

On the Educational Significance of Historical Textbooks for Adolescents' Ideological Consciousness, and Their Impact on Sino-Japanese Relations — Taking the Changes in Narrations on the War of Resistance against Japan in Chinese and Japanese History Textbooks as an Example

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Abstract. Significant disparities exist in the narratives of the Sino-Japanese War (1931-1945) as presented in Chinese and Japanese history textbooks. Both countries, influenced by their unique political, economic, and cultural stances, have made diverse revisions to their history textbooks at different times. This paper compares narrative changes in the history textbooks of both countries, contending that textbook revisions aim to shape adolescents' ideological consciousness and historical perspectives, influencing their political socialization tendencies and behaviors. As Japan refashions its historical textbooks, it impedes the young generation's ability to glean insights from history, potentially cultivating a cohort characterized by unwarranted arrogance yet lacking a sense of responsibility. The ongoing discourse surrounding historical textbooks consistently rekindles poignant memories among the Chinese populace, instilling fears of Japan repeating the errors of militarism and consequently, fortifying the younger generation's recollection of a humiliating past. China and Japan, not only wielding significant influence on regional security in East Asia but also playing pivotal roles in global peace and stability, should embrace equitable and amicable exchanges. Such exchanges can foster increased mutual trust and reciprocal benefits, representing the appropriate path for China and Japan, nations separated by a narrow body of water with a longstanding history of friendship.

Keywords: Chinese and Japanese History Textbooks, Revisions, Adolescents, Ideological Consciousness, Sino-Japanese Relations.

1. Introduction

The Anti-Japanese War stands as the pivotal historical event shaping modern Sino-Japanese relations. Following the conclusion of the Second World War (WWII) and the Cold War in the 1980s dominated by the United States of America (US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the narratives of this war in Chinese and Japanese history textbooks have undergone subtle yet crucial changes. These alterations reflect both governments' efforts to shape their young citizens' national ideologies, control historical perspectives through textbooks, influence the political socialization process, and ultimately mold individuals who align with national expectations.

Textbooks serve as the primary medium for educating young people, bearing the responsibility of ideological and moral education and functioning as a crucial carrier for shaping the state's mainstream ideology.

Renowned critical education representative Michael W·Apple asserted that textbooks are the most direct means to observe the relationships between curriculum and ideology [1]. In his seminal work "The Politics of Textbooks," he emphasized, "Textbooks play a critical role in deciding 'whose knowledge is used to educate children'; like curriculum knowledge, what they transmit is official or so-called correct knowledge, not neutral knowledge, for textbooks are the result of various social, political, economic, and cultural influences [1]."

Taiwanese scholar Lan Shun-De contended that "The relationship between textbooks and ideologies can be summarized as textbooks being closely related to issues of political legitimacy and historical consciousness, and their function is reflected in the role of political socialization tools [2]."

History education, closely intertwined with ideology, plays a crucial role in cultivating historical consciousness, reinforcing national identity, and constructing national consciousness. By shaping individual thought awareness and historical concepts, it influences national identification, national pride, and perceptions of other countries and nationalities. Michael W·Apple suggested that the role of ideology in textbooks can be accurately observed and understood from a historical perspective [1].

History textbooks are particularly influential in shaping young people's worldview, outlook on life, and values during their formative years. Their impact on the political socialization of young people is of utmost importance, especially during adolescence—a critical stage for forming individual political attitudes and behavior patterns. As these individuals eventually enter society and participate in political life, understanding the changes in the war history narration in Chinese and Japanese history textbooks becomes imperative.

This paper studies significant changes in the narration of war history in Chinese and Japanese history textbooks and their effects on the concepts and behaviors of individuals from both countries. It delves into the complex historical, political, economic, and cultural backgrounds behind textbook revisions, analyzing how textbooks influence the future trajectory of Sino-Japanese relations by shaping teenagers' ideologies. The novelty of this paper lies in its attempt to discuss, from the perspective of textbook influence on teenagers' ideologies, how both governments should objectively reflect. It conveys a historical perspective aligning with common interests to young people, provides a positive and upward direction of political socialization, and guides Sino-Japanese relations towards harmony, stability, and mutually beneficial cooperation.'

