

History Textbooks in Postwar German and Japanese Education

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Introduction

Much has been written and said about the differences in education in postwar Germany and Japan, particularly about the differences in history education. Since it is impossible within 15 minutes to give a complete overview over differences and similarities in the education systems of the two countries, I will focus today on what has been called the **history textbook problem**, the discussions about the contents of history textbooks and history lessons in school in both countries, with a particular focus on recent developments.

The basic assumption underlying this paper is the fact that while the so-called history textbook problem (*kyôkasho mondai*) has been a focus of debates in the field of education in postwar Japan, in Germany a controversial debate about history textbooks never has surfaced. There have been constant discussions about textbooks, and the contents of textbooks have been steadily improved, just as in Japan, but controversies about textbooks involving large parts of the public, the media and politics are hard to find in German postwar development.

Why have history textbooks become such a controversial topic in Japan, and why is there nothing like the “history textbook problem” in Germany?

1. The major reason has to be seen in the different intensity of **political intervention** in education in general, and in history and social science education in particular.

In West Germany, based on the experience of the 1930s and early 1940s, in the postwar era, state intervention in education was limited to a minimum. The prewar system of state-issued textbooks was abolished, just as in Japan, and the market for textbooks was generally liberalized. While in some regions (*Laender* 州) an approval system (*kentei seido*) for textbooks still continues to exist, this system has never become the focus of political or societal debates and never has led, unlike in Japan, to the accusation of “censorship” or any problems between textbook authors, publishers, teachers and state authorities. Contents of history textbooks rest on a broad consensus in society, historical science and politics concerning views on the German past and the importance to teach that past in schools.

In Japan, state control of education, particularly in the fields of history and civic studies (*kômin*), remains strong, as well as does political pressure. Recently, examples of massive intervention of politicians into education and particularly contents of history textbooks have been even increasing. Throughout the postwar period, the Ministry of Education (*Monbushô*, MOE) has used the examination system (*kentei seido*) as a utensil to suppress critical views of Japan's wartime past in textbooks. Textbooks that were considered "over-critical" of Japan's wars of aggression did not receive approval and therefore could not be used in classrooms. The examination system, for this reason, also has been called a system of censorship and seen in contradiction with the freedom of expression as guaranteed in the Constitution. The famous historian Ienaga Saburô has filed lawsuits over 30 years against the Japanese state, because his textbook was denied approval by the MOE and could not be used in classrooms.

In Germany, controversies about the examination system, which exists only in some regions, have never reached the intensity they have in Japan. This does not mean that German textbooks presented more critical views of the national past than their Japanese counterparts, particularly not in the early postwar period. Up to the 1960s, German history textbooks did not even mention German war crimes or the Holocaust. However, this was not due to state control, but rather the product of conservative and uncritical views in German historical science. German historians until the 1960s did not engage in active confrontation with their nation's war past – unlike Japanese historians –, and thus there was no mention of such topics in the textbooks and in history education. The situation only began to change, slowly, in the 1960s, due to general changes in society and a rising awareness of Germany's past. However, in this stage, state authorities did not interfere in the changes that occurred in textbook contents, the examination system never led to a clash of textbook authors and state authorities; state authorities rather aimed at guaranteeing *quality standards* of textbooks rather than contents that are in line with a certain political opinion.

As an example, let me shortly outline the textbook examination system in the *Land of Rheinland-Pfalz* as it is still in operation today. After submission of textbooks to the Ministry of Education and Culture in Mainz, the textbooks are sent to independent reviewers that examine the textbook's suitability for use in classroom. Different from Japan, where the administration in the MOE examines the textbooks, in Germany civil (*minkan*) and independent experts are asked for their opinion, and based upon these multiple opinions, the ministry decides about the suitability of the textbook. (in practice always following the expert opinion) The criteria for the decision are the following (Administrative Direction 942 issued by Rheinland-Pfalz Ministry of Education and

