

## Effects of the United States Reconstruction on Nationalism in the Japanese Education System

Connell Murphy

In 2015, fifty Japanese scholars criticized McGraw Hill's depiction of the Japanese military's treatment of comfort women during World War II. "Comfort Women", as the deniers call them, were women the Japanese had kidnapped and forced into prostitution for the Japanese Army. The scholars argued that, despite evidence against their claims, McGraw Hill depicted comfort women as sex slaves who were forced to go along with the Japanese Army. Japanese scholars refuted this and responded that the events were fictional, exaggerated, and inaccurate, even though there are testimonies and historical records from comfort women and soldiers alike.<sup>1</sup>

All of this leads to a simple question: how did these Japanese scholars and government officials gain such a warped view of the events of World War II? The Japanese's treatment of their own recent history is directly related to the American reconstruction of the Japanese education system after World War II, and their failure to purge nationalistic teachings from Japan's curriculum. This paper will argue that the United States used the Japanese reconstruction efforts to further their own interests, rather than to liberalize Japan and move it away from dangerous nationalistic ideologies. This failure can most clearly be seen in the education system, and allowed right-wing politicians in Japan to continue framing past events to support a nationalist narrative, rather than an accurate historical depiction.

First, it is necessary to define what nationalism entails. Nationalism is the concept of putting one's country before everything else. In a nationalistic view, the best course of action is the one that benefits the state the most, rather than in a more globalistic view in which nations make sacrifices to improve the world as a whole. While Patriotism and nationalism are similar ideologies, patriots take pride in their own nation while respecting others'. Nationalists, on the other hand, glorify their own nation to the detriment of others. Despite this difference, rhetoric between the two is commonly shared. Due to nationalism's focus on the glory of the nation, elements such as xenophobia, the practice of discrimination against people who are not from the same ethnic background as the majority of the nation, are usually incorporated. The most common example of a nationalistic state was Nazi Germany, where the 'Aryan race' was viewed as the pinnacle of human evolution, while 'undesirables', who did not align with the German identity, were often persecuted and forced into concentration camps.<sup>2</sup>

Japan's nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s was primarily a result of the country's isolationist and religious rhetoric. From 1641 to 1853, Japan closed its borders to almost all outside nations, allowing foreign trade only in one or two towns. This period of isolation cut

---

<sup>1</sup> Johnson, Jesse, Osumi, Magdalena. "Fifty Japanese scholars attack McGraw-Hill, U.S. academics on 'comfort women' issue". Japan Times. <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/12/11/national/history/fifty-japanese-scholars-attack-mcgraw-hill-u-s-academics-on-comfort-women-issue/>.

<sup>2</sup> Hans, Kohn. "Nationalism". Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/nationalism>.  
Soucy, Robert. "Fascism: Extreme Nationalism". Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/fascism/Extreme-nationalism>.

Japan off from developments in the outside world. After this isolationist era, nations in Europe and the United States were undergoing industrialization, while Japan was just exiting out of a secluded feudal period. Although some new inventions, such as guns, had made their way into the country through the trade cities, most had not, leaving Japan centuries behind other nations technologically. Japan's isolationist period ended with a visit from United States Commodore Matthew Perry, who brought four steam-powered warships and demanded that if Japan did not reopen for trade, he would burn down Tokyo Harbor. With this threat, the United States had forced Japan's hand and coerced them into re-opening the country's borders. Japan had been forced out of its isolation by the West at cannon-point, revealing to the world its ethnic and demographic uniformity. After over 200 years of isolation from the rest of the world, groups outside of their ethnic background had forced the Japanese into a world they had shown no real desire to interact with. Due to its self-induced isolation, Japan had developed a xenophobic worldview in which the Japanese ethnicity and culture were viewed as more valuable than other ethnicities and cultures.<sup>3</sup>

On top of ethnic differences between Japan and other nations, the country's religious views strengthened their idea of a Japan-centric world. Most Japanese follow Shintoism and Buddhism, both of which had been brought over from the Asian mainland before Japan's isolation. Each of Japan's emperors were said to have been divinely appointed by Amaterasu, the sun goddess, to rule Japan. This was not an absurd claim for a leader to make; for example, in Middle Ages Europe, kings were believed to be chosen by God, and only He had the power to depose a king. However, the Japanese emperor was not merely appointed by Amaterasu, but descended from her. After death, each emperor would become an immortal God. This gave the emperor divine authority to dictate everything while keeping the support of the people. To go against the emperor's command was the equivalent to rejecting a God's command.<sup>4</sup>

Most importantly, it gave the Japanese reason to believe they were superior to other ethnic and religious groups and that all should belong to the emperor's nation. This was a major factor in Japanese nationalism, which gave them reason to believe their military was divinely favored and therefore deserved to control the greater Eastern Asia region. Before their attack on Pearl Harbor, Japan had been conquering much of East Asia, beginning with Manchuria and progressing into both China and Korea. Events such as the Rape of Nanking, where Chinese citizens were raped and murdered and Japanese soldiers razed the city to the ground, showed just how little their military thought of non-Japanese people, and emphasized their belief in divine right to rule over these people.

This brutal nationalistic pride continued into World War II, when the Americans fought the Japanese for every inch of territory. Japanese soldiers would rarely surrender to American troops because it was seen as dishonorable for soldiers. An infamous example of Japanese tactics based around the faith in their nation and their emperor was use of *kamikaze*, Japanese for "Divine Wind", where they would commit suicide by flying their plane into whatever enemy planes or boats they could reach. To them, being taken prisoner was a worse fate than crashing into the enemy and dying for their nation. This militaristic fervor was expected from citizens as

---

<sup>3</sup> "Commodore Perry and Japan (1853-1854)". Asia For Educators. Columbia University. [http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan\\_1750\\_perry.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1750_perry.htm).

<sup>4</sup> "Divinity of the Emperor". BBC. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/history/emperor\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/history/emperor_1.shtml).

well, and a major element in the United States' invasion of Japan. With every citizen considered a possible combatant, the United States predicted a catastrophic loss of life for both sides.

Following the end of the war, America began its reconstruction efforts in Japan. The United States had just used atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and had firebombed Tokyo months before, causing the Japanese to surrender unconditionally. These attacks had left most cities without food and the vast majority of the nation was still starving. Japan as a whole had just been devastated by the United States, and now the United States was to be the primary country to assist in the reconstruction of Japan. Having created two reconstruction plans in both Asia and Europe, the United States hoped to gain new anti-communist allies to help them combat the Soviet Union. America's primary advantage in this situation was, grimly, Japan's unconditional surrender. The use of the atomic bomb had been accompanied by a demand of complete, non-negotiable surrender by the Japanese, allowing the United States to do with the nation as it pleased.<sup>5</sup>

The United States saw Japan's reconstruction an opportunity to create a new East Asian ally in close proximity to the Soviet Union. The United States hoped to rebuild Japan as a democratic, capitalist country. With Japan as an ally, America would gain the benefits of an industrialized country with which they could trade with freely. In addition, Japan would support most of the United States' international policy due to their involvement in rebuilding the nation. These goals were the motivations behind the United States' desire to remain in and rebuild Japan, rather than any reason related to purging nationalism from the country. Nationalism was simply one of the many pretenses given by the United States for their continued occupation.

The first step to rebuilding Japan was the creation of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, or SCAP, also known as General Headquarters, or GHQ in Japan. American General Douglas MacArthur was appointed as head of SCAP on August 14th, 1945, known better as V-J Day. MacArthur had joined the United States Army and enrolled at West Point in 1899, and would go on to serve in the Rainbow Division during World War I. In World War II, MacArthur received a Medal of Honor for his actions in the Philippines during the initial Japanese invasion of the territory, and he later helped in the campaigns to take New Guinea and the Philippines.