2. Literature Review

There are numerous academic documents addressing Sino-Japanese relations and textbook issues, thoroughly examining and comparing textbook content from various perspectives. Several articles criticize Japan's modifications to textbooks, emphasizing issues such as Japan's denial of the invasive nature of the war, the downplaying of atrocities, and the reinforcement of Japan's image as a victim. These writings bring to light Japan's concealment of its history of aggression against China through its educational policy and its evasion of war responsibilities. For instance, Wu Guangyi from the World Economics and Politics Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences authored "A Review of the Description of the War of Aggression against China in Japanese Middle School History Textbooks"; Wang Duyu from Shandong Normal University contributed to "Study on the Description of Japan's Aggression against China in Junior Middle School History Textbooks since the Founding of New China"; and Liu Chang from Suzhou University wrote "Study on the Image of Japan in History Textbooks - Taking the content of the unified high school history textbooks as an example" [3-5]. Reference can also be made to Zhao Yumeng's "Sino-Korean Historical Education and Relations with Japan - A Discussion Centered on Sino-Korean High School History Textbooks," which explores the role of historical education in shaping national consciousness and individual actions [6].

Articles analyzing Sino-Japanese relations from the perspective of the impact of ideological education on adolescents are not common. This article draws on Huang Yiqi's work at Nanjing University, titled "The Hidden Ideological Education: The Succession and Evolution of Role Models in Primary School Chinese Textbooks (1949-2016)." The study dissects the inherent logic and function of ideological education behind the shaping of role models, emphasizing that the primary mission and function of ideological education is to reflect the concept of the political ruling group [7]. This viewpoint aligns with those of historian Yi Nanhe in "History and Memory," which asserts that ruling elites often manipulate institutional tools for memory construction (including textbooks, museums, and commemorative ceremonies) for instrumental purposes. This leads to the creation of different historical memories of the same event in different countries, fostering the spread of nationalism and the prevalence of extreme viewpoints [8].

The primary audience for history textbooks is adolescents, and each revision directly affects the formation and identification of the ideological, historical, and political views of this age group. Concerning this, this article adopts a combination of literature research and comparative research methods, focusing on the deep underlying reasons for the changes in the narratives of Chinese and Japanese history textbooks and their impact on adolescent ideology. It analyzes the cautionary implications of the influence of textbook modifications on national historical memory under state will, with the hope of providing useful insights for future coordination, improvement, and development of Sino-Japanese relations.

3. A Study on the Narrative Changes in the Sino-Japanese War in Chinese and Japanese History Textbooks

3.1. Chinese History Textbooks

Chinese history textbooks initially characterized this war as an aggressive war initiated by Japan. The narrative primarily revolves around significant battles against Japan, supplemented with a description of Japan's aggressive acts, creating a comprehensive historical knowledge system.

Descriptions of the war in Chinese history textbooks have evolved several times since the establishment of the People's Republic of China. The 1956 edition portrayed the United States as the puppet master behind Japan's series of invasions of China, with Japan becoming the puppet. The United States, in addition to supporting Japan's invasions of Ryukyu and Taiwan, also launched an invasion of Korea [4]. In the 1950s, to promote "people's diplomacy" with Japan and move on from the shadow of the war, China emphasized the war crimes committed by a minority of Japanese militarists in its textbooks, distinguishing them from ordinary Japanese people. In editions before 1986, the War of Resistance Against Japan was not a focused narrative on aggression and counter-aggression, mainly depicting the role and deeds of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the war, criticizing the Nationalist Party's non-resistance policy and its ally, the United States. After 1986, the weight of the content about Japanese crimes and the positive battlefields gradually increased, the conflict between the KMT and CCP during the war faded out, the collaboration between the two parties was highlighted, and the major contributions of the United States on the Pacific battlefield were given objective and fair representation [4].