Culture on 25 May 1993) (see material no. 2):

- The textbook has to be in accordance with the German Constitution and with federal laws
- The textbook has to be in accordance with the concept of the liberal-democratic constitutional state and the ideal of a plural and diverse society
- The textbook has to serve the idea of *Völkerverständigung* (international understanding), has to take into account the responsibility of rich countries towards so-called underdeveloped countries as well as the topic of environmental protection
- The textbook has to be in accordance with the goal of equal opportunities and harmonic relations of boys and girls
- The textbook should avoid one-sided ideological statements
- The textbook has to be in accordance with existing curricula
- In terms of contents and language the textbook has to be appropriate for the age group that is going to use it.

These guidelines shall guarantee quality standards as well as the accordance of textbooks with the constitutional order and the ideal of a diverse society. They are, however, no political intervention serving the aims of a certain political direction or party. In Japan, on the other hand, the examination process in the MOE is less concerned with quality standards, but rather with the accordance of textbooks to the *political lines* of the administration, which, of course, has been continuously been dominated by party politics.¹ Accordance with the existing Constitution, on the other hand, is not necessarily demanded by the administration, as long as political objectives are satisfied. We could witness this in the examination of a certain textbook in 2001, which questioned several constitutional stipulations, but nonetheless received ministerial approval.

However, due to societal and international pressure, particularly during and after the internationalization of the history textbook debate in 1982, the contents of Japanese history textbooks have been changing rapidly over the last decades. Since the 1990s, history textbooks referred to most of the controversial topics of Japan's wartime past, including the Nanjing incident, the problem of the so-called "comfort women" etc. This reflected a *consensus* in Japanese society concerning Japan's wartime history. By the 1990s, awareness in Japanese society about Japan's wartime past had strongly risen, and it was above all *politics* continuing to resist a critical view of the past.

The societal consensus on historical questions is reflected, for example, in opinion polls.

¹ This became obvious in the examination of middle-school textbooks in 2001 and again in 2005, when the textbook of one publisher received approval notwithstanding the unprecedented high number of demanded revision – 137 in 2001, while the average of all other publishers was 25.

One representative example, particularly helpful here, was a survey conducted in 2000 by the research institute of NHK (see material no. 3). Its general focus was “Japanese attitudes towards war and peace”, with some of its questions making specific reference to Japan’s wartime *past*. Only a very small portion of respondents to the poll would deny the aggressive character of Japanese warfare in Asia – as some Japanese politicians continue to do until the present day – and the large majority agreed that successor generations still had to continue to assume responsibility for the war. In answer to the question “Do you consider the ‘Asian-Pacific War of 1931-45’ a war of aggression against Japan’s Asian neighbours or not?”, 51% of the respondents said they thought it was. Only 15% subscribed to the claims made by historical revisionism and denied the aggressive character of Japan’s wars. As for the question of continued responsibility, the NHK survey also asked: “Do you think the postwar generation should still bear responsibility for Japan’s actions during the last war?” The answers here divide by generation. Among 16-19 year olds, 69% answered in the affirmative; among those over 60, only 38% agreed.

These numbers reflected changes in Japanese textbooks’ contents during the 1980s and the 1990s. However, throughout the 1990s political opposition to this critical view of history in education grew stronger. In 1994, the Liberal Democratic Party initiated a campaign to undo changes in history education. It organized a series of lectures of well-known opponents of a critical view of history in the so-called “Committee for the Examination of History” (*Rekishi kentô iinkai*), the minutes of which have been published under the title “Summary of the Greater East Asian War” (*Daitô sensô no sôkatsu*) in 1995. Some of the contributors to the volume, such as Nishio Kanji, Takahashi Shirô, and others one year later founded the so-called “Association for the Making of New History Textbooks” (*Atarashii Rekishi Kyôkasho o tsukuru-kai*, known also as *Tsukuru-kai*), which still is the main organization fighting against a critical (“masochistic”, as they call it) view of history in education. The society was founded as a consequence of the meetings of the above-mentioned LDP committee, and it is still strongly supported and protected by various politicians, even in the public, just as recently by Foreign Minister Machimura in a live NHK program.