While the initial plan was for multiple countries to occupy Japan in a model similar to Germany after World War II, the United States soon became the primary occupying force in Japan. Russia, China, and other allied countries were given territories in East Asia, but Japan remained under the SCAP's jurisdiction. MacArthur's first attempt to hinder Japan's militaristic ideologies was to completely abolish their military, going so far as to have it be an article in their new democratic constitution. With no army, any ambition of conquest was certainly impossible for the Japanese government to realize. Due to this pacifistic shift, converting Japan's war-driven economy into a more consumer and trade-focused economy became a major issue. In addition, the Japanese economy had been brought to a standstill by the United States' bombings on the country. Factories and workplaces throughout the country had been burned, destroyed, or disintegrated, leaving many without a place to work or live. In order to combat this, MacArthur

---

<sup>5</sup> Ham, Paul. Hiroshima Nagasaki: The Real Story of the Atomic Bombings and Their Aftermath. 79. <https://books.google.com/books?id=5FZGAAQBAJ&pg=PA79#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

attempted to incorporate an economic plan based on the New Deal used in the United States under Franklin D. Roosevelt in order to help shift Japan towards a stable capitalistic system.<sup>6</sup>

While MacArthur may have given the orders to revamp Japan's economy, in actuality, he had little choice in the matter. Planners of the reconstruction in Washington had ordered MacArthur to enact strict regulations on "heavy industry", and told MacArthur that he was to encourage the Japanese to adopt a "free labor movement and 'wide distribution of income and of ownership of the means of production'". The SCAP was also ordered to combat the *zaibatsu*, or monopolies, within the country by removing business leaders and creating a "program for the dissolution of large industrial and banking combinations", which had been controlling "a great part of Japan's trade and industry". These orders were given even as tensions between the United States and the USSR increased, whilst communist and socialist ideologies were being discouraged within the United States. Rather than focus heavily on a free market to encourage capitalism over communism, the SCAP was told to heavily regulate the market and give more to those in the lower class. These changes created a vision of a sweeping overhaul of the Japanese economic system, one which was far to the left of its starting position, and, with continued Socialist Party support, could be shifted even further left. This philosophy for Japanese policy appeared heavily at odds with American policy at the time, which was strongly anti-communist and anti-socialist.<sup>7</sup>

The other major economic challenge Japan faced was repairing the catastrophic damage the country suffered during World War II. Occupational forces, writing on their arrival in Japan, said that major cities fell "completely flat with destruction" from the American bombings. Within Tokyo, "there was practically nothing left; the rubble did not even look like much", and the results of the firebombing had "destroyed everything but the obvious military targets". Historian Michael Schaller estimated the total destruction to be "nearly 40 percent of Japanese cities", crippling both Japanese industry and skilled job markets. To make matters worse, the Japanese government, along with wealthy business people, raided commodity stockpiles that had been created in 1941 by the government.<sup>8</sup>

With the current stratified economic system in place, the motivations behind the United States' proposal became clear. United States officials, though heavily supportive of capitalism, knew a truly free market would be a disaster, especially for a nation just beginning to rebuild after total devastation. To have a healthy economy, consumers need money to spend. Focusing on capitalistic measures would simply widen the divide between the wealthy and poor.

However, while these changes would help move Japanese corporations and the government away from militarism and assist those who had lost everything in the war, the overall views of the people within the nation remained an issue. If Japan was to become a new democratic state, the fundamental causes of these nationalistic and militaristic ideologies would

---

<sup>6</sup> Eiji Takemae, Robert Ricketts, Sebastian Swann, *The Allied Occupation of Japan and Its Legacy*. 241. [https://books.google.com/books?id=Ba5hXsfeyhMC&pg=PA67&dq=Kanagawa+prefecture+rape&sig=ACfU3U3\\_7MFOnBKgutBavggHUGIPQw9Vrg](https://books.google.com/books?id=Ba5hXsfeyhMC&pg=PA67&dq=Kanagawa+prefecture+rape&sig=ACfU3U3_7MFOnBKgutBavggHUGIPQw9Vrg)

<sup>7</sup> Schaller, Michael. *The American Occupation of Japan: the Origins of the Cold War in Asia*. 25. [https://books.google.com/books?id=uK7nCwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=uK7nCwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)

<sup>8</sup> Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, 27.

have to be curbed first. The source of these issues was identified to be in the classroom, specifically one form of class. *Shushin*, or morality classes, had been used to influence students, impressing nationalistic ideals on them from a young age. In order to stop this rhetoric from returning after the United States occupation, the SCAP would have to alter the basics of the education system to encourage patriotic pride rather than nationalistic fanaticism.

Before explaining SCAP's changes to the education system, some background on the education system before the reconstruction must be given. The Japanese education system had been previously reformed during the Meiji Restoration, an event in which Emperor Meiji restored power to the emperor from the Shogun, the military leader of Japan. Japan's isolationist period had ended 15 years before the Meiji Restoration began, resulting in an influx of new ideas travelling from Europe to Japan. After seeing European education systems compared to the outdated Japanese model, the Japanese government under Meiji initiated reformations of Japan's education system. In 1903, scandals involving publishers and textbook authors receiving bribes broke out, causing the Textbook Bureau of the Ministry of Education to produce all textbooks used in schools until 1945. The Japanese education system before World War II was created with the goal of moving power from the various prefectures to a consolidated government branch. This consolidation of power was an incredibly successful measure, and by 1906, Japan had a 95% school attendance rate and one of the highest literacy rates in the world. Statistically, there was nothing wrong with the Japanese education system before the war. However, with the Ministry of Education being the sole author of textbooks, the ministry's role would shift from oversight to controlling the education system.<sup>9</sup>

Although the Ministry of Education's centralization of power was very beneficial for the government, it created significant problems for the individuals within the education system. Any ideologies the Japanese government wanted to encourage in students was capable of being printed in textbooks and sent into classrooms for students to learn from. Classes educating students on morality were implemented from a young age and the primary outlet for these teachings, which formed an implicit connection in students between Japanese morality and Japanese nationalistic pride. From a young age, Japanese students were taught to view Japan as inherently superior to other nations, and that through the Emperor's divinity, they had heavenly support for their actions. In her paper "A Historical and Social Note on Moral Education in Japan", Michiya Shimbori explains how much reverence was given to *shushin* classes, calling it a "religion, in the Durkheim sense of concern for the sacred". Though the country followed Shinto and Buddhist teachings as well, *shushin* classes, with its tales of heroic Japanese figures from ages past, inspired and created a feeling that "something greater and of more worth than the individual exists and should exist", and created an innate connection between the individual and the state.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>Thakur, Yoko H. "History Textbook Reform in Allied Occupied Japan, 1945-52." 262-263. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/369749>.

Naoko Saito, and Yasuo Imai. "In Search of the Public and the Private: Philosophy of Education in Post-War Japan." 584. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134629>.  
<http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/edu/ViewLoitLo.do?method=preview&lang=EN&id=12991>

<sup>10</sup>Shimbori, Michiya. "A Historical and Social Note on Moral Education in Japan." *Comparative Education Review* 4, no. 2 (1960): 97-101. <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.chapman.edu/stable/3441604>.

The effects these teachings had on the Japanese citizenship was supplemented by Japan's usage of the Bushido Code. The Bushido Code was a system of values and morales rooted in Confucianism and used by samurai, originating sometime in the 16th century. As Japanese society advanced, the Bushido Code was implemented in other parts of society, eventually becoming the foundation for Japanese values and beliefs and heavily integrated into the education system. Samurai specifically were to be symbols of virtue and to strive for Confucius' idea of the "perfect gentleman" through Bushido. Teachings encouraged a life of honor, honesty, kindness, frugality, and a willingness to lay down one's life for his lord or family. These teachings can be seen through Japanese soldiers and their actions in World War II, where surrender was considered dishonorable and death was seen as preferable to such a cowardly act. Generations in Japan had been taught from an early age that the Emperor's will was divine and that this blessing of divinity came from Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess herself. With such a person leading the Japanese soldiers, dogmatic teachings would make them view their nation as unstoppable and the only nation worthy to rule. It also gave all the more reason for citizens to lay down their lives for the emperor, whether that be from conventional combat, or suicide with the intention of killing as many enemies as they could, seen in actions such as *kamikaze*.<sup>11</sup>

With their victory over Japan in 1945, the United States faced the challenge of dealing with a nation deeply entrenched in nationalism. Any system the United States would create would be forced to evade these nationalistic tendencies, or they would run the risk of Japan returning to their toxic nationalism from the 1930s. On the other hand, the fact that classes were taught such as *Shushin*, or "moral education" classes, increased the difficulty of this task. Parents who had been raised with a morals class were convinced that the United States was attempting to remove a cornerstone of Japanese education and harm Japanese culture. They had been raised to value traditional Japanese ideals that had been followed for centuries, and the United States could be seen as taking away centuries of old teachings, rather than attempting to remove a nationalistic tumor from the Japanese education system and begin a move away from the nation's militaristic past.