Regarding the timetable of the War of Resistance Against Japan, there is a significant difference between the unified standard version and the People's Education Press version in China. The People's Education Press book refers to the "eight-year bloody War of Resistance," while the standard edition textbook mentions the "Chinese nation's 14-year arduous War of Resistance" [5]. In 2017, the Chinese Ministry of Education required history textbooks to change the eight-year War of Resistance to the fourteen-year War of Resistance to comprehensively reflect Japan's war crimes against China. The phrase "fourteen-year War of Resistance" aligns with national ideology and has more scientific and educational significance.

3.2. Japanese History Textbooks

Early in the invasion of China, Japan created a set of history for "Manchukuo," providing a basis for the legitimization of the "Manchukuo" regime. In 1955, the Japanese right-wing opposed the description of "invasion" in textbooks. In 1997, some right-wing writers and conservatives in Japan formed the "New History Textbook Compilation Committee" to change Japan's war perspective by altering history textbooks. In 2005, the "New History Textbook," which denied their invasions and distorted historical facts, was approved by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology.

Currently, there are eight types of middle school history textbooks in Japan, all of which have fundamental issues regarding guiding ideology and basic historical facts. These are primarily evident in: 1. Avoiding the aggressive nature of the war against China and shirking war responsibilities. 2.

Intentionally downplaying and concealing war atrocities. 3. Separating the military from the civilian population and deliberately creating the image of Japanese civilians as victims. 4. Ignoring the resistance of Chinese military and civilians. Although the book published by Osaka Shoseki admits that the "Mukden Incident" was the beginning of the "Fifteen Years' War," the term "invasion" is not used. The Education Publishing House, Shimizu Bookstore, and Imperial Bookstore exclude the Japanese occupation of northeastern China from the war against China and refer to the war against China after the "Marco Polo Bridge Incident" as the "Sino-Japanese War." Ambiguous terms such as "moving in and out of the mainland" are used in the Education Publishing House's books [3].

The Japanese distortion of historical facts and beautification of invasions lead many Japanese students and the public to be ignorant or even deny the basic historical facts and aggressive nature of the war against China. They refuse to reflect on history and take responsibility for the war. On January 23, 2000, the Osaka Prefecture allowed right-wing forces to hold an event at the Osaka International Peace Center denying the Nanjing Massacre, openly declaring the Nanjing Massacre as the "biggest lie of the 20th century," a propaganda fabricated for political purposes [5]. A public opinion survey conducted by Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun in February 2015 showed that only 5% of the respondents "had a clear understanding" of the war initiated by Japan against China, 44% "knew a little," and 49% "didn't know" or "didn't know at all." 60% of respondents said they learned about the war through school education and textbooks [6]. The attitude of the perpetrators ignoring the victims' experiences and considering the history of the invasion as something to easily "discard" is precisely the mindset of the general Japanese public.

4. Analysis of the Causes of Content Changes in Chinese and Japanese History Textbooks

History textbooks aim to fulfill the educational function of providing historical perspectives, enabling members within a social group to acquire a shared belief system. Although political systems or parties vary from country to country, governments and parties strive by various means to make the individual consciousness of the public accept, transform, and align with the mainstream ideology of the ruling class. This allows them to accept the domination of the political ruling group and contributes to maintaining social harmony and development [9].

The addition of humanitarian disasters (such as Unit 731) and catastrophic events (such as the Nanjing Massacre) in China's narrative of the War of Resistance Against Japan is meant to allow adolescents to deeply understand the brutality of war and the misfortune of the people. It aims to arouse strong national consciousness and historical grief, encouraging the remembrance of the humiliating history. By depicting events and heroic figures where the Chinese people were united against the enemy, bravely resisted, and sacrificed, these narratives stimulate patriotism and national pride.

In 1985, the Chinese government reintroduced "Five Loves Education." In 1994, China's National Education Commission published the "Outline for Implementing Patriotic Education," emphasizing the history of China resisting foreign invasions as a collective experience of suffering, struggle, and glory. This is not only to express the determination and confidence that historical tragedies should not be repeated but also to inherit and promote the national spirit formed in the War of Resistance Against Japan. In 2015, China held a military parade to mark the 70th anniversary of the victory of the War of Resistance Against Japan, inviting leaders from many countries to participate and broadcasting it globally through various media.