This kind of political intervention in history education can hardly be found in postwar Germany. Strong societal opposition arose, for example, when Chancellor Helmut Kohl initiated the plan of a “House of the History of the Federal Republic of Germany”, the aim of which was to display the “bright history” of postwar Germany’s “success story”. He eventually only could realize this plan by admitting the building of a certain memorial that just recently has been finished in Berlin – the Memorial for the Murdered

Jews of Europe, which now stands next to the political center of unified Germany, the *Bundestag*. While we can find frequent and fierce debates about *memorials* in postwar Germany, and also passionate academic debates such as the *Historikerstreit* (historians' debate) of the late 1980s, which we have to see in conjunction with chancellor Kohl's conservative history projects, history *education* has been seen as a *non-partisan* field that must not become the battlefield of politicized debates about history. Non-partisan *institutions* have been guaranteeing smooth development of history education and contents of history textbooks based on a broad societal consensus, such as the well-known Georg-Eckert Institute for Textbook Research in Braunschweig, the Federal Center for Civic Education, or the German-Polish Textbook Commission, all of which have by now been acknowledged as *unquestioned* non-partisan institutions that can be entrusted the task of instructing teachers and discussing contents of textbooks.

2. The second reason for the difference in the intensity of debates about textbook contents and history education in Germany and Japan is the reaction to **foreign criticism and pressure**.

For postwar Germany, it was always necessary to adjust to and *embrace* foreign criticism – in Japan, one speaks rather of foreign pressure (*gaiatsu*) – if the major objective of postwar Germany was to be reached – to become a respected member of the international community again. Until the end of the 1960s, within the framework of integration into the (West) European Community, Germany therefore had to lend an ear to Western European voices concerning Germany's wartime past – particularly since during this era, as mentioned above, German historians did not yet engage in reflection on German war crimes and the Holocaust. In the 1970s, as a consequence of Chancellor Willy Brandt's "New East Policy", this openness was also extended to the East. Germany and Poland set up a bilateral commission to analyze the history textbooks of the two countries, and this commission drew up recommendations how to improve them. The Commission is still in function today and frequently raises its voice when certain political actors endanger the established consensus in one of the two countries. Just recently, the Commission expressed its concerns about the negative effects the foundation of a Center or a Memorial for the Germans expelled from Poland (and Czechoslovakia) at the end of World War II might have on bilateral relations.

Different from Germany, for Japan there was no urgent need for reconciliation with its Asian neighbors after the end of the war. Japan bound itself tight to the U.S. and felt safe even being isolated in Asia. The establishment of diplomatic relations with South Korea took 20 years and was only achieved due to US pressure in 1965. Normalization

with mainland China was only possible after 1972; normalization of relations with North Korea has still not been reached until the present day; and also a peace treaty with Russia could not yet be realized due to Japanese diplomatic inflexibility. In the 1980s, however, Japan, in order to protect its international reputation, had to adjust to foreign criticism concerning the contents of Japanese textbooks. After the famous history textbook debate of 1982, Miyazawa Kiichi, at that time Cabinet Minister, explained that in the future, in the process of examination of history textbooks, “the feelings of Asian neighbours would be taken into account.” Until to the present day, the “neighbouring countries clause” (*kinrin shokoku jôkô*) is a part of the criteria of textbook examiners in the MOE. However, as we can see in recent textbooks, it is not given much priority in recent years. The Tsukuru-kai and some LDP politicians have denounced the “neighbouring countries clause” as a product of foreign intervention and campaign for its abolishment. This has already led to changes in textbooks and to a reduction in explanations of critical chapters of Japan’s wartime history, which are not mentioned in much detail anymore in the latest versions of middle-school textbooks. If this trend continues, it has to lead to a increasing *isolation* of Japan in Asia in political terms, notwithstanding increasing economic importance of relations with China and cultural exchanges with Korea.