Shimbori's previous comments on the reverence given to *shushin* classes are exactly why the United States faced such a challenge with removing a single education course. The seemingly-innocuous memorization drilled these nationalistic morals into students from a young age, creating citizens willing to lay their lives down to defend Japan and their own honor. Even if it was primarily dry or unmemorable readings, the class instilled pride in Japan's history through the stories it told, and gave universal role models for students. Lastly, *shushin* classes over time also gave the natural-born Japanese population a common background. Those who grew up learning these stories and ideals were almost always born and raised in Japan, creating a divide between natural-born Japanese citizens and those who immigrated to the country. *Shushin* classes encouraged nationalist thought in students, while also creating a barrier between those who grew up learning and reading these, and those who had come to the country later in their life.

On December 31st, 1945 with these issues in mind, shortly after the conclusion of the war, SCAP sent a directive to the Japanese government asking for the suspension of *Shushin*, Japanese History, and Geography classes until suitable textbooks were created without

---

<sup>11</sup> "Bushido". Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Bushido>

nationalistic intentions. The Japanese History and Geography courses were suspended for the same purpose as *shushin* classes, primarily because the classes created a Japan-centric worldview that could encourage nationalistic tendencies. Shushin classes, however, were never ordered to be reopened by SCAP, and remained suspended indefinitely during the occupation. SCAP intended to integrate the positive morals and ethics throughout all of Japanese students' classes, rather than one class specifically for morals. In addition, with the ability for teachers to create their own curriculum, the teacher's beliefs and moral views could be taught much more naturally, making the need for a dedicated class on morality less necessary. This would result in less exposure to material intended entirely for nationalistic reasons, and give teachers a way of integrating the positive ideas in a more natural manner. This drew a heavy amount of opposition from parents, who believed that their students were being raised without a proper moral education, even if that moral education had been fueling an incredibly nationalistic populace.<sup>12</sup>

SCAP was responsible for overseeing all facets of the United States reconstruction of Japan, from ensuring that they transitioned peacefully to a democratic government, to reforming the education system. One of MacArthur's first actions in SCAP was to assist in the creation of the new Japanese constitution. The Japanese government's original draft was rejected by MacArthur and other officers, prompting members of SCAP to essentially write the new Japanese constitution for them. The revised constitution dismantled the Japanese military, relegated the Emperor to a figurehead role and established a new parliamentary system of governing. While the constitution did require the Japanese government to offer free compulsory education, their previous education system had already enacted compulsory education for primary school in 1900, resulting in little change for most youth.<sup>13</sup>

SCAP's overall objectives for the education mission were outlined in a 1946 report sent to General MacArthur by American educators stationed in Japan. In the report, the educators argue that the centralized Japanese system had stifled potential creativity and "failed to prepare its pupils for a world of reality". They also argued that the Ministry of Education had "through its apparent lack of confidence in the intelligence of teachers at all levels" had created "a lack of confidence on the part of the teachers in its power for leadership," in essence harming both teachers and students in an attempt for one-size-fits-all education. The educators' solution to these issues was a "complete elimination of militaristic, ultra-nationalistic, and other objectionable features of instruction", while simultaneously carefully observing which elements of national pride would be permissible to allow in other subjects. For moral education, the educators argued that nationalistic morals could be replaced by teaching about virtuous civil servants, so that "the virtues of peace may become as personalized as the vices of war" for students under the new system.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> K. Adachi. "Recent Developments in Japanese Education." *International Review of Education / Internationale Zeitschrift Für Erziehungswissenschaft / Revue Internationale De L'Education* 6, no. 3 (1960): 370-74.

<sup>13</sup> <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/japan-reconstruction>  
[http://ndl.go.jp/modern/e/img\\_t/105/105-001tx.html](http://ndl.go.jp/modern/e/img_t/105/105-001tx.html)  
<http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/edu/ViewLoitLo.do?method=preview&lang=EN&id=12991>  
<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.chapman.edu/stable/1186929>

<sup>14</sup> *Report of the United States Education Mission to Japan*. Tokyo, Japan. March 30, 1946. 8-10.

SCAP were also responsible for setting up the Tokyo Tribunal, a trial of upper-level Japanese officials to determine punishment for their actions during the war. While these trials did not have immediate relevance to the educational reforms, they provided examples of what SCAP valued during the occupation. The goals of the Tokyo Tribunal were mirrored by the Nuremberg Trials in Germany. In Nuremberg, high-ranking German officials were publically tried for their crimes during the war, primarily to show the German population that these ideologies or viewpoints were not to be encouraged.

The major difference between Nuremberg and the Tokyo Tribunal was that by the time court trials began in Nuremberg, Hitler had been dead for months; SCAP, on the other hand, had a live emperor who oversaw much of what Japan had done during the war. During the Tokyo Tribunals, SCAP did not try Emperor Hirohito, the emperor of Japan during and after World War II, or any of his family members. Among his relatives was Prince Yasuhiko Asaka, Hirohito's uncle and a career military officer whose orders began the Rape of Nanking. It is possible that the Japanese people simply would not believe that the Emperor or his son would commit such atrocities. Totsuka Hidejia, a Japanese civilian, said that any attempt to remove the emperor from power could only be done "after the complete annihilation of the eighty million Yamato people". Due to these fears, American officials had concluded that deposing the emperor would have been one step too far for the American occupational force, and instead attempted to distance him from Japan's acts in World War II. High-ranking officials were ordered to lie about Hirohito's connection, making any attempt to try him fairly almost impossible.<sup>15</sup>

Another reason for MacArthur's strong protection of the Emperor could have been due to the leverage it gave him during negotiations. While the emperor was revered by the Japanese population, he was very rarely seen by them. Hirohito was often photographed at angles that made him appear overbearing and powerful, tying in to the universal reverence the Emperor commanded. This changed in September 1945, when MacArthur met with Emperor Hirohito for the first time. At the end of the meeting, Hirohito and MacArthur took a picture together, which was then released overseas in newspapers. Shocking Japanese officials, MacArthur dwarfed Hirohito in the picture, shattering the idea of a perfect, godlike emperor held by his believers. The government quickly announced a ban of the picture in an attempt to stop citizens from viewing it. This action was met by MacArthur ordering not only the picture to be released, but also to print it in every Japanese newspaper. With this action, MacArthur made it clear that he, not Hirohito, would be dictating terms in most cases. In addition, it gave MacArthur a distinct advantage in dealing with one of the most powerful men in Japan, an advantage which would be squandered if the emperor was connected to any of the actions committed by the military officers on trial.<sup>16</sup>

Even if MacArthur's actions had harmed the facade of the Emperor, keeping Hirohito in power was seen as necessary to maintain stability in the nation. Japan was undergoing a fundamental shift in almost every facet of their society. The Yamato Dynasty, of which Hirohito was a part, had spanned the entire history of Japan, beginning sometime during the 7th century BCE. To have Hirohito, who had been regarded as a God, convicted of war crimes would be an

<sup>15</sup> Buono, Stephen. "Commission and Omission of History in Occupied Japan (1945-1949)". Binghamton University. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160130041757/https://www.binghamton.edu/history/resources/journal-of-history/stephen-buono.html> Accessed 5 May 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Bix, Hebert P. *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*. New York: Perennial, 2001. p. 550-551



impossible reconciliation for many citizens to make, and would threaten the United States continued relationship with Japan. In 1946, MacArthur affirmed this risk, saying that the emperor was “a symbol that unites all Japanese”, and that the effects of such an action “cannot be overestimated.” He even goes so far as to say that if the United States tried the Emperor, the United States may need over a million troops to be stationed in Japan for “an indefinite number of years” to deal with the aftermath. MacArthur saw the need, whether it be for political leverage or avoiding too much change, to protect the Emperor and his family and ensure they were not connected to the atrocities committed under him.<sup>17</sup>