Chinese historical education aims to enable Chinese adolescents to understand that the Chinese nation was once in a position to be beaten due to backwardness and to comprehend the brutality of foreign invasion and enslavement. It helps them understand the unyielding and brave fighting spirit of the Chinese people and establish a common understanding of cherishing peace, unity, self-reliance, and striving for improvement.

Japan, since the Meiji Restoration, grew into a rising power. To seize greater political and economic objectives, Japan embarked on a path of crazy expansion abroad. Both Chinese and Korean history textbooks agree that the reason Japan launched an aggressive war was due to the constraints of its domestic natural conditions, as well as political and social conditions. It urgently needed to expand its territory to plunder resources, land, and labor according to its development needs, thereby seeking political and economic benefits. The background narratives of the major war incidents triggered by Japan in China and Korea are consistent, mutually verifying the authenticity of historical facts, and highlighting the proactive aggression of Japan [6].

After the war, Japan reentered the international community as an independent nation. In modern times, the new generation of Japanese politicians believes that Japanese adolescents will gain negative cognition of their country and their predecessors' crazy brutality from learning about modern East Asian war history. To maintain its "normal country" image, get rid of the "constraints" of history, and claim that Japanese school education should serve "cultivating the Japanese spirit and cultivating national pride," they resort to altering and beautifying history to justify their war history.

Historian Yi Nanhe's research suggests that Japanese textbooks beautify the history of the invasions in three respects: First, they attribute the responsibility of initiating the war to a few military leaders, treating the emperor, senior bureaucrats, and ordinary Japanese people as innocents. Second, they avoid the aggressive nature of Japan's territorial expansion in Asia. Third, they downplay the atrocities of the invasions and even praise the image of the army, aiming to cultivate Japanese national pride and a 'normal country' mentality [8].

Professor Lee Hui-Yu of Sungkyunkwan University in Korea concludes: "One of the core issues of the history of Northeast Asia is the textbook problem of Japan distorting history to justify this period [10]".

The periods when the two countries revised their textbooks often coincide, reflecting that changes in the political background and social environment at that time triggered mutually targeted behaviors. For example, in August 1985, Sino-Japanese relations took a turn due to the Japanese Prime Minister's "worship," followed by the second Sino-Japanese textbook dispute in 1986. At the same time, China made large-scale revisions to the 1986 version of the history textbook, greatly increasing the description of Japan's invasion atrocities; in 2005, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology approved the "New History Textbook" that distorted history and denied invasions. In the same year, Chinese leaders emphatically stressed the saying of the fourteen-year War of Resistance on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the victory of the War of Resistance Against Japan.

5. The Influence of Textbooks on Adolescents

5.1. The Essence of the Textbook Argument Is a Contest of National Ideologies

Education is the most basic way for any country to achieve the socialization of ideology. Textbooks are the field of ideological contention, reflecting the will of a nation and emphasizing the ideas of the political ruling group. The actual intention behind textbook revisions is to instill the concepts of the ruling political group into the citizens, unify the thoughts of the citizens, and promote their political schemes.

China, being a victim of war, adjusts its history textbooks in the spirit of "remembering the past to guide the future," aiming to improve and develop Sino-Japanese relations. On the contrary, Japan, as the perpetrator of the war, blurs history and alters textbooks, largely to relieve its citizens of historical debts and psychological burdens.

The apparent argument over textbooks is essentially a contest of nationalism. This ideological opposition leads to the further deterioration of bilateral relations. From 2001 to 2006, the Japanese Prime Minister visited the Yasukuni Shrine every year, arousing anti-Japanese sentiment among the Chinese populace. From the end of March to May in 2005, anti-Japanese demonstrations occurred in

many parts of China, prompting protests and attacks on Japanese embassies and businesses, with young students as the main group of protestors.

The results of a joint survey on Sino-Japanese relations released in 2017 showed that "Japan has not sincerely apologized and reflected on its history of aggression against China," which is the main reason for the negative impression of Japan among 67.4% of the Chinese respondents. 46.4% of the Japanese respondents had a negative impression of China because China "criticizes Japan on historical issues [6]."