3. The third reason for differences in intensity of debates about history education in Germany and Japan is the difference about the **general idea of the purpose of history education**.

The purpose of history education in both countries is defined in the curriculum guidelines (*gakushû shidô yôryô*). In Japan, the ministry’s curriculum guidelines stress the importance of “deepening (children’s) love for the nation’s history,” but also call for “cultivating a spirit of international cooperation.” Recently, however, as seen during the process of adoption of textbooks, “fostering love for the nation’s history” and strengthening “patriotism” or “healthy nationalism” in education has been put much more weight upon than the “spirit of international cooperation,” as we can see in public statements of politicians and in the strong support of the Tsukuru-kai by politicians.

While in some *Länder* in Germany, the fostering of patriotism is also part of curriculum guidelines, in most cases the curricula rather stress the importance of “knowing the past in order to understand the present and achieve a better future.” (see material 1) Moreover, it is particularly international *reconciliation* (*wakai*) which has been generally acknowledged as a major objective of history education in Germany. For that end, an uncompromising commitment to teach the full truth of Germany’s wartime past

is, of course, a part of curricula in all regions of Germany, including the more conservative ones.

This goal has been achieved, among others, through the influence exerted by independent institutions such as the above-mentioned Georg Eckert-Institute for Textbook Research or the Federal Center for Civic Education. The Eckert-Institute, for example, in an era when teaching the Holocaust in history classes was still considered a taboo, demanded that “racial extermination policies and terror during the Nazi era, torture and dehumanisation of social and racial groups have to be taught in an accurate and appropriate way in classrooms and must not be ignored. We must not fear to confront students with the scenes of cruelty that are typical for the Nazi era, and we must not downplay these scenes or alleviate the fear of them.” Until the present, the Institute has continued to raise its voice in order to give new directions to history education and is still stressing the importance of textbook research as a means to diminish prejudice and advance international reconciliation. After the incidents of 11 September and recent terror attacks, the Institute has been demanding changes in history education in order to foster understanding of Muslim societies in central Europe with the ultimate aim of stemming against the self-fulfilling prophecy of a “clash of civilizations.”

It is, above all, the lack of independent and *generally acknowledged institutions* in Japan that explains the huge gap in terms of intensity of debates about history education. While in Germany independent institutions such as the Eckert-Institute *mediate* between the societal consensus and state authorities, in Japan society rather is in *direct opposition* to state authorities, with the fronts hardening in recent years. While in society reconciliation and understanding have been acknowledged as important objectives of history education, state authorities and politics rather put emphasis on the goal of raising *patriotic citizens* that acknowledge the priority of the state over the individual. Therefore, it is deemed necessary that they hold a “bright” picture of that state’s history. As the *examination* process in spring has shown, the Japanese state gives favourable treatment to textbooks that stress these goals (see footnote 1), but as the *adoption* process for middle-school textbooks in summer has shown, societal grass-roots opposition remains strong as well – and strong enough to not allow such books to widely spread. However, since still no generally acknowledged mediating institutions exist, it is unlikely that the history textbook problem will disappear in the near future as a major topic in Japanese educational politics.

配布資料

1. Japanese and German Curricula Guidelines for History

学習指導要領（中学校）

〔歴史的分野〕

1 目標

(1) 歴史的事象に対する関心を高め、我が国の歴史の大きな流れと各時代の特色を世界の歴史を背景に理解させ、それを通して我が国の文化と伝統の特色を広い視野に立って考えさせるとともに、我が国の歴史に対する愛情を深め、国民としての自覚を育てる。