One other group of individuals were given protection from the Tokyo Tribunal. Headed by Shirō Ishii, Unit 731 was the Japanese biological weapons unit during World War II. Under Ishii’s leadership, Unit 731 performed some of the most heinous experiments during the war. For example, they injected test subjects with bubonic plague, or forced women to become pregnant to observe the disease’s effects on the woman and the fetus. The unit’s existence was to be kept secret for almost anyone in Japan, and members were ordered to never speak of what they did. Had the researchers followed their orders, the American government should never have heard of them. However, after information was relayed to General MacArthur about the unit’s existence, he contacted Ishii, offering Unit 731 complete immunity from trial in exchange for their research results from their experimentation. The research that Unit 731 performed would enable the United States to be significantly ahead of the Soviet Union in any biological field, strengthening their position in the Cold War. Research had been performed primarily in China at laboratories long since destroyed. Because of the secretive nature of the experiments, there was little evidence that the Unit existed at all, unlike the atrocities performed by Nazi Germany during the Holocaust. The few who would be able to question the United States could then easily be dismissed as communist conspirators or a similar anti-American tag.<sup>18</sup>

Although the Tokyo Tribunals as a whole had little direct impact on the Japanese education system or the reformations proposed by the SCAP, the resulting message it sends about SCAP’s role in the reconstruction is clear. While the SCAP was an important instrument in the reconstruction of Japan, they were a component driven by American goals. The reconstruction would allow the United States to have a pivotal role in the founding of the new Japanese state, giving them another capitalist ally in east Asia. The Tokyo Tribunal demonstrated the SCAP’s recurring problem of compromising what would be best for the progression of a new democracy at the risk of political instability in exchange for allies in the war against communism.

SCAP’s requirement to protect American interests was observed outside of the courtroom as well. While the United States had removed all restrictions on the press when the occupation began, they quickly initiated their own policy of censorship. In September 1945, SCAP issued “codes outlawing the publication of all reports and statistics 'inimical to the objectives of the Occupation’”, after reports of rape by American soldiers began to circulate. This meant anything that the SCAP deemed as detrimental to the goals of the occupation could be blocked from being

---

<sup>17</sup> Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, 568.

<sup>18</sup> Kristof, Nicholas D. “Unmasking Horror -- A special report.; Japan Confronting Gruesome War Atrocity”. The New York Times.

<http://www.nytimes.com/1995/03/17/world/unmasking-horror-a-special-report-japan-confronting-gruesome-war-atrocity.html?pagewanted=all> Accessed 25th April 2018.

published. SCAP's censorship would expand to most news events that painted the United States in a negative light, and censored all discussion of the censorship codes, keeping it out of the public eye almost entirely. SCAP's censorship was the antithesis of the free speech they claimed to support; depriving Japanese citizens of the truth and stifling any discussion that could be seen as anti-American or pro-communist.<sup>19</sup>

These methods demonstrated that SCAP had no intention to liberalize Japan, even though they claimed otherwise. In the United States, stopping accurate articles from being printed would be a violation of the First Amendment and a massive overreach of the state. SCAP followed a totalitarian system during the occupation, rather than a system that encouraged freedom and liberty as they had asserted at the start of the occupation.

With the tribunal's conclusion, SCAP began to enact sweeping changes to the Japanese education system. The allegations made by American educators combined with the SCAP's overwhelming consensus against a centralized education system, resulted in a significant downsizing of the Ministry of Education within the Japanese government. For most of the 20th century, the Ministry of Education had been the sole authorizer of curriculum and textbooks in the Japanese education system. With all of the education system consolidated under the Ministry of Education, the government was able to ensure that nationalistic and militaristic teachings were spread across the country to all students, and created a centralized body to look over any questionable sections in new textbooks. After 1947, with the reformation of the Japanese government, the Ministry of Education lost much of its power, though the ministry still existed as a unifying administrative background for the prefectures. SCAP's actions had shifted the hands-on approach from the Japanese government to a more decentralized system. Their role shifted towards ensuring the prefectures' school boards functioned as intended, distancing them from a direct role in the classroom.<sup>20</sup>

SCAP had concluded that the true cause of Japan's rampant nationalism was education. The Ministry of Education was then required to put out a request to censor "all teaching materials that are not appropriate in the light of the Imperial Rescript after the war", including most militaristic and nationalistic segments. Created in 1890 under Emperor Meiji (and sent along with a portrait of him), the Imperial Rescript on Education was a document that every student memorized during school, in addition to being read at every school event. It served as a reminder of the purpose of education and it outlined what the government hoped would result from an education. However, the Rescript was seen as overly nationalistic by SCAP, due to its urging of the reader to "offer yourselves courageously to the State," in order to "guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth." Additionally, the text placed heavy emphasis on the connection between the Japanese people as a whole, praising how they have been "ever united in loyalty and filial piety" to the Emperor, and how Japan's success has "from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof" of such a system. Placing such an emphasis on supporting the state, along with the importance of the Japanese

---

<sup>19</sup> Takemae, Ricketts, Swann, *The Allied Occupation of Japan and Its Legacy*. p. 67.

[https://books.google.com/books?id=Ba5hXsfeyhMC&pg=PA67&dq=Kanagawa+prefecture+rape&sig=ACfU3U3\\_7MFOnBKgutBavggHUGIPQw9Vrg](https://books.google.com/books?id=Ba5hXsfeyhMC&pg=PA67&dq=Kanagawa+prefecture+rape&sig=ACfU3U3_7MFOnBKgutBavggHUGIPQw9Vrg)

<sup>20</sup> "Chronological Table (Organizational change list)". JACAR Glossary. Accessed April 26th 2018. [https://www.jacar.go.jp/english/glossary\\_en/tochikiko-henten/table/transition5.html](https://www.jacar.go.jp/english/glossary_en/tochikiko-henten/table/transition5.html)

national identity, resulted in the Diet, the Japanese legislative system, voting to abolish it in June 1948.<sup>21</sup>

However, as Yoko Thakur points out in her work "History Textbook Reform in Allied Occupied Japan, 1945-52", the Ministry's public statements very well could have been paying lip service to SCAP, simply saying that they condemned the nationalistic teachings while making no internal efforts to enforce the declaration. The removal of Imperial Rescript of Education served only to weaken the Ministry of Education and gave them no reason to support SCAP's efforts to strip away their power and place within the government. This gave them a reason to hinder SCAP when the opportunity arose, giving Thakur's argument further credence. On the other hand, since most of the ministry's power had already been taken away at this point, there is no way to really discern if they were sincere with their request. While it is possible that the Ministry of Education was working covertly to undermine SCAP, their diminished influence left them with little power to resist SCAP's orders.

In any case, the majority of the Ministry of Education's power was transferred onto a more local level. School boards were established in prefectures, which were comprised primarily of locally elected officials, rather than a single unified source. These school boards decided what textbooks public schools in their prefecture would use, which gave people representation in deciding their children's education instead of having the Ministry dictate all facets of learning. As a downside, however, each prefecture was allowed to have a different curriculum and textbooks from any other, which resulted in less cohesion to lesson plans between different schools and regions. In addition, teachers who used to be able to rely upon the Ministry of Education to give them a lesson plan for the school year were now required to create their own lesson plans. Due to this shift in curriculum development, the initial years of Japan's transition to locally-based school boards were troubled. Teachers had been educated with the expectation of only having to use the Ministry's national curriculum and some of the teaching staff were unable to create curriculums of comparable quality. In certain areas, the quality of teaching worsened after the changes, rather than improved. This, alongside the removal of *shushin*, geography, and Japanese history courses, was the first of many changes that harmed public perception of the United States' efforts.