Richard E. Dawson and Kenneth Prewitt believe that political socialization is the process by which citizens learn and form some understanding of the political world. It's a way of passing political standards and beliefs from one generation to the next [11].

Adolescents are the inheritors and disseminators of ideology; hence, they are the generational targets for state will. Each revision of history textbooks reshapes the historical memory of adolescents, subtly influencing the process of the socialization of ideology.

5.2. The Importance of Textbooks in Shaping Adolescents' Historical Outlook and Political Socialization

The historical view is an integral part of ideology. Historical knowledge is the 'knowledge of knowledge' passed on to the younger generation. History textbooks convey historical views to adolescents authoritatively, shaping their worldview, life view, and values progressively.

Professor Lee Hee-Yu points out, that Japan, by espousing an inaccurate historical perspective in its education of the youth, risks shaping its future developmental trajectory. This misguided approach may lead the inadequately informed youth down a problematic path [10].

Professor Wang Zhixin from Miyazaki Public University has conducted surveys on "Japan's relations with China and Asia" among university freshmen since 1994 and found that many freshmen even doubt the authenticity of the War of Resistance Against Japan, express ignorance about who should apologize to whom, and have almost no concept of the aggression against China in the memories of more Japanese people. Therefore, they do not understand why China always holds grudges against Japan on historical issues and even believe that Chinese adolescents' anti-Japanese sentiments are related to China's education [3].

Taiwanese education scholar Yuan Songxi points out that in any society, the state-sanctioned or approved textbooks employed in schools can be viewed as indicators of the political socialization strategy, reflecting the societal aspirations for the next generation as evidenced by the content found in these textbooks [12].

Adolescence is an important period for the formation of political attitudes and behavior patterns. The growing environment and education received can instill a specific political ideology and worldview, greatly influencing their later political participation behavior.

6. Conclusion

The most significant difference in the narrative changes of history textbooks between China and Japan lies in their distinct purposes. China aims to confront history directly, while Japan seeks to embellish it. Furthermore, the educational significance varies significantly. China's goal is to "learn from history and look to the future," while Japan ambitiously aspires to "forget the past and recreate glory." However, the underlying logic for both countries to revise textbooks remains the same, reflecting the will of the nation. They intend to reshape the historical view, educate national ideology, and ultimately influence the public's political socialization concepts and behavior.

China and Japan share a long history of harmonious and friendly exchanges. The missions to Tang Dynasty China, Jianzhen's voyage to the east, and Abe Nakamaro's endeavors are all brilliant historical markers of Sino-Japanese cultural exchanges. However, as neighbors separated by a narrow strip of water, conflicts and animosities between the two also exist. In modern times, the balance of

power between China and Japan has shifted significantly. The new cold war in international geopolitics presents new challenges to the already unstable Sino-Japanese relations.

Sino-Japanese relations are crucial for the East Asian region. Positive Sino-Japanese relations serve as both the ballast for regional security and stability and the driving force for regional economic development. China and Japan need to strengthen their shared responsibilities in East Asia, restrain the surge of nationalist sentiment in both countries, and prevent the rise of extreme nationalism.

How can the gap be bridged, and both nations move towards each other? The author believes that it should begin with resolving the dispute over history textbooks and reinforcing the positive guidance of Chinese and Japanese textbooks to adolescents. On one hand, in the spirit of "the one who tied the bell to the tiger must untie it, the Japanese government needs to guide Japanese adolescents to confront history squarely and assume more historical responsibilities for the future. On the other hand, the Chinese government should guide China's adolescents to adopt a stance of seeking common ground while reserving differences, viewing history objectively and rationally, and looking forward to the future. Controlling the negative impact of the historical textbook issued by China and Japan is the key to resolving deep-seated contradictions between the two countries. In this process, enhancing the interaction and communication between Chinese and Japanese adolescents and collaborating on extensive historical research are foundational steps in promoting the positive development of Sino-Japanese relations.

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