(2) 国家・社会及び文化の発展や人々の生活の向上に尽くした歴史上の人物と現在に伝わる文化遺産を、その時代や地域との関連において理解させ、尊重する態度を育てる。

(3) 歴史に見られる国際関係や文化交流のあらましを理解させ、我が国と諸外国の歴史や文化が相互に深くかかわっていることを考えさせるとともに、他民族の文化、生活などに関心をもたせ、国際協調の精神を養う。

(4) 身近な地域の歴史や具体的な事象の学習を通して歴史に対する興味や関心を高め、様々な資料を活用して歴史的事象を多面的・多角的に考察し公正に判断するとともに適切に表現する能力と態度を育てる。

Lehrplan Geschichte, 7. bis 10. Klasse (Rheinland-Pfalz)

GESCHICHTE zeigt die historische Dimension der Fragestellungen und Problemlösungen auf:

Sie setzt sich mit dem Menschen in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart auseinander, mit seiner Einbindung in politische, wirtschaftliche, gesellschaftliche und kulturelle Prozesse; sie öffnet den Sinn dafür, dass sowohl die individuellen als auch die kollektiven Entwicklungsprozesse durch das Spannungsfeld von Herausforderungen und Lösungsversuchen bestimmt sind. Die Betrachtung der Abfolge dieser Fragestellungen und der gefundenen Antworten macht die Vergangenheit einerseits als Voraussetzung für die Gegenwart erfahrbar und vermittelt andererseits die Einsicht, dass Geschichte die Gegenwart und Zukunft besser verstehen hilft. Dadurch wird Gegenwartserfahrung Schlüssel für das Verständnis der Vergangenheit und für die Bewältigung der Zukunft.

2. Opinion poll regarding Japanese historical consciousness (NHK 2000)

先の戦争と世代ギャップ

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3割をわった戦中・戦前世代

「先の戦争＝満州事変以降の対中国戦争と太平洋戦争（1931～1945年）」の敗戦から55年の歳月が流れた。

戦後の新しい教育制度のもとに初めて小学校に入学した人々は1939年に生まれている。したがって、1938年以前に生まれた人々が戦中・戦前世代となる。

戦後30年目に青春（16歳）に到達した人々が生まれたのが1959年である。そこで、1939年から1958年までに生まれた人々を戦後世代、1959年以降に生まれた人々を戦無世代と設定することが可能であろう。

今年5月、全国16歳以上の男女2,000人あまりを調査相手として、戦争観を尋ねた世論調査（個人面接法）の結果では、現在、戦無世代が34%、戦後世代が37%を占め、先の戦争の当事者である戦中・戦前世代は29%と3割を下回っている。



戦無世代の78%が真珠湾攻撃の日を知らない

人々は、先の戦争について、どのくらい知識を持っているのでしょうか。この調査では、「最も長く戦った相手国」「同盟関係にあった国」「真珠湾攻撃を行った日」「終戦を迎えた日」の4つについて答えてもらったが、それぞれの正解率を世代別に示すと次のようになる。

	全体	戦無	戦後	戦中・戦前
中国	37%	31	36	43
ドイツ	55	47	57	61
12月8日	36	22	35	54
8月15日	91	84	94	94

この表をみると、ほぼどの事項でも、戦無世代<戦後世代<戦中・戦前世代の順で正解率が高くなっていることが分かる。すなわち、戦無世代で先の戦争に関する知識は最も低い。特に、太平洋戦争開戦の日（＝真珠湾攻撃を行った日）が12月8日であると正しく答えた人がこの世代では22%であり、不正解の人が78%もいるということになる。

ちなみに、4項目とも全部正解だった人は、戦中・戦前世代27%、戦後世代17%、戦無世代10%という数字になっている。



戦中・戦前世代のみ肯定的

先の戦争についての認識を、「アジア近隣諸国に対する日本の侵略戦争だったか否か」、そして、「資源が少ない日本が生きるためのやむをえないものだったか

否か」の2点から尋ねてみた。

現在、先の戦争について、「アジア諸国に対する侵略戦争だった」と認識している人は51%で、「そうではない」とする人の15%を大きく上回っている。また、「昔のことだから、自分には関係ない」と答えた人が7%、「わからない、無回答」が28%であった。