In addition to teaching issues, no textbooks based around this new system were able to be produced before the school year started. The solution SCAP agreed upon was to black-out the objectionable elements in current textbooks and continue using those until suitable textbooks could be created. However, since neither SCAP nor the Japanese government had the manpower to black out each textbook, students were instead assigned to black out their textbooks in classes. Having students censoring out what many adults viewed as important parts of their culture and history resulted only in even more backlash against the education changes. Kurita Wataru, a student at the time, remembers - "We held the splotched pages up to the sunlight and if the words could still be read, we applied a fresh coat of ink" and that for the first time in his life, "I felt besieged by a jumble of contending values, a feeling that persisted ever since." Within months of each other, students had been told they were no longer able to learn Japanese morals in school,

---

<sup>21</sup> Thakur, Yoko H. "History Textbook Reform in Allied Occupied Japan, 1945-52." 265. *Imperial Rescript on Education*. Japanese Ministry of Education. [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Imperial\\_Rescript\\_on\\_Education](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Imperial_Rescript_on_Education)

and that the parts of their textbooks that focused on their national pride were to be eradicated from their collective memory, even if they were primarily striking out militaristic rhetoric.<sup>22</sup>

After passing these initial reforms, SCAP became increasingly hands-off with their approaches to reforming the education system. SCAP created a social studies class as a combination of history and geography, but outside of reviewing the textbooks and curriculums the schools would use, SCAP did not attempt to change the education system any further than they already had. After strong indications of progressive reforms, SCAP had suddenly ground to a halt in passing educational reforms.

This altered approach was in part due to a shift in power and policy within SCAP. General William Draper, who had been in Germany assisting with the economics of reconstruction following the conclusion of World War II, had taken a role at the Pentagon to help nations around the world with reconstruction efforts. Much like MacArthur, Draper admitted he “knew nothing about Japan,” as his experience primarily came from Wall Street before the outbreak of World War II, when he became an aide to the Secretary of War, Henry Stimson. Draper was a staunch believer in the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine, which were policies instituted by President Harry S. Truman after World War II. Through the Marshall Plan, the United States would assist in developing or rebuilding nations in order to prevent them from falling into communism. By supplying them with aid, they hoped that the countries would remain capitalist allies for the United States to trade with. The Truman Doctrine was a promise given by the United States to anti-communist factions. Truman promised to provide military aid to help defeat communism in any country it was present. Both West Germany and Japan were results of the Truman Doctrine; however, financial aid and troops were not enough to quell the United States’ fear of communism in these countries. George F. Kennan, creator of the containment theory and later the U.S Ambassador to the Soviet Union, was worried about an internal revolution in Japan, caused not by Soviet or Chinese agents causing disruption in Japan, but instead by radical left wing groups within the country. Kennan had been instrumental in shaping the United States policy on communism in Europe, and was a major contributor to the writing of the Marshall Plan, in which the United States gave financial aid and assisted European nations in rebuilding in exchange for continued support for America and capitalism.<sup>23</sup>

While SCAP’s reforms had been very progressive for Japan, the United States’ best allies within the government were the conservative legislators. The conservative base in Japan was staunchly anti-socialist and anti-communist, aligning them closest to the goals of the United States. However, some of the laws passed by SCAP in the past emboldened the radical left groups within the country, which harmed the United States’ relationship with the conservatives and created increased challenges for the occupation forces. The United States had reached an impasse with their administration of Japan. If they continued to support progressive policies, there was a large risk that they would lose the support of the conservatives while also giving a larger platform to the communists. If the communists were voted into power in Japan, the United States’ reconstruction efforts would have been footing the bill for the creation of a new communist enemy. However, if the current plan was successful, Japan would be a more open and

<sup>22</sup> Buono. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160130041757/https://www.binghamton.edu/history/resources/journal-of-history/stephen-buono.html>

<sup>23</sup> Schonberger, Howard. "U. S. Policy in Post-War Japan: The Retreat from Liberalism." *Science & Society* 46, no. 1 (1982): 39-59. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40402374>.

free society, but the United States would gain nothing more from following a more difficult plan for reconstruction. With this situation in mind, Kennan discussed with MacArthur the option of ending further progressive reforms in Japan, and to slowly relax pressure on the Japanese government to uphold the previously passed reforms as well.<sup>24</sup>

As Draper oversaw Japan's reconstruction, the lack of the Marshall Plan in Japan caused him to worry increasingly about communist insurrection. While Western Germany had been rebuilt under the ideas of the Marshall Plan, the plan was built around European nations, not Asian nations. Without the Marshall Plan guiding SCAP policy for Japanese reconstruction, both Draper and George F. Kennan, the U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union and the creator of containment theory, were worried about an internal revolution from the far-left in Japan. Such an uprising threatened to nullify the United States' years of efforts to position Japan as a capitalist ally. While SCAP had been involved with protecting groups such as Unit 731 and the emperor and his family, the organization had not pressured Japan to pass acts that would benefit America primarily. Both Kennan and Draper had instead seen SCAP encourage Japan to enact more progressive and leftist policies, which they worried gave the communists more support, since the SCAP had been actively encouraging such policies. While these reforms were beneficial to Japan as a democracy, they further alienated the conservatives within the government. This presented a major issue to the United States, since the conservatives within the Diet were more open to negotiations with the United States than the far-left was. Due to these fears, Kennan felt that he had to communicate to MacArthur to stop pushing the Japanese government to pass any further reform laws, and to gradually relax pressure for the reforms that had already been passed.<sup>25</sup>

By the fall of 1947, Kennan and Draper had agreed that Japan's period of reformation had come to a close, and that Kennan's "crank-up" program should be put into place as soon as possible. The "crank-up" strategy was to quickly and aggressively progress Japan's industrialization in order to create a self-sufficient modern nation. The United States could then trade openly with Japan, who would have manufactured goods to exchange with the United States. The United States would quickly gain a new economic partner, and Japan would be able to employ their population, produce goods, increase trade, and further rebuild Japan. The "crank-up" plan was a clear win-win situation for both countries. In order for this plan to work, however, Draper needed to remove some of the Japanese reforms and convince Congress to halt the reparations imposed on Japan for their actions in World War II.

Interestingly, Draper did not begin describing Japan as an anti-communist nation until at least half a year later, saying that in March of 1948 the "United States was not attempting to build Japan into a base against the Reds", and that his reasons for being assigned to Japan were "purely economic". While Draper agreed much earlier that the liberal policies passed in Japan had to be overturned, he was acting more from a policy of less regulation on capitalism, rather than worries about communism. While the Second Red Scare began in 1947, McCarthy would not begin his investigations until 1953, meaning public paranoia about communism was present, but not as feverous as it would become.

---

<sup>24</sup> Schonberger, "U. S. Policy in Post-War Japan," 44.

<sup>25</sup> Schonberger, "U. S. Policy in Post-War Japan," 44.

MacArthur fought against some of Draper and Kennan's policies, such as protesting the end of the purge of Japanese military officials, but was eventually overruled by the Pentagon. The result of this was power moved away from MacArthur and SCAP and shifted towards Kennan and Draper as they concluded the purge of the militaristic and nationalistic sects of the Japanese, and instead began to purge the communists. While the United States maintained a small military force, the era of policy creation during reconstruction had essentially concluded at this point. While the United States migrated to a laissez-faire approach to the Japanese government, the Diet, Japan's legislative house, became increasingly right-wing, passing laws that harmed the rights of workers and others. Here, the United States turned a blind eye, arguing that these laws were necessary to revitalize the Japanese economy and to curb the constant threat of communism.<sup>26</sup>

The United States followed the same ideology that they had held during the Tokyo Tribunal. When a choice came down to what would be best for Japan or what would be best for the United States, the outcome was always clear. While it may be an obvious observation that SCAP always put the United States ahead of Japan, the goal of the reconstruction effort, especially regarding education, was to drive out militarism and nationalism from Japan's cultural identity. This would move Japan further towards liberalization and democratic ideals that the United States championed. The actions performed by Draper, Kennan, and SCAP at times ran antithetical to the goals of the reconstruction. Instead, they exchanged these ideals for stronger United States influence in the country and a barrier in the East against communism.

