurukai history textbook as Kenichi Matsumoto pointed out that "the textbook is written in the context of Japan's nationalism. However, it is not written anywhere that where the Japan's nationalism once made mistakes." (Matsumoto 2007,p.204-205) [17]. Tsukurukai's patriotism as "a natural consequence of healthy nationalism" based on the attitude to eliminate the history itself, therefore, tells us it is inappropriate to be included in history education and also shows us an indivisibility between patriotism and memory of the dark side of Japan's history.

Then, how can they constructively co-exist? Iktaro Shimizu analyzed around the year 1950 that patriotism in Japan since Meiji era had never been rationalized by democracy, therefore had never been modernized, and it had once been driven to be inhumane form under the emperor-centered state system (Shimizu 1992, pp.80-90) [18]. With this analysis, I believe the answer for the question was already provided by Saburo Ienaga. Ienaga's understanding of patriotism included the nation's attitude to admit its own mistakes openly, and he emphasized the importance to learn from the past in order to not repeat them in the future. Here, we can see Ienaga, as a part of society against the state, attempted to rationalize patriotism based on the ideal of democracy. Following his example, it will be essential to foster a kind of patriotism, which takes re-examination of the dark side of Japan's history to learn lessons from them as a common practice, within the society, particularly to live in the globalized modern world.

III. CONCLUSION

Patriotism and memory of the dark side of the history often has been separated as two contradictory factors in the discourse of Japanese history. Examination of Saburo Ienaga and Tsukurukai and the underlying ideas of their activities showed us some similarities and big differences in their theories for memory of war atrocities and patriotism. For Ienaga, patriotism includes the attitude to reflect on the memory of the dark sides of history and learn from them for the future, making the two concepts indivisible. Tukurukai's understanding of patriotism and wartime memory, though, claims they are divisible, putting it in contrast to Ienaga. However, we see that the interconnectedness of patriotism and memory, which shows the flaw in Tsukurukai's theory for history education and the wisdom of Ienaga's theory. Ienaga's democratic approach to rationalize patriotism is necessary to bring wartime memory together for a brighter future. Restated, the polarization of patriotism and memories of wartime atrocities is a false dichotomy, and they can constructively co-exist if we recognize their interconnectedness and face the memories of wartime atrocities as a part of "national" history. The Fundamental Law of Education introduced at the beginning of this essay continues on: "...respect other countries, and raise attitude to contribute to peace and development of international society" (MEXT 2006a) [1]. A redefined view of patriotism, one that is democratic and rational, aligning with an honest engagement with history, fosters a form of national pride that is informed, critical, and responsible, and develops a kind of attitude to contribute to peace and development of international society.

In this research paper, I attempted to underscore the importance of critically examining how history is taught, highlighting the potential of education to shape national identity and collective memory. Further, I demonstrated that patriotism and a truthful engagement with historical memory need not be mutually exclusive but can coexist in a manner that enriches a nation's understanding of its past. The focus of this research paper was primarily on two major movements, and it opens avenues for further research into other influential voices or perspectives within the Japanese historical discourse. In addition, looking ahead, extending this analysis to other national contexts and incorporating a broader range of perspectives could further enhance our understanding of how best to educate future generations in Japan about their history, fostering a global community in Japan that is both proud of its heritage and committed to learning from its past.

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