	全体	戦無	戦後	戦中・戦前
侵略戦争	51%	48	54	50
違う	15	16	13	15
関係ない	7	7	8	5
わからない	28	30	25	30

この結果を世代別にみたのが上の表であるが、戦後世代で、「わからない」という人が相対的に少なく、「侵略戦争だ」と明確に答えている人が多いのが特徴となっている。

次に、先の戦争が「資源の少ない日本が生きるためのやむをえないものだった」と認識する人は30%で、「そうではない」とする人の35%よりも少ない。さらに、「昔のことだから、自分には関係ない」と答えた人が4%、「わからない、無回答」が31%であった。

	全体	戦無	戦後	戦中・戦前
やむをえない	30%	20	30	41
違う	35	45	36	23
関係ない	4	5	4	2
わからない	31	30	30	33

そして、この項目に関しては、さきほどの結果より、世代別の傾向が際立っている。

すなわち、戦無世代が「やむをえないものではなかった」という先の戦争に対する批判的な意見に大きく傾いているのに対し、戦中・戦前世代では、「やむをえなかった」とする肯定的意見が多数派を占めている。

戦後世代でも批判的意見が強く、戦中・戦前世代が、この「やむをえなかったかどうか」では孤立している観がある。

以上をまとめると、先の戦争を侵略戦争であるとする意見はどの世代でも多数派であるが、中でも戦後世代でその傾向が顕著である。また、先の戦争を「やむをえなかった」と肯定的にとらえる人々は、戦無・戦後世代では少数派、戦中・戦前世代では多数派という構図になっているのである。



戦無世代に責任を引きつぐ覚悟あり

戦争責任に世代をからめて「戦後に生まれた世代は、先の戦争で日本が行った行為の結果について責任を引きつぐべき

かどうか」を質問した。

全体の結果をみると、「世代が違って未解決の問題があるなら、引きついで解決すべきだ」が50%であり、「世代が違うのだから、引きつぐ必要はない」の27%を上回った。そして、「もともと日本に責任はなく、引きつぐべきかどうかという問題ではない」が5%、「わからない、無回答」が17%であった。

	全体	戦無	戦後	戦中・戦前
必要なし	27%	23	27	31
引きつぐべき	50	60	52	37
責任なし	5	4	6	5
その他、わからない	18	13	14	27

これを世代別にみたのが上の表であり、「引きつぐ必要はない」という意見は、戦中・戦前世代で多く、戦無世代で少ない。また、「引きつぐべき」は戦無世代で多く、戦中・戦前世代で少ない。そして、戦後世代もその傾向は戦無世代に似ており、それぞれ、責任引きつぐ世代としての自覚をかなり持っているといえよう。



世代で違う影響メディア

「先の戦争に対する自分の考え方に影響のあったメディア」をいくつでも答えてもらったのが下表である。

	全体	戦無	戦後	戦中・戦前
身近な人	36%	30	44	32
学校の教師	21	33	20	9
学校の授業	22	35	18	12
テレビ	32	35	40	17
新聞	20	13	26	18
本	10	9	13	6
漫画	3	6	2	0
雑誌	3	3	4	2
アニメ・映画	9	18	8	1
インターネット	0	0	0	0
テレビゲーム	0	0	0	0
その他	5	1	2	14
特になし	25	21	22	35

この結果も世代によって特徴があり、戦無世代では、教科書、授業、テレビ、漫画、アニメ・映画、戦後世代では、身近な人、テレビ、新聞、本、雑誌、そして、戦中・戦後世代では、その他（＝実体験）がそれぞれ相対的に多いという傾向があり、これらの違いが先の戦争に対する世代ギャップに反映していると考えられるのである。

この調査結果は、8月15日のNHKスペシャル「2000年 あなたにとって戦争とは」の中で紹介された。