On top of this shift in administration, 1947 was the beginning of the Second Red Scare in the United States. The Red Scare was a period from the late 1940s to the early 1950s when there was widespread paranoia about communist insurgents infiltrating the United States. After infiltrating, the fear was that they would obtain positions of power, eventually converting the United States into another communist state. Elsewhere, China was already in the middle of a civil war between the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party, making Japan one of the only countries that the United States could rely on, along with South Korea. Public perception of communists in the United States may have caused Draper to shift from a stance driven by economics to a stance driven by communism. Just months before his public statement on the threat of communism, he claimed that there was no secret motivation to fight the communists in Japan, but rather, it was based purely on economics. With the shift towards an even stronger anti-communist sentiment, Draper would have reason to change his public opinion after saying the opposite months before, and gave a reason for the Japanese and Americans to be harsher against left-wing dissidents who did not support repealing recent laws.

General MacArthur resigned his command of SCAP in 1949. Shortly after, MacArthur was assigned to help command the Korean War. In 1951, Truman had General MacArthur resign due to comments he made during the Korean War. He said later that MacArthur's weakness was not that he spoke and acted foolishly, but rather that MacArthur "wouldn't respect the authority of the President." In Japan, by the time of his death in 1964, MacArthur had gained the nickname *Gaijin Shogun*, or "Foreign Ruler", from many in Japan. This was in part due to how MacArthur shaped SCAP's public presence around himself. Almost all public announcements and information from SCAP had MacArthur's name or signature on it, even if he himself had very

---

<sup>26</sup> Schonberger, "U. S. Policy in Post-War Japan," 46-50.

little to do with that specific act. From his first meeting with Hirohito, the general had positioned himself in a way that would make the Japanese people at the very least respect his position. MacArthur had positioned himself so directly in the spotlight that even the Japanese public regarded him as the foreign leader of Japan. They used the same title to describe him, *shogun*, as they gave to the country's rulers during the feudal period, indicating the level of power he had held while leading the SCAP. Though his exits from both Japan and the United States military were abrupt, MacArthur's presence left a clear impression on the Japanese citizens.<sup>27</sup>

The goals of reconstruction had changed dramatically over the course of the occupation, largely due to increased attention from Pentagon officials. Due to the Red Scare unfolding in America, Draper and Kennan felt it was better for Japan to remain staunchly conservative and decided to undo two years of social and economic progression, rather than risk letting the country fall to communism. The conclusion of Allied law-making, however, meant that changes to the Japanese education system were not solidified, and not enough time had passed to allow the full removal of nationalistic elements. Shortly after the official departure of the Americans, with the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, the Japanese government began to once again alter the education system.

As mentioned previously, *shushin* was an important part of Japanese education for many families. After the removal of the class by SCAP, the country had a significant increase in crimes committed by youth when compared to the period before the war. Many adults, already disappointed by the removal of these classes, used this as evidence that the newest generations were being raised without proper moral guidance. While the parents were focusing on what the Americans were doing in their classrooms, the increase in crime was due to the destruction from the war. In addition to being surrounded by destruction, the Japanese youth had lost homes and loved ones. Many Japanese youth had become homeless or orphaned. With a failing economy and food shortages across the country, thefts and other crimes increased.

On top of this increase in crime, schools' interpretations of Japanese history in new textbooks provided a much more mundane and grounded depiction, which many felt were overly harsh. The Japanese government's control of textbooks meant that while their studies had shown them to be valorous symbols that embodied the ideals of Japan and its people, the modern textbooks instead simply stated facts about the figures and what significance they had. Due to public outcry at the lack of a class on morals, the Ministry of Education announced in 1958 that classes for *dotoku*, another word meaning "moral teaching", would be implemented for one hour a week in schools. The Ministry also attempted to reintroduce the Imperial Rescript on Education into schools, but this measure did not pass.<sup>28</sup>

Even more worrisome were the changes to textbook distribution performed by the government two years earlier, in 1956. The government announced that they would be creating a new textbook screening system which once again gave the Ministry of Education the final say on

---

<sup>27</sup> "Harry Truman Talks About Firing General Douglas MacArthur". Huffington Post.

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-colbert/harry-truman-talks-about\\_b\\_621832.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-colbert/harry-truman-talks-about_b_621832.html)

Valley, David J. (2000). *Gaijin Shogun: General Douglas MacArthur, Stepfather of Postwar Japan*. Sektor Company.

<sup>28</sup> Naoko Saito, and Yasuo Imai. "In Search of the Public and the Private: Philosophy of Education in Post-War Japan." *Comparative Education* 40, no. 4 (2004): 586.

what could be included (or excluded) from textbooks. This would entail a system incredibly similar to the one Japan had used before World War II, and a system which SCAP had identified as a major factor in the country's nationalistic tendencies. Control over textbooks was one of the primary ways with which the government was able to indoctrinate students before the war. Giving the Ministry control over textbooks once again created a risk of history repeating itself. After this, the government went one step further by no longer permitting local school boards to vote on their own members; instead, the central government would appoint new members to school boards across the entire country. The system that SCAP had set up to encourage local-level discussion on academics had resulted in a state-controlled system that would once again follow whatever the Ministry of Education dictated. Three of the largest reforms performed by SCAP had all been undone within 6 years of the occupation's conclusion.<sup>29</sup>

SCAP's reform efforts were focused around decentralizing the Japanese education system in order to pass more power to the teachers and parents through personalized curriculum and school boards. However, the sudden nature of the United States' changes to the education system, along with a nihilistic, amoral generation following the death and destruction of World War II, resulted in strong public outcry against the American changes to the system. These factors, combined with the United States' retreat from progressivism in order to retain a capitalist ally in East Asia, resulted in an education system that, while less centralized at a glance, retained most of the key components of Japan's centralized system. This meant that Japan had reverted almost entirely back to the administrative structure used before the war. The only major change to day-to-day learning that remained by 1960 was the removal of the Imperial Rescript for Education.

Following the conclusion of the United States occupation, there was little international attention given to the new Japanese education system. This changed in 1982, when a textbook edit became an international controversy for Japan. A Japanese high school textbook, while describing the Japanese invasion of Northern China in the 1930s, had replaced the word for "aggression" with the word for "advance". Critics of the Japanese government saw this as a clearly revisionist view of World War II, where Japan had inarguably been the aggressor in attacking China and other East Asian nations. Although the Japanese government apologized for the incident, it was later discovered that the use of aggression had never actually been in the textbook. The entire situation was the result of misreporting and hasty reactions from the parties accusing the Japanese government. While this resulted in an interesting discussion on reactionary media, it also made accusers of the Japanese government's policies appear over-reactionary and foolish for being so easily misled. Such overreactions spread misinformation among the public and damage the reputation of countries who follow this false narrative. Actual critique of Japanese textbooks' content can be dismissed as another case of reactionary anger due to this situation, harming further discussion on the topic.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, the readiness with which China and other nations accused Japan showed how vivid the memories of the war and the Japanese occupation were for those in East Asia. Japan's actions throughout World War II had given many of the mainland countries good

---

<sup>29</sup> Naoko Saito and Yasuo Imai, "In Search of the Public and the Private," 586

<sup>30</sup> Seddon, Terri. "Politics and Curriculum: A Case Study of the Japanese History Textbook Dispute, 1982." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 8, no. 2 (1987): 213-26. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1392737>.



reason to distrust the Japanese government, and even though the nation was demilitarized, the sheer devastation caused before that period was enough to cause outcry over a simple verb change. Though World War II ended over 70 years ago, tensions have continued between Japan and other East Asian nations up until modern times, as seen through conflicts and political debates over water rights and various small islands between China and Japan.

This would not be the last time that Japan would face controversy for its depictions of their deployment to China in the 1930s. In 2007, Former education minister Nariaki Nakayama announced that with the help of 130 Liberal Democratic Party members, the use of the phrase “wartime sex slaves” had been removed from almost all history textbooks in middle schools. Nakayama would go on to express his opinions on a variety of topics involving World War II, claiming that the Nanjing Massacre was a “pure fabrication”, and that the sex slaves used by the Japanese during World War II were “professional prostitutes at frontline brothels run by private agencies,” rather than enslaved women. Nariaki Nakayama also served as the Minister of Construction and Transport for a mere four days. He lost the position after he commented about the Japan Teachers’ Union being a “cancer for Japanese Education”, and that Japan was an “ethnically homogeneous” country that “do not like nor desire foreigners”. Though he only remained in this role between September 24, 2008 and September 28, 2008, he had served as Japan’s minister of education from 2004 to 2005, making his comments on the events of World War II dangerously revisionist.<sup>31</sup>

Prime Minister Abe stood by the country’s statement about sex slaves during World War II, when the Japanese government apologized for forcing women into prostitution, but in other interviews he emphasized that, “no documentary evidence has been discovered to prove direct involvement by the government or army in taking the females by force — as in kidnapping — to the frontline brothels.” Abe argued that the women in the brothels who moved with the Japanese army were not being forced to become prostitutes, but rather made a conscious decision to join. However, Abe’s answer is in response to the argument that the women were being kidnapped. It is probable that the women did agree to serve, but only under extreme circumstances that would not be considered consent. In such a situation they would not be “kidnapped”, but rather “recruited” into the Japanese army to serve as comfort women. This would mean that although Abe was correct in a technical sense, the circumstances at the time make it more probable that they had to choose between joining or death. With their life on the line, many of the women would feel compelled to agree, making the idea of them being “recruited” an absurdity.<sup>32</sup>

Interestingly, a Stanford study conducted between 2006 and 2014 found that Japanese textbooks had the opposite of the perceived problem; they were, in fact, too dull and were more of a “dry chronology” without enough content to encourage students to think critically. In fact, Daniel Sneider, a scholar at Stanford, found that only about one percent of textbooks used in classrooms contained what he considered nationalistic teachings. In fact, he saw more nationalistic and revisionist rhetoric in South Korean, Chinese, and American textbooks than in Japanese textbooks. Sneider argued that Japan’s textbook issue was primarily an issue of

---

<sup>31</sup> Yoshida, Reiji. “Sex slave history erased from texts; ’93 apology next?” <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2007/03/11/news/sex-slave-history-erased-from-texts-93-apology-next/> “New Japanese minister in hot seat after gaffes”. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-politics/new-japanese-minister-in-hot-seat-after-gaffes-idUSTRE48Q1NU20080927>. Accessed 24th April 2018.

<sup>32</sup> “Sex slave history erased from texts; ’93 apology next?”

appearance. Japanese textbooks only appeared in international news when a nationalistic controversy was occurring with it, which gave them the appearance of a constant issue. Sneider explains that the major difference between Germany and Japan was their need to confront their wartime past. To remain an important political entity in Europe, Germany could not allow themselves to ignore what had occurred during World War II. In Japan, their position as a capitalist rival to communist China meant that they did not have to acknowledge the actions they had committed while in China. While Japan was not at war with China at the time, there was no need to humanize a nation that would more than likely be an enemy. Sneider's conclusion demonstrates that even if the alteration of Japan's textbooks was over-exaggerated by media coverage, the Japanese government remained reluctant to acknowledge that their wartime remained a key issue for their relationship with neighboring countries.<sup>33</sup>

After the previously explained incident in 2015 involving the term "comfort women", the topic would once again be re-ignited in 2017, when San Francisco created a monument to the women who were forced into prostitution by the Japanese army. San Francisco's sister city in Japan, Osaka, threatened to cut all ties with the city as a result of the statues' creation, arguing that it did nothing but cause further division among the two cities and countries as a whole. While this incident is not strictly related to education, it serves to show the Japanese government's reluctance to honor the memory of the women they had enslaved in modern times, despite having previously apologized for it.<sup>34</sup>

Most of these comments were from government officials commenting on Japanese history, and were not directly linked to education. However, all of these officials did belong to the same political party. The Liberal Democratic Party, or LDP, was the majority party in Japan, and the party of Prime Minister Abe. The LDP are a right-wing political group, and are considered nationalist in some of their viewpoints. Since being founded in 1955, the LDP has been out of power in Japan for a total of four years: once between 1993 and 1994, and again between 2009 and 2012. The Diet in Japan is most similar to a parliamentary system, meaning that outside of those two periods, the LDP had consistently won the majority vote in most significant elections. A consistent view of the LDP throughout the decades, however, has been support and cooperation with the United States, and a strong focus on capitalistic economics. In this regard, they carry many of the same ideals that the conservatives of the Diet in the late 1940s had.

The nationalistic elements of the right in Japan, however, have only escalated since the United States' departure. Abe, Nakayama, and other important members of the LDP are also members of the Nippon Kaigi, the largest right-wing organization in Japan with 38,000 members. Nippon Kaigi are a revisionist organization who argue that Japan's motives in conquering East Asia were to liberate the region from Western imperialists. They also maintained that the results of the Nanking Massacre are exaggerated or falsified entirely. In 2006, Hideaki Kase, a member of Nippon Kaigi, told Reuters that they were "dedicated to our conservatives cause", expressed the organizations support of monarchism, and argued that the constitution must be revised "for the glory of the nation". In other words, since the LDP's

<sup>33</sup> Parker, Clifton B. "Nationalism clouds WWII Memories, says Stanford Scholar."

<https://news.stanford.edu/pr/2014/pr-memory-war-asia-040414.html>

<sup>34</sup> "'Comfort Women' Statue in San Francisco Leads a Japanese City to Cut Ties". The New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/25/world/asia/comfort-women-statue.html>

founding, the party has been in control of Japan for fifty nine out of sixty three years, with a strong nationalist foundation found within the Nippon Kaigi. Japan's textbooks may not encourage nationalism, as Sneider discussed, but with strongly conservative and nationalistic groups such as the LDP running the country and Ministry of Education for decades, these revisionist and elements almost certainly have still found their ways into classrooms and teachings.<sup>35</sup>

Recent events such as these are direct results of the United States' involvement in the reconstruction of Japan. While the initial efforts were very focused on individual choice and freedom, Kennen and Draper's overbearing fear of communism forced most of these progressive reforms to be reneged, and instead created a strong, nationalistic government that was allied with the United States. While this deal may have proved advantageous for the United States, who gained a capitalist ally in a hotly contested region, the cost for the Japanese moving away from nationalistic tendencies cannot be quantified. Japan's reformations under SCAP, which had shown promise and improvement throughout the two-year period they existed, was quickly and viciously dismantled out of fear of communist uprisings. The effects of these actions can be seen clearly today, with the Prime Minister of Japan actively questioning the existence of events such as forced sexual slavery during World War II. Without a nationalistic upbringing, such actions would be considered as absurd as denying the Holocaust; however, in part due to the warped perception of their own nation, nationalistic political figures generally seek to whitewash and downplay the worst parts of their nation's history, while constantly showcasing the greatest time periods of the country.

Actions such as these weaken the field of history as a whole. Censoring and altering textbooks deprives readers from an accurate portrayal of events, and can lead to warped perceptions of situations or groups based off false information from education. The present is an era of "fake news" and misinformation. Schools are to be places for debate and discussion of ideas and explaining what went wrong in a nation's darker moments. Recontextualizing these situations in a more positive light, such as with "comfort women", serve only to deepen animosity between Japan and its East Asian neighbors, and in the process reopen wounds from World War II.

There also remains the question of how to combat such nationalistic tactics in a country where it is so entrenched. While criticism of Japan's nationalistic elements is common, the LDP remains the most popular political party in almost all of Japan's elections. In 2017, the LDP made up 48% of the popular vote in the House of Representatives election and 39% in the House of Councillors election. The next closest party in the House of Representatives received 20% of the popular vote, a sign of the massive gulf in popularity between the LDP and other parties. These results indicate a variety of possible causes. One of the most probable causes is the overall age of Japan's population. Japan's population pyramid has turned into a population cone, with far too many old retiring workers and not enough children to replace them. The youth who are more likely to vote against the LDP may simply be outnumbered by their elders who support a more traditional, conservative government. In this case, the current status of textbooks in Japan

---

<sup>35</sup> "Tea Party Politics in Japan". New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/13/opinion/tea-party-politics-in-japan.html>  
Linda Sieg, Reuters, June 15, 2006. Accessed 25th April 2018. <https://www.oneindia.com/2006/06/15/by-linda-sieg-1150344320.html>

would be less relevant, since the issue would lie with previous generations of Japanese and the textbooks they read after the end of the occupation.

Japan is a storied nation, and its people should be to celebrate that rich history. However, patriotic pride can easily be distorted into nationalist superiority. In the same fashion, the Japanese government in the period before World War II distorted their historical and moral beliefs into a form more beneficial to their militaristic goals. As newer generations are raised in an increasingly global world, it is certainly possible that as Japan's older generations pass on, gaffes by government officials on the topic of their history will become less frequent, as the overall demographic within the Japanese government begin to skew towards a more globally aware age group.

However, the United States must still bear responsibility for decisions during the reconstruction that created this situation. The United States' general administrative philosophy of putting the desires of America before the needs of Japan applied even to the education system. While the first two years of the occupation led to significant changes inside and outside schools, including the Ministry of Education's diminished role, increased local involvement in the academic system, and the removal of nationalistic "morality" classes such as *shushin*. All of these changes were necessary efforts to denationalize and decentralize Japan's educational system and allow more choices for teachers and schools. When Washington began to take an increased interest in Japan, Draper began to set in motion his "crank-up" plan, with the goal of rapidly industrializing the nation so that they may become an independent trade ally with the United States. With the assistance of George F. Kennan, Draper began to overrule MacArthur's control of SCAP and Japan, instead diverting power to the conservatives in Japan's legislative system, the Diet, undoing progressive reforms that benefited the Japanese over the Americans. The result of this heel turn was a sharp increase in power for the conservative party, later the LDP, who turned to revert some of the more unpopular education changes, including the reintroduction of morality classes, and the Ministry of Education once again overseeing all textbook content.

Japan is a nation at odds with its own history. Political groups seek to stifle this discussion and focus on presenting a romanticized national identity of Japan before anything else. Attempting to rewrite history and to deny documented events serves to do nothing but divide and weaken countries. A nation should be able to tell their history with both their brightest and darkest moments, to serve both as prideful reminders of their heritage, as well as take responsibility for painful reminders of their past.

## Bibliography

- Bix, Hebert P. *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*. New York: Perennial, 2001.
- Buono, Stephen. "Commission and Omission of History in Occupied Japan (1945-1949)". Binghamton University. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160130041757/https://www.binghamton.edu/history/resources/journal-of-history/stephen-buono.html> Accessed 5 May 2018.
- "Chronological Table (Organization change list)". JACAR Glossary. Accessed April 26th 2018. [https://www.jacar.go.jp/english/glossary\\_en/tochikiko-henten/table/transition5.html](https://www.jacar.go.jp/english/glossary_en/tochikiko-henten/table/transition5.html)
- Colbert, David. "Harry Truman Talks About Firing General Douglas MacArthur". Huffington Post. Accessed 5 May 2018. [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-colbert/harry-truman-talks-about\\_b\\_621832.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-colbert/harry-truman-talks-about_b_621832.html).
- "Commodore Perry and Japan (1853-1854)". *Asia For Educators*. Columbia University. Accessed 14 June 2018. [http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan\\_1750\\_perry.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1750_perry.htm).
- "Constitution of Japan (GHQ Draft)". Modern Japan in Archives. Accessed 14 June 2018. [http://ndl.go.jp/modern/e/img\\_t/105/105-001tx.html](http://ndl.go.jp/modern/e/img_t/105/105-001tx.html).
- "Divinity of the Emperor". BBC. Accessed 14 June 2018. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/history/emperor\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/history/emperor_1.shtml).
- "Education During the Meiji Restoration, Japan". The Virtual Museum of Canada. Accessed 5 May, 2018. <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/edu/ViewLoitLo.do?method=preview&lang=EN&id=12991>.
- Eiji Takemae, Robert Ricketts, Sebastian Swann, *The Allied Occupation of Japan and Its Legacy*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002.
- Fortin, Jacey. "'Comfort Women' Statue in San Francisco Leads a Japanese City to Cut Ties". The New York Times. Accessed 5 May 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/25/world/asia/comfort-women-statue.html>.
- Ham, Paul. *Hiroshima Nagasaki: The Real Story of the Atomic Bombings and Their Aftermath*. <https://books.google.com/books?id=5FZGAWAAQBAJ&pg=PA79#v=onepage&q&f=false>. Accessed 14 June 2018.
- Hans, Kohn. "Nationalism" *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed 14 June 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/nationalism>.
- Imperial Rescript on Education*. Japanese Ministry of Education, 1989.
- Johnson, Jesse, Osumi, Magdalena. "Fifty Japanese scholars attack McGraw-Hill, U.S. academics on 'comfort women' issue". Japan Times.

- <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/12/11/national/history/fifty-japanese-scholars-attack-mcgraw-hill-u-s-academics-on-comfort-women-issue/>. Accessed on December 3rd, 2017.
- K. Adachi. "Recent Developments in Japanese Education." *International Review of Education / Internationale Zeitschrift Für Erziehungswissenschaft / Revue Internationale De L'Education* 6, no. 3 (1960): 370-74.
- Kato, Norihiro. "Tea Party Politics in Japan". *New York Times*. Accessed 5 May 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/13/opinion/tea-party-politics-in-japan.html>
- Kristof, Nicholas D. "Unmasking Horror -- A special report.; Japan Confronting Gruesome War Atrocity". *The New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/03/17/world/unmasking-horror-a-special-report-japan-confronting-gruesome-war-atrocity.html?pagewanted=all> Accessed 25th April 2018.
- Linda Sieg, Reuters, June 15, 2006. *OneIndia*. Accessed 25th April 2018. <https://www.oneindia.com/2006/06/15/by-linda-sieg-1150344320.html>
- Naoko Saito, and Yasuo Imai. "In Search of the Public and the Private: Philosophy of Education in Post-War Japan." *Comparative Education* 40, no. 4 (2004): 584. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134629>.
- "New Japanese minister in hot seat after gaffes". *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-politics/new-japanese-minister-in-hot-seat-after-gaffes-idUSTRE48Q1NU20080927>. Accessed 24th April 2018.
- "Occupation and Reconstruction of Japan, 1945–52". *United States Office of the Historian*. Accessed 5 May, 2018. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/japan-reconstruction>.
- Parker, Clifton B. "Nationalism clouds WWII memories in Asia, says Stanford scholar". *Stanford News Service*. Accessed 5 May, 2018. <https://news.stanford.edu/pr/2014/pr-memory-war-asia-040414.html>
- Pletcher, Kenneth. "Bushidō". *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed 5 May, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Bushido>.
- Report of the United States Education Mission to Japan*. Tokyo, Japan. March 30, 1946.
- Schaller, Michael. *The American Occupation of Japan: the Origins of the Cold War in Asia*. Oxford University Press (1985). <https://books.google.com/books?id=uK7nCwAAQBAJ>.
- Schonberger, Howard. "U. S. Policy in Post-War Japan: The Retreat from Liberalism." *Science & Society* 46, no. 1 (1982): 39-59. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40402374>.

- Seddon, Terri. "Politics and Curriculum: A Case Study of the Japanese History Textbook Dispute, 1982." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 8, no. 2 (1987): 213-26. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1392737>.
- Shimbori, Michiya. "A Historical and Social Note on Moral Education in Japan." *Comparative Education Review* 4, no. 2 (1960): 97-101. <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.chapman.edu/stable/3441604>.
- Soucy, Robert. "Fascism: Extreme Nationalism". *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed June 14 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/fascism/Extreme-nationalism>.
- Thakur, Yoko H. "History Textbook Reform in Allied Occupied Japan, 1945-52." *History of Education Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1995): <http://www.jstor.org/stable/369749>.
- Valley, David J. (2000). *Gaijin Shogun: General Douglas MacArthur, Stepfather of Postwar Japan*. San Diego: Sektor Company, 2000.
- Yoshida, Reiji. "Sex slave history erased from texts; '93 apology next?" <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2007/03/11/news/sex-slave-history-erased-from-texts-93-apology-next/>